

The Art Gallery as Destination

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Works on display at the Galerie Gradyva's inaugural exhibition in Paris include "Le Rêve II" by Balthus. Galerie Gradyva.

Art

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LONDON — Selling art these days is all about destinations. International fairs like [Art Basel](#), which begins previewing on Monday, attract tens of thousands of collectors over just a few days. In a month as busy as June, with its logjam of competing art world events, dealers have to come up with compelling ways to coax wealthy collectors to pay their galleries a visit too.

Making the gallery a destination itself is one way of attracting the one-percenters. Multinational contemporary art dealers such as [Gagosian](#), [Hauser & Wirth](#), [David Zwirner](#), [White Cube](#) and [Emmanuel Perrotin](#) all have spaces that regularly have a black limousine or two parked outside. Now ambitious dealers in other sectors are expanding their ideas of how their galleries should be conceived and perceived.

London-based [Daniel Katz](#), 66, one of the world's most successful dealers in pre-20th century works of art, has moved from his premises in Bond Street to a much bigger five-story town house at 6 Hill Street in Mayfair, which he shares with his son, the 20th-century British art specialist [Robin Katz](#), and the New York antiquities dealer [Ariadne Galleries](#). Once the venue for an exhibition of [Lucien Freud drawings](#), this 6,000 square-foot building has been transformed into the sort of elegantly corniced temple to European civilization that turn-of-the-century tycoon collectors like Henry Clay Frick or John Pierpont Morgan would have felt at home in. An Auguste Rodin head of John the Baptist, priced at about 500,000 pounds, or about \$840,000, sits in front of a wall painted a bespoke shade of gray; an early 16th-century Florentine marble relief of Hercules and Antaeus attributed to Baccio Bandinelli, marked at about £1 million, is tucked away in a Chippendale cabinet.



Picasso's "Homme à l'épée" at Galerie Gradyva. Galerie Gradyva

"A house feels more exclusive and private than standing around in a gallery," said Stuart Lochhead, the director of Daniel Katz Ltd., at the opening on June 3. "Someone would feel comfortable in a space like this after stepping off a G5 from Los Angeles."

Thomas Bompard, 36, who resigned as head of Impressionist and modern art at Sotheby's Paris at the end of last year, is also hoping to capitalize on a prestige location. [Galerie Gradyva](#), which opened on May 28, is the name of a new dealership in a 17th-century mansion on the Quai Voltaire on the Left Bank of the Seine, opposite the Louvre, that

specializes in the very top end of the market for late 19th- and earlier 20th-century art. The historic 6,500-square-foot space, formerly the premises of the furniture dealers Camoin Demachy, has been sensitively renovated by François-Joseph Graf.

Mr. Bompard's venture — or adventure, as he prefers to call it — has been backed by a group of anonymous collectors. The inaugural exhibition, combining works from stock and on consignment, includes the enigmatic 1956-57 Balthus painting, "Le Rêve II," showing two girls in a bourgeois interior. Oils by the reclusive Balthus are virtually unknown on the open market and this example is priced at between \$11 million and \$15 million, according to Mr. Bompard. He wasn't prepared to divulge the asking price of Pablo Picasso's 1969 "musketeer" canvas, "Homme à l'épée." This large trophy painting had been [sold at Sotheby's](#), London, in June 2009, for £7 million to a buyer identified as the Paris-based Lebanese financier Samir Traboulsi.

"I will be expensive," said Mr. Bompard. "These days people want the same things: icons of modern civilization."

Mr. Katz's and Mr. Bompard's mansions devoted to the conspicuous consumption of art are reminiscent of the "art palaces" built in New York a century ago by dealers such as Duveen, Knoedler and Wildenstein. That [original generation of art palaces has gone](#) — the 20,500 square-foot Wildenstein Building on East 64th Street was sold to the state of Qatar this year, [according to the Wall Street Journal](#) — but a new generation is replacing it.

Mr. Zwirner's stately townhouse gallery in Mayfair, for instance, is currently holding an exhibition that is a must-see. "Bridget Riley: The Stripe Paintings 1961-2014" is the first major retrospective devoted to this influential British artist [since 2008](#). The exhibition of more than 30 canvases and works on

paper, held in collaboration with the artist's long-time London dealer [Karsten Schubert](#), charts Ms. Riley's development from monochromatic 1960s Op Art to the more celebratory explorations of color that followed her visit to Egypt in 1979.

Ms. Riley's early black-and-white works have a following with American collectors, aware of her inclusion in "[The Responsive Eye](#)" group show at MoMA, New York, in 1965. While most of the paintings in the show are on loan, five new large-scale works, predominated by warm terra-cottas, oranges and yellows, are for sale, priced between £600,000 and £1 million.



Eduardo Chillida's "Consejo al Espacio IX" and Joan Miró's "Femme dans la nuit," on the wall in the background, at the Ordovas gallery in London.
Sucessió Miró/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2014

Meanwhile, a fellow Mayfair dealer, [Pilar Ordovas](#), is exploring the little-known friendship between the 20th-century Spanish artists Eduardo Chillida and Joan Miró. Ms. Ordovas specializes in compact, museum-quality exhibitions, and in this show she displays previously unseen private correspondence between the two artists — who regularly summered together with the collector Aimé Maeght in St.-Paul de Vence in Provence — together with 14 works, again mostly loans, that reveal Miró's influence on his younger compatriot. Miró's magisterial 1945 canvas, "Femme dans la nuit," which hasn't been seen in Britain for 50 years, isn't for sale, but Chillida's monumental 2000 flower-like bronze, "Consejo al Espacio IX," is available at between 3 million to 4 million euros, or \$4 million to \$5.4 million.

"There's so much happening in the art world and the competition is huge with fairs and auctions," Ms. Ordovas said. "But if you can put on an exhibition that has an element of surprise, that tells you something new, then people will come to see you."