

YSTYLE

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IN A CITY THAT READS

By MARELLA RICKETTS

A country's democracy correlates to the freedom its cultural and arts sectors have," a professor once told us during class. Upon reflecting on these words, one realizes that the creation of literature does contribute to a community's identity and culture,

and ultimately, to its democracy. In the short time that I've been living here in Paris, I have observed this to be true numerous times through the many independent bookstores that I've encountered, each on their own personal mission.

If you keep your eyes open, you will always

spot at least a few people with their heads buried in a book, whether during rush hour at the Metro or under the sun in one of the city's many parks — the latter made more possible these days with the arrival of spring. More often than not, I find myself unable to leave my tiny

The independent bookstores that are defining Paris' arts and cultural sector in an increasingly digital world.

flat without a book in hand. I am creating a map in my mind — not just of places where I can comfortably settle down and read, but also of bookstores that invite you to keep coming back.

AFTER 8 BOOKS



A screen print by the visual artist Neil Beloufa at the After 8 storefront via @after.8.books on Instagram.

Along an unassuming street in Strasbourg St. Denis quartier is a bookstore that gently calls your attention with its simple sign: "BOOKS." Under that, in smaller text: "After 8." Upon entering the store, one finds a plethora of novels, essay collections, magazines, zines and other types of contemporary publications, including the store's own published books done in collaboration with up-and-coming writers and artists.

After 8 Books was initially part of an artists' space called castillo/corrales nearly a decade ago, starting out as a part of their exhibitions. Eventually the team, which included Antonia Carrara, Benjamin Thorel, Théo Robine Langlois and Marco Caroti, wanted to re-launch it as a proper bookstore offering publications that weren't readily available in Paris. "Most of the books we have come from abroad because that was the idea, to make available things that were not yet in the city," shares co-founder Antonia Carrara during a chat one morning.

Their carefully curated selection is a product of working with distributors both large and small from all around the world. As a publisher, they work with promising writers

and artists, creating well-thought-out publications that highlight their work in the best way. "Each project is different. Some are printed on rotation, which are those big machines that produce newspapers. Others are more print on demand," Carrara shares, pulling out a recent collaboration with a friend, Piero Heliczer: *Poems & Documents*. "For some of these publications, it's often smaller quantities because it's more of a niche thing. But we know that each book here will find its audience. Everything is hand-picked; it's very personal and we know why each book has made its way here," she adds.

"I don't feel like there is a competition with online content," Carrara answers when asked about the rise of digital publications. "With art books, there is more materiality, more novelty. There is a different attachment to the object. But I think these things can all co-exist together. Publications are a vital element to the arts and culture sector, and as long as each of us is doing what we believe is necessary and addressing the needs of our audience and community, then things kind of arrange themselves," she says with a smile.

OFR



A preview of the latest *Behind The Blinds* magazine cover at OFR via @ofrparis on Instagram.

Passing by Ofr, an independent bookshop, gallery and publishing company located at the heart of the vibrant Le Marais district, one cannot help but flip through the pages of eye-catching magazines and books strategically propped on an outdoor display. Eventually, you are lured inside, where you find stacks of publications on fashion, photography, film, architecture, culture and so on. Even further inside is a gallery, displaying prints and their merchandise when not used for events or to showcase an artist's work. It's easy to get lost in Ofr's world.

Founded in 1996 by brother and sister Alexandre and Marie Thumerelle, Ofr has always been much more than a bookshop. "When you have your own shop, you can arrange everything and create a universe," shares co-founder Alexandre Thumerelle in between bites of his croissant. It is the sunniest Saturday I've seen

in weeks and light is shed on the importance of creating publications of different forms. "It's not a little fight; it's a big fight. It's important for democracy. What we're doing is bringing people to read honest, quality publications. In Paris for example, there used to be only specialized gay bookstores. When we opened 25 years ago, we wanted to bring this to the mainstream, for other communities and racial minorities as well. We chose not to open bookshops in little streets for this very reason," he adds. Since its launch, Ofr has opened and closed around 200 bookshops, from pop-ups to more permanent stores, such as Ofr Seoul. Next on their list? Tokyo.

Towards the end of our conversation, Thumerelle offer this piece of wisdom: "Real ideas, they don't care about the right moment. When there is someone courageous enough to do it, they do it. As we like to say here in Ofr, life is what you make it."

BONJOUR JACOB



The perfect combination at Bonjour Jacob from @bonjourjacob_ on Instagram.

A few streets away from Canal Saint Martin is Bonjour Jacob, a concept store that sells three things: publications, coffee and vinyl records. Walking into the store is a magazine lover's dream — it was the wall of publications, from Magazine B to Apartamento to i-D, that first drew me in. And then to my left: coffee. I was in heaven.

Starting out as an online store during the pandemic, Bonjour Jacob eventually turned into a physical store just last year. Beginning in the digital sphere created a base of loyal customers who would eventually become regulars at their store. Bonjour Jacob's owner, Jacob, shares that the idea stemmed from what he considers a good day. "I was attracted to this idea of a 'slow life,' where you would have a good coffee, good music, and a good magazine or a 'mook' with you," he says. A mook, he explained, is a slower type of publication, somewhere between

a magazine and a book. Browsing through their displays of publications from all around the world, one can't help but wonder — how do they decide which ones to include in the store? Jacob shares that it all boils down to three things: "First, we look at the editorial quality of the publication's content, from the articles to the graphic design to the type of paper used. Next is its intemporalité, or its timelessness. Lastly, we look at its value as an object — how will it be able to take space in someone's home? Will it be a valuable object you can display?"

Bonjour Jacob sees the future of publishing as a dynamic user experience: "We need both digital and physical publications. The paper of tomorrow will have digital versions, yes, but readers should have experiences with physical objects, too. For the best user experience, you will need more than simply digital."

BEAUTY ON THE GO



gloss the record
MARBBIE TAGABUCBA



Lashes by The Secret Lounge (left) and Japanese-style cut and color by Benihana Beauty Hub (right) are some of the home services you can book thanks to Parlon and Grab's partnership.



and Passionails are just some of the celebrity favorites kicking off its Metro Manila operations, with more to come soon.

"We're not just here to create a marketplace or a software. We aim to build an ecosystem and we strongly believe that home service will play a part in the industry's future as we continue

to navigate a post-pandemic life," Parlon CEO Claire Ongcangco says of this launch.

"This partnership strengthens our mission of creating an ecosystem of different everyday essentials easily available to our consumers," says Anton Bautista, head of deliveries for Grab Philippines.

On your Grab app, go to Mart and tap Salon Services to browse a menu complete with prices and descriptions, book and personalize as you wish, choose a time slot at least a day ahead, and keep track of your appointment.

The convenience goes both ways as stylists and beauty technicians will enjoy not only the convenience of the platform but also hassle-free car transport services to and from their

Booking salon and grooming services is now as easy as ordering takeout from your smartphone.

client's houses for every appointment. For everyone's safety, salons and customers are required to be vaccinated.

"We've entered this partnership with both the consumers and the salon industry in mind," Ongcangco explains. "At Parlon, we want to give consumers easily accessible options to book their home service appointments while keeping the comfort of salon owners and staff as well. We're confident that with Grab's strong reputation of delivering safe and convenient rides, our beauty providers won't have to worry about the hassle of traveling with all their tools and equipment."

Visit www.parlon.ph for more information.