

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

STREETS TO SAVOR

One man is transforming an overlooked corner of bohemian Paris into a world-class destination for food and design.

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IF YOU WANDER DOWN Paris's Rue du Vertbois this month you'll find new signs of life hidden behind once-vacant storefronts. A sustainable seafood store designed by Tom Dixon has opened just up the block from a new tapas bar by Jasper Morrison. The nearby Korean street-food restaurant was conceived by Milan-based architect and designer Paola Navone, the butcher shop by her compatriot Michele De Lucchi.

Tucked behind historic facades, an epicurean village is taking shape in the northern Marais, with six spots scheduled to open in April and 40 more on the way. Welcome to La Jeune Rue (the "Young Street"), a food-and-design theme park—and the vision of one man, 42-year-old Cédric Naudon, who has amassed a small fortune in finance and real estate. Two years ago the Parisian launched his first restaurant, *Le Sergent Recruteur*, on the Île Saint-Louis, which was celebrated for its market-driven cuisine by former Michel Bras protégé Antonin Bonnet and its playful interiors. "I became a banker to please my parents," he says. "I'm really a frustrated chef."

Naudon's experiment in urban renewal began with a second restaurant space. He hoped to turn a party venue on the Rue du Vertbois into an Italian eatery designed by Spaniard Patricia Urquiola, but for months the landlord refused to sell. When he finally succumbed, Naudon agreed, on a whim, to also take four vacant spots the landlord owned on the street. He began to imagine bringing back the butchers, bakers and fishmongers who'd once worked there—but in a new way, encouraging Parisians to "consume differently," with ethical sourcing and top-notch design. Naudon, who grew up in an art-filled household—"I've always loved aesthetic things," he says—reached out to designers whose work he adores (and collects). One after the next, they agreed to sign on.

Each new idea inspired another. If there was going to be a fish store, why not an oyster bar, too? So Naudon bought a few more storefronts, and a few more after that. Soon word started to spread of a madman on a buying spree, and new spaces for sale began flooding in. Within the span of six months he bought 45 venues. "I was enjoying myself," he says. "I may have gotten a little carried away."

In January he unveiled the full scope of his scheme for the first time at a press conference in Paris,



announcing a name taken from a poem by Guillaume Apollinaire ("Here's the young street and you're still a baby/Dressed by your mother in blue and white only"). Only then did the two dozen designers involved realize what they'd signed on for. "Everyone was taken by surprise," says Naudon. "They said, 'My god, we are making history.' Nothing was planned. Everything came piece by piece."

Though the last enterprises—a speakeasy by Ingo Maurer, a *creperie* by Studio Job—won't open until the end of the year, he's already at work lining up spaces for another Jeune Rue, set to debut in 2016—though Naudon won't say where yet. "Watch out New York," he teases. "We might be there soon."

LA RUE EST BELLE

The shops of La Jeune Rue combine ethically sourced food with interiors by top designers. 1. Patricia Urquiola's Italian restaurant 2. tapas bar by Jasper Morrison 3. speakeasy by Ingo Maurer 4. Paola Navone's Korean street-food restaurant 5. seafood store by Tom Dixon 6. butcher shop by Michele De Lucchi 7. Studio Job's *creperie*.