



CANAL ST MARTIN

WORDS AND IMAGES: **GEOFF BROKATE**



When you speak to Parisians about Canal St Martin there's a word that is commonly used to describe its newfound trendy status: 'Bobo', which stands for bohemian bourgeois.

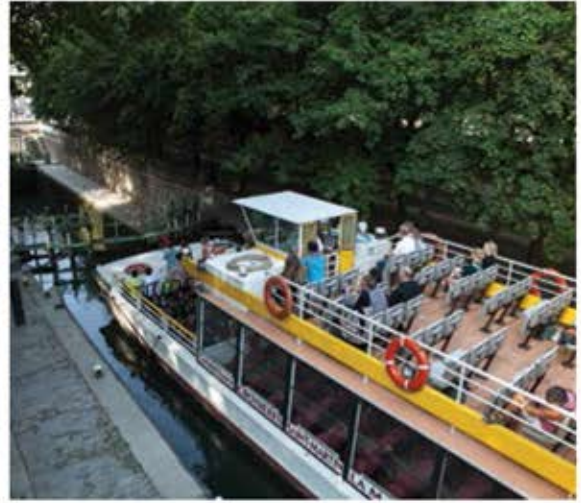
While its original 1802 build was to create an artificial waterway for transporting goods and fresh water, the canal holds a

special place in Parisians' hearts because it has been immortalised in some of the classics of French cinema.

The 1938 love story *Hotel du Nord* was set in a hotel that still exists along the edge of the water, while a more recent homage was in the 2001 film *Amelie*, whose main

character spends her time strolling along the arched iron bridges of the canal. Director Jean-Pierre Jeunet's film heralded a change in public perception towards Canal St Martin, inadvertently ushering in the Bobo revolution. The cafe-lined canal is now the place to be seen.

CANAUXRAMA



If you want to experience life on the canal then you need to take a boat along its waters and watch Paris and its people glide by. The oldest company offering cruises on Canal St Martin is Canauxrama, established in 1983. They've been offering panoramic cruises of Paris' canals and the Seine for 32 years. The cruises along Canal Saint Martin begin at the Arsenal Marina quay on Boulevard de la Bastille and terminate at Basin de la Villette. The boat takes a leisurely pace under 100-year-old trees and wrought iron footbridges that line the canal, but the most enthralling aspect of the journey is when the boat passes through a mysterious tunnel, called the Vault Of The Bastille. Here, experimental films by Japanese artist Keiichi Tahara are eerily projected onto its dark walls.

13, Quai de la Loire | +33 1 42 39 15 00 | canauxrama.com

POTEMKINE



Art-house movies from the French New Wave during the late 1950s and '60s changed the way we view cinema today. This boutique DVD store pays homage to the rich past of Parisian films. The name Potemkine comes from the seminal 1925 silent Russian film *Battleship Potemkin*, but this is no wilting DVD rental store, however. It's bursting at the seams with special editions, rare copies of long forgotten films and modern classics. Aside from the flicks, Potemkine has become a hub for the city's filmmakers. Artists and creative media fashionistas hang out in the cafe to discuss projects, attend the well curated events and listen to special guest speakers. Owner Nils Bouaziz, who opened the store 10 years ago, proudly boasts the likes of director Peter Greenaway as an example of the talent that speak at his events.

30 Rue Beaurepaire | +33 1 40 18 01 81 | potemkine.fr

KANN DESIGN



This concept furniture store sells and displays work by international designers who are inspired by the colours and designs of the 1950s, with a focus on Danish design from that era. All of the pieces are made in Lebanon, where founder Houssan Kanaan originates. There's a strong commitment to the use of traditional methods of handcrafting, and this dedication is symbolised by the front counter of the store originally being his father's old carpentry table. Houssan's wife and artistic director Meghedhi Simonian was born in Iran and has lived in Paris for ten years. She explains that the concept of the store is for the furniture to have a practical purpose, along with simple design and sleek lines. The store has a well-displayed showcase of stylish furniture, lamps and sofas.

28 rue des Vinaigriers | +33 (0)9 53 40 86 98 | kanndesign.com

MACHICADOU



This small, endearing boutique is filled with the passion and commitment that owner Camille Klarfeld has shown in creating her atelier, which is at once a workshop and secondhand clothes store. Machicadou is very much a family affair. Her father built the mezzanine that acts as a space to restore and up-cycle vintage clothes Camille has handpicked. The name is taken from a family joke and is a made-up word that describes the meal made from the leftover food from dinner the night before. What really marks this store out as unique, however, is when exploring the details of its contents. Camille makes every visitor feel a part of her family as she walks you through her array of jewellery, handbags, home decor; children's accessories, designer labels and her unique designs.

165 Quai de Valmy | +33 1 44 72 04 07 | machicadou.blogspot.com

ARTAZART



Labelled as a design bookstore, Artazart has the visual impact of an art gallery and museum of creative objects from the past and future. Since 2000 its founders Carl Huguenin and Jérôme Fournel have dedicated their store to the celebration of the image in all its forms. Their hand-selected collection of photography, painting, graphic design, children's books and magazines is visited by design professionals from all over the city. Listed in the *Huffington Post* top 10 art and design bookstores around the world, Artazart's bright red shop front can't be missed as you walk along the canal path. Aside from art and books, the store is the perfect place to pick up unique creative objects like pin-hole cameras, cyanotype photography kits, bicycle accessories and hard to find art supplies.

83 Quai de Valmy | +33 1 40 40 24 00 | artazart-paris.fr

ANTOINE ET LILI



As you walk along the canal you'll come across a colourful collection of storefronts, with baby pink, sunshine yellow and apple green beckoning you inside. You have arrived at the neighbourhood's longest running boutique, Antoine et Lili. Originally opened in Montmartre in 1998, it has since expanded, now with 17 stores all over the country. Established by Alexandre Gattegno and Martine Sénac, it's a woman's fashion boutique focused on the chic Bobo style that typifies the area. The designs are created in-house and are inspired by Martine's world travels, with each season focusing on a new influence. The strip of stores is unique as it features one very special offering, which has adult designs in children's sizes, along with a boutique accessories store stocking original items from around the world.

95 quai de Valmy | +33 1 40 37 41 55 | antoineetlili.com

HOTEL DU NORD



This hotel is a classic icon of Parisian history. Built in 1912, it consisted of 40 rooms that were home to the workers, sailors and migrants who worked on the canal during its industrial period. In 1938 a film was released with the same name and it's now a bar, bistro and popular stop for people wanting to experience a piece of cinematic history. It has narrowly escaped being knocked down on many occasions but most famously in the early '80s. The building had fallen into disrepair and was about to be demolished by developers, but outraged locals protested and camped out at the front of the hotel. In 1989 it received heritage status and Parisians celebrated their victory. It was eventually restored in the image of the original movie.

102 Quai de Jemmapes | +33 1 40 40 78 78 | hoteldunord.org

LE COMPTOIR GENERAL



Hidden away down an unassuming alleyway, you'll eventually find the best kept secret in Canal St Martin. As you walk into this building it isn't clear if you're entering an old Grand Hotel or an exclusive club. The decor is the result of a collaboration between artists, gardeners, set designers and visionaries who have created a menagerie of eclectic objects around what at first appears to be a cafe and bar. Dedicated to the exotic, with a focus on items and styles from Africa, this live-in museum is also a hair salon, travel agent, clothes store, a music label, greenhouse and photo studio, as well as occasional venue for cinema and guest events, and offers the most undiluted vision of Canal St Martin's Bobo vibe.

80 Quai de Jemmapes | +33 1 44 88 24 48 | lecomptoirgeneral.com