



Off Vendôme. Photo courtesy of the gallery.

Off the Beaten Path

A new must-know gallery arrives in Chelsea.

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When Matt Moravec opened the original [Off Vendôme](#) gallery in Dusseldorf, Germany, in 2013, he named it for someplace more than 300 miles away—the Place Vendôme in Paris—because, he says, the location and spirit of the space felt equally removed from the art world’s beaten path. In Dusseldorf, where Moravec moved from New York to work for the artist Christopher Williams, the young gallerist showed an impressive list of artists—including Margaret Lee, Emily Sundblad, Jacob Kassay, and Ian Cheng—at Off Vendôme. Now he brings a new location of the gallery even further

from Paris, to a corner of 23rd Street, a few blocks away from New York's main art thoroughfare—closer to the throbbing commercial heart of the scene than its predecessor, but still not quite in it. (The gallery officially opens tonight with a joint show by Lena Henke and Max Brand.)

It's a homecoming for Moravec, who got his start co-running West Street, a bedroom gallery of sorts in the West Village, with the curator Alex Gartenfeld from 2010 to 2012. On the day of a last-minute pre-opening performance by Dean Blunt at his new gallery two weeks ago, Moravec was overseeing final touches on the space, which still had scaffolding and smelled of fresh paint. When I asked about Blunt's plans for the show, Moravec responded, with no apparent anxiety, "I have no idea what Dean is going to do." By that evening, after e-mail invites had gone out indicating Blunt would perform a piece called *War Report*, the packed gallery was masked by thick white fog, as crashes boomed from huge speakers every few seconds. "How far back does this room go?!" one confused guest asked. "A mile!" said a voice, somewhere. Blunt appeared and delivered a monologue: "There are plenty of you here, but there's only a few concerned with upward mobility. You guys are beginners now, so you're idealists, but you don't know about where art and corporate interests meet yet." But it looks like Moravec might be getting closer.