

The not-only-edgy East



Why London's hippest gallery scene is one to stand by

For those who are new to the UK and perhaps equally new to the art world, the East London gallery scene may be an unfamiliar realm, a distant zone filled with visions of modish young gallerists and ephemeral project spaces. But the vibrant boroughs which make up the right side of the map are in fact home to numerous galleries that prove there are serious things happening in spaces beyond the shiny streets of Mayfair.

"I think it would be interesting to break down this stereotype that East London is edgy, because actually now most of the galleries here are really established" says Nora Heidorn, assistant director of The Approach gallery, which is one of the five spaces that are featured in this article. "A lot of that is changing," she says in response to the old typecasts, and "now it's not off the beaten track any more."

Here we have compiled a brief list of our top spots that are well worth a visit and will positively help to break down any outdated assumptions about the East London gallery scene.

Paintings by Michael Chance, 2016, courtesy of Mercer Chance Gallery

Parasol unit

Tucked away on a quiet street near the Regents Canal, the Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art is a gem in the Shoreditch art scene. Perhaps less widely known than its neighbor, Victoria Miro gallery, Parasol unit deserves no less recognition. The two galleries share walls within an airy building on Wharf Road, and while they also share a tranquil back garden with rotating installations of sculptures and large-scale works, the key attribute that sets Parasol unit apart is its central philosophy as a not-for-profit institution.

As a nationally registered charity, Parasol unit is one of the few independent galleries in East London that operates purely for public benefit. With a solid programme of only four shows a year, the foundation is able to deeply develop each of its exhibitions through a total



commitment to artists and their creative endeavors. This altruistic attitude results in challenging and thought-provoking exhibitions, with recent shows including reputable names such as Robert Therrien, Rana Begum, and Julian Charrière.

The foundation's recently opened restaurant, Sardine – adjacent to the gallery and accessible by a semi-secret side door within the ground floor space also presents the perfect spot for an après-art cocktail.

Parasol unit will be showing *Elger Esser* from 29th March to 21st May (Preview 28th March).

14 Wharf Road, N1 7RW
<http://parasol-unit.org>

Mercer Chance

Mercer Chance gallery borrows its name from founders Rachel Mercer and Michael Chance, two young artists who met while studying at the Royal Drawing School in Shoreditch. Together the pair established the gallery on Hoxton Street in 2014 to function both as a platform for promoting emerging artists, and as a way in which to develop their own practices through close dialogue with fellow painters. The duo emphasise the importance of cooperation in working with artists to select and curate each



'Facade on Hoxton Street, 2016' courtesy of Mercer Chance Gallery

show, and as a result, host a frequent schedule of short exhibitions at the gallery. This allows "the opportunity of a solo show to as many people as possible" says Mercer. Shows are varied in context, but the artists featured generally have a practice rooted in drawing and painting, thereby exploring the potential of image-making in contemporary times.

Outside of regular exhibition hours, Mercer and Chance use the gallery space as a studio, creating a unique "opportunity for locals and visitors to see the artistic process in action and watch [as] paintings slowly change and develop each time they pass the window."

Mercer Chance will be showing *Julie Held: Recent drawings from 6th - 9th April*, and *Aude Herail Jager: Sentinels*, from 18th–21st May.

253 Hoxton Street, N1 5LG
www.mercerchance.co.uk

Limoncello

Encapsulating the constant change and evolution of East London's gallery scene is Limoncello, which has recently relocated from its former spot on Kingsland Road to a space in the Huntingdon building on Ebor Street, now sharing an address with the equally hip Kinman Gallery and Emalin. This move marks the gallery's fourth space in its nine years of operation, a development that founder and director Rebecca May Marston contends is a positive one. "It's good to move to different spaces to offer the artists [new] architectures to work

'Harde' sculpture by Kate Owens, 2014
courtesy of Limoncello



within for their exhibitions." Being just steps away from Shoreditch High Street station and the bustle of Redchurch Street's shops and restaurants has its benefits as well. "The energy is excellent" says May Marston, "this move has been a great one."

This March, Limoncello will be presenting an exhibition by *Kate Owens*, a graduate of the Royal College of Art, whose practice is processually-based, thus playfully exposing the mechanisms of the making of the work as part of the work itself.

Unit 5, Huntingdon Industrial Estate, Ebor Street, E1 6JU
www.limoncellogallery.co.uk

SPACE

Established in 1968, SPACE is a long-standing East London organisation which spans across seven boroughs and runs a variety of artist-supporting initiatives including exhibitions, residencies and studio programmes. What is particularly special about the organisation is that it not only champions emerging and experimental practices, but also encourages a continuous exchange between the gallery and its surrounding Hackney community. SPACE works closely with four artists each year to commission new works that aim to consider the historical and current context of its neighborhood. Beyond a solo presentation within the gallery, each project also includes off-site interventions such as walking tours, workshops, learning activities for local schools and outdoor performances. These engaging practices offer a unique opportunity for encounters between the artist, the site and those who visit the works.

Most of SPACE's activity is programmed at its Mare Street headquarters, just around the corner from the base of London Fields park and Broadway Market, which also make it a perennial favourite for a Saturday afternoon stroll.

Laura Wilson 'Folds' courtesy of SPACE



SPACE is currently showing the ongoing performative sculpture work, *Laura Wilson: Folds*, through 28th March.

131 Mare St, E8 3RH
www.spacestudios.org.uk

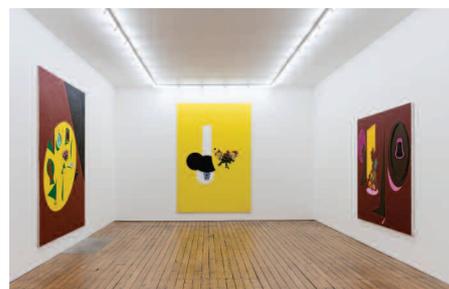
The Approach

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, The Approach gallery was first started as a non-commercial project space, exhibiting works by friends of founder Jake Miller. Now, two decades later, times have changed as the internationally recognised gallery represents more artists than its age. "We do pick up young artists, and some people really like the gallery for this 'on the pulse' feeling, [but] it was different to when you open a gallery now... it was a much smaller field," says Heidorn of the evolving scene.

Not by coincidence, the gallery sits above the same-named Approach Tavern, and many patrons find this feature to be one of the highlights of their visits. "The pub is really integral to the gallery" says Heidorn. "We don't have a lot of signage outside—it is hard to find—but it is really nice to go and have a Sunday roast and then see the show. It's very London."

The Approach will be showing a solo exhibition of new paintings by *Helene Appel* through 26th March, followed by a group show curated by Heidorn, from 6th April to 14th May.

1st Floor, 47 Approach Road, E2 9LY
<https://theapproach.co.uk>



Interior shot with paintings by Patrick Caulfield, 'Stillness and Drama', 2016, courtesy of The Approach, London Credit: Plastiques photography

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