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[The collective gallery](#)

[Hayet Moutfi](#) | Jul 07, 2010 | [Comments 0](#)

Chinatown is known for its secret treasures, and the fifth floor of 173-171 Canal Street is a true surprise. The Collective Gallery is the brainchild of Virginie Sommet, a ground-breaking French artist who has drawn praise from all over the world. The space, founded in 2007, features the surprising works of eleven artists, many of them from the French-speaking world.

Why did you start the Collective Gallery?

I'm an artist, and I know how difficult it is to find a gallery to showcase work. I wanted to create a space that would allow people to share and exchange ideas. The Collective currently has eleven artists, and we put together shows to help out each other.

What is unique about the gallery? It's run by artists, political artists. The shows at the Collective are about the topics of minority and majority, consumerism, nature, rights, gender, racism, and post-colonialism around the world. Our artists are from all over: Egypt, Switzerland, the United States, France, Brazil, Poland, Canada, Norway, and Germany. When we find other artists who share our aesthetic direction we give them a show, and perhaps later invite them to be part of the Collective. Our artists use a variety of media: photography, installations, collage, digital art, drawings, video, and performance.

What is the most exciting thing about having your own gallery?

I can't say I have my own gallery because this is really a collective. Our collective works how we want it to work, that means that we make our own rules. Some collectives create pieces together, but we don't but we do organize exhibits together because we know that our work is connected by the same artistic purposes. Some artists also have solo shows, but when and how often depends on the evolution of their work. We are all part-owners when there is an art fair. 10% of every sale goes back to the Collective Gallery to help with the next fair.

What do you think is Chinatown's best-kept secret?

If I want to keep it a secret, I won't tell you, Darling! But there are some very nice underground bars in Chinatown that you would never expect to find in small streets!

The Collective Gallery

The Collective Gallery's exhibition program is available upon request.

Address :

173-171 Canal street #5 floor, Manhattan

J, M, Z to Canal St or B, D to Grand St

(646) 245-6072

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Article by Hayet Moutfi

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