

When the Picardo sisters Audrey (33) and Anne-Cécile (29) suddenly found themselves both laid off and unemployed in early 2018, they were somewhat relieved. Their twenties had been enriching but exhausting, both experiencing the success, personal development and burn out of corporate careers in various fashion-related startups and advertising conglomerates. Skyping between their Paris and Berlin homes, they wondered, could they finally stop “selling bullshit to people” and create their own business? Armed with time, savings, a redundancy payout and knowledge in business, marketing and fashion, they decided to take the plunge.

Two and a half years and Anne-Cécile’s move to Berlin later (they’re flatmates now too), the Picardos opened the doors to their new Sredzkistraße boutique at the end of November, a mere 9000 kilometres from the sleepy French colony island of La Réunion where they grew up. The concept behind P-Berg’s newest concept store? *Tout ce qui est Français* (All things French). French food, French fashion, French art. Conjuring up clichés in your mind? La Case Paulette indeed offers the famous ancestral striped *Marinière* long-sleeved sailor pullovers, authentically knitted in Brittany by La Touche Francaise and the very last to still be produced in France today. *Naturellement*, they’ll also soon stock be-

La Case Paulette

Grand-sisters’ style

rets. Fresh croissants and other pastries are delivered daily – from the French embassy’s (secret) supplier, no less – and there’s filter coffee to sip while browsing contemporary photography, paintings and illustrations from French artists.

But the sisters are striving for more here than stereotypes. As two French gals from an Indian Ocean isle know well, “France is not only Paris!” Their store celebrates a bright, colourful artistic expression they felt Berlin’s fashion retail scene was lacking, with plans in motion to collaborate with a number of “underdog” designers from across the French diaspora. This season sees bright yellow unisex trench coats lined in fuchsia and mint, and bold African Ankara-print floral jumpsuits in gold and azure from streetwear brand A.B.P.C.S.M. Meanwhile, basket woven lampshades from French Berlin brand Ambidextre will soon be joined by handmade confiture and vegan chilli paste delicacies from La Réunion brand, Ho’op.

Predictably, having shared an upbringing with your business partner brings its challenges. Anne-Cécile admits to bossiness and sometimes making decisions too quickly; Audrey procrastinates until the last minute. This inevitably leads to

some big arguments in their Neukölln flat, which, with time, they always manage to rise above. “We’re getting better but we need to improve our communication skills.” But being so close also its has benefits – they hold each other accountable, help one another grow as entrepreneurs, and have a shoulder to cry on when things go wrong – “It’s a lot of sweat and tears!” admits Anne-Cécile.

The store’s name pays tribute the sisters’ grandmother, who never ceases to inspire them. A single mother, Paulette raised four sons while being a successful entrepreneur. She built the girls’ childhood home with her own hands, worked hard work to give them the best education, and showed what it really takes to make it as a black woman in a white man’s world. Without her there would be no La Case Paulette. “Seriously!” declares Anne-Cécile, “Everyday I’m calling my Grandma for one hour for business advice... she’s our role model.” —

Dominic Bruce-Radcliffe

La Case Paulette Sredzkistr. 52, Prenzlauer Berg, Tue-Sat 11:00-20:00



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