

Maison Dorée
PARIS

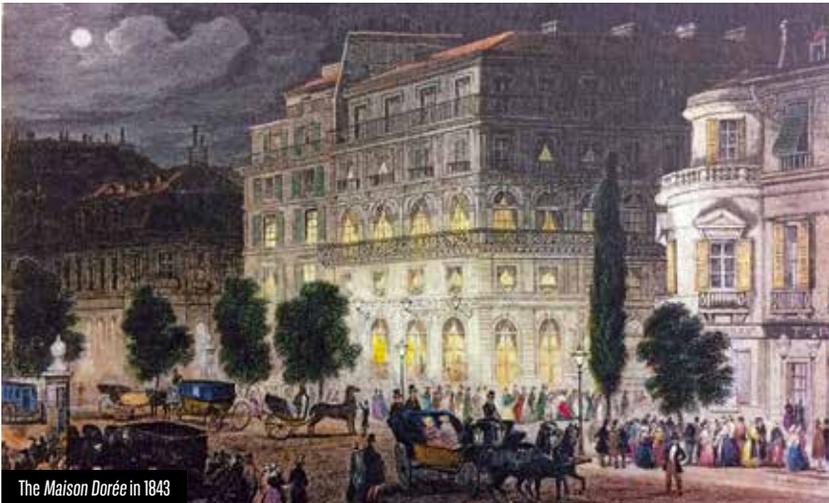


BNP PARIBAS

The bank for a changing world

MAISON DORÉE

To serve head office needs, BNP, headquartered at adjoining 16, *boulevard des Italiens* and 1, *boulevard Haussmann*, acquired in 1974 the block stretching between the *rue Taitbout* and the *rue Laffitte*, where stands the iconic *Maison Dorée*. After major renovation works were completed in 1976 by architect Pierre Dufau, the International Department, the Treasury division, the Forex dealing room and the merchant bank BANEXI moved into the rejuvenated building. While architectural heritage preservation and banking requirement relevancy challenged thoroughly, the design was amended several times until it became a genuine façadism project. Hence not only does the façade overlooking the boulevard retain its exquisite neo-Renaissance decor, but also extend by two identical bays through the *rue Taitbout*. At the back of the building, glass walls with aluminium joinery make up a huge contemporary insert. The upper floor houses the function rooms and a roof garden. Dark tinted panes both enhance the stone façade and increase the appearance size.



The *Maison Dorée* in 1843

MAISON DORÉE



The *Maison Dorée* and BNP headquarters in 1989

Initially, this marshy plot was part of the **farming estate La Grange Batelière** when the **French financier Crozat**, the richest Frenchman and a close friend of king Louis XIV, bought it to set up a kitchen garden for his mansion located on the other side between the *rue de Richelieu* and the *boulevard des Italiens*. In 1750, the property came under new ownership after the **Duke of Choiseul-Stainville**,

a French diplomat, married his grand-daughter Louise-Honorine Crozat.

The *boulevard des Italiens* development started when the **streets *rue Laffitte* and *rue Taitbout* were opened between 1768 and 1775**. Soon the gardens were dismantled and the mansions demolished alike the Crozat-Choiseul mansion, which gave space for the new **Opéra-Comique, inaugurated in 1783**.

MAISON DORÉE



A sculptor reproduces the original frieze for the new bays



A metal chiseller reproduces the original balcony motif for the new bays

The gastronomic history of the building harks back to **1798**, when **Neapolitan ice-cream maker Velloni** moved in. But **in 1804**, his assistant **Tortoni** took over the business while the **Café Hardy** opened next door at the corner of the *rue Laffitte*. The two neighbouring cafés were to liven up Parisian life for almost a century. Likewise they played host to the fashionable smart set as well as the intellectual crowd of writers, artists and politicians. They were also a popular haunt for financiers with stockbrokers and kerb traders meeting daily. The nearby Opéra-Comique and Opéra Le Peletier (1821-1873) attendance

ensured a lively and lighthearted atmosphere until late at night.

The Café Hardy famously created the *déjeuner à la fourchette* – an early lunch of fairly substantial ingredients –, but was sold a small fortune **in 1836 to the Hamel brothers**, owners of the Grand Véfour restaurant at the *Palais-Royal*, who went bankrupt rapidly. After it was acquired by contractor **Victor Lemaire**, manager of the *Cité des Italiens* development with architect **Léopold Kauffmann**, the edifice was turned into a **glamorous neo-Renaissance property in 1839**. The **ornamentalist sculptors**

MAISON DORÉE



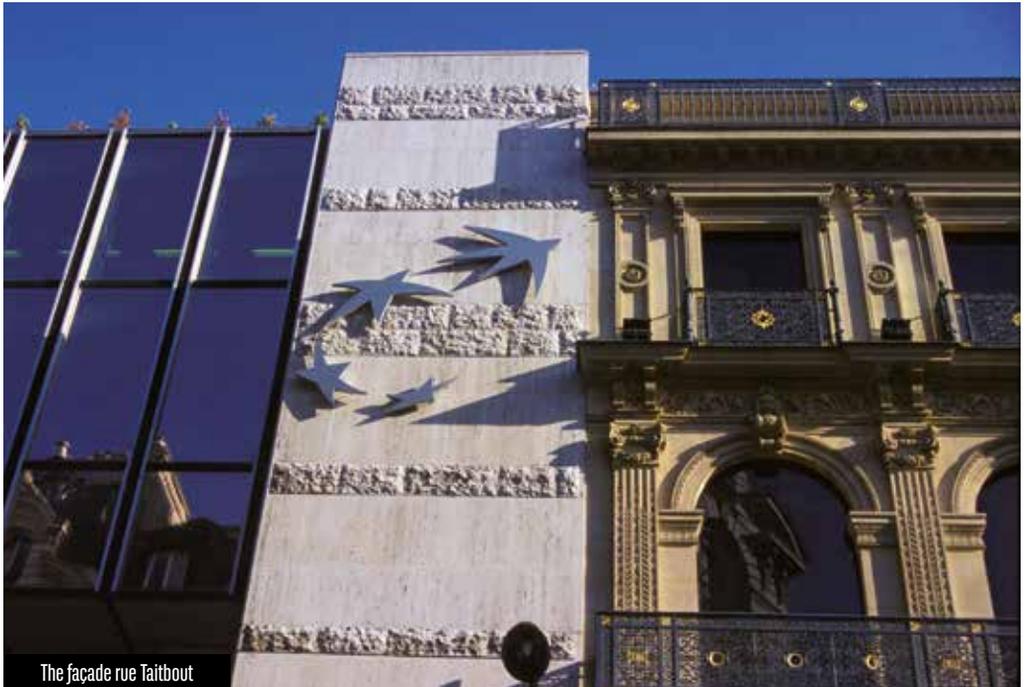
Auguste-Jean-Baptiste Lechesne, Jean-Baptiste-Jules Klagmann, and Gabriel-Joseph Garraud contributed on the magnificent decor. Lechesne and Pierre-Louis Rouillard are thought to have carved the stunning stone frieze depicting a hunting scene swarming with animals and foliage, that runs along the façade above

the ground floor. Val d'Osne foundry owner Jean-Pierre Victor André's Parisian ironwork shop supplied the balconies adorned with dazzling gold motifs that bestowed forever its name to the building. Thus when Louis Verdier opened his *Restaurant de la Cité* in 1841, the name was quickly shelved and abandoned.

MAISON DORÉE

During the Second Empire, the *Maison Dorée* was one of the best restaurant in Paris. Its layout boasted two separate areas, the one overlooking the boulevard dedicated to the general public whereas the one fronting the *rue Laffitte* was designed for the regular VIPs with opulent secluded parlours, which number 6

was the most popular. The two-storey wine cellar was its greatest treasure and prominent **Casimir Moisson** its visionary chef cooking standout dishes. Besides the world-famous Crayfish Timbale Sauce Nantua, he created the **Tournedos Rossini** to honour one of his regular customer, Italian composer Gioachino Rossini.

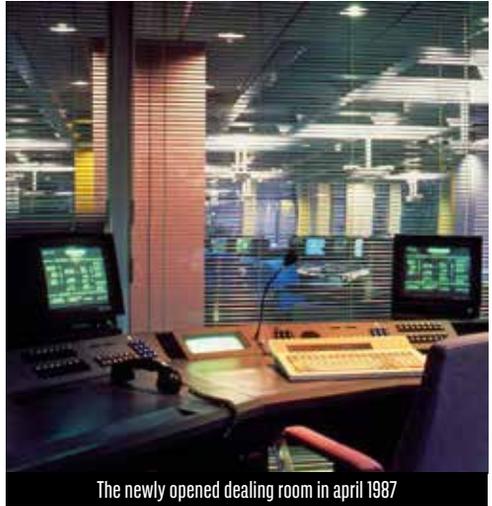


MAISON DORÉE

Throughout the era, French novelists gave detailed account of dinners experienced by their characters, alike **Honoré de Balzac** with Lucien de Rubempré. **Marcel Proust**, in “In search of Lost Time” – *À la recherche du temps perdu* – relates how Swann fell deeply in love with Odette while fetching her at the *Maison Dorée* but could not see her anywhere.

After the Opéra Le Peletier burnt down (1873) and the Opéra Garnier started out (1875), customers were less frequent as taste and lifestyle changed. **Press publications** alike the Froment-Meurice brothers’ *L’Événement*, *La Revue Blanche* or even Alexandre Dumas’s *Mousquetaire* rented upper floors offices but none lasted more than a few years on.

While Tortoni seemed to secure its past glory as it has become the inescapable meeting place for **enthusiast newcomers to both horse racing and sport activities**, the *Maison Dorée* tried to look at other alternatives such as letting spaces to the art world. Hence **in 1886 it was the seat of the 8th and last Impressionist exhibition** before the artists were about to part to evolve into new academic trends. The patrons of Tortoni disgruntledly shouted heated insults at the exhibitors and yet they were immortalised in one of **Edouard Manet**’s masterpieces! Then **in 1895, Siegfried Bing, an art dealer** of German ancestry, moved in the inner courtyard his business called **L’Art Nouveau**, setting a new decorative style bearing its name.



The newly opened dealing room in april 1987

The start of the 20th century saw the closure of both institutions. A number of attempts were subsequently made to bring in new businesses alike a post office (1909), a cheap brasserie and retail shops. After they all failed, the block suffered a wear and tear time until **its purchase by BNP in 1974**.

Today, the premises, wholly dubbed *Maison Dorée*, serve as offices for the Corporate and Institutional Banking activities with a dealing room and an auditorium.



BNP PARIBAS

The bank for a changing world