

## Fountains of yesterday and today

### FROM ARTS-ET-MÉTIERES TO PLACE DU CHÂTELET

Under the Old Regime, public fountains were generally little more than a thin stream of water springing forth from the mouth of a nymph or faun, as exemplified by the fountains spread across the Marais area. The first Parisian fountains in fact appeared more out of necessity than a desire for aesthetic enjoyment. At the turn of the 15th century, the capital had 17 public fountains, all located in the 4 first arrondissements of Paris. A centre of everyday life, the fountains provided precious water, a symbol of life and renewal, and were generally inhabited by a group of benevolent deities associated with water, nature and opulence (tritons, nymphs, fauns, bacchantes and oreads).

The fountains on this trail have undergone extensive redevelopment and some of them have been taken down and put up again as a result of development and sanitation projects in the centre of Paris, like the Maubué Fountain, the Innocents Fountain.

From the 19th century onwards, when the capital secured an abundant water supply, the many aqueducts and pipes made it possible to create water features that made use of the new applied arts techniques.

The fountains were used by the various political regimes to celebrate victories, like the Palmier Fountain or assert their splendour, like the Arts-et-Métiers Fountain. Since the end of the 1970's, the City of Paris has implemented a policy of restoring water to its fountains and promoting its fountain heritage. This has included launching an art competition to decorate public its public buildings, involving the Stravinsky Fountain and the Saint-Merri Fountain.

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(3rd) Rue du Verbois - Rue Saint-Martin  
Verbois Fountain

This was built in 1712 by Pierre Bullet, who was responsible for the plans to modify the buildings at Saint-Martin-des-Champs, involving one of the towers of the priory's fortified enclosure. In 1882, when the tower and fountain were threatened with destruction, Victor Hugo defended them, criticising the architect who was responsible for the work: "Demolish the architect, not the tower. The tower should stand; the architect should fall. [...] All the old remains of Paris must now be conserved. Paris is the city of the past. Why? Because it is the city of the future."

The tower and fountain were therefore preserved, moved and returned to their current location.

The fountain has a base where the water springs forth through a bronze mascarón (a face designed to ward off evil spirits) with the head of a mythological animal. Two Doric pilasters with so-called "vermiculated" bosses and bosses with "congelations", crowned by a cornice with an architrave and a type of acroterion bearing a winged cartridge, adorn the central part of the edifice.



(3rd) Square Chautemps

### Arts et Métiers Fountain

Built in 1860 by Gabriel Davioud, the two buildings of the Arts et Métiers Fountain are made up of an oblong main basin, ending in two semi-circular parts and surrounded by a manicured lawn. Two bronze figures crouch over a stone base that forms a unit with the foot of the Jura stone basin.

The two figures on the fountain closest to the Lyrical Theatre, sculpted by Auguste Ottin, represent Mercury and Music. The two figures on the other fountain represent Agriculture and Labour, and were produced by Charles Gumery.

The water escapes from the foot of the two basins through two lions' heads, and from the middle of the basins through two vertical water jets.



(3rd) Rue des Haudriettes - Rue des Archives

### Haudriettes Fountain

Built in 1638, the Haudriettes Fountain was rebuilt in 1760 following drawings by Pierre-Louis Moreaux-Desproux.

According to the legend, a 12th-century draper named Haudry left for the crusades and was declared dead. His loyal wife joined a convent. But Haudry returned. The Church, moved by this example of virtue, relieved the nun of her vows. The Haudriettes Fountain was redeveloped in the 18th century and is the only remaining trace of the Hospital that Haudry donated to thank the Church. The naiad sculpted in the die on the pedestal, seen from behind and resting on an urn, is by Pierre-Philippe Mignot (1715-1770).



(4th) Square Langlois

### Guillemites Fountain

The Guillemites Fountain went through various stages of construction. After it was erected at the request of the monks, in 1655 the municipal magistrates' assembly of the City of Paris decided to place a tap in the spy hole on the external abbey wall.

Jean Beausire then supplied the drawing for the new fountain in 1719. After several threats to destroy the fountain, which came to nothing thanks to the frequent changes of regime that took place in the 19th century, the fountain was protected from a new project to widen Rue des Blancs-Manteaux in 1930 thanks to the actions

of the Commission du Vieux Paris (Commission of Old Paris). It was then moved to the Square des Blancs-Manteaux, where it stands against the wall of the church.



(4th) 10, rue des Hospitalières Saint-Gervais

### Têtes de boeuf Fountain or Blancs-Manteaux Fountain

The two bronze bulls' heads were made in 1819 by Edmée Gaulle. They are a reminder of the original purpose of the pavilion, which was incorporated into the adjoining Blancs-Manteaux Market in 1823. Now converted into a community school, the pavilion used to specialise in the meat trade. The butchers' work is glorified by the antique reference of the two bull heads decorated for sacrifice. The two fountains are made up of a projecting table in the form of a stele, topped with a small triangular pediment. Originally, the water came out of the muzzles in the bulls' heads, which are located in the tympanums of the pediments, in two basins that have since been removed.



(3rd) 48, rue de Sévigné

### Charité Fountain

The Charité Fountain was demolished in 1860. The only reminder of this fountain is the low relief by the sculptor Fortin. It belongs to the Carnavalet Museum, which had it sealed into the wall at 48, rue de Sévigné. The low relief shows a young woman standing, wearing an antique-style veil with a baby at her breast, surrounded by three older children. At the bottom, an urn where the water would have come out provides a reminder of the original purpose of the edifice.



(4th) Impasse de la Poissonnerie

### Jarente Fountain or Poissonnerie Fountain

This fountain was built in 1783 by Caron, architect of Sainte-Catherine Market, in an cul-de-sac where the fish market was held. The market was built on a site donated by the Abbot of Jarente, to open up a street that a cart could pass through (Rue de Jarente).

It includes a protruding main motif in between two Doric pilasters with bosses that support an entablature with a triangular pediment, which has a tympanum sculpted with a vase surrounded by reeds. There is also a rectangular niche decorated with a low relief showing a fasces (a bundle of sticks) crowned with oak leaves, accompanied by two dolphins entwined with horns of plenty. The fountain stands in between two doors, whose lintels are sculpted with rosettes formed of shells and aquatic plants.



(4th) Place Igor Stravinsky

### Stravinsky Fountain

Presented as the biggest fountain ever built from the Trocadéro basins in 1937, from the time of its inauguration in 1983 the Stravinsky Fountain was distinguished by the clear aim of its commissioners and designers, Jean

Tinguely and Niki de Saint-Phalle, to combine artistic creation and the public nature of the street. A general theme, the "Rites of Spring" by Igor Stravinsky, was selected for the design of this shallow rectangular basin inhabited by sixteen animated sculptures, engaged in a truly theatrical representation like so many artists in a circus ring. Life, a sort of horn of plenty that alone embodies the general theme, is placed at the centre of the basin. A host of other compositions gravitate around it, including the Key of G, a homage to music, and Death, a skeleton whose metal limbs animate a white skull.



(4th) Rue Saint-Martin - Rue de Venise

### Maubuée Fountain

The Maubuée Fountain is one of the oldest fountains in Paris, and is mentioned in the letters of patent dated 9 October 1392, in which Charles VI tried to put an end to the special concessions that had been granted or usurped on the waterways of Paris. The name "Mau buée", meaning "bad vapours" or "bad washing", is said to have been given to this fountain because of the poor quality of the water that came from the Belleville springs. However, the fountain that we can admire today was built by Jean Beausire and his son, Jean-Baptiste Augustin, in 1733.

It was then dismantled in 1937 and moved to its present location. The fountain is decorated with an 18th-century low relief showing a rocaille vase surrounded by reeds and marine plants.



(1th) Place Joachim du Bellay

### Innocents Fountain

This fountain originally stood at the corner of Rue Saint-Denis and Rue aux Fers (currently Rue Berger).

It was then erected, or rather restored and decorated, in 1551, under the reign of Henry II, by Pierre Lescot and Jean Goujon.

The three façades of the fountain were made up of Corinthian arches in between pilasters, against which stood a nymph. This was the first time that a public fountain had taken on a real architectural dimension in Paris. At the request of Quatremère de Quincy, the fountain was moved to the square which was converted into a market when Saints-Innocents Church was destroyed and the bones were transferred from the cemetery to the Catacombs.

Four architects, assisted by the sculptor Antoine Pajou, were in charge of creating a fourth side for the fountain, taking inspiration from Goujon.

When the market moved to the Halles de Baltard (Baltard Covered Market) in 1856-1858, Davioud had the fountain moved by a few metres to adorn the Square des Innocents. The sarcophagus and lions were replaced by several levels of basins and some sculptures that had been placed at the Louvre for conservation.



(1st) Place du Châtelet

### Victoire Fountain or Palmier Fountain

Built in 1806-1808 on the site of the Grand Châtelet fortress by François-Jean Bralle, architect, and Louis-Simon Boizot, sculptor, the column shows the names of Napoleon's victories. On top is a winged Victory made of gilded bronze, standing on a globe and holding a laurel crown in each hand. The trunk also has palm tree branches.

The fountain was then transformed and elevated by Davioud in 1858: he added an elevation consisting of two successive basins guarded by four sphinxes designed by Jacquemart, with water coming out of their mouths. When the fountain was restored in 1896-1901, the Victory was transferred to the Carnavalet Museum and replaced by a gilded copy.

Marché des Blancs-Manteaux Fountain



Stravinsky Fountain



Arts-et-Métiers Fountain



Throughout the capital, the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Paris maintains some six hundred commemorative monuments and statues which form part of the municipal heritage. These works, most of which date from the beginning of the Third Republic, are the result of an active policy of artistic commissions intended to decorate the squares and streets, in accordance with the wishes of the elected officials of Paris. They include some of the masterpieces of French sculpture: The Fountain of the Four Continents by Carpeaux and The Triumph of the Republic by Dalou.

The 20th century was for a long time more cautious in this respect, but over the last twenty years or so, the City of Paris has revived the tradition of commissioning public art. In 2004, it set up the Art Committee in the City, a consultative committee of elected officials and experts to provide an opinion on policy in this area. Together with this Committee, the City of Paris commissioned 35 permanent or temporary public works between 2004 and 2008.

From Exercise Tower by Wang Du (Paris 17th) to the Dance of the Emerging Fountain by Chen Zhen (Paris 13th) and the Forest of Candelabras by the Berlin collective Inges Idee (Paris 19th), all these works can be discovered throughout Paris.