

RESTORATION OF A FOUNTAIN MONUMENT

THE BUFFET D'EAU AT THE GRAND TRIANON - UNTIL SPRING 2023

Versailles, 21 February 2022
Press Release

In January 2022, the Palace of Versailles launched ambitious works to restore the Buffet d'Eau in the Grand Trianon's gardens thanks to the Fondation Bru. This little-known fountain features spectacular water effects, and is set to be restored to its former glory. Due to run for eighteen months, the works will draw on a range of different fields of expertise to bring the Grand Trianon gardens' water features back to life.



The Buffet d'Eau prior to restoration © Palace of Versailles/T. Garnier

THE BUFFET D'EAU: A TRUE MASTERPIECE

Nestled in the Grand Trianon's gardens, the Buffet d'Eau is an Italian-inspired fountain monument built by Jules Hardouin-Mansart in 1702, before being altered and tweaked several times on Louis XIV's orders.

Despite a very frontal feel, this majestic monument measures 12 meters deep from the front of the basin to the back of the stonework.

From the moment it was first unveiled, a series of water features cascaded down into the basin, with each different angle creating a wash of water that would then spill down into the row of white marble bowls. Angled jets sprayed out from within the four masks used to adorn the lower section and embody the winds (Boreas, Eurus, Auster, Zephyrus), with the different nuances of marble enhanced by the glistening water.

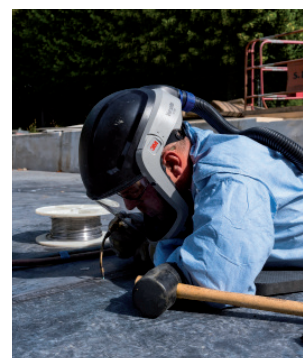
MAJOR RESTORATION WORKS

Restoring the Buffet d'Eau is a flagship heritage project for the Palace of Versailles. The fountain was last restored in 1892, and now bears a number of alterations on the marble, the lead-sculpted figures and decorative pieces, and the functionality of the water effects.

The restoration works will tackle the monument as a whole, repairing the fountain construction and sealing, and refurbishing the sections around the edges of the basin. These works will call for highly skilled and specific expertise in marble-working, fountain-building, welding, and hydraulic engineering.



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Following on from the restoration work on the Trianon gardens' hydraulic system that was carried out from 2019 to 2021 thanks to patronage by the Fondation Bru, this project will bring one of the Trianon gardens' little-known yet spectacular fountain monuments back to life, reinjecting them with all the splendor that Louis XIV had envisioned for his country residence.

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THE FONDATION BRU

The Geneva-based Fondation Bru was set up in tribute to the founders of the Laboratoires UPSA. It encompasses all the patronage initiatives that Doctor Nicole Bru sparked in the past, continuing work on them while simultaneously seeking new ones.

The Fondation Bru sets out to provide long-term support and assistance for projects concerned with education and safeguarding heritage, often becoming involved in the very earliest stages of the projects it backs. Over and above financial support, it strives to play a long-term role in helping projects grow and paving the way for new partnerships.

As the living embodiment of this entrepreneurial spirit and sense of human connection, Doctor Nicole Bru continues to guide the foundation today through the effort and commitment she pours into working for the common good.

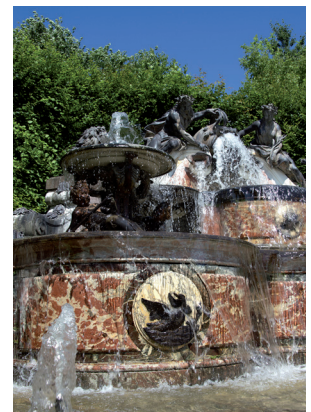
As early as 1993, she set up the UPSA Pain Institute, followed by the Association Docteurs Bru in 1994. Working out of the house in Agen where the company first launched, in 1996 the association opened its Maison d'Accueil Jean Bru, a pilot shelter for young girls who had been subjected to sexual abuse or incest.

The Fondation Bru supports a number of initiatives, including:

- Help setting up China's very first engineering school for French-speakers, the École Centrale de Pékin: the fruit of particularly innovative Chinese/French joint efforts. Engineering students from the first cohort of this École Centrale were awarded their diplomas in January 2012.
- Restoration work on the 17th-century Casino Zane, which went on to house the Fondation Palazzetto Bru Zane – Center of French Romantic Music in 2009. Through its research and publishing activities in addition to its concert seasons, this Venetian foundation works tirelessly to raise the profile of the 19th-century's greatest composers, and to coax once-forgotten works back out into the light.
- Support for the Concert Spirituel (since 1987).



The Grand Trianon and its gardens © Palace of Versailles/T. Garnier



Close-up of the Buffet d'Eau prior to restoration © Palace of Versailles/T. Garnier, D. Saulnier, C. Milet

- Support for the Gilles Caron Foundation with a view to showcasing the artist's body of work and returning it to its rightful place in the history of journalism, art and photography.
- The AMFA, the Association Internationale des Charités, the APREC, a range of different cultural schemes in Geneva, community action and initiatives, work with fencing, museums, and beyond.



The Buffet d'Eau prior to restoration © Palace of Versailles/T. Garnier

The Buffet d'Eau features a basin topped by three staggered marble levels in shades ranging from Languedoc and Campan Royal reds to Carrara white. The fountain is embellished with lead figures that feel particularly refined and would once have been gilded. Neptune and Amphitrite reign over the whole, flanked by two lions as four young tritons cavort beneath the bowls. Bas reliefs depicting sea gods and wreaths decorate the lower levels.



Close-up of the Buffet d'Eau prior to restoration © Palace of Versailles/D. Saulnier



The Grand Trianon and its gardens © Palace of Versailles/T. Garnier

THE GRAND TRIANON AND ITS GARDENS

Located approximately a kilometer and a half away from the Palace of Versailles at the far northern end of the Grand Canal, the Grand Trianon was preceded by a first palace built by Louis Le Vau in 1670, known as the Trianon de Porcelaine due to its “Chinese-inspired” blue and white ceramic tile exterior. This palace’s gardens were designed by Michel Le Bouteux, and abounded in flourishing fragrant flowers such as jasmine, tuberose and hyacinth, with rare flowers planted here and there in their midst.

In 1687, the Trianon de Porcelaine was demolished and replaced with the current building designed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart and originally named the Trianon de Marbre. André Le Nôtre extended the gardens, carrying out very few changes in the process. Tens of thousands of perennials and tuberose thrived here in a colorful, perfumed profusion of blossoms that worked beautifully with the architecture, designed to open out into the gardens.

At the dawning of the 18th century, Jules Hardouin-Mansart worked on the Grand Trianon’s fountains and gardens. In the late 17th century he had been appointed head gardener at Versailles, with Le Nôtre’s Baroque-flavored landscaping no longer in vogue.

The new designs laid out plans for creating the Salles Vertes, the Grand Trianon’s groves: structured green spaces stretching either side of a long path running north to south, and intended as intimate nooks.

The basins’ decorative elements were readjusted for balance, with some of the sculptures moved from Versailles’ gardens to the Grand Trianon, where they had been lacking. The reflecting pools and water jets embody the Trianon’s full diversity of water features, and were representative of a new approach to gardens as places studded with precious artworks. The three basins at the upper and lower parterres – one at the far end of Trianon-sous-Bois and the Buffet d’Eau – are made from a similar pink marble to that used on the building’s pilasters, and create a sense of harmonious balance between the palace and its surroundings.

Still today, the Grand Trianon’s gardens stand out for their sweeping terraced parterres, the surrounding leafy nooks that stretch endlessly on, and the spectacular views they offer up of the Grand Canal.