

THOMAS JONGLEZ



SECRET PARIS



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

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PLANT DECORATION OF THE JEAN SANS PEUR TOWER

14

One of the masterpieces of medieval French sculpture

20, rue Étienne Marcel
 tourjeansanspeursite.wordpress.com
 Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday 1.30pm–6pm
 Metro Étienne Marcel



A unique Parisian example of medieval military architecture (the Sens and Cluny hotels are not military, and the Conciergerie and Fontaine du Vertbois have been extensively redesigned), Jean Sans Peur tower is supported by the remains of the wall of Philippe Auguste (see page 130).

It was built between 1409 and 1411 to allow the Duke of Burgundy Jean sans Peur (John the Fearless), who had just murdered King Charles VI's brother Louis d'Orléans, to take refuge there, safe from possible reprisals.

The duke's room was at the top of this 23-metre-high fortified tower, protected by battlements and trapdoors. Under the chamber was another chamber, then an empty space about 10 metres high in order to avoid attack or the risk of the floor catching fire.

The most remarkable element of this tower is the exceptional plant decoration on the vault of the spiral staircase. Once polychrome, this is a masterpiece of medieval French sculpture organised around three plants, each symbolising a member of the Burgundy family. Emerging from the four corners of the wall and the central pot, the oak represents Philippe le Hardi, father of Jean sans Peur, and the power of the dukes of Burgundy. In the middle of each wall are branches of hawthorn (ubiquitous in Flanders, a symbol of strength and hardness, but also purity) that symbolise his wife Marguerite de Flandre (Margaret III, Countess of Flanders). In the centre, hops, symbol of their son Jean sans Peur (see below), curling around the branches of the paternal oak.

Jean sans Peur and the origin of beer

Although it was Hildegard of Bingen (1099–1179) who discovered the aseptic and preservative virtues of hops that allowed beer to be kept better and longer, it was Jean sans Peur who made hops the main ingredient of beer. They replaced the herbal blends then used in brewing and standardised the taste. He also created the Order of the Hop in 1406; in 1435 an edict imposed this recipe and the word 'beer' appeared for the first time as distinct from 'ale'.

Jean sans Peur was eventually assassinated in 1419 by the Armagnacs, supporters of the Orléans family. In 1477 on the death of Charles the Bold, son of Philip the Good and grandson of Jean sans Peur, Louis XI integrated Burgundy into the Kingdom of France.

VAL-DE-GRÂCE CLOISTER

①

The forgotten cloister

Musée du Service de Santé des Armées

1, place Alphonse Laveran

+33 1 40 51 51 92

Wednesday–Sunday 11am–6pm

Valid identification required

RER Port-Royal



A visit to the museum of the French army's health service is a very good excuse to admire the little-known but magnificent cloister of the former abbey of Val-de-Grâce, built between 1624 and 1669.

The church itself was the result of a vow made by Queen Anne of Austria, in thanks for having given birth to a son after 23 years of marriage, in 1638. On 1 April 1645, the future King Louis XIV therefore laid the first stone for a building whose construction was prolonged until the end of the 1660s. Mansart, then Le Mercier, and finally, Le Muet, assisted by Le Duc, all contributed to the design of the church, which is decorated with numerous statues, as well as four paintings by Philippe de Champaigne. The abbey was transformed into a military hospital in 1793 and is still the property of the French Army.

The museum itself is intended to help the visitor understand the multiple relationships between medicine and the military, but its chief point of interest is its location, beneath the vaults of one of the upper galleries overlooking the beautiful cloister. Note the superposition of the two galleries that compose it.



NEARBY

Garden of the École Normale Supérieure

45, rue d'Ulm – RER Luxembourg

Open daily during class hours

A very pleasant garden graced with a small ornamental pond.

②

THE DODO RIDE

18

A prehistoric ride

Jardin des Plantes

*Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday: from 1pm to the garden's closing time,
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday: from 3pm to the garden's closing time*

Creator and owner: M. Samy Finkel

Metro Place Monge or Jussieu



Set up in 1992 in the middle of the Jardin des Plantes, this 1930s-style carousel was specially conceived for this location on the theme of animals that have now vanished or are threatened by extinction. It thus gathers together members of rare or extinct species, such as the famous dodo from Mauritius, the Tasmanian wolf, the sivatherium (an elk-like precursor of the giraffe), and the triceratops (one of the last dinosaurs).

Although children are not always aware of the history of the animals they've climbed upon, they seem to be delighted to ride in a gondola carried by a panda, in the shell of a horned tortoise, or on the back of a Madagascan aepyornis (the biggest bird ever recorded).

Microclimate in the Alpine garden at the Jardin des Plantes

The Alpine garden at the Jardin des Plantes is an amazing place first conceived in the 1930s. Constructed 3 metres below the level of the rest of the botanical gardens, and thus protected from both heat and cold, by means of the interplay of rocks and irrigation it mimics the microclimates of several mountainous regions. Within a confined space, there are temperature differences of up to 20°C. The garden can thus take pride in over 2,000 different plant species, including the famous but rare edelweiss, all cohabiting in an area measuring less than 4,000 m².

Buffon's *gloriette* (gazebo), at the summit of the maze in the Jardin des Plantes, is the oldest metallic construction in France. Born in the town of Montbard, Buffon directed the famous foundry there, which produced the steel used to build these metal structures.

NEARBY

The human foot in the Fontaine aux Lions

19

Metro Place Monge or Jussieu

The lion fountain located in the Jardin des Plantes near the gate in rue Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, was built by Henri Jacquemont in 1863. Astonishingly, a lion is seen here devouring what appears to be a human foot ... The sculptor, particularly keen on naturalism, also conceived the sphinxes for the fountain in place du Châtelet, the lions in place Félix Éboué (12th arrondissement), and the dragons in place Saint-Michel.



FORMER ÉCOLE COLONIALE

①

The finest Islamic building in Paris after the Great Mosque

Now the *École Nationale d'Administration*
2, avenue de l'Observatoire
RER Luxembourg or Port-Royal



Constructed in 1894–1896 to a design by the architect Maurice Yvon, this building at the corner of avenue de l'Observatoire and rue Auguste Comte is one of the finest examples of Islamic architecture in Paris. Possessing a superb Moorish-style entrance on avenue de l'Observatoire, it has an attractive interior patio and a magnificent library that have maintained their original appearance. It is strange that this gem is not better known. Originally built to house the École Coloniale, which trained those who would administer France's overseas colonies, it now houses the ENA, which trains those who administer France itself.

Islamic architecture in Paris

The first official contacts between France and the Orient came in 1669–1670, when ambassadors were exchanged between the courts of Louis XIV and the Ottoman emperor. Subsequently, the publication of Antoine Gaillard's translation of *The Arabian Nights* at the beginning of the 18th century made the Orient all the rage in the capital. Around the middle of that century French travellers rediscovered the beauties of Egypt (see page 70), with the result that travel throughout the whole of the Muslim world became more common. The Spanish Alhambra and the mosques of Cairo would have an equal influence on the architects of the famous Marseille church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde and even on the design of the crematorium at Père-Lachaise cemetery. Other than the beautiful Great Mosque in the 5th arrondissement, the most striking example of the influence of Islamic architecture in Paris is probably the former École Coloniale at 2, avenue de l'Observatoire (see above). Other fine examples are to be seen at 4 bis, avenue Hoche (a large Moorish-style salon built in 1892); 68, rue Ampère (a Moorish-style salon, 1895); 44, rue Servan (in the 11th arrondissement, 1870–1890, façade adorned with material probably recycled from the pavilions for the Universal Exposition); 9, rue Fénelon (a private house with an Arab-style vestibule and ceramic decoration produced by the Gillet ceramic works); and 16, rue Bardinet (in the 14th arrondissement, dating from 1908). At 18, rue des Mathurins you can also see the typical Arab-style windows of what used to be a hammam, while the Maison du Maroc in the Cité Universitaire has a magnificent carved wood ceiling from Morocco itself. Finally, two buildings in which the influence is less marked can be seen at 35, rue de Charenton (in Moorish-Gothic style and dating from 1840) and 4, rue de la Cossonnerie (an elephant head that reveals a Muslim-Indian influence).

STATUE ON THE ÉCOLE DE MÉDECINE'S GRAND STAIRCASE

23

A spectacular allegory of Nature

12, rue de l'École de Médecine
Monday–Saturday 9am–8pm
Metro Odéon



Heading to the Inter-university Library of Health (see previous double-page spread), don't miss the beautiful staircase – at its foot is the remarkable sculpture *La Nature se dévoilant devant la Science* (Nature unveiling herself before Science). The statue depicts a young woman, an allegory of Nature, sensually removing her veil in front of Science in order to discover its beauty and secrets.

After a first version in white marble in 1889 was created for the new Faculty of Medicine in Bordeaux, Louis-Ernest Barrias (1841–1905) created a second version in 1899 (white marble, red marble, onyx, malachite and lapis lazuli) for the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers in Paris. This version is currently on display at the Musée d'Orsay.

The white marble version at the medical school was exhibited at the 1902 Paris Salon art exhibition and installed at its present location. A plaster copy is also kept at the Musée de Grenoble.

The initial project for the medical school was due to Jacques Gondoin (1737–1818), a young architect supported by Louis XV, who on returning from Rome commissioned a building to house the Collège Royal and Académie Royale de Chirurgie. Louis XVI laid the first stone in 1774.

The central part of the façade facing rue de l'École de Médecine, the peristyle, the Grand Amphithéâtre (a fine painting by Antoine Esprit Gibelin on the theme of surgery – visiting is sometimes possible on request) and its façade in the Cour d'Honneur, all date from this early period.

In 1876 architect Paul-René-Léon Ginain (1825–98) was commissioned to carry out extension works.



THE GIANT PHALLUS AT 29, AVENUE RAPP

③

A door adorned with a giant inverted phallus

RER Pont de l'Alma



© Pline

A prize-winner in a 1901 competition for façade design, the building at 29, avenue Rapp is considered to be Lavirotte's masterpiece. Surmounted by a female head (perhaps a portrait of the architect's wife) and flanked by Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise, the main doorway is relatively well known to Parisians; however, there are few who have noticed that the door itself takes the form of an inverted phallus.

To see this, just focus on the central part of the wooden door (the carving itself is significant), with the central glass panel and the two oval-shaped glass panels at the top.

A fervent champion of sexual symbolism, Lavirotte also used the motif of a penis inside a vulva in the ironwork of the ground-floor window balconies.

Contrary to what is widely believed, the owners of the building were Lavirotte himself and a certain Charles Combes. It was never the home of the ceramicist Alexandre Bigot, whom many think used the façade to advertise his skills; however, there is no doubt that he did adorn the building with his famous stoneware ceramics, specially adapting them for use in architecture. Lavirotte himself lived on the fifth floor of the nearby building at 3, square Rapp.

Jules Lavirotte

One of the most famous architects of Parisian Art Nouveau, Jules Lavirotte (1864–1929) was undoubtedly the most flamboyant. He not only banished straight lines and right angles from designs in which curves predominate, but he also made free use of sexual symbolism – something which did not prevent him from becoming the only architect to win the 'City of Paris' façade design award three times. However, in 1907 he abandoned Art Nouveau, claiming that the imitations of his work were mere pastiches which betrayed the essence of the original movement. His most famous buildings are to be found at 29, avenue Rapp, 3, square Rapp, 12, avenue Sédillot and 34, avenue de Wagram (Hotel Céramic, see page 289). Other, less spectacular, buildings by him can be seen at 134 and 151, rue de Grenelle, 23, avenue de Messine, 169, boulevard Lefebvre and 2, rue Balzac at Franconville (95) (Villa Dupont).

Other ceramic phalluses

The building at 12, avenue Sédillot was the first fully designed by Lavirotte. That at 3, square Rapp contains quite clear sexual symbols (most notably, the ceramic phalluses in the window balconies of the fourth floor).

THE SANDBOX

16

Souvenir of days gone by

2, place de la Reine Astrid
Metro Alma-Marceau



The cast-iron box which faces 2, place de la Reine Astrid takes us back to the days when sand was used to make roads less slippery from snow or ice in winter, and all year round to mop up horse urine before sweeping. The horse-drawn vehicles of all kinds having long since left the capital, and with salting (developed from 1917) being more efficient and cleaner, having replaced sanding, the sand boxes that dotted the streets have almost all disappeared.

There are five remaining, all of which are similar and can be dated to the period 1901–19, as indicated by the Art Nouveau style of their decoration. The boxes are 1.5 to 1.7 metres high and consist of a pyramidal base topped by a rounded cornice bearing the motto of the City of Paris, *Fluctuat Nec Mergitur* (Rocked [by the waves] but Does Not Sink) with a mesh lid, as the boxes were supplied with sand from above. The front faces are decorated with the city's coat of arms: the nave (sailing ship), placed in the interlocking of a laurel branch and an oak branch, surmounted by a five-tower wall crown, and completed at its base by the Legion of Honour, incorporated into the coat of arms following the decree of 9 October 1900.

On the sides of the boxes, the initials of the City of Paris are placed on a circle, at the intersection of two laurel branches. A hatch at the base is decorated with a scallop shell which opened to let the road-workers shovel sand to spread on the roadway.



In addition to the heritage conservation issue, the five remaining sandboxes have found a new mission. They are used as ventilation chimneys for underground changing rooms used by the maintenance workers of the City of Paris.

Other sandboxes in Paris

- 22, avenue de Saxe, 7th arrondissement
- 41, avenue Gabriel, 8th arrondissement
- Place Georges Guillaumin, 8th arrondissement
- 39, avenue Trudaine, 9th arrondissement

GLASS ROOF OF THE CENTRAL OFFICES OF THE SOCIÉTÉ GÉNÉRALE

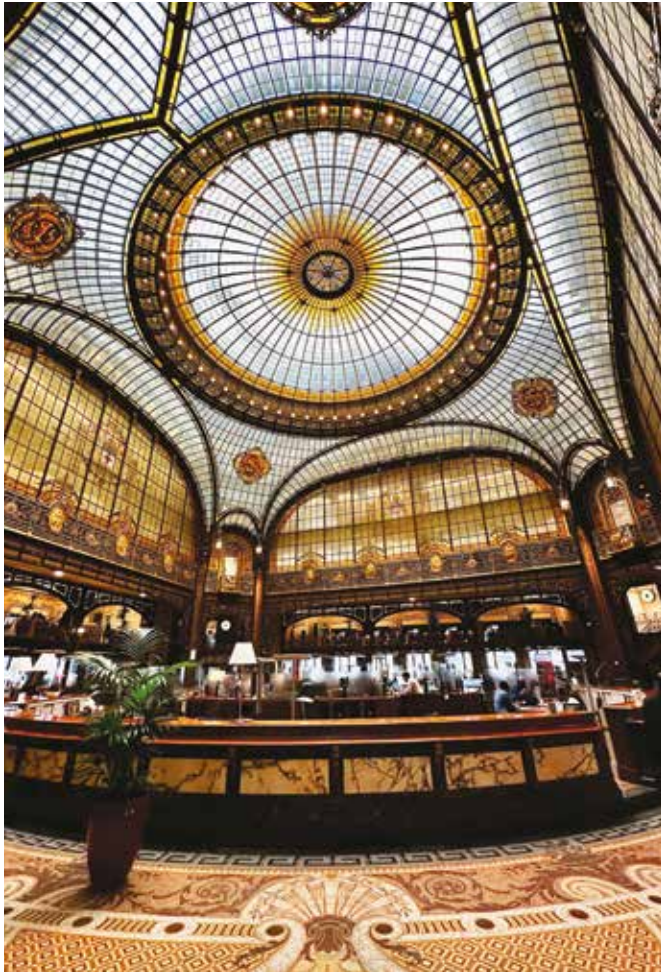
①

A bank in all its splendour

29, boulevard Haussmann

Open during office hours, and for 'Journées du Patrimoine' (Heritage Days)

Metro Opéra



The Société Générale was founded in 1864, and its main branch occupies a magnificent ensemble of seven interconnected buildings dating from the Second Empire. When the bank bought the premises in 1905, the architect Jacques Hermant demonstrated a clearly modern approach to structural conversion because he did everything possible to maintain the original façades, redesigning the interior space to create four underground levels for the vaults. The completed structure was opened in 1912. In the centre of the bank is a large circular counter, known as le 'fromage'; this stands under an immense cupola of iron and glass which measures 24 metres in diameter and was designed by Jacques Galland. The mosaic floors were the work of the Gentil & Bourdet company of Boulogne-Billancourt. Various parts of this bank (the exteriors; the glass and iron roof and hall; the main stairwell; the vault rooms) are all listed architectural features. Of particular note are the splendid strongbox rooms, the mosaics and the main door to the bank vault; weighing some 18 tons, this has 40 cm thick armour plating. Visitors should be discreet as this is a place of work.



Why are there so many banks in the Opera district?

Nights at the opera have long been a way for high society to show off its wealth: in the 19th century, women used to attend the Opéra Garnier wearing their finest jewels. Their value was such that they were kept in the vaults of nearby banks. This limited the risk ...

CHURCH OF SAINT-EUGÈNE- SAINTE-CÉCILE

②1

*Two patron saints, two liturgies,
two types of architecture ...*

6, rue Sainte-Cécile

Daily 7.15am–9pm

Check masses on dioceseparis.fr/-saint-eugene-sainte-cecile-.html

Metro Grands Boulevards or Bonne Nouvelle



This fine but little-known church is curiously dedicated to two saints: Saint Eugene (in honour of Napoleon III's wife, Eugénie, who was responsible for it being built in the first place) and Saint Cecilia (patron saint of music; the National Conservatoire is close by). Note that the church has no bell tower, so that the bells do not disturb the musicians.

Designed by Lussion and Boileau, who took their inspiration from 13th century architecture, the church was built in 1854–1855 to meet the needs of the new suburbs being created as Paris expanded. Wherever you stand in the interior you get an overall view of the entire space, which is brightly painted and flooded with light; note also the Second Empire chandeliers.

The entire structure, including the columns, is in painted cast iron, creating a very original polychrome interior. The columns are steel blue and Florentine bronze, whilst the vaults are dotted with stars and the ribbing is painted a variety of colours.

Another peculiarity of the church is that since 1989 masses here have been held according to two different liturgies – that introduced by Paul VI and that associated with Pope Pius V and celebrated in Latin. Up to 1998 the two liturgies were celebrated by two different priests, but now are the responsibility of a single priest. Thus it is not uncommon to find, in the same morning, a mass in French (with the celebrant facing towards the congregation), then – a couple of hours later – the same priest, now in gold and purple vestments, celebrating a Latin mass (complete with Gregorian chant) according to a rite that has him facing away from the congregation.

The Tridentine and the Pauline liturgies

– The Tridentine mass. This is associated with Pope Pius V and was the liturgy which the Roman Catholic Church followed from the period of the Council of Trent (1563) – hence the name Tridentine – to the Second Vatican Council. Though opposed by some (most notably Monseigneur Lefebvre in France), the Pauline liturgy is considered as a step towards modernisation, a sign of the Church adapting to the 20th century.

– The Pauline mass. This is now the standard liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church and was introduced by Pope Paul VI following the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).

SCULPTURES OF MICHELANGELO'S DYING SLAVE

④

Slaves of the law

*Hôtel de Police, 12th arrondissement
23, rue de Rambouillet and 78-80, avenue Daumesnil
Metro Montgallet or Reuilly-Diderot*



The best view of an awesome work of art is on the other side of avenue Daumesnil, at the top of the arcades at the level of the Coulée Verte. At the junction of rue de Rambouillet and avenue Daumesnil, the top of the 12th arrondissement police station is in fact discreetly occupied (you have to look up to see them) by a series of 12 concrete sculptures of naked men, each 7 metres tall.

The work of Manuel Nuñez-Yanowski; each statue is a reproduction of Michelangelo's Dying Slave, whose unfinished originals are in the Louvre Museum. The only difference from the original: although the exuberantly bare torso was faithfully reproduced, the penis was omitted. At the time, according to the architect, 'that was shocking to politicians'. On the day of the installation, however women of a certain age exclaimed: 'It's a shame that the most interesting bit is hidden!'

Validated in 1985 under François Mitterrand, Nuñez-Yanowski's project was dropped until 1991, when the building was finally completed. The dying slaves on the roof of the police station are not a coincidence: quite the contrary. 'I wanted to show that it is not the bandits and criminals who are in prison, but police officers,' he explains, alluding to the fact that the police were 'slaves of the law'. He adds: 'In the specifications, bars were also provided on the windows of the ground floor.'

The statues all look in the same direction, towards place de la Bastille, an obvious reminder of the old prison.



THOMAS JONGLEZ



SECRET

PARIS

Winemaking firefighters, a tree in a church, an inverted phallus at a well-known entrance, an atomic bomb shelter under Gare de l'Est, unsuspected traces of former brothels, the patron saint of motorists, royal monograms hidden in the Louvre courtyard, the presentation of Christ's crown of thorns, a prehistoric merry-go-round, a sundial designed by Dalí, bullet holes at the ministry, religious plants in a priest's garden, a mysterious monument to Freemasonry at the Champ-de-Mars, a solid gold sphere in parliament, a Chinese temple in a parking lot, a blockhouse in the Bois de Boulogne, decipher the alchemical symbols on Notre-Dame de Paris, examine the lyre-shaped turtles at the Opéra-Comique, climb the majestic grand staircase of the medical school, visit a sublime hidden library, search for the enigmatic star-shaped octahedron on André Breton's grave, admire forgotten ceramics...

For those who thought they knew Paris well, the city is still teeming with unusual and secret places that are easily accessible.

JONGLEZ PUBLISHING
544 PAGES

£16.99
€19.95
US\$22.95

ISBN: 978-2-36195-846-6



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www.jonglezpublishing.com

