

The “Wallace Fountain” at the Lucernaire Arthouse



The Lucernaire is an arthouse venue offering a unique mixture of theatre, cinema, bookstore, dining and special events. Located at 53 rue Notre Dame des Champs, 75006 Paris, the venue was established in 1978 in a former welding and torch factory. According to longtime employee, Céline Ena seen in the photo, the founder of the place, Christian Leguilloch, now deceased, wanted to create the impression of a Paris street inside the facility.

Cobblestones in the hall were added and Leguilloch loved to say they were authentic cobblestones torn from the streets during the "May 68" uprising in the Latin Quarter between students and the police. He claimed to have bought them for a symbolic franc after they were forgotten in storage.

Originally, green boxes filled with books like those of the booksellers on the banks of the Seine and famous Parisian green public benches were also part of the inside streetscape.

The fountain arrived in 1983. However, it is not an authentic Wallace Fountain. It is a replica made from a cast of the real fountain on Place Laurent Terzieff, a stone's throw from the theatre. This cast was made clandestinely, at night. The replica fountain is made of plaster and resin and painted the traditional green color. Like a real Wallace fountain, it is equipped with a device that allows water to flow.

“The clandestine circumstances of its arrival at the Lucernaire are rather amusing. We find in it the transgressive spirit of Christian Leguilloch, sixty-eighter par excellence!” stated Céline Ena, who has been with the theatre since 1994.

The fountain changed places at the theatre in 2024 for the first time in its history to accommodate renovations at the venue and is expected to be moved again once the renovations are complete.

Céline Ena sees a parallel with the story of the real Wallace Fountains which were placed on the streets to make drinking water accessible to all. At the entrance to Lucernaire Theatre, their fountain majestically welcomes the public and presides over access to culture for all. The caryatids remind Ena of the Muses, inspirational goddesses of literature, science, and the arts in Greek mythology.

“For me, our fountain is definitely a friendly, indispensable presence. I had it for a long time in front of me [as I worked] in the ticket office. It is the silent witness of the entire existence of the place, it seems to me inseparable and forever linked to the Lucernaire. I would be inconsolable if it were to disappear and I wouldn't be the only one!” said Ena.

