André Le Nôtre

In Perspective 1613-2013
Until 23 February 2014

Activity booklet FOR CHILDREN
Who was André Le Nôtre? The exhibition at the Palace of Versailles, which brings the celebrations dedicated to Le Nôtre to a close, shows the genius of this incredible creator who is famous for designing the estate of Versailles. Born into a family of royal gardeners at the Tuileries in Paris in 1613, André Le Nôtre took over from his father brilliantly, first working for Louis XIII and then becoming indispensable to Louis XIV. Gardener, designer, architect and visionary landscaper, his name is inextricably linked with French formal gardens. Through his many large-scale accomplishments, including those at Vaux-le-Vicomte, Sceaux, Saint-Cloud and Chantilly — not to mention his creations in Europe —, he has left an imposing body of work, making his mark right up to the present day.
Not only was he a gardener, he was also an art lover! Having trained under Simon Vouet, first painter to King Louis XIII, Le Nôtre was one of the era’s most important collectors — as illustrated here in the re-creation of his collection room. Master paintings, sculptures inspired by mythology, rare medals: the guides written for rich travellers of the day already indicated that his collection was exceptional. When at the age of 80, he retired from his functions as gardener and designer, he donated to the King 21 paintings which are now in the national collections.

Le Nôtre can’t find this sculpture in his collection; help him identify the shadow of the sculpture.

In the Le Nôtre collection: a painting by Nicolas Poussin, Saint John Baptising the People, and a sculpture by Ferdinando Tacca Apollo and Daphne.
During the reign of Louis XIII, Le Nôtre spent his time learning the trade and then under Louis XIV he played a leading role. First he was the designer of the King's gardens, then he became his advisor, and later the General Controller of Buildings, Gardens, Arts and Factories. The King enjoyed the company of this highly cultivated man, appreciated his sincerity, often sought his advice and granted him his friendship. Called to Versailles in 1661, Le Nôtre started the major works that represented the peak of his career. He soon became a favourite of the whole royal family and French nobility and the orders came rolling in. He was ennobled by Louis XIV in 1675. In this painting, you can see the King and his ministers as well as Le Nôtre visiting the site at Versailles.
After being ennobled by the King, Le Nôtre was given a coat of arms that he himself created. Help him find his coat of arms using the following clues: it has a yellow band pointing upwards on a black background and three small shelled animals, two of which are facing to the right.
Le Nôtre was a great master of vanishing points. For Versailles, he planned for the future and imagined the features that could be created as far as the eye could see, despite the fact that some pieces of land had not yet been purchased. At the time, the estate had a surface area of 10,000 ha, i.e. ten times the present area. At the same time as Versailles, Le Nôtre worked on many other creations: Chantilly, Fontainebleau, Saint-Cyr, Meudon, Sceaux and other estates in France and Europe.

Observe all the ladies on horseback in this room. Each of them is posing in front of an estate created by Le Nôtre. This horse rider is lost - help her find her estate.

The Duchess of Burgundy in front of the Grand Canal at the Palace of Fontainebleau.
Le Nôtre’s profession required many technical and scientific skills in optics, hydraulics, topography, town planning, etc. In this room you can see a re-creation of his workshop with his table and various tools.

From his letters, the exhibition curators discovered that André Le Nôtre was dyslexic, in other words he mixed up letters. In these anagrams, you will find the names of the instruments he used everyday.
Based on the principles of organising space and extending perspectives, Le Nôtre transformed Versailles into a real masterpiece. Although he did not invent French formal gardens, he was the first to use them so extensively. From the seventeenth century on, gardens became vaster and were crossed by large perspectives which allowed the creation of a succession of different spaces. They included beautiful layouts of parterres, walks, groves and terraces following on from each other. Through the pools, fountains and water parterres, water is omnipresent.

**GLOSSARY - FRENCH FORMAL GARDENS**

- **maze**: Network of plant-lined paths. In 1668, André Le Nôtre began to work on the Palace of Versailles grove maze which was based on an idea conceived by Charles Perrault.

- **parterre**: Ornamental plant beds organised into a variety of geometrical patterns.

- **grove**: These wooded areas were in fact sumptuously decorated "green salons" in which great festivities were organised. Versailles had fifteen groves.

- **topiary**: Topiary, introduced by the Romans, is the art of pruning shrubs (particularly yew, box and cypress) rather like plant sculptures.
Create some topiary art yourself by completing the series below.

View of the Orangery, the Hundred Steps stairways and the Palace of Versailles by Etienne Allegrain.
Find all the words relating to French formal gardens in the grid below. They may be written forwards, backwards, horizontally, vertically or diagonally.

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P V I B K J B E D Y O
A E X A O F T B T V L
R U R S T D U O F P A
T S T S O I J S O I B
E A E I P O N D U Y Y
R J R M I E Y U N V R
R I B D A A C E T B G
E P F U R Z J T A L R
S A T O Y V E R I E O
F U O I E F I S N V V
B A X S T A T U E T E
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When André Le Nôtre died at the age of 87 in his house in the Tuileries in September 1700, his art had already spread throughout all of Europe. His assistants travelled around spreading his method of work and foreign gardeners came to train in France. Overshadowed by the English landscape garden in the nineteenth century, the regular Le Nôtre style garden made a comeback in the twentieth century and influenced many architects and landscape designers including the famous Le Corbusier. In the architectural drawing (above) made for the Villa Church in Ville-d’Avray, we can see how Le Corbusier re-adopted Le Nôtre's parterres.

At the end of this tour, you will be able to discover the project by the landscape designer Louis Benech and the artist Jean-Michel Othoniel who were asked to re-create the Water Theatre Grove which had disappeared up until now. until now had disappeared.

Look up at the ceiling in this room. You will see a picture of the cover of a book on architecture showing the influence exerted by Le Nôtre up until the twentieth century. What does this picture depict?

☐ a river system
☐ a motorway access road
☐ a skyscraper
This is part of a painting by Etienne Allegrain showing the gardens of Versailles. Spot the 7 differences between the two pictures.