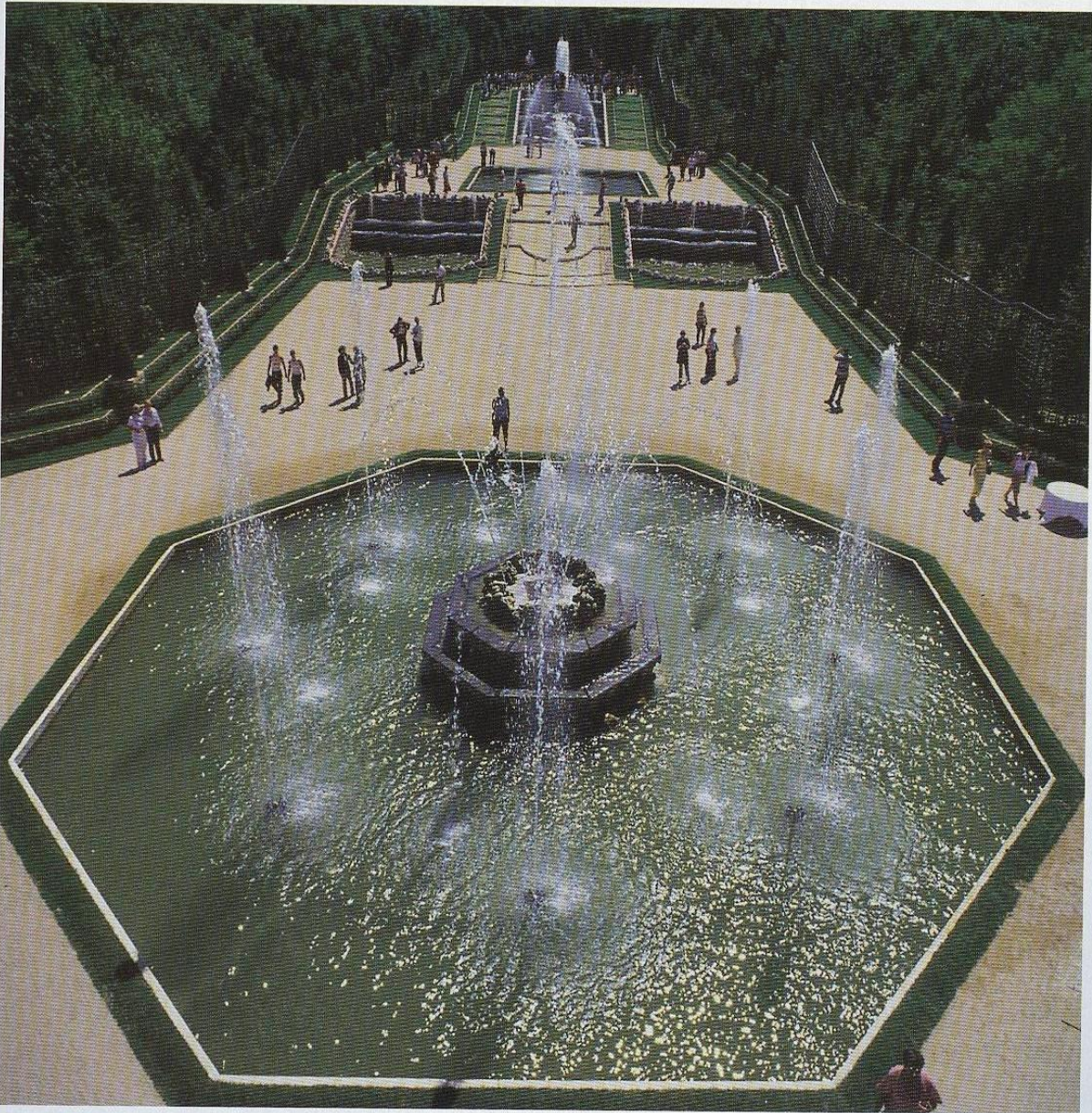


DEPARTURES

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LASTING IMPRESSION



LE NOUVEAU JARDIN Of all the gardens of Versailles, Les Trois Fontaines Bosquet was Louis XIV's favorite (the king is said to have had a hand in its design). And yet the 17th-century masterpiece by André le Nôtre was allowed to crumble amid weeds, dirt, and neglect over the course of 200 years. "France has many monuments that need maintenance," explains Catharine Hamilton, head of the American Friends of Versailles, the philanthropic group that spearheaded the garden's restoration. "And Versailles is very, very old." In fact, a renovation of Bosquet had been scheduled for 1790, but

the revolution cut short such royal caprice. In 1997 old architectural plans were unearthed, launching experts on an expensive and persnickety reconstruction effort. Dormant quarries were activated, rare limestone was mined, and 120 artisans gathered to create the stunning succession of fountains. "We had many documents available," architect Pierre-André Lablaude told *Le Figaro* after the gardens were reopened in June. "Still, the harmony was not visible on the page. Only in the last, very moving weeks was the technical forgotten in favor of the aesthetic. It is even more beautiful than we thought." **JEFFRIES BLACKERBY**