



THE AMERICAN FRIENDS  
*of*  
VERSAILLES

Newsletter No. 1, March 2024





# Le Gala des Fleurs d' Oranger

May 31 - June 3, 2024

Dear Friends, you are cordially invited to join us May 31st through June 3rd at the Château de Versailles with surrounding events in Paris.

Experience LE GALA DES FLEURS D'ORANGER,  
CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES.

A divine evening in the Palace and the Orangerie, that even the Sun King would find radiant! (Black-tie and Long dress) An incredible time when we shall celebrate history, beauty, and international friendship.

[VIEW ALL EVENTS](#)

A BRIEF HISTORY “In 1663, the resplendent Palace of Versailles gained a remarkable addition: the Orangerie crafted by the expert design of Louis Le Vau. Strategically positioned to face the sun's embrace from the south and shielded from the chill of prevailing winds by its location beneath the South Parterre, this architectural marvel now graces the palace grounds.

Twenty years later, Jules Hardouin-Mansart expanded the initial structure, transforming the Orangerie into a colossal edifice. Its central gallery stretches over 150 meters, crowned by a soaring 13-meter-high vaulted ceiling. Two side galleries are nestled beneath the monumental Hundred Steps staircases. With walls measuring 4-5 meters in thickness, double windows, and a southern exposure, the Orangerie maintained a winter temperature that never descended below 40 degrees.

Louis XIV, with regal vision, gathered orange trees from royal houses and procured an impressive array of new specimens from Italy, Spain, and Portugal. In the etiquette of the era, courtiers gifted the King their most cherished orange trees. The Versailles Orangerie soon reigned as Europe's largest with an unrivaled collection.”

For more information contact: [info@americanfriendsofversailles.org](mailto:info@americanfriendsofversailles.org)



A Note of Welcome From Our New  
President of The American Friends  
of Versailles, Alicia Bryan



Dear Friends,

Warm greetings to both longstanding supporters and newcomers. We are thrilled to present our inaugural newsletter in this significant year, marking the 400th anniversary of the Palace of Versailles! Below you will find information on our June benefit gala in France, an exciting update regarding the opportunity to dine at the royal, Chateau de Bagatelle, and our new restoration project at Versailles, and more!

Throughout its remarkable history, the Palace of Versailles has remained an enduring symbol of cultural magnificence and political importance, captivating generations with its timeless allure. The preservation and restoration of Versailles owe much to the generosity of patrons like the Rockefellers, whose contributions in the 1920s and 30s played a vital role in safeguarding its legacy. In this spirit, the American Friends of Versailles carries forward the tradition of international philanthropy and remains steadfast in its mission to help support this precious world treasure.

Our gala invitation to an unforgettable benefit weekend in Versailles and Paris, awaits your perusal above, promising evenings of elegance and splendor amidst the historic halls of the Palace of Versailles, the Bagatelle, the Hotel de Soubise, and a private residence in the Marais.

In addition to these remarkable experiences, I am excited to announce that our Board of Directors has recently voted to participate in a new restoration project in Versailles, the 17th-century painted ceiling of the Salon de Diane, a masterpiece ordered by Louis XIV and designed by Charles Le Brun, the esteemed first painter to the King. With over 8 million annual visitors to Versailles, including 2.8 million Americans, this project holds significant cultural importance and promises to enrich the experience of all who visit it for future generations.

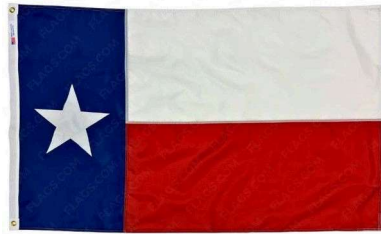
Stay tuned for more updates on this restoration project in our upcoming newsletters. In the meantime, I invite you to join us in France this June and to extend this invitation to your friends and loved ones. Together, let us embark on a journey filled with history, culture, and the spirit of philanthropy.

Thank you for your support, and I look forward to creating lasting memories with you in Versailles and Paris.

Alicia Bryan

President

The American Friends of Versailles



To learn more about our impressive new President visit this charming article in the Curated Texan.

<https://curatedtexan.com/2024/03/san-antonian-alicia-bryans-lovely-ladylike-largess/>

# Les 400 Ans de Château de Versailles

## 400 Years of the Château de Versailles



22 January 2024. Every 400 years or so, if you have a suitable château and a few friends who don't mind driving out of town, it's nice to have an intimate dinner providing you keep it on the modest side. This past January, AFV's newly welcomed president, Alicia Bryan, was privileged to attend just such an event.

Annual Board of Directors Meeting,  
18 October, 2023. Chicago, IL





18 October 2023. Every year, as our charter mandates, the AFV board of directors and a few well-meaning stragglers (SKH) gather for our annual meeting. This past year, we convened in Chicago, IL. Perhaps most notably we bid farewell to our Founder and Chairman Emeritus, Mrs. David R. (Catharine) Hamilton whom, after twenty-five years has chosen to pass the crown, as it were, to fellow Texan artist and arts administrator, Alicia Bryan.

It would be all but impossible to overstate the contribution that Catharine has made to Versailles over the last twenty-five years and equally challenging to express our enthusiasm for Alicia's willingness to join the club.

Not to tip our hand, but there are some VERY exciting projects on the horizon which we hope to announce shortly.

To enjoy some of our past events visit NY Social Diary as reported by Sharon King Hoge, one of AFV's International Council Chairmen.

<https://www.newyorksocialdiary.com/beyond-the-ball-a-weekend-of-activities-in-paris-with-the-american-friends-of-versailles/>

New Leadership Must Be in the Air.  
Former Musée D'Orsay Director is  
Announced as New President of  
Versailles



© THOMAS GARNIER



The director of Paris's Musée d'Orsay, Christophe Leribault, has been named the new chair of the Château de Versailles.

Christophe Leribault, 60, is an art historian with particular focus on the 18th and 19th centuries. He led the Petit Palais.

His appointment represents a symbolic victory for curators. For the first time, all major French museums (the Musée d'Orsay, always chaired by a curator, Versailles, the Musée du Louvre, the Centre Pompidou and the Musée du quai Branly) will be headed by art historians.

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## Château de Bagatelle



For those fortunate enough to join us on May 31st enjoy COCKTAILS ET DÎNER DE SUPRÊME ÉLÉGANCE CHÂTEAU DE BAGATELLE, A ROYAL RESIDENCE IN THE CLOSE ENVIRONS OF PARIS, in honor of international friendship. This extraordinary dinner soirée, set in the splendor of a historic dwelling, promises to be an evening of a special kind, where you will step into a world of bygone elegance. **You will be among the first to dine here after its restoration. A rare invitation indeed.** This event is more than a gathering, it's a celebration of beauty and cultural unity in which bonds transcend borders. (dark suit and dressy cocktail attire).

In 1775, Count d'Artois, brother of King Louis XVI and future King Charles X, purchased the Bagatelle estate in the Bois de Boulogne. He wagered with Queen Marie Antoinette that he could build a château in a few weeks during the court's stay at Château de Fontainebleau. His neo-Palladian château was completed in just sixty-four days. Over 900 workers contributed to its construction with prestigious craftsmen decorating the interior. Famed artist Hubert Robert painted six landscapes for a ground-floor boudoir.

Botanist Thomas Blaikie created an English garden Ceiling in the Bagatelle for Bagatelle in 1778, adorned with ponds, rivers, waterfalls, picturesque bridges, pavilions, and sculptures inspired by ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. During the 1780s, it became a fashionable pleasure garden, attracting visitors from around the world.

# Extraordinary Extra Curriculars

## AFV VP: Juan Pablo Molyneux



AFV Vice-President, Juan Pablo Molyneux is extraordinary by any measure. Juan Pablo Molyneux is an internationally acclaimed interior designer and architect. A committed classicist, he creates spirited interiors that are rooted in history without being historical recreations. His work is bold, eclectic, witty and unmistakably his own. Recently, he created a short film that documents the revitalization of his and his wife Pilar's remarkable Château de Pouy-Sur Vannes. Enjoy :

<https://youtu.be/pA5BUB-4CBg?si=iid-reukGde3uwW->

The Molyneux have been an essential force in the success of the American Friends.



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[info@americanfriendsofversailles.org](mailto:info@americanfriendsofversailles.org)

The American Friends of Versailles 980 North Michigan Avenue Suite 1400  
Chicago, IL 60611, USA