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**WORLD MONUMENTS FUND  
CELEBRATES THE COMPLETION  
OF THREE MAJOR PROJECTS IN FRANCE**

**Choeur des Religieuses in the Couvent de la Visitation, Moulins  
Salon de Musique in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Paris  
Grande Singerie in the Château de Chantilly, Chantilly**

World Monuments Fund (WMF) has recently completed three important projects in France, initiated by WMF Europe: the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Choeur des Religieuses (or nuns’ choir) in the Couvent de la Visitation in Moulins, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Salon de Musique in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal in Paris, and the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Grande Singerie in the Château de Chantilly.

“These three projects, all spectacular cultural heritage sites, demonstrate the effectiveness of international partnerships in historic preservation,” said **WMF President Bonnie Burnham**. “Now that they have been rescued, restored, and opened to the public, these masterpieces will inspire future generations.”

“The year 2008 saw the completion of three major projects that are part of WMF’s Fine European Interiors Restoration Program,” said **Bertrand du Vignaud, president of World Monuments Fund Europe**. “These important French monuments, now restored at the initiative of WMF, were not in good condition, their original beauty seriously altered by time and neglect. Two of the interiors, the Choeur des Religieuses in Moulins and the Salon de Musique in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, were not even open to the public and known only by a very limited group of scholars. Now not only are they accessible to the public, but they have also opened new and very interesting perspectives on 17<sup>th</sup>-and 18<sup>th</sup>-century French color schemes, techniques, and décor.”



**Choeur des Religieuses in the Couvent de la Visitation,  
Moulins**

The little-known 17<sup>th</sup>-century Chapelle Saint-Joseph in a convent in Moulins, the capital of the Auvergne region in central France, houses extraordinary treasures. The chapel was commissioned by Marie-Félicie des Ursins for her late husband, Henri II, Duc de Montmorency, who was executed for treason by Cardinal

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Richelieu in 1632. Afterwards, Ursins entered the convent. In addition to the Duc's important, sumptuous mausoleum created by master sculptors François and Michel Anguier, the chapel contains a spectacular painting cycle in the nuns' choir of the life of the Virgin Mary by Rémy Vuibert, a pupil of Simon Vouet, who helped introduce the "Antique" classical style to France. These paintings, on canvases that covered the ceiling, had been deteriorating for many years.

In 2004, WMF Europe convinced the local authorities to launch a fund-raising campaign to restore the choir. Work began in 2007, when conservators painstakingly removed Vuibert's paintings from the ceiling for restoration. They were reinstalled in August 2008. In October 2008, a wrought-iron grille was re-created and put in the entrance to the nuns' choir, replacing the original destroyed at the time of the French Revolution.

The project was funded by the World Monuments Fund and the Louis D. Foundation, Institut de France.

### **Salon de Musique in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, in the Marais district in Paris**

The Salon de Musique in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal was commissioned in the 1740s by the last Grand Master of the Artillery, the Comte d'Eu, and designed by different artists, among them the architect Antoine Nicolas Dauphin. Four overdoor paintings that represent the four seasons are based on the famous sculptures by Edme Bouchardon for the Fontaine de Grenelle in Paris.

The Arsenal palace was transformed into a library by the Marquis de Paulmy, a great bibliophile who lived



there for about 30 years and housed his collection of 100,000 volumes. The building was seized at the time of the French Revolution and became a public library in 1797. Under the leadership of author, intellectual, and librarian Charles Nodier from 1824 to 1844, it became a literary hub, with luminaries such as Alfred de Musset and Victor Hugo among the guests.

But the Salon de Musique remained out of sight, used as a storage space for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This proved to be a blessing in disguise, as the shelving

installed for storage preserved all of the original décor.

WMF Europe stepped in to conserve the salon in 2004. What conservators found beneath layers of more modern wall paint was truly stunning: a deep purple hue, the only known surviving example from 18<sup>th</sup>-century Paris. Few examples of this once fashionable wall color now survive apart from that found in the Salon de Musique. The delicate boiseries were removed for conservation, for the first time since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and then put back in place. The Salon de Musique was officially opened to the public on October 2, 2008.

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The project was funded by the World Monuments Fund and the International Music and Art Foundation. The silk damask fabric for the curtains was offered in kind by Rubelli spa. and the elaborate passementerie by Maison Declercq.

### **Grande Singerie in the Château de Chantilly**



Commissioned in 1737 by the Duc de Bourbon, Louis XV's prime minister, the Grande Singerie ("monkey room") in the Château de Chantilly, about 25 miles northeast of Paris, is a rare survival of chinoiserie, fashionable throughout Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The walls of the room are adorned with whimsical paintings of costumed monkeys imitating humans, painted by Christophe Huet (1700-1759), a student of Claude Gillot. One of the few rooms by Huet that survives intact, the salon originally housed the prince's porcelain and other East Asian objects.

Following years of water damage to the painted stucco ceiling and walls, WMF began to conserve the room in June 2007. The restored room was opened to the public in January 2008. The project was funded by the World Monuments Fund and the Fondation pour la Sauvegarde et le Développement du Domaine de Chantilly.

### **World Monuments Fund**

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 40 years, working in more than 90 countries, our highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, we inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide, including WMF Europe, led by Bertrand du Vignaud and based in Paris. [www.wmf.org](http://www.wmf.org)

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