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The Val d'Osne art foundry, model gallery.

The large fountain of Tourny in Quebec made by the Val d'Osne by Mathurin Moreau in 1854.

Made by Val d'Osne foundry by Mathurin Moreau.

Made by Val d'Osne foundry by Liénard and Mathurin Moreau, large fountain decorating Prince's square, Launceston, Tasmania, 1859.

Thanks to the invention of **art cast iron**, a large number of high quality resistant sculptures and often with monumental dimensions, were produced. Cast iron was more affordable than bronze, and the 19th century experienced a craze for this material, that is why this century was also called "the iron century". Artists will soon take advantage of the possibilities that this new metal ornament gave them.

"*Art cast iron*" refers to several type of objets : single character, bust or group, monumental pieces, low and high reliefs, sculptures incorporated in an architectural ensemble (usually a monumental project such as fountains, equestrian statues and memorials). The subjects of these works of art are both secular and religious.

The **Val Osne company** was an art foundry founded in 1835 by **Jean Pierre Andre Victor**, inventor of cast iron ornamental technique. Its original purpose was for manufacturing street furniture and decorative cast iron, the company quickly became the largest art cast iron maker in France under the name "*Val d'Osne art foundry*".
After his death, his nephew, **André Hippolyte (1826-1891)**, was in charge of the company. The workshops were located in **Val d'Osne** (Haute Marne, France) and its headquarters and gallerie at the 58th Boulevard Voltaire in Paris. The massive growth of the compagny allowed it to buy its competitors : **Barbezat and Ducel**.

On a regular basis, Val d'Osne foundries were rewarded during several exhibits. At the "*Exposition des produits de l'industrie française*" (French industry products exhibit) they received the bronze medal in 1834, the silver medal in 1839, and in 1844 and 1845 the gold one. The company Val Osne took part in many **International Exhibitions**. Especially the first one, called the "Crystal Palace Exhibition" of 1851 in London. Their monumental art cast iron sculptures were highlighted in this huge glass nave, from this moment on they had a worldwide acknowledgment. They also attended the International Exhibitions of 1855 in Paris, 1875 in Santiago, 1879 in Melbourne, 1878 ("Grand Prix" and two gold medals), 1889 (out of competition and jury member) and 1900 (out of competition and jury member) in Paris.
At the **Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris**, Val d'Osne foundries designed that year (and in very different styles), the four sets in gilded bronze for the *Alexandre III bridge* and the Art Nouveau style decorations for the *parisien metro* designed by **Hector Guimard**.

The foundries were working with many important artists such as **Albert Ernest Carrier-Belleuse**, **Mathurin Moreau** (shareholder in the company) or **James Pradier**. The Val d'Osne became famous for its monumental fountains, animal groups, statues and large groups of cast iron, after antique or classic models. Some old *Wallace fountains* in Paris are still stamped with the Val d'Osne signature. They also built some memorials after the First World War.
In 1931 the foundry was purchased by its competitor the **Sommevoire Factory** (today called GHM Company) which still produces street furnitures.

After World War II, the cast iron ornament are no longer fashionable, statues and fountains suffered from a lack of maintenance. Scorned by art specialists, beautiful cast iron sculptures made for the world exhibitions are put to landfill because they are seen as industrial and mainstream works, simple copies of academic art. In 1986, the **Orsay Museum** was inaugurated and a thesis about **Pierre-Louis Rouillard** (under the direction of Anne Pingeot) was published. It was the begining of art cast iron recognition and it entered museums collections, especially the forecourt of the Orsay Museum adorned with beautiful animal statues.

Wallace fountain decorating a square in Montmartre, in Paris.

The Troyes fountain in the Champagne region made by the Val d'Osne foundry.

Young page by Mathurin Moreau and the Val d'Osne foundry, 1874, Paris.