

La Closerie des Lilas
HISTORY

From a simple flowery open-air café, **la Closerie des Lilas** has become the meeting place for artists from all over the world.

In the late 19th century, La Closerie was a post station on the road to Fontainebleau. It was the first café to establish the reputation of Montparnasse. It became famous and made its name thanks to its location near the Bullier ball, the most famous ball in Paris at the time. **La Closerie attracted everyone who was anyone to its garden of lilac trees for a quadrille in a setting worthy of The Thousand and One Nights.** The bourgeoisie slumped it with penniless artists, alluring dancers and no-names that stared on in astonishment. La Closerie was the place to be before and after the ball – Emile Zola brought his friend **Paul Cézanne**, and **Théophile Gautier** and the Goncourt brothers were regulars. The tone had been set.

In the early 20th century, **Paul Fort** walked through the door of La Closerie des Lilas and practically settled down here. He loved to play chess with Lenin on the terrace.

Paul Fort was a prince, the prince of poets, taking after another regular - **Paul Verlaine**.

He would gather together his friends, men of letters, in the large room of the ground floor every Tuesday. They would talk about their opinions, exchange poems and recite verses.

Apollinaire was one of these men and introduced them all to **Alfred Jarry**, who – at the time – was known for being the creator of pataphysics. As the story goes, Jarry was once sitting next to a beautiful yet frosty woman. Fed up with being ignored, he pulled out his gun, shot the mirror in front of her and said, “Mademoiselle, now that the ice is broken, let’s talk! ».

These meetings quickly extended beyond the boundaries of Montparnasse; the Bateau-Lavoir painters mixed in wonderfully with the poets of La Closerie and their word games.

Tuesday at La Closerie became the international get-together for thinkers and artists.

Paul Fort, Moréas and Salmon created the literary review Vers et Prose at this time, a monument in the French literary world. Vers et Prose featured the work of illustrious writers including Maeterlinck, Stuart Merrill, Barrès, Gide, Maurras, Jules Renard and Apollinaire.

In 1922, In 1922, an argument between **Tristan Tzara and André Breton** at La Closerie des Lilas marked the end of the Dada movement in Paris.

Though the unfortunate destiny of Dada was played out at La Closerie, it soon became the place where the scandal of Surrealism burst into all its dazzling glory.

In America, prohibition was on. In Europe, people could drink in peace and life wasn’t very expensive. La Closerie became one of American ex-pats’ favourite places. **Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Miller...**

“The only decent café in our neighborhood was La Closerie des Lilas, and it was one of the best cafés in Paris. It was warm in the winter and the terrace was lovely in the spring and fall...” (Hemingway)

Champions of classicism, Surrealism devotees and princes of Cubism came from all over the world, and gave La Closerie its letters of nobility.

La Closerie des Lilas became the theatre of the most exciting concepts and theories of its time.

For a century and a half, all the greatest poets, all the most beautiful minds and most talented artists rebuilt the world according to their own outrageous ideas.

Modigliani, Paul Fort, André Breton, Aragon, Van Dongen, Picasso, Jean-paul Sartre, André Gide, Paul Eluard, Oscar Wilde, Beckett, Man Ray, Ezra Pound and many others...

Years go by and generations follow generations... while the tradition of the Arts lives on at La Closerie.