

# 1948 // NATIONAL PROFILE FRANCE

By Hanna Sorsa-Sautet

## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN 1948

The *Comité de l'art des jardins* of the *Société d'Horticulture de France* (SNHF), was created in 1888 as a way to support and recognise professionals within the field of garden architecture.<sup>1</sup> By the 1930s there were around 100 people associated with the society. In 1932, there was a publication called *Jardins d'aujourd'hui* written by leading designers, concerned with the profession's engagement with urban and social matters. This preceded the creation of the *Société française des architectes de jardins* (SFAJ) in 1933. From its drive to develop the profession as well as related education and training, came two major events that preceded the creation of IFLA in 1948.

The first of these in 1937, was the organisation of the first International Congress of Garden Architects, chaired by Achille Duchêne. This took place during the *Exposition Internationale des arts et des techniques dans la vie modern* in Paris. It brought together participants from Belgium, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland. Ferdinand Duprat, an internationally renowned landscape architect and professor at the *École Nationale d'Horticulture* (ENH), was rapporteur for the session on teaching, denouncing its inadequacies. Secondly, in December 1945, a specific training programme was created at ENH: the *Landscape and Garden Art Section*. The title of *dplg landscape gardener* was adopted from then on, and became official in 1961.

Duprat played an active role in the creation of IFLA, along with his English and Italian alter-egos Geoffrey Jellicoe and Pietro Porcinai. At the IFLA congress in 1948, France was represented by landscape architects Ferdinand Duprat, Jean-Bernard Perrin, Maurice Thionnaire and Jacques de Wailly. According to the English Journal of the Institute of

Landscape Architects, Emile Treyve, René Fautrelle, Adrien Desmidt and Émile Prévosteau also participated in the congress.

The French contribution to the 1948 IFLA conference exhibition was revealing in its emphasis on Le Nôtre's legacy and the style of the gardens there, stating that they had decided not to show contemporary projects because they had not reached a stage of maturity where they could be photographed. The selection reveals a strong influence from Achille Duchêne (1866-1947). He attached great importance on promoting the profession through his work with the *Société des architectes paysagistes de France*, of which he was a co-founder and chair. The choices of project to exhibit were no doubt seen as a form of tribute to Duchêne, who had died not long before. Ferdinand Duprat (1887-1976), who worked with him, presented five projects for the French section, including the *Château de Vayres* and the *Clairvivre* housing development, as well as a rose garden.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects, Ferdinand Duprat, Jean-Bernard Perrin, Maurice Thionnaire and Jacques de Wailly represented France at the congress in 1948. In the journal *Revue Horticulture* from 1949, Duprat's report mentions that France brought together a selection of gardens, private or public parks, stadiums, city plans of the best French tradition with the works of Achille Duchêne and Charles Bouhana (retrospective), Charles Weiss, Dental, Duprat, Gréber, Pasquier, Prévosteau and Courcelles [sometimes using the title *Prévosteau et Courcelles, Paysagistes de France*], Toutain and Roussel, Treyve, de Wailly.<sup>3</sup>

1. « Paysagiste », « Architecte-paysagiste » and « Architecte de jardins » was used at the time for landscape architect. From 1940 on and the creation of the architects professional order forbidding the use of "architect", only "Paysagiste" was used. In 2017 the title "Paysagiste concepteur" became official.  
2. de Courtois, Stéphanie. Un moment de renouveau de l'Europe des jardins : 1948 et la création de l'IFLA. Actes Journée d'étude Rendez-vous aux jardins 2018 - L'Europe des jardins. Direction générale des patrimoines. 2018, 15-20.  
3. *Revue Horticole*, 1949 mars-avril, 1949, 46.  
4. Ferdinand Duprat, « Les Jardins d'Aujourd'hui (Europe et Amérique) à l'Exposition Internationale de l'Art des jardins à Londres », *revue Horticole*, 1949 mars-avril, SNHF, Paris, 44-47.  
5. de Courtois, Stéphanie. Un moment de renouveau de l'Europe des jardins : 1948 et la création de l'IFLA. Actes Journée d'étude Rendez-vous aux jardins 2018 - L'Europe des jardins. Direction générale des patrimoines. 2018, 15-20.  
6. de Courtois, Stéphanie. Un moment de renouveau de l'Europe des jardins : 1948 et la création de l'IFLA. Actes Journée d'étude Rendez-vous aux jardins 2018 - L'Europe des

jardins. Direction générale des patrimoines. 2018, 15-20.  
7. Historic of Château d'Hendecourt, <https://www.chateauhendecourt.fr/historique/>; « De l'exposition de la Société d'horticulture de Douai » (1926), *Journal de la Société nationale d'horticulture de France*, Année 1926 - Société nationale d'horticulture de France, 507.  
8. About Department of landscape and garden art (la section du paysage et de l'art des jardins, 1945-1975) see: Blanchon, Bernadette. "Ferdinand Duprat" in *Créateurs de jardins et de paysages en France du XIXe siècle au XXIe siècle*, tome II, dir. Michel Racine. Actes Sud, Paris, 2002.  
9. Bulletin SNHF (1930), SNHF, Paris, 21.  
10. *Horticulture* (Mars-Avril 1949), III.  
11. Interviews with Jean-Marie Prévosteau and Étienne Bertrand. "A brief history of the company Prévosteau", ENSP, March 2nd 2023 and September 29th 2023.  
12. Ferdinand Duprat, « Les Jardins d'Aujourd'hui (Europe et Amérique) à l'Exposition Internationale de l'Art des jardins à Londres », *revue Horticole*, 1949 mars-avril, SNHF, Paris, 44-47.

## Les Jardins d'aujourd'hui (EUROPE ET AMÉRIQUE) à l'Exposition Internationale de l'Art des Jardins à Londres

par F. DUPRAT

Professeur d'Architecture de Jardins et d'Urbanisme à l'École Nationale d'Horticulture de Versailles

A l'occasion du Congrès International des Architectes-Paysagistes, où furent représentées seize nations d'Europe et d'Amérique, the Institute of Landscape Architects avait organisé dans les locaux du London County Council une exposition de l'Art des Jardins.

« Le paysage du travail et des loisirs », tel était le titre d'une présentation des travaux d'Architecture de Jardins et de Paysage provenant des pays participant au Congrès.

Une rétrospective montrait des plans de jardins de la Renaissance italienne dessinés par les étudiants de l'Académie américaine à Rome, les vues des



SUISSE. — Pergola dans un jardin d'usine à Grenches. Waller LEDER, Architecte-Paysagiste.

grands jardins français du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, des plans anglais du XVIII<sup>e</sup> et les portraits des botanistes du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle à qui nous devons un riche héritage végétal.

Des plans et surtout des photographies illustrent le champ d'action des architectes-paysagistes : jardins privés, jardins publics, terrains

SUEDE. — Parc de récréation aux Usines de Marabou A. B. Sundbyberg, par le Professeur Svan A. HERMELIN, Architecte Paysagiste. Ce parc est ouvert au public l'après-midi.



According to the garden historian Stéphanie de Courtois, the exhibition in the summer of 1948 therefore paints a rather contrasting picture of the profession, with very different types of composition and a different degree of national coordination in public commissioning and understanding of the relationship with modernity. This was a pivotal period in the joint organisation of the profession.<sup>4</sup>

Paradoxically, the introductory remarks and the choice of projects on display do little to reflect the conviction expressed by Duchêne in his 1935 book *Les Jardins de l'Avenir* that public parks would represent the future of the profession. "The creation of private parks will be a thing of the past, but by working for local authorities, we may then have more powerful means at our disposal than in the past." De Courtois mentions also that Jacques Gréber (1882-1962) is over-represented among French Architects, both for his private gardens and for his urban projects, including his parkway designed in Philadelphia in the USA in 1919.<sup>5</sup>

We must keep in mind that at this time, the profession of landscape designer was not separated from that of entrepreneur. Most of these landscape architects or architectes de jardins were also entrepreneurs.

## NOTABLE INDIVIDUALS

**Adrien Desmidt** was living and working in Audruicq and was in charge of château d'Hendecourt's garden plantations.<sup>6</sup>

**Ferdinand Duprat (1887 – 1976)** was a professor of garden architecture and urban planning at the École Nationale d'Horticulture (ENH, 1934-1951) and was already a well-known landscape architect in the 1930s. He was leading two agencies as well as practicing as a designer, contractor, nurseryman and horticulturist. Duprat contributed widely to the development of education of landscape and garden architecture. For him, teaching and the liberal profession were two sides of the same coin: his interest in training was justified by his involvement in the defense and dissemination of the profession. The originality of his approach lay in his ability to observe changes that were taking place as well as juggle both horticultural work and design. This was an ability that probably originated in his varied training. He began by learning from his horticulturist father, specialising in the cultivation of ornamental plants in greenhouses. He then studied at Kew Gardens in England and was then apprenticed to various Dutch, Belgian and finally Parisian agencies.

In the 1930s, at the height of his career, Duprat was recognised as one of the specialists in the restoration of 18th-century gardens, while also being called upon to design town planning schemes and new towns. Sensitive to the French classical garden tradition and an admirer of the interpretative approach of Achille Duchêne, whose collaborator he became, Ferdinand Duprat also appreciated the work of Jules Vacherot who, still linked to the school of Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps, "drew as an architect and composed as a landscape gardener".<sup>7</sup> In 1932, Ferdinand Duprat directed the "Jardins d'aujourd'hui", published by the SNHF. From 1934, he held the chair of architecture and town planning at ENH

until 1951. By now he had a prestigious international clientele and worked throughout Europe. Duprat was the landscape designer to the Royal Court of England - where he succeeded Achille Duchêne in restoring the gardens of Blenheim Castle - as well as the courts of Denmark and Sweden.

Ferdinand Duprat was interested in the evolution of the landscape gardening profession towards public spaces and urban planning. The French government met the demands of the landscape gardeners of the SNHF and SFAJ's Comité de l'art des jardins by institutionalising professional training for designers. By decree of General de Gaulle, on 5 December 1945, the Section of Landscape and Garden Design was created at the ENH in Versailles, with the aim of training an "elite" of "landscape designers" and "engineers", i.e. "executives for reconstruction and urban planning", as well as for "private enterprise". Among the teachers in this section were several active members of the SFAJ, such as André Rioussé, who taught "Theory of the art of gardens and composition", and Henri Thébaud, who taught "the use of plants and planting projects". As for Ferdinand Duprat, he continued to teach the course on garden architecture and urban planning at the ENH and thus ensured the links between the training of horticulturists and landscape gardeners.<sup>8</sup> Duprat presided over the French Society of Garden Architects, in order to assert the rights of the profession and tried to impose it to the detriment of the title of landscape engineer still in use. Ferdinand Duprat was also a member of the Comité de l'Art des jardins de la Société nationale d'horticulture (SNHF, vice president and president) with Maurice Thionnaire (council delegate, curator of the collections). Duprat gave lectures on English landscape architecture (jardins paysagers et romantiques) for the members of the SNHF.<sup>9</sup> The journal *La Vie à la Campagne*, which was created in 1906, wrote for a wide

audience on contemporary garden art and its history in France. Duprat wrote the articles about landscape, seaside, community and plantation gardens. He set out his views on the art of gardens in a series of thematic readings which reflected his personal interests and areas of specialisation.

In the journal *Revue Horticulture* (1949), Ferdinand Duprat gave an overview of the projects that were presented in the IFLA congress exhibition of 1948. Pictures were included from Switzerland, Sweden, Italy, Belgium and England. Duprat seemed to be impressed by the projects, but all the photos taken at the congress were not published in the journal. The editorial board apologised for this and promised to publish some other visuals in the next issues.<sup>10</sup>

**Jean-Bernard Perrin** started his career as a student of the second promotion of the Landscape and Garden Art Section (1947) of the École Nationale Supérieure d'Horticulture in Versailles. Perrin was close to Ferdinand Duprat, professor of garden architecture and urban planning at the ENH.

Jean-Bernard Perrin was behind the creation of the Agence de l'Arbre in 1962 at the Ministry of Construction and Urban Planning, where he worked on the development plan for the Paris region. Perrin was also co-founder of ESAJ (École supérieure d'architecture des jardins, Paris) with Henri Pasquier and Met de Penninghen around 1960s.

**Émile Prévosteau (1901 – 1974)** was the founder of *Entreprise Prévosteau*, Émile Prévosteau's early career was published in the journal *Vie à la Campagne* in 1926. Articles show, Émile Prévosteau as being skilled at drawing, someone who sought professional status and who went on to participate in *Concours en loge* in 1925 with great success. Prévosteau first worked in several local offices, then went on to Toutin-Roussel's studio before finally creating his own company, *Prévosteau & Courcelles* in 1930. The company's first

project was the *Foundation Cognacq-Jay* in Samoreau in 1932. Prévosteau collaborated with landscape architects, architects and decorators as such Russell Page, Walter, Pierre Dufau, Biro and Fernier, Henri Samuel, Faye, François Catroux and Christian Liaigre.<sup>11</sup> Society Prévosteau used several names including *Prévosteau & Courcelles*, *Prévosteau paysagistes*, *Prévosteau et Fils*.

**Maurice Thionnaire** was the principal founder and a Vice-president of *Société française d'Architecture de Jardins*. He actively promoted garden architecture and published several articles in the magazine *Vie à la campagne* at the beginning of the twentieth century. He was a member of the *Garden Art Comité* (Comité de l'Art des jardins) and a Chairman of the photography section of *Société Nationale d'Horticulture*. Much like Ferdinand Duprat, Maurice Thionnaire gave the lectures on flowered stadiums, playgrounds and sports fields to a professional audience at the SNHF.

**Jacques de Wailly (1903-1971)** was a landscape architect and town planner, from the region of Somme, and was in the family line of the great sons of the most important French neoclassical architects, such as Charles De Wailly (1730-1798). De Wailly was a member of the *Société Française d'Architecture des Jardins* (SFAJ). He designed the gardens at Roques in Occitanie in 1955-1956 for Christian Vieljeux. According to Ferdinand Duprat, projects from the De Wailly was presented at the IFLA exhibition in 1948.