

## **At the heart of the sparkle – the variety of Aachen fountains**

### **From the Chicken Thief to the Türelüre-Liße: A small tour of Aachen inner city fountains**

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By Sabine Rother

Aachen, “City of fountains and monuments” – this is a book title that can be verified in Aachen with every step you take. Since the beginnings of humanity people have always preferred to settle where they could find water, which is more than anything else essential to life. Aachen even has springs, from which hot and healing water flows. There was good reason for the Emperor Charlemagne to build his favourite palace at this location. Long before him the Celts used and revered the forces of nature in the Aachen region.

#### **The Emperor as the focal point**

The beginning and end of the city tour is the historic Town Hall from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Our first goal is the imposing Market Fountain with the statue of Charlemagne. In 1620 the master craftsman Franz von Trier cast the bronze bowl of the fountain, which weighs seven tons, in Aachen. The statue of Charlemagne was created in Dinant in Belgium. The fountain material is “Blaustein” (blue limestone). The fountain itself was renovated in 1735 by the city master builder Johann Josef Couven and is typical of his style. The two well-nourished bronze dolphins were incorporated in the basin a little later in 1738. Please walk over towards the Town Hall now. Here you find a stone, which is held together by iron clasps. It marks the important spot, where once the gallows stood.

From this memorable place you proceed through the Krämerstraße to the Hühnermarkt (Chicken Market). Next to the “Goldener Apfelbaum“ (Golden Apple Tree) the “Chicken Thief” hangs above eight golden baby chickens. Just when the chicken thief thought that he had got away with stealing a cock and several hens, the birds made a noise and gave him away. This bronze sculpture above the water basin was created by Hermann Josef Pagels.

### **Sweet monument**

We continue our tour to the left of the Couven Museum and down the Rommelgasse. Then we take a left turn into the Körbergasse. On the corner you can see the life size "Printenmädchen" (Printen Girl). Here the sculptor Hubert Löneke dedicated a "sweet monument" to Aachen national sweets. To the right (Büchel) you approach the statue of a monster, the "Bahkauv". This monument was designed in 1967 by Kurt-Wolf von Borries from Cologne-Junkersdorf. The Bahkauv (translated as River Calf) is a legendary being that is half panther and half dragon. According to legend, in the old days the Bahkauv came jumping up from the depths of the Aachen fountains late at night and landed on the necks of the drinkers who were on their way home. Please continue straight ahead through the Büchel and turn left down the Ursulinerstraße until you get to the Holzgraben. Now turn right and pass the imposing "Elisenbrunnen" (Elisa Fountain). This fountain was built by the architect Karl-Friedrich Schinkel (1882 - 1927) and was named after the Crown Princess Elizabeth, the subsequent wife of King Frederick Wilhelm IV. of Prussia. Inside the rotunda (the round building) the Aachen water flows into a couple of basins. This water is hot and has its own strong "fragrance". Please feel free to try it out for yourself.

### **Comical figures in bronze**

You may want to take a close look at the marble plaques that list the names of famous visitors throughout the centuries. Can you find Händel, Blücher or Tsar Alexander the Great? The high society of past times came to Aachen to enjoy its spas. Our tour continues to the right. We pass the Atrium and follow the Hartmannstraße along the Elisa Garden until we reach the fountain "Kreislauf des Geldes" (Circulation of Money). The principle of money circulation was created by Karl Henning Seemann in 1976 with his comical bronze figures on the fountain. By the way, it is said to bring you luck when you throw a penny or a cent into the water. When you turn in the direction of the Cathedral, you can make a short detour to the right into the Krämerstraße. There you will find the "Puppenbrunnen" (Fountain of the Puppets) that was created by Bonifatius Stirnberg in 1975. The fountain is decorated with some wonderful bronze puppets that can be made to move. The figures show the Aachen characters of the canon, market woman, professor, legionary on horseback, harlequin and the fashion model. Please go back via the Münsterplatz to the Mariensäule (Column of St Mary), which was built by the city architect Friedrich Josef Ark in 1847. The adjacent statues of the Holy Mother, St Foillan, St Michael and St Vinzenz of Paul were created by Gottfried Göttig.

At the edge of the Münsterplatz is the “Vogelbrunnen“ (Birds Fountain), which is also called “Möschebrunnen“ (Sparrow Fountain). This fountain was sculpted by Bonifatius Stirnberg in 1987. When you press the button, water will flow out of the large ball. At the “Domlädchen“, an interesting shop opposite the fountain, take a turn to the left and proceed through the narrow street Spitzgässchen to the Fischmarkt (Fish Market). On the left you can see the “Grashaus“, the old Town Hall. In the Fish Market is another fountain with a naked small boy who holds two fishes in his hand. This monument is called the “Fischpüddelchen“ and was designed by Hugo Lederer in 1911. Public outcry about the naked boy at the time reached such a scale that for a while the fountain needed to be guarded by police. When you turn left here and go through the “Rennbahn“, which is another small street, you get to the fountain “Türelüre-Liße“ in the Klappergasse. This fountain was created in memory of a teasing song by the sculptor Hubert Löneke in 1967. The song is about a little girl and three little boys. While she is “doing her small business“ (!), the boys are dancing around her and teasing her.

### **The blacksmith who was a butcher**

The “Wehrhafte Schmied“ is part of the history of Aachen. This monument by Karl Burger (1909) in the Jakobstraße tells the story of a brave blacksmith who played a decisive role in the defeat of the Count of Jülich and his men. The battle took place on St Gertrud’s night in 1278. Part of the story is that the blacksmith who was supported by his sons was really a butcher ...

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