

The Editorial Notebook

The Season of Aquarius

It's time to take to the waters again. Fountains, pools, sprays and jets are becoming a focus of street activity as the sun warms the city and the lunch break takes on its seasonal aspect of *dolce far niente* — doing nothing, pleasantly.

New York's fountains are not the massive, overflowing basins of splashing gods and naiads that in Rome turn gravity's flow into limpid baroque art. There are a few late 19th- and early 20th-century examples here that feature Victorian maidens in large saucers or figures of Grace and Abundance pouring from pitchers of Plenty in such places as Grand Army Plaza or Central Park. Only the Maine Memorial, at the southwest corner of the park, borrows blatantly from Bernini.

Most of New York's fountains are relatively recent, and their style comes not from gravity but from the recirculating pump. They send up thin jets in military phalanxes, as in the pools fronting the Metropolitan Museum of Art; or in meager rings, like those added to the statue at Columbus Circle. Among the most artful of the new fountains are the two, "dandelions" in front of Burlington House on the Avenue of the Americas, and the water wall in Paley Park that turns one small building lot into an enchanted retreat.

The latest is the fountain in City Hall Park, a single jet set in a handsome basin of stone steps. If it does not approach the splendor of the 19th-century Croton Fountain built in the park

to celebrate the arrival of the reservoir's waters in New York, it adds refreshment and dignity to what is loosely called the Civic Center.

The City Hall fountain, like a number of others around the city, was donated by George Delacorte, a generous civic beautifier who prefers to cast his gifts upon the waters. He also plans a fountain for Times Square, as part of the total redesign of that desolate triangle that splits Broadway and Seventh Avenue and has been a dumping ground for "temporary" recruiting stations, trash cans, and occasional trees that do battle with the city's fumes. At the risk of sounding parochial, we are willing to assert that no place more deserves a spray.

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