

*Dessin de l'Orangerie de l'Hôtel de Sully, rue St-Antoine à Paris - par Phil. Rogier.*

A mansion standing between courtyard and garden

Unlike the famous townhouses of Place des Vosges, with their brick walls and freestone framed doors and windows - a style still in fashion in the reign of Louis XIII - Hôtel de Sully proclaims its **classical composition** by the use of freestone. This costly option subsequently became normal practice.

The tall roof spaces are lit by dormer windows, the **symmetry of the façades** is accentuated by the vertical alignment of the windows surmounted with successively arched and triangular pediments, two pavilions stand either side of the gate facing the road. These features are characteristic of the French aristocratic mansion of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, many examples of which were to be found in the Marais. The garden of box-edged patterns and the orangery with its well-proportioned façade put the finishing touches to the overall composition of the building.

The **elaborate use of sculpted decoration** on the facades contrasts with the austerity of the composition. The mannerist ornamental motifs are representative of the late Renaissance: heads of women, plant motifs, allegories of the Elements and the Seasons in high relief in niches.

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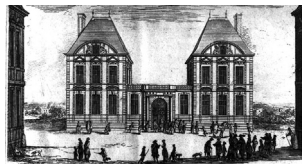
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## Hôtel de Sully

From Sully to the Centre des monuments nationaux

In 1624, the superintendent of finance Mesme Gallet had a **private mansion** built with a garden and orangery opening onto Place Royale - today Place des Vosges - right in the heart of the Marais, a fashionable quarter of the time. Maximilien de Béthune, first **Duc de Sully**, former minister of finance and superintendent of buildings to King Henri IV, then bought it in 1634. The old man completed its interior décor and lived out his final years there. His grandson Maximilien, second Duc de Sully, had an additional wing built onto the building in



1660, on the garden side. Hôtel de Sully still bears the name of this family which continued to own it until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It then passed through the

hands of various owners. Used as an **investment property** in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, changes were made to house businesses and tradesmen.

Listed as an **historic monument** in 1862, the mansion was gradually given a new lease of life thanks to new owners who took greater care with its conservation. It became State property in 1944. A long campaign of restoration was then undertaken, completed with the orangery in 1973.

Since 1967 it has been the head office of the Caisse nationale des monuments historiques et des sites, which became the **Centre des monuments nationaux** in 2000. This public institution part of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, manages over a hundred of France's most prestigious national monuments, and publishes books on the national heritage.

## history



Amid the tall façades of rue Saint-Antoine, the Hôtel de Sully is distinctive for the yellow shades of its stone and the monumental air given by the two pavilions that frame its gate topped by a flat roof.

Passing beneath the porch, you enter the entirely paved **main courtyard**.

**Reception** is on the left of the gate and the information centre on the work of the Centre des monuments nationaux on the right.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this courtyard was a hive of domestic activities: beneath the archways of the right wing were coachhouses for horse-drawn carriages; the kitchen and offices were on the ground floor of the left wing.

On the side wings, sculpted figures symbolise the Elements: on the left Air is accompanied by a chameleon and Fire by a dragon spitting flames; on the right, a lion protects the Earth, and Water carries a vase on its shoulder.

The elevation of the wings is similar to that of the **main building**. Its façade is divided into five bays, the middle one - the most highly decorated - corresponds to the staircase that serves the two floors. The two sculpted allegories represent Autumn, a man carrying bunches of grapes, and Winter with the features of an old man leaning on a cane. Two sphinxes introduce the visitor into the central passageway that leads to the garden and the upper floors.

The **main staircase**, with a central newel and straight flights, is embellished by a ceiling decorated with sculptures.

In the **bookshop** housed in the **lower main hall**, you can see the ceiling with 17<sup>th</sup> century painted beams and joists as well as traces of painted decorations in the window embrasures. The furniture of the bookshop was designed in 1993 by the architect Jacques Ripiquet.

From the **garden** you can see that the rear façade of the building repeats the design of the façade facing the courtyard. The two allegories, embodied by women, this time represent Spring and its flowers, and Summer carrying sheaves of wheat. The peace of the garden contrasts with the courtyard and offers rest in the shade of its holm oak. The four flowerbeds bordered by box have replaced the box-edged patterns\* that formerly adorned the garden.

At the far end, the **orangerie** consists of a central building resting on five archways, flanked by two pavilions with pointed roofs decorated with lead finials.

The dormer windows of the central building break up the cornice in a way that brings life to its upper parts.

The archway in the centre is topped by a sundial carved in the stone.

The door of the right pavilion opens onto Place des Vosges.

\* **Box-edged patterns**

Layout of shrubs, usually box, clipped low and forming decorative geometric motifs.

For further information:

**HÔTEL DE SULLY**

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Coll. « Itinéraires »

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