He said he hoped, however, that the fountains would be safe. “Fountains are joyful,” he said. “They are about childhood and pleasure; they are marvels.”

And for all their seeming delicacy, the fountains are engineered to withstand high winds—and other objects. If hit by items thrown by protesters, "the fountains are strong," Mr. Gatier said, adding, "If you take a 20-ton truck and you drive over a water fountain, the fountains are there to stay."

For Pierre-Antoine Gatier, a chief architect for historical monuments who oversees the restoration of several Paris landmarks, introducing contemporary design to Haussmann's urban layout is crucial to the city's identity. "Paris is history," he said, "but a city needs to be alive and in touch with the evolution of minds."

For the fountains, Mr. Gatier is poised to perform one of the duties of his position, choosing the architects. "It's a mission of listening," he said, "to include architects from all over the world."

Triomphe's lighting.

The fund-raising campaign was spearheaded by Fonds Pour Paris, a private organization that also raised money for the production of a new opera by Dutch composer Wim Mertens and a new version of "Paris," a hit musical that was also being screened in New York.

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The Bouroullecs (Ronan is 47 years old and Erwan, 42), have made their names through elegant industrial products, and their limited-edition objects are prized by art collectors. They have been commissioned to design furniture for François Pinault's private museum being created near Les Halles, and have donated spigots and some of the piping, bringing the fountains to a standstill. They are expected to stay in their design for several years, with a million euros ($1.5 million) having been raised from private sponsors for the project.

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