

2 Action in chains

Also sometimes less frequently called «Freedom fettered» **this bronze statue erected in 1908 recalls the tormented destiny of Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881)** (see no.5, p.12) who was **born in Puget Théniers**. Anxious to preserve the memory of the « Detainee », his biographer Gustave Geoffroy led the Puget section of the *French league of the defense of citizen and human rights* in a project to erect a monument. The honorary President of the committee is no other than Georges Clemenceau, an admirer of Blanqui who he had the opportunity to meet.

It is to Aristide Maillol(1861-1944) that the project is entrusted.

A graduate of the painting section of the Beaux Arts de Paris - *Paris Fine Arts school*, he joins the Nabis group in the wake of Gauguin. He finally abandons painting to take up sculpting, initiated by his friend Antoine Bourdelle a disciple of Rodin. In 1905 when he receives the order for this sculpture, his career as a sculptor finally takes off with the success of “The Mediterranean” presented at the Autumn salon.

The representation of women is key to his work and the monument to Blanqui as a feminine allegory is no exception. He replies to Clemenceau saying “*I will give you a great woman's arse Mr President!*” ? Maillol's style is already recognisable with its classic inspiration breaking with Rodin's vocabulary, it is so detailed, modelled and vibrant. In it prevail the fullness of flesh, massive and serene with smooth silent volumes. **Her legs are anchored to the ground, just like Blanqui's convictions, pegged to her body, her arms linked behind her back, her face turned in refusal of the power of authority, the allegory is however advancing, chest forward, purposeful.**

Before entering the village, notice the bridge which crosses the river Var, it replaces a bridge built between rue Jausserandy and the large buildings on the other bank. The architect Laurent Barbier conceived this cable-stayed bridge without an intermediary pillar, so as not to obstruct the flow of the river in case of flooding. Its very unusual construction was undertaken on the right bank of the river in 2004, before pivoting the whole bridge 90° in less than two hours in order to place the extreme end of the bridge deck on the left bank.

Upstream from the bridge is the former furniture factory of the Brouchier family built in 1906 (see no.13, p 24)

Liberty displaced and celebrated

Initially erected in front of the south facade of the church, the monument is transferred to its current position in 1922.

Pretexting the creation of a war memorial in its place, the town council ended the virulent opposition of parishioners to the outrageous nudity of the statue. Since then, having escaped, in extremis, destruction during the Occupation, « Marianne » as the local Pugétois have named her, is included in all commemorations.