

# FLUME & VORTEX

## THE ART OF TWO FOUNTAINEERS

Jenny Pery

When, over a decade ago, two fountaineers lit the fuse to start their new father-and-son partnership, they had no idea of the magnitude of the explosion. Their chosen medium, water, was to prove as unpredictable as had their individual lives of high-octane adventure. To become fountaineers was an unusual choice, and their escapades with water have provided them with many excitements, yet as fountain-makers they have become important new members of a long and fascinating tradition.

Water's therapeutic and decorative powers have been acknowledged and exploited since antiquity, but never more so than today. Harnessing the magical power of water has, by pure chance, become an enduring challenge for Ranulf and Giles Rayner. This inventive duo have created a large number of innovative fountains, both at home and abroad, and their sculpture, combining detailed naturalism with extreme modernism, exploits the fickle properties of water with spectacular results.

Since starting their enterprise commissions for fountains have taken Ranulf and Giles all over the world. The dynamic partnership has resulted in the building of water sculptures in many different genres, ranging from the purely traditional to the most extreme cutting-edge modernity, and has exploited the special effects of water in novel and exciting ways.

Fountains are now essential features in new urban developments and in large well-designed gardens, and Ranulf and Giles Rayner have never been busier. In this handsomely illustrated book, Jenny Pery explores their remarkable and adventurous lifestyles, discusses the background to their work, and reveals their achievements as leaders in the field.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jenny Pery is an artist and art historian. She is the author of numerous titles on British art including books on Anthony Eyton, Benedict Rubbra, Daphne Todd, Claude Rogers, Solomon J. Solomon, John Dodgson, Edward Piper, Robert Organ and Alan Cotton.



Ranulf Rayner



Giles Rayner

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## HALSGROVE TITLE INFORMATION

# Flume & Vortex

## THE ART OF TWO FOUNTAINEERS

THE EXTRAORDINARY LIVES AND WORKS OF GILES & RANULF RAYNER



Jenny Pery

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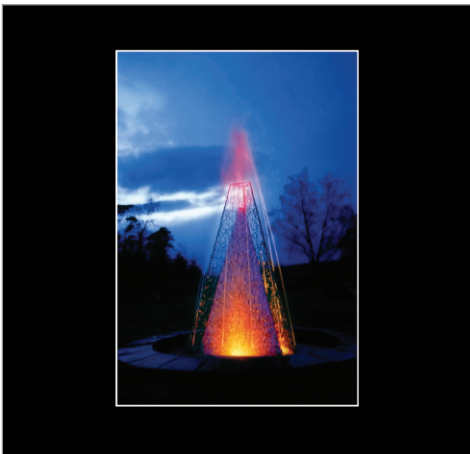


# FLUME & VORTEX



Above: Giles at work.

Left: Blade. Designed like the wing of an aeroplane in order to combat the high winds sometimes experienced in Co Tipperary, Southern Ireland, the sculpture, built of bronze, stands 30ft high.



Example of a double-page spread.

*'If water is the fuel of life, then fountains are the fire!'*  
Ranolf Rayner

When, in 1986, the two fountainiers to the fore to start their own father and son partnership, they had no idea of the magnitude of the explosion. Their chosen medium, water, was to prove as unpredictable as their lives of high adventure. It was an unusual choice, and their recognition with water here proved them with many scepticisms, but as fountain makers they have become important members of a long and fascinating tradition.

Water's therapeutic and decorative powers have been acknowledged and exploited since antiquity, but never more so than today. Harnessing the magic power of water has, by past choice, become an enduring challenge for Ranolf and Giles Rayner. This innovation has been created a large number of innovative fountains both at home and abroad, and their sculpture, combining detailed realisations with extreme modernism, explains the fickle properties of water with spectacular results.

Because the history of fountain goes back to ancient times, Ranolf and Giles Rayner have a vast library of ideas to draw on, and the story is a fascinating one. Originally purely functional, fountains were at first connected to springs or aqueducts to provide water for drinking and washing, but soon the importance of these water sources seemed to call for embellishment. The need for a fountain to mark a water source in ancient civilisations depended upon whether their water supply was above or below the level of the cities. The ingenious heating methods used by the ancient Egyptians to lift water from the river Nile obtained the need for fountains. The Greeks and Romans, however, who brought their water down from the mountains via aqueducts, built fountains that sprayed or poured water into the collecting basins. Greek fountains were usually made of stone or marble, with water flowing through bronze pipes. Although the water was typically gravity fed into the collecting basins, it can be seen from pictures on their coins that the Greeks understood the use of water pressure to create jets or sprays.

Roman aqueducts served a cultural as well as a practical purpose, and with lead pipes instead of bronze, the Romans advanced both the art and the technology of fountain design. Ancient fountains were filled with public fountains, and small fountains decorated the courtyards of many private houses. After the fall of the Roman Empire, these fountains fell into disrepair. By medieval times fountains were to be found only in monastic centres, where they were symbolic rather than functional, and also as symbols of piety and longevity in the Gardens of Convent. Even allowing the great abilities, fountains as monumental focus points persisted, employing more ingenious designs. The earliest known wind-powered fountains were invented in Persia, and decorative fountains reached an artistic peak in the palaces of



Flame. For Ranolf and Giles the sculpture creates a mist, which often billows from the mouth.

Vortex is fabricated in copper with a red lacquer finish. It is a real laser-welded affair, the 'core' at night also gives the impression of rising flame, and as the water falls back over the surrounding walls, an intricate cocoon-like effect.



Mercury. As it rotates, the water seems to fall in slow motion with the polished stainless steel sculpture floating upwards.



Whirlpool. School for Giles seemed like a vast whirlpool. His design for a garden in Oxfordshire has since proved hugely popular and has been taken up elsewhere. The water both laps over, then clings to the sides of the copper basin and creates a bath plug effect down the centre. 'Which way would it swirl in Australia?' some ask.