



Art and architecture

Subversive classicism

Tim Benton

The sculptor Puget began his career-carving figureheads in the naval dockyards in Toulon. His reputation spread, and the King gave him two great blocks of marble to fashion as he pleased. This is a most unusual subject. Alexander the Great on whom Louis XIV modelled himself had gone to see the great philosopher Diogenes, who lived naked in a barrel. When Alexander and his retinue arrived, he asked the philosopher how he could help him. And Diogenes replied 'Just get out of my light'. Now since Louis XIV also represented himself as the 'Sun King', this is a potentially treasonous representation.