

Marianne

This article is about the symbol of France. For other uses, see [Marianne \(disambiguation\)](#).

Marianne (pronounced: [maʁʒan]) is a national symbol

seillaise, as well as the coat of arms and the official Great Seal of France.



Bust of Marianne sculpted by Théodore Doriot, in the French Senate.

of the French Republic, an allegory of liberty and reason, and a portrayal of the Goddess of Liberty.

Marianne is displayed in many places in France and holds a place of honour in town halls and law courts. She symbolizes the “Triumph of the Republic”, a bronze sculpture overlooking the Place de la Nation in Paris. Her profile stands out on the official government logo of the country, is engraved on French euro coins and appears on French postage stamps; it also was featured on the former franc currency. Marianne is one of the most prominent symbols of the French Republic, and is officially used on most government documents.

Marianne is a significant republican symbol, opposed to monarchy, and an icon of freedom and democracy against all forms of dictatorship. Other national symbols of France include the tricolor flag, the national motto *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, the national anthem *La Mar-*

1 History



Liberty Leading the People by Eugène Delacroix (1830), which celebrates the July Revolution (Louvre Museum).

In classical times it was common to represent ideas and abstract entities by gods, goddesses and allegorical personifications. Less common during the Middle Ages, this practice resurfaced during the Renaissance. During the French Revolution of 1789, many allegorical personifications of 'Liberty' and 'Reason' appeared. These two figures finally merged into one: a female figure, shown either sitting or standing, and accompanied by various attributes, including the tricolor cockade and the Phrygian cap. This woman typically symbolised Liberty, Reason, the Nation, the Homeland, the civic virtues of the Republic. (Compare the Statue of Liberty, created by a French artist, with a copy in both Paris and Saint-Étienne.) In September 1792, the National Convention decided by decree that the new seal of the state would represent a standing woman holding a spear with a Phrygian cap held aloft on top of it.

Historian Maurice Agulhon, who in several well-known works set out on a detailed investigation to discover the origins of Marianne, suggests that it is the traditions and mentality of the French that led to the use of a woman to represent the Republic. ^[1] A feminine allegory was also a manner to symbolise the breaking with the old monarchy headed by kings, and promote modern republican ideology. Even before the French Revolution, the Kingdom of

France was embodied in masculine figures, as depicted in certain ceilings of Palace of Versailles. Furthermore, France and the Republic themselves are, in French, feminine nouns (*la France, la République*),^[2] as are the French nouns for liberty (fr:Liberté) and reason (fr:Raison).

The use of this emblem was initially unofficial and very diverse. A female allegory of Liberty and of the Republic makes an appearance in Eugène Delacroix's painting *Liberty Leading the People*, painted in July 1830 in honour of the Three Glorious Days (or July Revolution of 1830).

1.1 The First Republic



Bust of Marianne, displayed in the corridors of the Luxembourg Palace, seat of the French Senate. (anonymous artist)

Although the image of Marianne did not garner significant attention until 1792, the origins of this “goddess of Liberty” date back to 1775, when Jean-Michel Moreau painted her as a young woman dressed in Roman style clothing with a Phrygian cap atop a pike held in one hand^[3] that years later would become a national symbol across France. Marianne made her first major appearance in the

French spotlight on a medal in July 1789, celebrating the storming of the Bastille and other early events of the Revolution. From this time until September 1792, the image of Marianne was overshadowed by other figures such as Mercury and Minerva.^[3] It was not until September 1792 when the new Republic sought a new image to represent the State that her popularity began to expand. Marianne, the female allegory of Liberty, was chosen to represent the new regime of the French Republic, while remaining to symbolise liberty at the same time.^[4]

The imagery of Marianne chosen as the seal of the First French Republic depicted her standing, young and determined.^[5] It was symbolic of the First Republic itself, a newly created state that had much to prove. Marianne is clad in a classical gown.^[4] In her right hand, she wields the pike of revolution with the Phrygian cap resting on it, which represents the liberation of France.^[5] Marianne is shown leaning on a fasces, a symbol of authority. Although she is standing and holding a pike, this depiction of Marianne is “not exactly aggressive”,^[5] representing the ideology of the moderate-liberal Girondins in the National Convention as they tried to move away from the “frantic violence of the revolutionary days”.^[3]

Although the initial figure of Marianne from 1792 stood in a relatively conservative pose, the revolutionaries were quick to abandon that figure when it no longer suited them. By 1793, the conservative figure of Marianne had been replaced by a more violent image; that of a woman, bare-breasted and fierce of visage, often leading men into battle.^[5] The reason behind this switch stems from the shifting priorities of the Republic. Although the Marianne symbol was initially neutral in tone, the shift to radical action was in response to the beginning of the Terror, which called for militant revolutionary action against foreigners and counter-revolutionaries. As part of the tactics the administration employed, the more radical Marianne was intended to rouse the French people to action.^[4] Even this change, however, was seen to be insufficiently radical by the republicans. After the arrest of the Girondin deputies in October 1793, the Convention sought to “recast the Republic in a more radical mold”,^[6] eventually using the symbol of Hercules to represent the Republic. The use of increasingly radical images to symbolise the Republic was in direct parallel to the beginning of the violence that came to be known as the Reign of Terror.

After the Reign of Terror, there was a need for another change in the imagery, to showcase the more civil and non-violent nature of the Directory. In the Official Vignette of the Executive Directory, 1798, Marianne made a return, still depicted wearing the Phrygian cap, but now surrounded by different symbols. In contrast to the Marianne of 1792, this Marianne “holds no pike or lance”, and leans “languorously” on the tablet of the Constitution of Year III.^[7] Instead of looking straight at the observer, she casts her gaze towards the side, thus appearing less confrontational.^[7] Similar imagery was used in the poster of the Republic’s new calendar.

The symbol of Marianne continued to evolve in response to the needs of the State long after the Directory was dissolved in 1799 following the coup spearheaded by Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès and Napoleon Bonaparte. Whereas Mercury and Minerva and other symbolic figures diminished in prominence over the course of French history, Marianne endured because of her abstraction and impersonality.^[5] The “malleability” of what she symbolised^[3] allowed French political figures to continually manipulate her image to their specific purposes at any given time.



Great Seal of France (1848). The headdress of the Republic is identical to that of the Statue of Liberty. Both are prominent republican symbols.

1.2 The Second Republic

On 17 March 1848, the Ministry of the Interior of the newly founded Second Republic launched a contest to symbolise the Republic on paintings, sculptures, medals, money and seals, as no official representations of it existed. After the fall of the monarchy, the Provisional Government had declared: “The image of liberty should replace everywhere the images of corruption and shame, which have been broken in three days by the magnanimous French people.” For the first time, the allegory of Marianne condensed into itself Liberty, the Republic and the Revolution.

Two “Marianne” were authorised. One is fighting and victorious, recalling the Greek goddess Athena: she has a bare breast, the Phrygian cap and a red corsage, and has an arm lifted in a gesture of rebellion. The other is more conservative: she is rather quiet, wearing clothes in a style of Antiquity, with sun rays around her head—a transfer of the royal symbol to the Republic—and is accompanied by many symbols (wheat, a plough and the fasces of the Roman lictors). These two, rival Marianne represent

two ideas of the Republic, a bourgeois representation and a democratic and social representation – the June Days Uprising hadn't yet occurred.

Town halls voluntarily chose to have representations of Marianne, often turning her back to the church. Marianne made her first appearance on a French postage stamp in 1849.^[2]

1.3 The Second Empire

During the Second Empire (1852–1870), this depiction became clandestine and served as a symbol of protest against the regime. The common use of the name “Marianne” for the depiction of “Liberty” started around 1848/1851, becoming generalised throughout France around 1875.

1.4 The Third Republic



“Freedom for France, freedom for the French” Marianne (1940)

The usage began to be more official during the Third Republic (1870–1940). The Hôtel de Ville in Paris (city hall) displayed a statue of “Marianne” wearing a Phrygian cap in 1880, and was quickly followed by the other French cities. In Paris, where the Radicals had a strong presence, a contest was launched for the statue of Place de la République. It was won by the Morice brothers (with

Léopold Morice producing the sculpture and the architect François-Charles Morice designing the pedestal), in 1879, with an academical Marianne, with an arm lifted towards the sky and a Phrygian cap, but with her breasts covered. Aimé-Jules Dalou lost the contest against the Morice brothers, but the City of Paris decided to build his monument on the Place de la Nation, inaugurated for the centenary of the French Revolution, in 1889, with a plaster version covered in bronze. Dalou's Marianne had the lictor's fasces, the Phrygian cap, a bare breast, and was accompanied by a Blacksmith representing Work, and allegories of Freedom, Justice, Education and Peace: all that the Republic was supposed to bring to its citizens. The final bronze monument was inaugurated in 1899, in the turmoil of the Dreyfus Affair, with Waldeck-Rousseau, a Radical, in power. The ceremony was accompanied by a huge demonstration of workers, with red flags. The government's officials, wearing black redingotes, quit the ceremony. Marianne had been reappropriated by the workers, but as the representative of the Social and Democratic Republic (*la République démocratique et sociale*, or simply *La Sociale*).

Few Mariannes were depicted in the First World War memorials, but some living models of Marianne appeared in 1936, during the Popular Front as they had during the Second Republic (then stigmatized by the right-wing press as "unashamed prostitutes"). During World War II, Marianne represented Liberty against the Nazi invaders, and the Republic against the Vichy regime (see Paul Collin's representation). During Vichy, 120 of the 427 monuments of Marianne were melted, while the Milice took out its statues in town halls in 1943.^[2]

1.5 Fifth Republic



Marianne « La semeuse » on a five French francs coin (1970).

Marianne's presence became less important after World

War II, although General Charles de Gaulle made a large use of it, in particular on stamps or for the referendums. The most recent subversive and revolutionary appearance of Marianne was during May '68. The liberal and conservative president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing replaced Marianne by *La Poste* on stamps, changed the rhythm of the *Marseillaise* and suppressed the commemoration of 8 May 1945.

During the bicentenary of the Revolution, in 1989, Marianne hardly made any public appearance. The Socialist President François Mitterrand aimed to make the celebrations a consensual event, gathering all citizens, recalling more the Republic than the Revolution. The American opera singer Jessye Norman took Marianne's place, singing *La Marseillaise* as part of an elaborate pageant orchestrated by avant-garde designer Jean-Paul Goude. The Republic, after harsh internal fighting throughout the 19th century and even the 20th century (February 6, 1934 riots, Vichy, etc.), had become consensual; the vast majority of French citizens were now republicans, leading to a lesser importance of a cult of Marianne.^[2]

2 Origin of the name

At the time of the French Revolution, as the most common of people were fighting for their rights, it seemed fitting to name the Republic after the most common of French women's names : Marie (Mary) and Anne. The account made of their exploits by the Revolutionaries often contained a reference to a certain Marianne (or Marie-Anne) wearing a Phrygian cap. This pretty girl of legend inspired the revolutionaries, and looked after those wounded in the many battles across the country.

A recent discovery establishes that the first written mention of the name of Marianne to designate the Republic appeared in October 1792 in Puylaurens in the Tarn *département* near Toulouse. At that time people used to sing a song in the Provençal dialect of Occitan by the poet Guillaume Lavabre: "*La garisou de Marianno*" (French: "*La guérison de Marianne*"; "Marianne's recovery (from illness)"). At the time Marie-Anne was a very popular first name; according to Agulhon, it "was chosen to designate a régime that also saw itself as popular."^[9]

Some believe that the name came from the name of the Spanish Jesuit Juan de Mariana, the 16th century Monarchomach, a theoretician of tyrannicide. Others think it was the image of the wife of the politician Jean Reubell: according to an old 1797 story, Barras, one of the members of the *Directoire*, during an evening spent at Reubell's, asked his hostess for her name—"Marie-Anne," she replied—"Perfect," Barras exclaimed, "It is a short and simple name, which befits the Republic just as much as it does yourself, Madame."

The description by artist Honoré Daumier in 1848, as a mother nursing two children, Romulus and Remus, or by



Marianne in Jonzac (1894). The sculpture is similar to Liberty Enlightening the World, commonly known as the Statue of Liberty.^[8]

sculptor François Rude, during the July Monarchy, as a warrior voicing the *Marseillaise* on the Arc de Triomphe, are uncertain.

The name of Marianne also appears to be connected with several republican secret societies. During the Second Empire, one of them, whose members had sworn to overthrow the monarchy, had taken her name.

In any case, she has become a symbol in France: considered as a personification of the Republic, she was often used on republican iconography – and sometimes caricatured and reviled by those against the republic, especially royalists and monarchists.

3 Models

The official busts of Marianne initially had anonymous features, appearing as women of the people. From 1969 however they began to take on the features of famous women, starting with the actress Brigitte Bardot.^[2]



Demonstration against same-sex marriage in Paris on 13 January 2013 by the group “Manif pour tous”.

She was followed by Mireille Mathieu (1978), Catherine Deneuve (1985), Inès de La Fressange (1989), Laetitia Casta (2000) and Évelyne Thomas (2003).

Laetitia Casta was named the symbolic representation of France’s Republic in October 1999 in a vote open for the first time to the country’s more than 36,000 mayors. She won from a shortlist of five candidates, scoring 36% among the 15,000 that voted. The other candidates were Estelle Hallyday, Patricia Kaas, Daniela Lumbroso, Laetitia Milot and Nathalie Simon.^[10]

In July 2013, a new stamp featuring the Marianne was debuted by President François Hollande, allegedly designed by the team of Olivier Ciappa and David Kawena. Ciappa claimed that Inna Shevchenko, a high-profile member of the Ukrainian protest group FEMEN who had recently been granted political asylum in France, was a main inspiration for the new Marianne.^[11] However, Kawena and his attorney later claimed that Ciappa was falsely representing himself as having had any level of creative input on the artwork. Kawena further stated that Shevchenko, or any other figure that Ciappa claimed to be an inspiration, was in no way the model for the work, and has sued Ciappa for violation of copyright on the Marianne artwork.^{[12][13]} Ciappa later refuted the claims that Kawena was ignored, and also revealed his legal name (“David Kawena” being a pseudonym taken from the *Lilo & Stitch* films) in a retaliatory press release; Xavier Héraud, a writer for Yagg (a French LGBT news site), noted that in a 2013 Huffington Post piece by Ciappa^[14] he never refers to Kawena and claims authorship of the images within the post.^[15] Yagg later reported on a response to their posting from Ciappa where he said that he was not in editorial control of the Huffington Post piece and did not intend to have the phrasing be “My Marianne” as accused by Kawena in his suit; Yagg later contacted Huffington Post who informed them that they sent a draft for Ciappa to look at prior to publishing, which is the current version of the article.^[16]

4 Government logo

Blue-white-red, Marianne, *Liberté-Égalité-Fraternité*, the Republic: these national symbols represent France, as a state and its values. Since September 1999, they have been combined in a new “identifier” created by the Plural Left government of Lionel Jospin under the aegis of the French Government Information Service (SIG) and the public relations officials in the principal ministries. As a federating identifier of the government departments, it appears on a wide range of material—brochures, internal and external publications, publicity campaigns, letter headings, business cards, etc.—emanating from the government, starting with the various ministries (which are able to continue using their own logo in combination with this) and the *préfectures* and *départements*.^[17]

5 Gallery

6 See also

- National personification, contains the list of personifications for various nations and territories.
- Statue of Liberty (*Liberty Enlightening the World*), a gift from the French people to the American people to commemorate the American Declaration of Independence.
- Columbia, an equivalent symbol for the United States of America.
- Government of France

7 Notes

- [1] Agulhon, Maurice (1981). *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880*.
- [2] Anne-Marie Sohn. *Marianne ou l'histoire de l'idée républicaine aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles à la lumière de ses représentations* (French)
- [3] Hunt 1984, p. 62.
- [4] Agulhon 1981, p. 18.
- [5] Hunt 1984, p. 93.
- [6] Hunt 1984, p. 94.
- [7] Hunt 1984, p. 118.
- [8] Poitou-Charentes Region. “Monument commémoratif du Centenaire de la Révolution”. La statue, réalisée par le sculpteur Gustave Michel, a été fondue par Louis Gasné. Elle représente une Liberté coiffée d'un bonnet phrygien ceint d'une couronne végétale. Elle porte un glaive suspendu à un baudrier, brandit de la main gauche le flambeau de la Liberté et maintient au sol de la main droite les

Tables de la Loi, soit une position inverse de la statue de la Liberté de Bartholdi.

- [9] Agulhon 1981, p. 10.
- [10] Laetitia Casta as Marianne
- [11] “FEMEN’s Inna Shevchenko inspired France’s Marianne stamp”. BBC. 15 July 2013. The artist who designed the new Marianne image for French stamps has revealed that he was inspired by topless activist Inna Shevchenko.[...] The Ukrainian, who belongs to the protest group FEMEN, was recently granted political asylum in France.
- [12] “Timbre Marianne: David Kawena affirme être le seul auteur et porte plainte contre Olivier Ciappa”. Yagg. 2014-02-25. Retrieved 2014-05-16.
- [13] “Timbre Femen : vers un procès en France”. Lefigaro.fr. 2014-03-06. Retrieved 2014-05-16.
- [14] “Olivier Ciappa: Pourquoi j'ai choisi une Femen pour Marianne”. Huffingtonpost.fr. 2013-07-15. Retrieved 2014-05-16.
- [15] “Timbre Marianne: Olivier Ciappa se justifie, David Kawena sort de son silence”. Yagg. 2014-03-03. Retrieved 2014-05-16.
- [16] “Droit de réponse d'Olivier Ciappa”. Yagg. 2014-03-21. Retrieved 2014-05-16.
- [17] Service d'Information du Gouvernement (24 September 1999). “Charte Graphique de la Communication Gouvernementale” (PDF). Retrieved 2011-10-23.

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- Agulhon, Maurice (1981). *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880*. Translated by Janet Lloyd. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-28224-1. OCLC 461753884.
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9 Further reading

- Censer, Jack R.; Hunt, Lynn (2001). *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*. University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press. ISBN 0-271-02088-1. Website <<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/>>

10 External links

- Marianne - Official French website (in English)
- Marianne (French embassy in the USA)
- Marianne (French Prime Minister's office)

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