

## Fountain

The Bear Fountain stands in Zuoz's most prominent location: in the middle of the village square. Framed by sturdy Engadine houses, directly opposite the patrician Planta family home, the fountain water – „l'ova da bügl“ – babbles. A standing bear on the fountain's base gives it its name. The bear's paw was the symbol of the once-powerful Planta family.

This fountain, along with the others in Zuoz, now serves only as decoration and is a cultural and historical landmark. The use of water is as old as humankind. Springs were tapped, wells were dug, and houses with stables and barns grew up around them. At the well, livestock were watered, laundry was washed, and drinking water was fetched. The water was carried into the house for hygiene, cooking, or as fire-fighting water to protect against conflagration. Well associations organized the well regulations: when and how the well could be used and who was responsible for cleaning it and on what schedule.

For the people, the fountains were not only essential for survival; they were also meeting places. News was exchanged, celebrations were held, announcements were read aloud, and children played there. It's no coincidence that the living room windows of Engadine houses are usually oriented towards the fountain.

In Zuoz, the fountains also hold special significance during Chalandamarz. Chalandamarz is an old Engadine custom in which children parade through the village with bells and songs, symbolically banishing winter. Originally, it was the festival marking the beginning of the year, as the Julian calendar began on March 1st, thus welcoming the New Year. In Zuoz, the „Prouva da Chalandamarz“ takes place two Sundays prior. This consists of an initial procession of the bell-ringing children around all the fountains in the village. This custom originally dates back to the selection of young men for mercenary service.

*Fadrina Hofmann*