

Chapter 4: ART NOUVEAU

OR nuvo/(French for "new art") (1890 – 1910)

Derived from the name of a shop in Paris, “**Maison de l'Art Nouveau**”, at the time run by Samuel Bing, that showcased objects that followed this approach to design.

4.1 THE MOVEMENT

- First stirrings in the 1880s, in few progressive designs influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. One example is the **Bookcover design for City churches of Sir Christopher Wren** by architect-designer Arthur Mackmurdo's (1883).
- Climaxed (**1892 to 1902**). At the **Universal Exposition** (1900) in Paris, the "modern style" triumphed in every medium. It peaked at the 1902 **Turin Exposition** in Italy.
- It is a prelude to 20th-century modernism, that included:

"**Jugendstil**" ('Youth')("Style") in **Germany** and “**Nieuwe Kunst**” in **Netherlands**

"**Sezessionsstil**" ('Secessionism') in Vienna at the **Austrian school of art and architecture**. Forward-looking artists and designers seceded from the mainstream salon exhibitions, to exhibit on their own in more congenial surroundings.

In **Catalonia**, Barcelona, Spain known as "**modernisme**", with **Antoni Gaudí** as the most noteworthy practitioner.

In **Italy**, "**Stile Liberty**" name of the London shop, Liberty & Co, also “**Stile Floreale**”

In **Russia**, it referred to art magazine **World of Art**, which produced **Ballets Russes**

4.2 CHARACTERISTICS

- Made use of **technological** innovations of the late 19th century; broad use of exposed **iron** and large, **irregularly-shaped pieces of glass** in architecture
- Free-flowing **wrought iron**, flat floral textile designs, influence of **vegetal-derived** patterns of High **Victorian** design though eschewed the eclectic historicism of the Victorian era.
- Modernized some of the more abstract elements of **Rococo** style, such as **flame** and **shell** textures.
- Use of highly-stylized **nature** as the source of inspiration and expanded the "natural" repertoire to embrace seaweed, grasses, and insects.
- Use of organic forms, curved lines, especially floral or vegetal
- Dynamic, undulating and flowing, curved "whiplash" lines of syncopated rhythm
- Use of **hyperbolas** and **parabolas**

- Conventional moldings sprung to life and "grow" into plant-derived forms

Though has affinity to, but unlike Symbolist painting, it has a **distinctive** visual look; and unlike the backwards-looking Pre-Raphaelites, the artists used new materials, machined surfaces, and **abstraction** in the service of pure design.

For **sculpture** the principle materials employed were **glass** and **wrought iron**, leading to sculptures quality even in architecture.

Art Nouveau is considered a "**total style**", meaning that it encompasses a hierarchy of scales in design — architecture, interior design, jewellery, furniture and textile design, utensils and art objects, lighting, etc.¹

4.3 DECLINE

About the **First World War**, the its highly stylized nature of design, that was **expensive**, began to be dropped in favor of more streamlined, simply **rectilinear modernism** that was cheaper and thought to be more faithful to the rough, plain industrial aesthetic.

4.4 NOTED ARCHITECTS AND THEIR WORKS

4.4.1 OTTO KOLOMAN WAGNER (1841-1918)

He was an **Austrian** architect. He studied in Berlin and Vienna. He started designing in historicist style later joined the movement. He became a **teacher** at the **Academy of Fine Arts Vienna**. He made use of **new materials** and **forms** to reflect the changing society. He stated that "new human tasks and views called for a **change** or reconstitution of existing forms". As a **functionalist** he designed and built structures that reflected their intended function, such as the **Austere Wohnhaus** (apartment building), **Maiolika House apartments**.

His style culminated in the rigid geometry of **Saint Leopold's Church** (1907) and the delicate steel-and-glass **linearity** of the **Post Office Savings Bank** (1906), both in Vienna. He was one of the founding members of the "**Vienna Secession**" artistic group.

Facade is created by a marble veneer attached by means of aluminium headed bolts.



Post Office Savings Bank²

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Nouveau

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wien_-_%C3%96sterreichische_Postsparkasse,_Georg-Coch-Platz.JPG

4.4.2 ANTONI GAUDÍ I CORNET (1852-1926)

He was a **Spanish** architect of the **Modernisme** (Art Nouveau) movement, famous for his unique style and highly **individualistic** designs. He studied architecture at **Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura** in Barcelona. As Elies Rogent signed Gaudí's title (degree), he declared, "I have either found a lunatic or a genius."

He was fascinated by **nature** and incorporated **angles** and **curves** into his designs. His designs complemented organic vision of architecture with a unique spatial vision which allowed him to conceive his designs in three dimensions, unlike the flat design. His designs were based on **Geomorphic Architecture** by;

- Integrating the **parabolic arch**, nature's organic shapes, and the **fluidity** of water
- Translating the form of nature through hyperboloid, helicoid, cone etc.
- Use of **Catenary curves** in Architecture that was used in engineering of suspension bridges
- Facade is decorated with a mosaic made of broken ceramic tiles (**Trencadís**)

CASA VICENS

- This is a residential building.
- Undressed stone, rough red bricks, and coloured ceramic tiles in checkerboard and floral patterns
- Plan is asymmetrical with protruding gables and buttresses
- Use of bright colors and extensive use of tiles
- Elaborately decorated chimney



CASA VICENS³

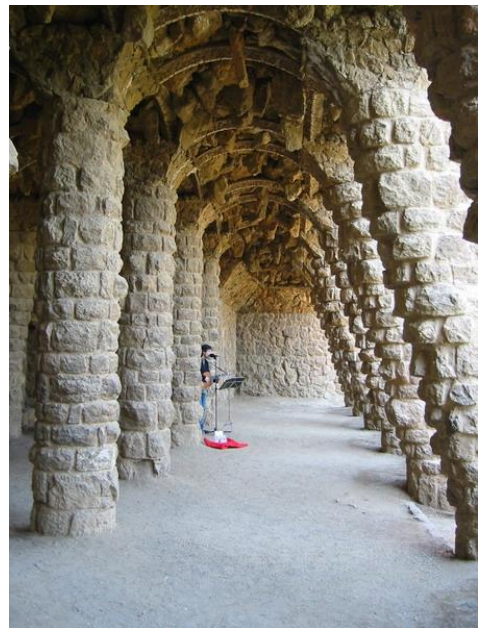
³ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/83/Vicens_Carolines.jpg/1024px-Vicens_Carolines.jpg

CASA BATLLÓ

- Have a visceral, skeletal organic quality
- Tracery, irregular oval windows and flowing sculpted stone work
- Avoid straight lines completely
- Mosaic made of broken ceramic tiles that start in shades of golden orange moving into greenish blues i.e trencandis
- Roof is arched and was likened to the back of a dragon
- Consist of basement, five stories and garden at the back

PARK GÜELL (1900-1914)

- Garden complex with architectural elements situated on the hill
- Columns at the top of stairs has a plaza
- Mosaic work on the main terrace
- Multi colored mosaic dragon fountain at the main entrance
- Sloping columns responding to force vectors
- Vaulted construction



Vaulted construction⁴

⁴https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/52/Parc_Guell_10.jpg

CASA MILÀ (LA PEDRERA)

- It has two buildings; which are structured around two courtyards that provide light to the nine levels
- It has an asymmetrical layout and its facade is self-supporting



Casa Mila⁵

Its most significant parts of the building is the roof, crowned with skylights, staircase exits, fans, and chimneys.

- Its shape of the exterior continues to the interior.
- It has the application of the catenary arch as a support structure for the roof
- It was a controversial design at the time for the bold forms of the undulating stone facade and wrought iron decoration of the balconies and windows

SAGRADA FAMÍLIA (1882- incomplete)

- It has a cruciform plan, with a five-aisled nave, a transept of three aisles, and an apse with seven chapels.
- Gaudí conceived this church as if it were the structure of a forest. The nave in the Sagrada Família is built with a hyperboloid vault. Inspiration from nature is taken from a tree, as the pillar and branches symbolize trees rising up to the roof.
- Essentially none of the interior surfaces are flat while all detail works are done on full of curvaceous elaborations
- Its northeast façade rising to the sun is the Nativity Façade; a symbol for the birth of Christ. It is decorated with scenes reminiscent of elements of life and images from nature. Its three porticos represent a theological virtue (Hope, Charity and Faith).
- Its west façade facing the setting sun, symbolic of the death of Christ, the Passion Façade is supported by six large and inclined columns and has a pyramidal pediment.

⁵https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/de/Casa_Mil%C3%A0%2C_general_view.jpg/250px-Casa_Mil%C3%A0%2C_general_view.jpg

It is plain and simple, carved with harsh straight lines to resemble the bones of a skeleton; intended to portray suffering of Jesus during his crucifixion.

4.4.3 VICTOR HORTA (1861-1947)

He was a **Belgian** architect. He abandoned the neoclassical style of his schooling in favor of an innovative Art Nouveau. The construction of his **Hôtel Tassel** in Brussels is credited as the first to adopt **Biomorphic** style derived from decorative arts into architecture.

He shifted from residential works to devote himself to competitions for **public work**. He focused on the **curvature** of his designs, believing that the forms he produced were highly practical and not artistic affectations.

He wrote, “Everything thought out in terms of architecture as well as construction should be faithful to the last detail”. Four of his works are enlisted in the UNESCO **World Heritage Site**: Hôtel Tassel, Hôtel Solvay, Hôtel van Eetvelde, **Maison and Atelier Horta** (now; Horta Museum).



Hôtel Tassel⁶

In interiors, Horta used iron for columns, ceilings, windows and handrails. The stairwell is designed a lighted core in a constrained urban environment.

⁶https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/af/Tassel_House_stairway.JPG/319px-Tassel_House_stairway.JPG

4.4.4 HECTOR GUIMARD (1867-1942)

He was a **French** architect, considered to be prominent representative of artists and architects in Art Nouveau style. He went to **Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts** in Paris where he got **rationalist ideas** based on the theories of **Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc**, which provided the foundations for the **principles** of Art Nouveau.

He undertook space experiments, in the volumetric of his constructions: the **Coilliot house** and its disconcerting double-frontage, **La Blquette** and its beautiful volumetric harmony and the **Castel Henriette** & the **Castel d'Orgeval** radical demonstrations of a vigorous and asymmetrical "**free plan**".

He designed his first and finest apartment building, **Castel Béranger** in Paris (1898). Symmetry is however not proscribed: the **Nozal hotel**, uses the rational disposition of a plan in square proposed by Viollet-le-Duc. He is best known for his **subway entrances** the **Paris Métro** for (1900).



Subway entrances of Paris Métro⁷

He was an isolated sniper, without any disciple or any school.

4.4.5 JOSEPH MARIA OLBRICH (1867-1908)

He was an **Austrian** architect. He studied at the **Academy of Fine Arts**, Vienna and won several prizes. He worked for **Otto Wagner** and did the detailed construction for most of Wagner's **Wiener Stadtbahn** (Metropolitan Railway) buildings. His works include: residence for Hermann Bahr at Vienna, **Hochzeitsturm** at Mathildenhöhe, Department store for Leonhard Tietz at Düsseldorf and the **Secession building** at Vienna.

⁷https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a0/Abbesses_entrance_2.jpg/800px-Abbesses_entrance_2.jpg

4.4.6 Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928)

He was a **Scottish** architect/ designer and watercolorist in the **Arts and Crafts movement** and the main exponent of Art Nouveau in Scotland. He worked as an apprentice to architect **John Hutchison** and later as a draughtsman with Honeyman and Keppie, simultaneously attended evening classes in art at the **Glasgow School of Art**.

He developed his own **Mechanomorphic** style: a contrast between strong right angles and floral-inspired decorative motifs with subtle curves, e.g. the **Mackintosh Rose motif**, along with some references to traditional Scottish architecture.

One of his famous projects was the **Glasgow School of Art**;

It large rectangular windows, unmoulded transom/ mullions framed in masonry of rectilinear severity, functionalist/ modern look. The "Glasgow" style influenced the **Sezessionstil**.

4.4.7 Josef Hoffman (1870-1956) is an **Austrian** architect, a pioneer of modern architecture. He was a pupil of **Otto Wagner**, whose **rationalistic principles** he carried toward greater refinement and elegance. Hoffmann's early designs such as the flat-topped **Purkersdorf Sanatorium**, Austria, emphasized squares and rectangles and has “**cubiform**” vocabulary.

His masterpiece, the **Palais Stocklet**, Brussels is a large but delicately detailed building, anticipated the mid-century **International Style**. His later works—including villas, exhibition halls, and **working-class housing** moved away from mainstream architectural developments toward extreme **purity** and **austerity**.

4.4.8 Auguste Perret (1874-1954), **French** architect, is a pioneer of the modern French style. He was one of the earliest advocates of **reinforced concrete** as a building material. His apartment building (1902-1903) in the Rue Franklin in Paris is the first French residential building in concrete. Perret was forward-looking in his emphasis on designs that visually reveal a building's structure; his preoccupation with classical proportion links him with earlier architects, as exemplified in his **Church of Notre Dame**, Le Raincy.

As director of the postwar rebuilding of the French **City of Le Havre**, he designed a grid-like plan that was based on classical proportions, with a broad **central axis**, generous squares, and prefabricated housing in a uniform style.

ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT

Context:

Rapid Industrialization in nineteenth-century England created a new social order based and raised the material standard of living. They were becoming concerned about the decline of artistic standards in manufactured goods because trained designers were not involved in such wares for industrial production.



Red House⁸

Two major issues i.e. decline of moral values and decline of artistic standards of manufactured goods began the Arts and Crafts Movement (1850-1900) in Britain and (1876-1916) in United States.

The Originator of the movement is **John Ruskin**, art critic and is known as the “**Creator of Arts and Crafts Ideals**”. He associated moral values with certain historical styles and believed in devotion of craftsmen to building.

William Morris, architect and artist was the key person who practiced his ideals. He established workshops where artist-craftsmen created textiles, wallpapers, stained glass, utensils, and furniture using handicraft techniques⁹

He commissioned **Philip Webb, Architect** to design **Red House**, Kent 1869-70.

The plan is of the house is rectangular and functional.

Designed to have direct response to light and ventilation; it is true to its materials and its construction.

The building comprehended the site and local culture.

Another Architect who practiced in this movement is **Richard Norman Shaw**, Leyswood, Sussex (1870). He lessened the excesses of Victorian Gothic to produce a rural vernacular known as “Old English”.

Later Architect **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** designed all interiors furnishings in handcrafted Arts and Crafts Movement tradition; furniture, light fixtures, carpets etc. in Glasgow School of Art, Scotland.

⁸ https://photos.geni.com/p13/f3/97/43/3e/5344483ea4ec3d97/red-house-3_medium.jpg

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_and_Crafts_movement