

## Hôtel Tassel

The Hôtel Tassel is a town house built by Victor Horta in Brussels for the Belgian scientist and professor Emile Tassel in 1893-1894. It is located at 6, Rue Paul-Emile Jansonstraat in Brussels. It is generally considered as the first true 'Art Nouveau' building, because of its highly innovative plan and its ground breaking use of materials and decoration. Together with three other town houses of Victor Horta, including Horta's own house and atelier it was put on the 'UNESCO World Heritage List' in 2000.

At the Hôtel Tassel Horta definitively broke with this traditional scheme. In fact he built a house consisting of three different parts. Two rather conventional buildings in brick and natural stone - one on the side of the street and one on the side of the garden - were linked by a steel structure covered with glass. It functions as the connective part in the spatial composition of the house and contains staircases and landings that connect the different rooms and floors. Through the glass roof it functions as a light shaft that brings natural light into the centre of the building. In this part of the house, that could also be used for receiving guests, Horta made the maximum of his skills as an interior designer. He designed every single detail; doorhandles, woodwork, panels and windows in stained glass, mosaic floorings, stairrailings, electric fittings and even the decorative wallpaintings and the furnishing. Horta succeeded in integrating the lavish decoration without masking the general architectural structures.

The innovations made in the Hôtel Tassel would mark the style and approach for most of Horta's later town houses, including the Hôtel van Eetvelde, the Hôtel Solvay and the architect's own house and 'atelier'. It might be superfluous to mention that these houses were very expensive and only affordable for the rich 'bourgeoisie' with an 'Avant-Garde' taste. For this reason the pure architectural innovations were not largely followed by other architects. Most other Art Nouveau dwellings in Belgium and other European countries were inspired by Horta's 'whiplash' decorative style which is mostly applied to a more traditional building. The Hôtel Tassel had a decisive influence on the French Art Nouveau architect Hector Guimard who later developed a personal interpretation of Horta's example.

## Hôtel Solvay

The "Hôtel Solvay" is a large "Art Nouveau" town house designed by Victor Horta on the Avenue Louise in Brussels. The house was commissioned by Armand Solvay, the son of the wealthy Belgian chemist and industrialist Ernest Solvay. For this wealthy patron Horta could spend a fortune on precious materials and expensive details. Horta designed every single detail; furniture, carpets, light fittings, tableware and even the door bell. (see photo) He used expensive materials such as marble, onyx, bronze, tropic woods etc. For the decoration of the staircase Horta cooperated with the Belgian pointillist painter Théo van Rysselberghe. The "Hôtel Solvay" and most of its splendid content remained intact thanks to the Wittamer family. They acquired the house in the 1950's and did the utmost to preserve and restore this magnificent dwelling. The house is still private property and can only be visited by appointment and under very strict conditions. The edifice is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

## Hôtel van Eetvelde

The Hôtel van Eetvelde is a town house designed in 1895 by Victor Horta for Edmond van Eetvelde, administrator of Congo Free State. It is located at 4 Avenue Palmerston in Brussels. Together with the Hôtel Tassel, the Hôtel Solvay and his own House and atelier it belongs to the core of epoch-making urban residences Victor Horta designed before 1900. The visible application of "industrial" materials such as steel and glass was a novel for prestigious private dwellings at the time. In the Hôtel van Eetvelde Horta also used a hanging steel construction for the façade. The interior receives additional lighting through a central reception room covered by a stained-glass cupola. An extension to the house was designed by Horta in 1898. This building has a more conventional, beautifully detailed sandstone façade. It was designed to house a garage, an office for van Eetvelde as well as supporting apartments and therefore had a separate entrance (2 Avenue Palmerston).

## Maison and Atelier Horta

The Musée Horta (French) or Hortamuseum (Dutch) is a museum dedicated to the life and work of the Belgian Art Nouveau architect Victor Horta and his time. The museum is housed in Horta's former house and atelier (1898) in the Brussels municipality of Saint-Gilles. In the splendid Art Nouveau interiors there is a permanent display of furniture, utensils and art objects designed by Horta and his contemporaries as well as documents related to his life and time. The museum also organises temporary exhibitions on topics related to Horta and his art. The building is inscribed on the UNESCO World heritage list.

Source: -- Wikipedia [<http://www.wikipedia.org>]