

PRESS KIT

ART NOUVEAU



UNIQUE OBJECTS WITH A TALE TO TELL



ART NOUVEAU.

Unique objects with a tale to tell.

In the context of the 'Art Nouveau Brussels 2023' year, the King Baudouin Foundation will be exhibiting a series of Art Nouveau masterpieces from its collection at the BELvue museum in Brussels, from 7 June 2023 to 7 January 2024. This year's Art Nouveau celebrations are the perfect opportunity to shine a spotlight on this key period in Belgium's art history.

Visitors will be able to marvel at both Art Nouveau masterpieces and a plethora of everyday objects, designed in the trademark Art Nouveau style. Behind each of the objects is a special story or interesting anecdote. Discover the exceptional objects and their history by visiting the free exhibition 'ART NOUVEAU. Unique objects with a tale to tell.'

Thanks to the generosity of its patrons, the King Baudouin Foundation has been able to acquire key pieces from the Art Nouveau period in recent years, including work by Victor Horta, Philippe Wolfers, Henry van de Velde, George Morren and Gustave Serrurier-Bovy. The collection contains a wide variety of unique pieces - from art jewellery, furniture and sculptures to ceramics, drawings and book covers. Several were handed down to us by the heirs or disciples of the artists.



THE RED THREAD

While the pieces are usually exhibited in different museums around the country, they will now be showcased for the first time in one and the same exhibition at the BELvue museum. The Foundation's exhibition is part of the 'Art Nouveau Brussels 2023' initiative, which various Brussels museums and institutions will be participating in.

Belgium's capital city played an important role in the birth and popularisation of Art Nouveau. All through 2023, Brussels will celebrate and pay tribute to this distinctive Belgian style of art.

Professor Werner Adriaenssens, Art Nouveau expert and the exhibition's curator, will take us on a tour of two dozen iconic artworks and everyday objects that epitomise the Art Nouveau period. He will introduce us to this exceptional art movement, which is all about creativity, craftsmanship, nature, the graceful and fluid play of lines, and Gesamtkunstwerk (total artwork).

The stories of novelist and historian Marc Meganck take us back in time and give us a glimpse of the history of these special objects.

An exhibition that presents the works of the

PROTAGONISTS OF ART NOUVEAU

- **Victor Horta** – architect
Ghent, 1861 - Brussels, 1947
- **Paul Hankar** – architect and decorator
Frameries, 1859 - Brussels, 1901
- **Philippe Wolfers** – jewellery designer, goldsmith, sculptor
Brussels, 1858 - Brussels, 1929
- **Henry van de Velde** – architect en decorateur
Antwerp, - Oberägeri [Zwitserland], 1957



Victor Horta



Portrait of Sophie Willstädter, wife of Philippe Wolfers

- **Gustave Serrurier-Bovy** – architect and decorator
Liege, 1858 - Liege, 1910
- **George Morren** – painter and jewellery designer
Ekeren, 1868 - Brussels, 1941
- **Charles Samuel** – sculptor and medal maker
Brussels, 1862 - Cannes, 1938
- **Égide Rombaux** – sculptor and medal maker
Schaarbeek, 1865 - Ukkel, 1942
- **Armand Rassenfosse** – draughtsman, painter and engraver
Liege, 1862 - Liege, 1934
- **François Hoosemans** – jewellery designer and goldsmith
Brussels, 1857 - Brussels, 1941

Some highlights

SOME EMBLEMATIC MASTERPIECES OF THE ART NOUVEAU PERIOD

Méduse pendant by Philippe Wolfers

The Méduse pendant, designed in 1898, is internationally recognised as an icon of Art Nouveau jewellery. It is one of Wolfers's 'Exemplaires Uniques', unique artistic creations of exceptional quality which were meticulously listed in a catalogue. Not only is the Méduse considered as the most important symbolist piece of jewellery created by Philippe Wolfers, it is also his most remarkable piece. Wolfers carved the face in ivory.



Méduse pendant - Philippe Wolfers

Libellule pendant by Philippe Wolfers

An absolute masterpiece by Philippe Wolfers, in enamel, gold, diamond, opal and Mexican opal. It is considered to be one of Philippe Wolfers's most iconic pieces.



Libellule pendant - Philippe Wolfers

Oiseaux et Iris jewelled comb by Philippe Wolfers

Wolfers created a total of nine decorative hair combs. Oiseaux et iris, however, is the only comb to have come to us in its entirety. It carries the mark of 'Exemplaire Unique' and is still in its original case, making it a museum piece of special importance. By 1900, jewelled combs were already rare and particularly exclusive objects. In present-day jewellery, jewels to be worn in the hair have almost disappeared. No Belgian museum had previously possessed such a jewel.



Oiseaux et Iris jewelled comb - Philippe Wolfers



Ring - Henry van de Velde

Ring by Henry van de Velde

Jewellery created by Henry van de Velde is exceptionally rare. This is the only ring that can be attributed with certitude to this versatile artist. It is made of yellow and red gold, platinum, pearls and diamonds.



Lamp with a nymph - François Hoosemans and Egide Rombaux

Lamp with a nymph by François Hoosemans and Egide Rombaux

This piece is internationally renowned as a masterpiece of Belgian Art Nouveau. It is one of the rare examples we have received of Belgium's contribution to the Exposition Universelle de Paris held in 1900. François Hoosemans, a renowned jeweller, represented Belgium in the Decorative Arts section and he decided to work with Egide Rombaux for this important occasion. They made a series of candlesticks and electric lamps for the event in silver and ivory. The ivory sculpture is the work of Egide Rombaux, whilst the silver support is by François Hoosemans.



Tripod pedestal table - Victor Horta

Tripod pedestal table, Victor Horta

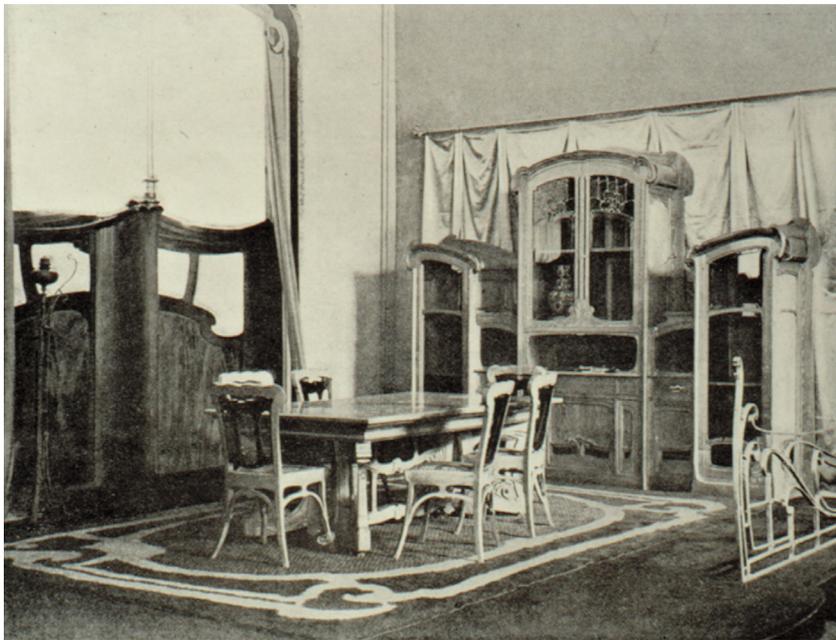
This Art Nouveau tripod pedestal table was designed around 1905-1906 by the Art Nouveau architect Victor Horta for the winter garden of his house (now the Horta Museum). For the table top and shelf, he chose a fossilised wood block that perfectly evokes the function of the winter garden as a link between the house and the garden.

Dining room suite and set of office furniture by Victor Horta

This furniture was designed by Victor Horta for the 1902 Turin International Exhibition of Decorative Arts. The pieces are considered as the highest point in Art Nouveau furniture produced by Horta. The complementary splendour of the colours of the two interiors played a role in the design. The international press could not stop talking about the interiors that Horta had designed and indeed he was awarded a diploma of honour, the highest distinction awarded by the international jury.



Office furniture - Victor Horta



Office furniture - Victor Horta



Dining room - Victor Horta



'Civilisation et Barbarie' - Philippe Wolfers

'Civilisation et Barbarie' by Philippe Wolfers

This document holder was a gift from Belgian industrialists to Edmond van Eetvelde, General administrator of the General Independent State of Congo. It was given to him after the 1897 World Exhibition in Brussels, for which a colonial section was created. The document holder is in Congolese ivory supported by two figurines, one white and the other black, supposed to evoke the two people who would share the Belgian part of the 'African Coral Coast'. The artist adapted the commission by choosing an allegorical representation: a swan to represent civilisation and a dragon to symbolize barbarism. Both are fighting to protect a lily, symbol of purity and enlightenment. In this work, Wolfers was merely reflecting perceptions of the time regarding the colony and Belgium's 'civilizing influence'.

This work is therefore linked to colonial propaganda and bears witness to a current of thought that we reject today. It is from a period when the Western way of life and society were considered superior.

Wolfers mastered to perfection the nature of the various materials he used, excelling equally as a silversmith and a sculptor. He was the only person to ensure that the elephant tusks were used as they were or sectioned in such a way that their origin remained clearly identifiable.



Tiles from the Pozzo collection

Tiles from the Pozzo collection

The Art Nouveau movement was not limited to fine art and architecture, but included utensils and decorative items too. The tiles and decorative panels in the Pozzo collection are an example of this. Among the 9,000 pieces collected by Roberto Pozzo are many Art Nouveau gems from the Gilliot & Cie factory, as well as from Boch Frères, Helman, La Majolique, the Hasselt Ceramics Manufactures, La Dyle de Wijnmaal and numerous Walloon manufacturers, including the Faïenceries de Nimy. A real feast for the eyes!

THESE EXCEPTIONAL ART NOUVEAU OBJECTS REFLECT A STORY OF CREATIVE AFFINITIES

ART NOUVEAU

A story of creative affinities

Novelist and historian Marc Meganck takes us back in time and sheds light on these extraordinary objects.

Architects, decorators, goldsmiths, jewellers, designers, painters, bookbinders, engravers and others. Many artists took part in this ephemeral movement, which reached its peak at the transition between the 19th and 20th centuries. They met in the salons and at major national and international exhibitions. They were neighbours, colleagues, members of the same circle, teachers at the same universities. They created and innovated, but also formed friendships. Their families were close and forged unbreakable bonds. The stories behind these objects take us back to some snapshots of the artistic milieu and high society of the 1900s.



To mark the Art Nouveau year and this exhibition, the King Baudouin Foundation is also releasing a publication featuring the illustrated works of art and their stories.

free - illustrated - 68 pages.

Available (only in French & Dutch) during the expo or via www.kbs-frb.be.



HERITAGE FUND OF THE KING BAUDOUIIN FOUNDATION

🏠 www.heritage-kbf.be
📷 [@belgianheritage](https://www.instagram.com/belgianheritage)

The exhibition 'ART NOUVEAU. Unique objects with a tale to tell' is an initiative of the King Baudouin Foundation's Heritage Fund. The King Baudouin Foundation's Heritage and Culture Programme is committed to safeguarding Belgian heritage and encouraging philanthropy in the field of heritage and culture.

For more than 30 years, the Foundation has been buying and receiving emblematic works and significant documents that bear witness to the historical, social, economic and cultural evolution of Belgium and, more broadly, of Western Europe. Thanks in particular to numerous donations, it has built up a valuable collection which today includes almost 27,000 works and 26 archives. The collection is preserved and accessible to the public in more than 90 museums and public institutions.

Patrons of the arts can also turn to the King Baudouin Foundation to implement their philanthropic ideas relating to heritage and culture. A wide variety of projects relating to movable heritage, music, architecture, natural heritage, archaeology, history, etc. have already been carried out.





KING BAUDOUIIN FOUNDATION

The King Baudouin Foundation's mission is to contribute to a better society in Belgium, Europe and the world.

The Foundation is an agent of change and innovation in Belgium and Europe, serving the general interest and social cohesion. It seeks to maximise its impact by strengthening the capacities of organisations and individuals. It promotes effective philanthropy by individuals and companies.

Its core values are integrity and transparency, pluralism and independence, respect for diversity and the promotion of solidarity.

Its vision for the future? In Belgium, to anchor its activities at all levels: local, regional and federal. In Europe, to continue to position the King Baudouin Foundation on the European stage and, internationally, to become a key player in cross-border philanthropy, particularly through its 'family', KBFUS and KBF Canada, and its partnership with Give2Asia.

The Foundation was created in 1976, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the reign of King Baudouin.







BELVUE MUSEUM

The BELvue is both a museum and a centre for democracy. Through a permanent exhibition on Belgium and its history, temporary exhibitions and workshops on political and economic citizenship, justice, colonial history and living together, the BELvue offers different keys to understanding and interpreting current Belgian society.

Each theme is developed with the help of current testimonies, then explained through different historical moments. A modern and original way to understand Belgium of yesterday and today.

The BELvue is managed by the King Baudouin Foundation, whose mission is to contribute to a better society. The Foundation is an agent of change and innovation in Belgium and Europe, serving the general interest and social cohesion.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

about 'ART NOUVEAU. Unique objects with a tale to tell'

Download high-resolution photos:

<https://images.kbs-frb.be/j3ZC3DjLZy>

EXHIBITION

When

7 June 2023 to 7 January 2024

Where

BELvue museum
Place des Palais 7
1000 Brussels

Opening hours

Monday (groups with reservation only) • 9:30 to 17:00

Tuesday to Friday • 9:30 to 17:00

Saturday and Sunday • 11:00 to 19:00

July & August • 11:00 to 19:00

Short school holidays & public holidays
• 9:30 am to 5 pm

Languages

Exhibition in Dutch and French.
Audio guide also available in English.

Free entrance

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