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## 6.2 Art Nouveau and Art Deco design and architecture

### ART NOUVEAU (roughly 1900 – 1918)

Art Nouveau is a style that is seen in architecture, in interior design, in the designs of household goods, as well as in graphic art such as posters and book illustrations.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century these artists tried to create an Art Nouveau – a new art – that would break away from the Victorian art of the previous century. Victorian architecture had been characterized by historicism, i.e. using styles from the past in their buildings. Greek pillars, Roman domes, and Gothic arches, were very frequently used in a decorative way in the buildings built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Art Nouveau tried to replace this historicism with a style that used organic form (shapes from nature) in a sophisticated and decorative way.

In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Industrial revolution was well under way in Europe, and mass-produced machines goods were becoming available at prices that the ordinary man could afford. The artists of the Art Nouveau movement were concerned that the age of the machine would produce badly designed and badly made goods. Thus, they worked together with craftsmen to produce beautifully designed handcrafted objects. The emphasis was brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Art Nouveau was thus opposed to industrialization. They were influenced in England by the Arts and Crafts Movement started by William Morris. This group of designers looked back to traditional medieval craftsmen's guilds. They did not want these traditional skills to die out with the advent of the machine.

### Characteristics of Art Nouveau Design

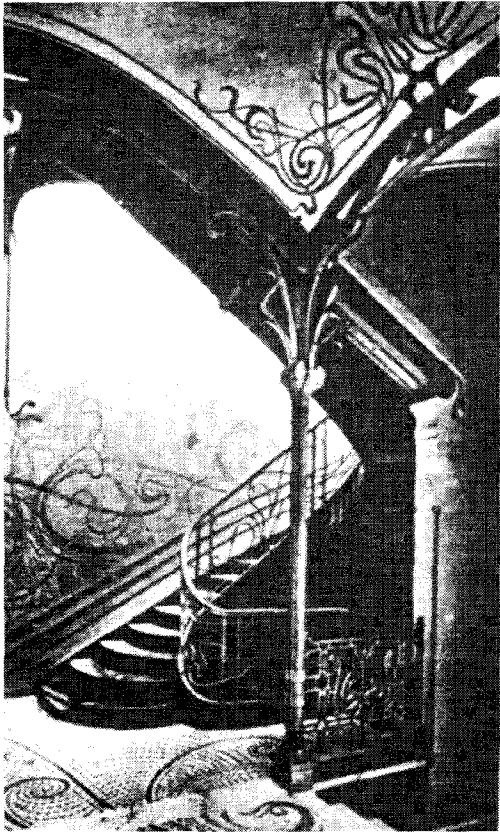
1. It is a style based on organic form rather than geometric shape. It is characterized by flat patterns of writhing plant forms: leaves and tendrils are very common.
2. A whiplash curve is frequently used. It is graceful and elegant and sophisticated.
3. Where the human form is used, it is that of a slim and graceful girl, often clad in soft draperies, with the subtlest hint of eroticism.
4. Design is asymmetrical. Symmetrical design is perfectly balanced where each element is repeated and balanced by its counterpart. Asymmetrical design is the opposite of this.
5. Despite the fact that Art Nouveau designers and artists were not in favour of the Industrial Revolution, they frequently used materials produced by this Revolution, particularly cast iron. Cast iron can be shaped into wonderful curving organic forms. Glass was also a favourite. The Tiffany Lamp, designed by Louis Tiffany, uses coloured glass and cast iron to produce a very elegant table lamp in the shape of a stylized tree.
6. Art Nouveau is most important in interior design and graphic design (lamps, textiles, furniture, ceramics, glass, wall-paper, etc.). Artists, craftsmen, and architects, worked together in creating this movement. Many of the most beautiful examples of Art Nouveau are what we would call craft, rather than Fine Art.
7. Because of the emphasis on fine craftsmanship and high quality materials, Art Nouveau was a very expensive style.



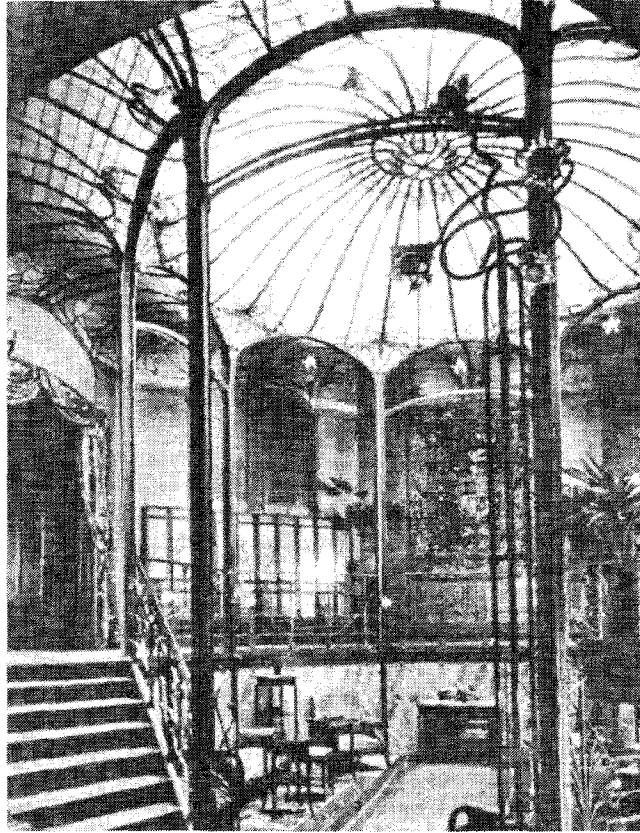
*Examples of Art Nouveau glassware and furniture.*

*Art Nouveau glassware showing the sophisticated asymmetrical use of design based on plant forms.*

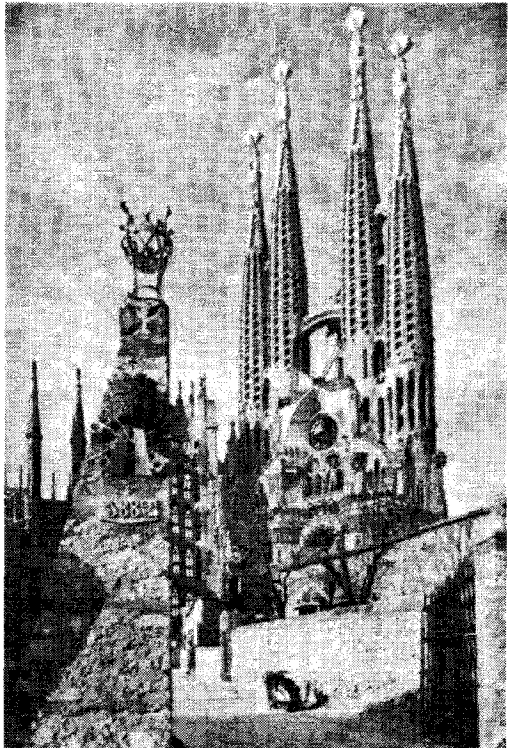




*This elaborate ironwork balcony is typical of Art Nouveau. It was designed by the architect, Horta, in the interior of Tassel House, Brussels, 1892*



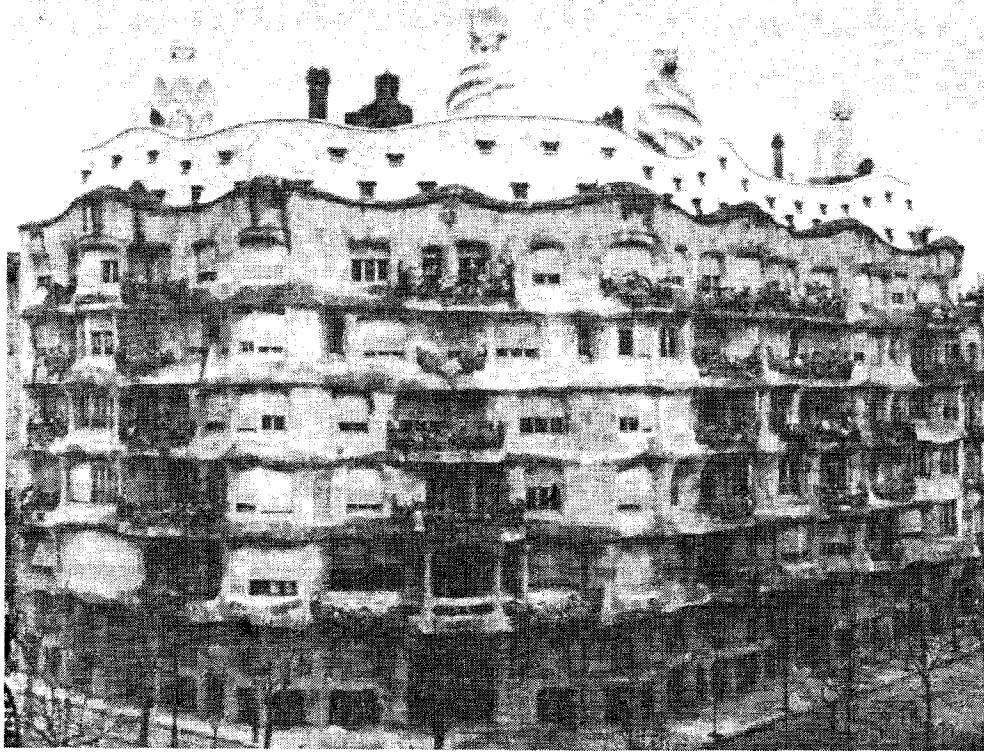
*Ironwork in an interior also designed by Horta in the Hotel van Eetvelde, Brussels, 1895*



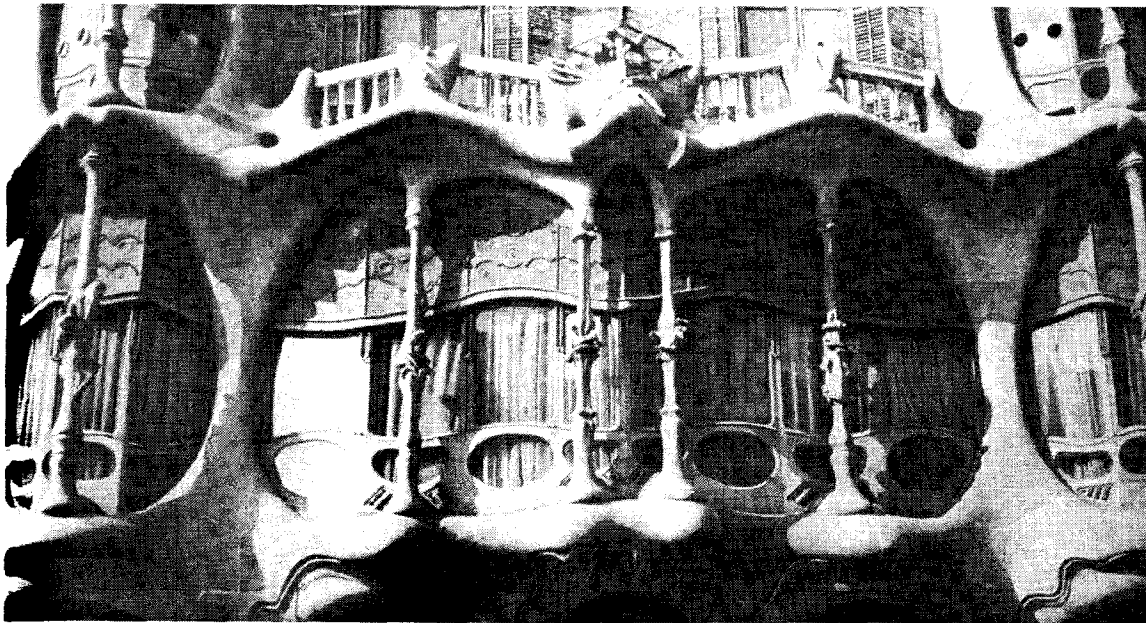
**ANTONIO GAUDI (1852 – 1926)**

Gaudi was a Spanish architect who worked in this style. His unique and extraordinary buildings are based on organic form. The Casa Mila, an apartment block built in Barcelona in 1905, uses wavelike plasterwork and cast iron decoration to create a building where no one room is the same as any other, and where nothing depends on right angles.

*Antonio Gaudi Church of the Sagrada Familia, Barcelona, that was begun in 1883 and is still incomplete.*



*Antonio Gaudi Part of the exterior of the Casa Mila*



*Antonio Gaudi Casa Battlo: another apartment building in Barcelona*