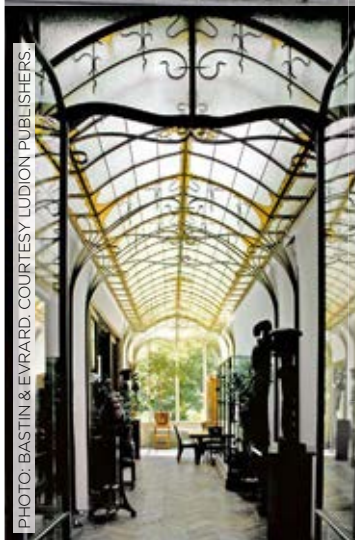




MAISON MUSÉE

A museum opens in a 123-year-old building designed by art nouveau architect Victor Horta. But here's where it gets interesting: the owner, Indian aesthete Nupur Tron, happens to live in it too

WRITER TORA AGARWALA



The Frison House, on a Brussels hilltop, has been under lock and key for 10 years now. But let the lull not be an indicator of all that has passed—its illustrious history apparently includes a period when it was confiscated by the Gestapo—or all that is yet to come. In its newest avatar, the home, originally built by Victor Horta for his friend, Maurice Frison in 1894, re-emerges as Maison Frison Victor Horta, the museum that “bridges the cultures between the East and West”. The custodian, this time, is Brussels-based aesthete and jewellery designer Nupur Tron. “When I first visited the house, I felt it telling me: ‘Take care of me!’ And I said to it, ‘You take care of me, and I shall of you,’” says Tron, laughing.

Ever since the pact, the Frison House has turned into a hub of activity. Once the house was deemed liveable, Tron embarked on part two of her plan: to make a museum out of her home. Aided by expert restorers of The Royal Commission for Monuments and Sites, the marble stairways were redone, intricate murals uncovered, and the original facade rebuilt. Meanwhile, Tron channelled her roots, and brought the legacies of the East to the West. Currently on view at the museum, in collaboration with Bengaluru-based gallery Tasveer, is the photography exhibition ‘Maharani: The Women of Royal India’.

Ornamental railings decorate the numerous balconies of the four-storeyed Frison House, in trademark Horta style. At the back is the “winter garden”, touted to be the architect’s best. “This is a classified building. A monument!” Tron says, “Living in it is like living in a time capsule.” And living in a museum? Where does the home end and where does the museum begin? “You can’t close one part and open another!” Tron is quick to retort. In hundred-year-old homes, which are also museums, some boundaries are better left undefined. ❖



Clockwise from top left: The Frison House; the salon; jewellery designer Nupur Tron; a chandelier hangs from a ceiling with relief work in the salon; a curving flowery baluster at the entrance of the house; the path to the winter garden.

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PHOTOS COURTESY MAISON FRISON AND MUSÉE HORTA.