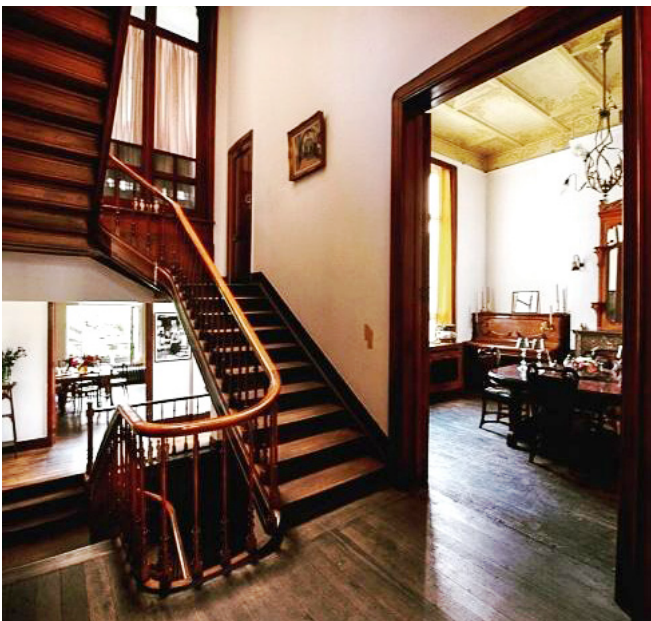


RESTORING SPLENDOUR TO THE MAISON FRISON HORTA A LIVING MUSEUM

BY PICK KEOBANDITH



■ I love the cosmopolitan city of Brussels, the heart of art nouveau and art deco. A delightful discussion about the Maison Horta with its owner Nupur Tron, a remarkable young woman

from India, who is passionate about art and culture, confirmed my warm feelings for this city.

When studying the buildings and townhouses built in Brussels by the architect Victor

Horta (born in Ghent 1861–d.1947) I had the opportunity to make a special foray into the Maison Frison Horta/Foundation Frison Horta, a cultural institution and an art centre acting as a bridge between East and West to favour a better understanding between the cultures of India, Europe and the rest of the world.

The house is in the Sablon area, a historic centre in the heart of Brussels. Situated in the middle of the Lebeau street, at number 37, it stands proudly between neo-Renaissance and neo-Gothic townhouses.

Today Nupur Tron, the inspiring fourth owner of this living museum, has opened its doors to us, sharing its secrets and describing the enormous pleasure she has had in restoring former splendour to this old building, which was built in 1894 for the lawyer Maurice Frison. The house is bathed in light and delicately adorned with a peaceful invasion of flora and fauna. A



Nupur Tron and her daughter Arya celebrate Diwali



lack of visible symmetry further softens the whole effect.

Nupur told me that originally she had no idea who Victor Horta was. She fell in love with the house itself for it reminded her of her parents' and grandparents' homes back in Rajasthan in India. She finds similarities in the vocabulary used by Horta, in particular the warm colours

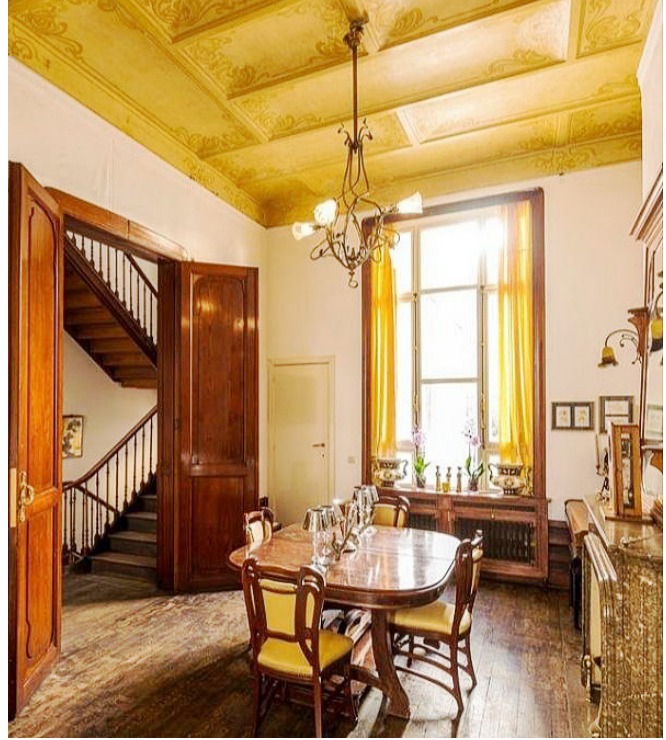
and auspicious Indian motifs such as the lotus flower and the trident of the god Shiva. Every detail from floor to ceiling gives her joy. The great staircase, lit with warm colours and ornamentation, is the true backbone of the house, opening onto the different floors. Horta cleverly brought light into this tall townhouse.

At the time India was under the rule of the British Empire. Horta knew England well, and was active in international exhibitions. The first World Fair - the Crystal Palace Exhibition - was held in London in 1851 and was full of loot and goods from India such as textiles, miniatures, artefacts and jewels, which heavily influenced the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain. Horta was also a collector of Chinese art and was one of the first specialists of Japan.

Nupur's attachment to the house deepened during the long hours of cleaning and restoration. It has taken over four years to bring beauty back to the furnishings, the lighting, walls, ceilings and central stairwell.

We laughed as she described herself as Foundation Frison Horta's Queen of Cleaners. She has learnt a lot about conservation and restoration with the help of specialists and the architect Francis Metzger, who has restored many heritage buildings such as the Maison Autrique, the Solvay Library, and the Villa Empain.

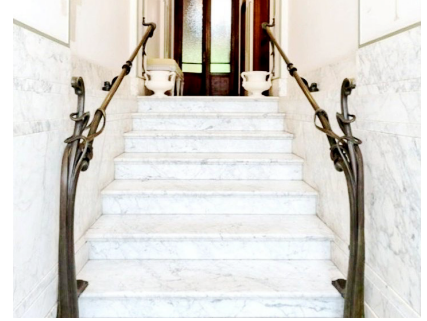
The Maison Frison Horta was lit brightly



by Nupur and her young family to celebrate Diwali - the same day when Rishi Sunak, of Indian origin, became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Diwali is the festival of lights in India and a little like Christmas. She lit home-made candles, and held a grand dinner with presents and dancing. However this doesn't stop her from celebrating Christmas with her daughter Aria, who is half Indian and half Spanish. Bringing together East and West is important both for her daughter and for the Foundation Frison Horta.

Nupur's ambition is to breathe new life into this museum home, turning it into a unique cultural and economic platform to make India better known in Europe. In reality this means organising East-West encounters for schools and universities and hosting classical concerts, and also events for businesses and organisations looking for partnerships in India.

On 25th November the Foundation Frison Horta celebrates the launch of its partnership with EICC – Europe India Chamber of Commerce – who will be their new Head



of Culture and Philanthropy and Business Development. Both institutions recognise that bringing Europe and India closer through cultural connectivity is a priority. Together they aim to bring new dynamism connecting European and Indian businesses and to build bridges between Europe and India, developing

sustainable support networks to create a dynamic and business development model mutually beneficial for communities.

Regretfully my conversation with Nupur had to come to an end and my thoughts began to turn to the art deco buildings of Bozar and Brussels Central Station built towards the end of Victor Horta's career. I start to day dream about art deco in Mumbai and my own impending trip to India...

Nupur Tron, Founder of Foundation Frison Horta

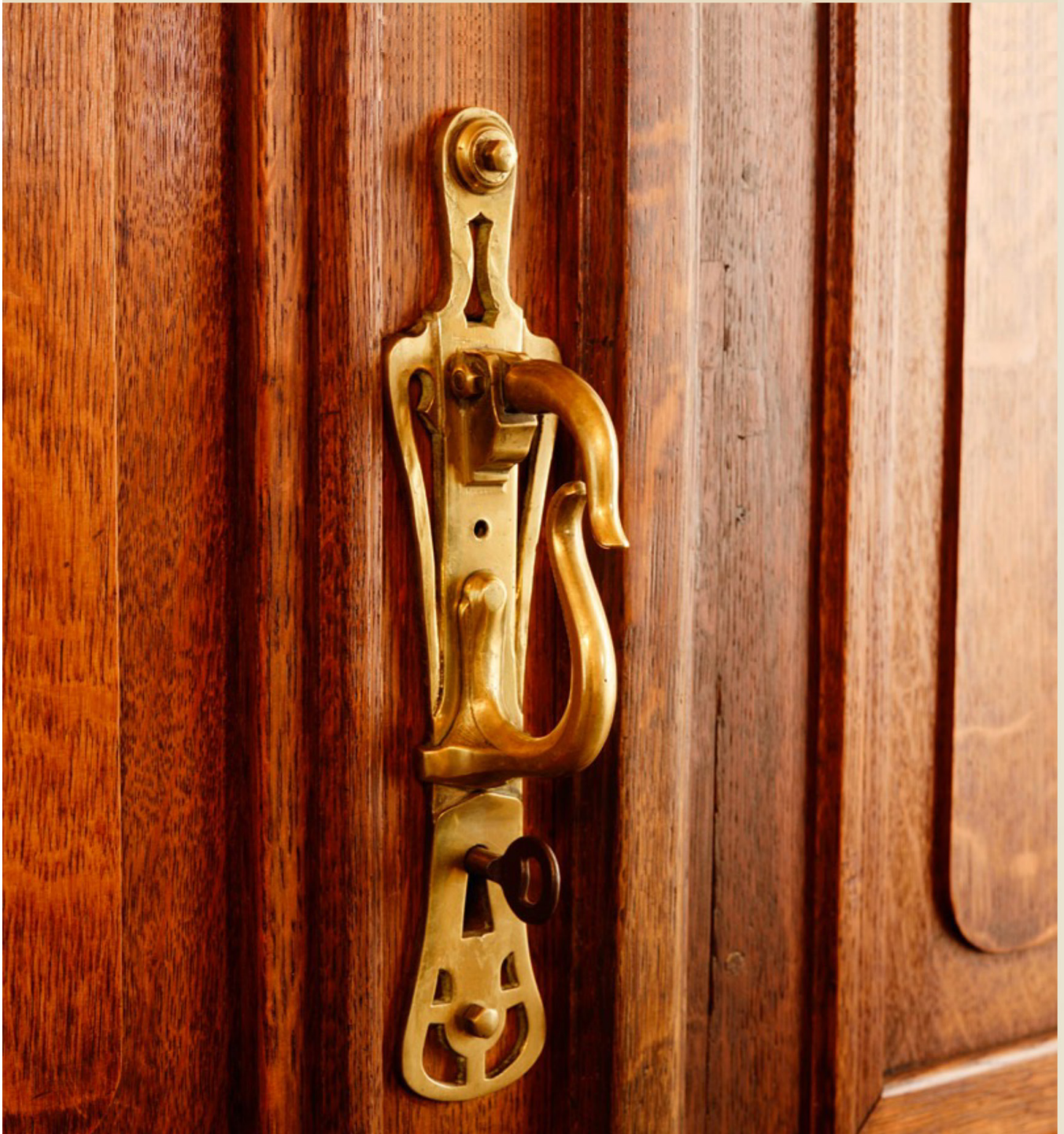
Has lived in Europe for over 16 years, first in Paris and now in Brussels. Masters in Architecture and Restoration.

She is a curator and consultant in heritage, art and culture. Applying her enriched sensibilities to the cultures of Europe and India, she has worked on many branded projects with houses such as LVMH, Kerring Group and Richmond and has her own luxury jewellery brand "Nupur-Paris" based in Paris. She has also worked with Boucheron and many other brands with the Comité Vendôme.

Foundation Frison Horta "A Living Museum"
Restoration, Preservation & Sharing
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