



Nupur Tron & The Foundation Frison Horta

A passionate devotee for Art Nouveau and its Indian influences

by Antoinette Martin



When two Art Nouveau enthusiasts meet, the resulting alchemy leads them brilliantly towards collaboration and projects of high artistic intensity.

Nupur Tron is a real UFO in the field. Her profile, her history, and her determination to promote a formidable Belgian Art Nouveau heritage command admiration. Nupur Tron, a radiant woman who embodies the image of a modern young Indian woman, is from Rajasthan. Her personal and professional life path combines ostracism, luxury, and love of India. Having left for the United States at a very young age, she arrived in Europe where, for 16 years, she has been able to develop activities in fields that have enabled her to refine a sensitivity conducive to quality, a value essential to her current commitment. A significant appetite for Indian tradition opens the way to high jewelry. She created her own brand, “Nupur-Paris” present at the Bon Marché Paris and across the Atlantic for more than 20 years.

In July 2017, the Indian traditionalism rooted in her and fate led her to her current home, the Frison house built by Victor Horta. This is the beginning of a frenetic and passionate story.

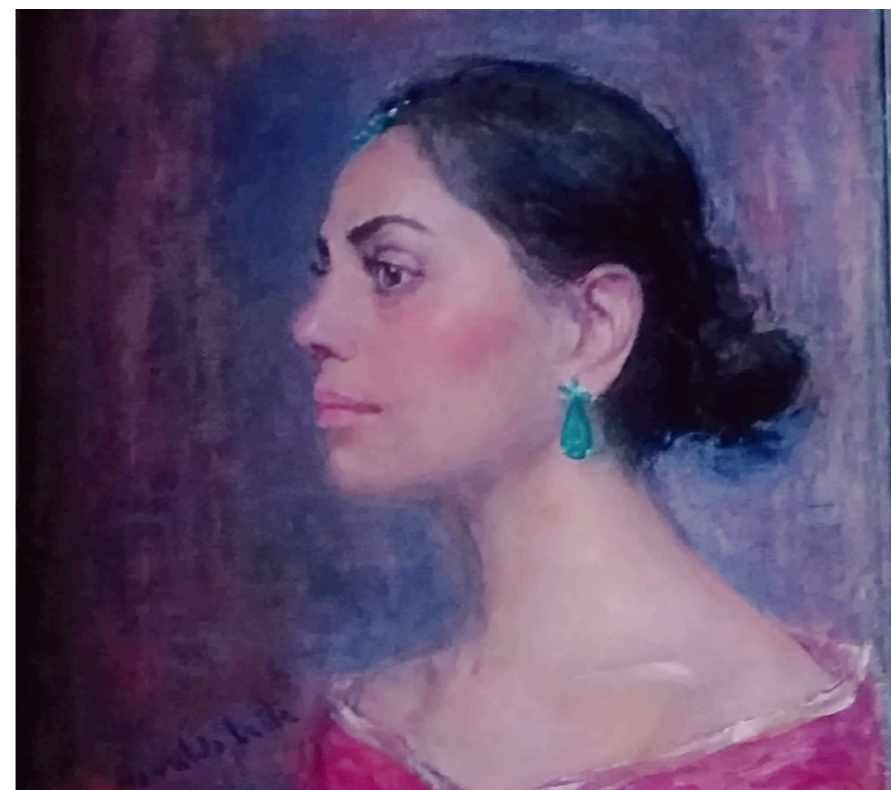
Located in the center of Brussels, in the middle of rue Lebeau, at number 37, stands the Maison Frison designed by Victor

Horta. It is an extension of neo-Renaissance style buildings and neo-Gothic residences. Opened to the public for the first time in 1894, it is one of the very first individual constructions of the architect Victor Horta and moreover, a large house in terms of its surface area and the work envisaged.

The sponsor is a friend, Maurice Frison, a lawyer by state. The Belgian architect Alphonse Balat, Victor Horta’s tutor, is at the origin of the meeting between the two men and a 45-year friendship. Victor Horta signs an ode to Nature whose fluid organic art confronts daring urban constructions within which the building is stuck. It is like a seed of humanity in the cogs of the machines that conquered the world then. A sleeping beauty for 18 years when acquired by Nupur Tron by chance and convinced that fate has drawn her there.

The artistic details of the house ended up convincing her: the total art that fills the place fascinates her, the details of every meter of the stained-glass windows, the frescoes, the metal work, the mosaic stairwell, the garden of ‘winter. In view of the treasures discovered in the house, the owner chooses a new profession: restorer of jewels.

For this, Nupur Tron had no hesitation in resuming studies in a master’s in architecture and Restoration by Cambre Horta



Nupur Tron painted by Osvaldo Liete

at the Free University of Brussels in order to acquire the knowledge, vocabulary and techniques inherent in this titanic project. To establish her approach, she created the non-profit Foundation under Belgian law Frison Horta in January 2018, an organic and living bridge between East and West aimed at reviving the heritage, culture, and craftsmanship of a bygone era through restoration, preservation and sharing, which is also the philosophy of the Foundation.

The primary mission of the Frison Horta Foundation is the restoration of the building and its furniture. A visit is essential to discover the extent of the work envisaged. The house is seven meters wide, twenty-two meters deep and twenty meters high, the top of which is accessible via a monumental staircase.

Its facade is adorned with white stone and bands of blue stone. Raised asymmetrically, it is divided into two distinct parts: a taller left bay that looks like a tower, narrow and slender including a sober rectangular entrance door placed in a projecting and profiled frame with a sober volute. A transom with a spherical wrought iron gate surmounts this door and is beautifully embellished with a stained-glass window representing an iris in summer colors. Three windows with rectangular shapes on the first floor are surmounted on the second floor by other windows on cushions and measured. The upper floor has twin windows and blind spandrels.

The wider bay on the right once showed an openwork basement-ventilator with a latticed triplet with mitred lintels, railings and is masked at its ends by pilasters with worked capitals. Today, this level is adorned with a charmless commercial window set up in 1954-55 by the architect C Gérard encompassing the basement and the ground floor. The owner restored it to the original.

The first level of classic look with openwork French windows is preceded by a curved balcony with corner consoles flanked by a wrought iron railing. On the upper floor, a large three-day bay treated as a curved bow window on a single console is surmounted by cast iron columns supporting the iron lintel with an I profile like the cornice and preceded by a balustrade in wrought iron. Iron lintel which is a hallmark of Horta. The rectangular three-day skylight opening the

arched roof with a curved advance with a recent, projecting cover completes this span.

The most spectacular, Horta reserved it for the interior of the house. The absolute unity of structure and decor is equally heretical with the employment of such 'unsuitable' materials as concrete and iron to bring out marble, stained glass, and precious hardwood.

The threshold of the entrance door, whose floor is in marble, opens onto seven steps which are, on each side, equipped with handrails with majestic curves. A work that announces the entrances to Hector Guimard's Metro. And the beginnings of the other curves that we will discover as we progress through the house. The staircase generally considered subsidiary element, is the central point.

The rest of the house is made up of half floors at the back which lead to the current kitchen and on the upper floors to the living rooms and original furniture was stored in these cramped rooms that had been sleeping under a veil of dust for decades. Thus, she brought out from the bowels of the house works by Gustave Serrurier Bovy, Paul Hanker, Michael Thronet, Gustav Strauven, Joseph Hoffman, Joseph Kauns, Louis Majorelle, Emile Gallè and of course yours truly Victor Horta. The pieces of furniture are doubly linked, echoing not only each other, but the fundamental compositions of the house itself and its ornamentation.

One of the centerpieces of the house is its winter garden, an extraordinary room that the owner found in a state requiring major restoration, especially at the level of the frescoes on the side walls. Restorers have been associated with this project for the facade and the frescoes. All in all, the owner has not hesitated to get involved and to restore herself for four years the furniture found and a thorough stripping.

The most important project that Nupur Tron has chosen to undertake alone is the updating of the frescoes that adorn the different levels that adjoin the staircase. His patience and meticulousness have made it possible to update frescoes like those found in the Horta Museum, those which have been hidden under.... twelve layers of paint! A titanic work that she carried out alone during the months of confinement due to Covid, which offers the house a renewal of the past in today's world.

The recent full restoration of the Winter Garden is a historic moment that serves as an extraordinary example of a time capsule of Horta with its original furnishings and decorative art, making it a living museum linking the past with the future.

Another element that fascinated Nupur Tron when entering the mansion is the fresco that adorns the ceiling of the living room on the ground floor on the street side. It merges with certainty with Indian motifs. The drawing represented is like frescoes from the Middle Ages with floral motifs.

The connection with India is evident and is based on a shared fascination with nature and the quest for harmony with it as a source of spiritual strength. While immaculate frescoes are painstakingly freed from layers of oblivion and abandonment, precious exotic woods and unique metalwork resurrected, bespoke furniture traced, returned, and restored, and all in accordance with the strict requirements of the National Trust, the Horta house comes to life, gaining a second life at least as rich and captivating as the first, but now in a completely different setting. A mirror from the past to the future.

Notwithstanding, this large-scale project has a cost. Never mind, the vitality and perseverance of Nupur Tron responds with vigor and passion. To do this, the Frison



Horta Foundation multiplies the activities aimed at as many people as possible. The place is both a Cultural Institution and an Art Center, a Living Museum, an organic and living cultural center, a platform conveying the heritage-Tale of Brussels intended for a global audience. Maison Horta is a living organ promoting the human arts, rooted in Art Nouveau whose place conveys an era long gone, replaced and uprooted many times but today with renewed relevance, the foundation seeks deeper meaning in existence and inner harmony.

The foundation partners with various academic institutions related to education communication, public engagement. It welcomes private partners and sponsors favorable to culture and crafts through workshops, exhibitions, and seminars. Concerts, recitals, and conferences complete the system put in place to build bridges between eras, cultures, and men, to promote understanding of the human arts to bring people together.

In 2018, during the year of Victor Horta and the year of European heritages, Nupur Tron also organized for the first time in history a conference on Art Nouveau in Mumbai, India with Dr. Bhau from the Daji Lad Museum. The link between East and West in terms of cultural and artisanal heritage is officially established.

Although it is a private museum, the Foundation is committed to sharing this heritage with as many people as possible to promote and raise awareness around Art Nouveau as 2023 is the Art Nouveau year and the foundation is an organic cultural bridge between India and Europe restoring and preserving rich craftsmanship and its strong links that was brought to Europe in the 19th century through the East India company and the silk route trades.

Today, the courageous Nupur Tron is running from all sides to finance this colossal challenge. Her exemplary career will find an echo and the association we represent is proud to be able to participate in this development by promoting its foundation and collaborating for a future exhibition within this magnificent residence that is the Frison house!

Further information:
www.foundation-frison-horta.be

