

History of Architecture and Culture – 5

Lecture 13

Art Nouveau – 1

Art Nouveau is an international philosophy and style of art. We are calling it an international philosophy and style of art. We didn't call the previous Arts and Crafts movement as an international philosophy but we are calling Art Nouveau as an international philosophy, why? Here is the reason, Art Nouveau was one of the first styles that expressed its presence over a large number of countries. I want to tell you why in the next couple of slides but we will just continue with what is Art Nouveau for now. Art Nouveau is an international philosophy and style of art, architecture and applied art especially the decorative arts that were the most popular during 1890 - 1910. A reaction to the academic art of the 19th Century. Another reactionary movement. All movements were a reaction to something. This style was inspired by natural forms and structures, not only in flowers and plants, but also in curved lines in general. The English word Art Nouveau has been derived from the French word 'new art' in French, it also has different names in different countries, in different languages. According to the philosophy of style like how art philosophies have, art should be a way of life. Arts and artists decided to combine all the fine arts and applied arts together, even for utilitarian objects like lampshades, mirrors, furniture. Even for utilitarian objects, people try to incorporate fine arts with applied arts, that is how Art Nouveau was produced. I told earlier that style has different names in different languages. Style has presence over a lot of countries that even appear in the screens today. Austria, Spain, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden; in a lot of countries, in a lot of languages it was called in different terms.

Now let us take another aspect which actually defines Art Nouveau. Art Nouveau is called 'total' art style. Not only was it an internationally acclaimed style, it was being followed in a lot of countries, a lot of places but it is also a total style. Why is it a total style? Total style is something which has its presence almost all art forms. It has fundamentally utilitarian art forms like architecture, graphic art and interior design. It has its presence over the functional art forms or even in decorative art forms like jewellery making, furniture design, textile design, household silver and other utensils, lighting and Fine arts. This style has its presence in almost every gamut of art. It has a universal presence, which is why we call this art style as total art style. Another important terminology which we should understand in Art Nouveau is Whiplash.

Whiplash actually first gained its presence in Pan magazine of Hermann Obrist's wall hanging Cyclamen, described it as "sudden violent curves generated by the crack of a whip", which became well known during the early spread of Art Nouveau i.e the early 80s and 90s. The work itself became better known as 'The Whiplash'. Not just that, but the term "whiplash" is

frequently applied as a characteristic curve that is also employed by a lot of Art Nouveau artists. Whiplash is nothing but the way the whip forms, whip is something you strike. The curves the whip produces. The whip has a very characteristic look in itself. If you keep the whip straight, it will look straight. The curves are very general and sometimes the curves are very deep towards the end of the whip where it becomes thin. In thinner forms, the curves are very strong and when the things are used in thick lines, the curves are very gentle, that is the identity of the whip and that is exactly how it is used in arts and art forms as well. Moving along from Whiplash, in architecture, Hyperbolas and parabolas in windows, arches and doors are common, and decorative mouldings 'grow' into plant-derived forms. Like most design styles, Art Nouveau sought to harmonize its forms. The text above the Paris Metro entrance uses the qualities of the rest of the iron work in the structure.

Art Nouveau movement in Architecture and Interior design did not follow the eclectic revival styles of the 19th century. They did not want anything from the previous era, which means the art form from the arts and craft movement is much different from Art Nouveau. The art forms in the previous styles like Baroque style is much different from Art Nouveau style, they did not follow any eclectic revival style. They did not say they were going to take this particular style from this particular era and clad it with a different style, make it look like a different thing, add a new wrapper to it, I am not going to do that. Art Nouveau involves art in its raw form, natural forms are going to be expressed in its natural beauty as it should be. Even though some of the designers selected and 'modernised' some of the more abstract elements of Rococo style, such as flame and shell textures. They also stayed true to their organic form which they styled since they use the organic forms of nature, they took those as an inspiration and expanded the natural appearance of these elements. They also advocated the use of very stylized organic forms as a source of inspiration, expanding the 'natural repertoire to use seaweed, grasses and insects. The softly-melding forms of 17th century auricular style. Auricular style is the style of making utensils, silverware, a dutch art form which is also a very important element that influenced Art Nouveau. Art Nouveau actually started in Paris. As mentioned in the previous lectures, a lot of these art forms travel from another space or another country because after the advent of modern technology, machinery, in the industrial revolution, the world became a very small place. People were able to move faster and farther. While moving, they were also able to carry their own heritage, art form and their own language. People began to mix that and slowly things started to develop further which did not exist in their particular region and could actually exist in some other region as well. Art Nouveau was a culmination of all these things together. Art Nouveau did not show any hesitation in using the new materials that were invented from machines. As opposition to the Arts and Craft movement, those people shunned the use of machines and projects, while people who knew art, did not do that. They said "ok, you can use all the machines from the machinery but then I am also going to add my own value

to it which will make it all the more precious to me. I am not going to say no to machinery projects but I am not going to use it as such either. I am going to add my own value to it, then sell it out and then use it. That was the speciality of Art Nouveau movement, they did not completely shun the materials produced by machines, they embraced them instead.

For sculpture, the main materials that were used were Glass and Iron which means Iron was an industrial material, sculpting iron was very difficult at that point of time without the advent of modern machinery. If you use modern machinery and modern materials, your own imagination also gets poured into that and you get wonderful projects as a result.

R2 architecture - Art Nouveau architecture made use of many technological innovations of the late 19th century. Especially iron and large irregularly shaped glass pieces for architecture. Let us take a look at some of the Key Proponents of this Art Nouveau movement. Look at artists first and later few architects in this later point of the list. Some of the artists who were really fixated on this particular style and who really contributed to the development of this style were Alphonse Mucha, Gustav Klimt, Jan troop, Rene Lalique, Louis comfort Tiffany, Otto Wagner and Henry Van de Velde. Some of the architects who practiced for a brief period of time or practiced for the entire career were Auto Wagner, Henry Van de Velde, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Antoni Gaudi, Hector Guimard, Victor Horta, Peter Behrens, Josef Hoffmann, Eliel Saarinen and Louis Sullivan. These are the famous names, of course they are a lot of other people who also followed Art Nouveau movement in their own styles, in their own ways. But due to paucity of time and space, we could only list a few people here.

Art Nouveau – 2

Art Nouveau was a total art movement, by total art movement, the art movement embraced different varieties of art. Let us take a look at some of the products which were designed during the art movement. Take a look at the lamp shades, vase, jugs, urns and other products that were designed during the art movement. You can clearly see the gentle curves, the use of animal motives and plant motives, irregular but smooth curves, not only in the form but also in the decor on the form. Taking inspiration from nature and natural materials. Even the colours are from nature. These are some of the designs that were produced in the field of jewellery design and accessory design. Brooches, sculptures and other art. Again, take a look at how they have been inspired from animal forms. This is a dragon fly, the form of the insect is so clearly expressed. A few artists also worked on making graphic designs, they produced postcards, they produced graphic letter heads, envelopes, they also made paintings, illustrations for magazines, books and other publications. Alphonse Mucha was one of the pioneers of Art Nouveau Art. He made these paintings. These paintings have a touch of Roman antiquity in them, but look at the surroundings, the environment in which these ladies are sitting. Even their accessories, even

their expressions are clearly not antiquity art, even though the inspiration was drawn from antiquity from the ancient Roman art, the final art form is clearly Art Nouveau. Peacock mouldings, thin lines that have a sharper curve, thick lines have a wider curve in these paintings. This is more interesting. Take a look at some of the furniture that we designed during the Art Nouveau period. The bold form, curves, everything in this room is Art Nouveau furniture. Even the chandelier, even the corners on the roof, the chairs.

Let's come back to Art Nouveau architecture. Art Nouveau architecture was primarily expressed through decoration. Buildings were covered with ornaments in curving forms, as earlier mentioned, often based on flowers, plants or animals; on butterflies, peacocks, swans, irises, cyclamens, orchids and water lilies. One of the main characteristics of Art Nouveau is the use of asymmetrical facade. Again, Rococo style also had asymmetrical facade and asymmetrical designs in their art form but what differentiated Art Nouveau from Rococo was the grace that they infused. Art Nouveau had a grace whereas Rococo had bourgeois. Often decorated with polychrome ceramic tiles, along the facade of Art Nouveau buildings. The most important thing about decoration is the suggested movement. There was no distinction between the structure, the ornament structure and the ornament were all in one grand unison. They also suggested movement. Again, gentle curves, floral motives, vibrant colours of nature, whiplash designs. On the left hand side is a building which is famously known as the Tassel hotel which was designed by the famed architect Victor Horta. If you take a look at the interiors of this hotel, you'll realize that it's a perfect Art Nouveau building. The exterior on the hand looks like a mix of elements, the Art Nouveau elements, the positioning windows and other aspects look a little neo-classical but one should clearly note the distinction they have made through accentuating the entrance and look at the detail here in the windows where the size of the window kept reducing at each level. In Neo-classical architecture, this is a sacronage which just could not happen in Neo-classical architecture. If there was a window here, there needs to be a window here of the same size. It could be a semi-circular arch or it could be segmental arch, but if there is a window of certain size, the same size should have been repeated over here. But look at how the size of the window reduces as you scale further up. This is the interior of the Tassel hotel. Everything in this hotel is Art Nouveau. Right from column capitals to Iron columns, rail links, even the steps of the staircases, the decor on the walls, decor panels, railings on the side and on top, lamps, floor; everything about this picture is Art Nouveau.

In architecture, the file first made its appearance in this Tassel hotel and there was another hotel called Solvay which Victor Horta designed 6 years later. This Tassel Hotel inspired a lot of architects at that particular point of time to the extent that, another architect, Hector Guimard went to the Tassel hotel, saw the hotel, got inspired and used similar kind of architecture in his first major work, Castel Beranger. The new architect, Hector Guimard worked on it so

beautifully that led to him receiving a commission to design the entrances of all new Paris metro stations. The Paris metro stations were underground Metro stations, one has to get down to the underground and take a metro station. The entrances have to be emphasized above the ground. All these entrances at the stations were given as a commission to Hector Guimard. But unfortunately after the war, a lot of these metro stations were destroyed, only a very few of these places still remain, one of them continues to exist. If you are wondering how the Castel Beranger looked like this is the entrance of Castel Beranger.

Let us take a look at the scenario, what happened in Paris before this Art Nouveau aspect cropped up during the early 80s and 90s. There were very strict architectural rules and regulations in Paris which was imposed by the City prefect under the leadership of Napoleon III. Windows were restricted, the use of decor and facade was restricted, a lot of things were restricted. There were so many restrictions and regulations. The rules were very strict. Finally in 1903, more windows were finally allowed. When things started to move in towards their favour, Art Nouveau architects took to the extreme end of the spectrum. They designed buildings that were essentially huge works of sculpture. They didn't design architecture, they looked more like huge works of sculpture, completely covered with decoration; floral motives, other forms of decor. This type of architectural style slowly spread from France to Belgium, from Belgium to Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Spain and the rest of Europe, taking on different name and character in each country. It took different names and different character in each of the countries.

On the right hand side, what you see is an interior of Art Nouveau by a German architect. On the left hand side, you see one of the famous works by one of the famous architects in Spain. We will study in detail about this architect and his works in further episodes. Let's take a look at how different Art Nouveau could be in different time periods and in different countries by different architects. Sharp contrast of the formality of language in German Art Nouveau with organic architecture in Spain.

Now, it's time for us to look at the primary features of Art Nouveau buildings. Buildings primarily have Asymmetrical shapes, we have already discussed that. The extensive use of arches in curved forms since arches were the only form of entrances that used a curve. They couldn't use a flat doorway since they detested flat forms, they wanted curved forms everywhere. Arch was the only thing available for them to use as a curve even at the entrance doorway. They used extensive arches, curved glass again not flat glass like they used in the cathedrals before. Curved glass - curving plant like embellishments, mosaic stained glass and the important thing which grant future in Art Nouveau buildings are Japanese motifs.

As mentioned earlier, people can travel farther at relative ease now, thanks to all the modern modes of transport after Industrial revolution. People went all the way to Japan, learnt some stuff from there, came back, they even used Japanese motifs and Japanese styling in their buildings. Coming to the name Art Nouveau, it is actually new art in French but how did this name actually come into existence. Let's just say that, there is this famous art gallery in Paris called Maison de l'Art Nouveau operated by Siegfried Bing. That was the spring point for the name Art Nouveau. Here is a building in Russia, an interior of Art Nouveau in Russia like what I mentioned different countries took different ways of expressing Art Nouveau. This is how they expressed it in Russia. Here again, you can take a look at Iron in Art Nouveau, animal forms and column bases and column capitals. Even the arch is actually not technically an arch and they made it look like an arch by means of an external treatment. In particular, the notable feature is the Asymmetrical design in this gate. Here, on the right hand side is a look at one of the top end furniture which was designed for the rich. One of the cities in Paris, these particular designs were developed, there was a huge workshop for this kind of work and around the workshop there were a lot of Art Nouveau buildings just to showcase the works that were done by this workshop.

Art Nouveau is an eventuality which had to happen because all over Europe, there was a need for liberation and change of direction because 2 centuries of industrial revolution got people into more routine habits and they got into this mechanized life. They desperately needed art in their life. They wanted to break away from their set formulas that historical styles gave them. Historical styles dictated that there needed to be a sense of proportion, there needs to be a certain set of rules, that windows had to be this tall and this wide, there need to be repetition and colour restrictions. There were a lot of restrictions on the whole from the Industrial set and a lot from the Historical styles, these people did not want all these restrictions, so they found a third and a different approach that led to Art Nouveau. They wanted originality, they didn't just like to take some motive from the previous era, do a makeover on that and present it, rather they were in search of original ideas. All these culminated the birth of Art Nouveau in the early 80, 90s.

The most important feature of Art Nouveau is they actually broke away from traditional, historic architecture because until Neo-classicism, they followed traditional architecture and they weren't having any new varieties of Ideas. Until Art Nouveau came, most ideas were makeovers of the ideas which previously existed. This represents the beginning of what we call the modern architecture. This is the railway station entrance in Austria. Again, take a look at the difference and the Art Nouveau style in different countries. The picture on the right is another form of Art Nouveau but this style later came to be known as the Glasgow's school of Art. This was designed another famous architect, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and he was once a great

pioneer of Art Nouveau and later he formulated his own style of art. On the left hand side, you have a picture that denotes another way to define Art Nouveau. We were talking about Hector Guimard and his great entrances to railway stations. The picture on your right, is one of the famous entrance to your railway station. The text on top of it, even the railings, everything was designed in Art Nouveau fashion. It gave a very unique appearance and this was replicated in almost all the railway stations and one of it even exists in Chicago metro railway station. Again, you'd notice the human and animal forms and curves and railing design.