

## FAQs

### **Explain the early life and situations that let Horta to become an accomplished architect.**

Born the son of a shoemaker in Ghent in 1861, Victor Horta began studying architecture at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Ghent; from 1874 until 1877 he attended the Royal Atheneum there. In 1878 Victor Horta went to Paris, where he worked until 1880 in the studio of the interior decorator Jules Debuyson. Victor Horta would later write in his memoirs: "My stay in Paris, the walks I took, the monuments and museums I visited, awakened my artistic sensitivity. No academic education could have inspired me so strongly and lastingly as "reading" monuments." In 1881 Victor Horta moved to Brussels and finished his studies there at the Académie des Beaux-Arts. From 1881 Victor Horta also worked in the practice of the Neo-Classical architect Alphonse Balat. Victor Horta was particularly inspired by the French architect and theorist Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. On the one hand, Viollet-le-Duc clamored for protecting and restoring medieval buildings; on the other he was a passionate advocate of the new engineering in architecture and was committed to the use of the new building materials, particularly cast iron, and modern building techniques. In "Entretiens sur l'architecture" (published 1863 and 1872) Viollet-le-Duc drew a comparison between the Gothic skeletal method of construction and 19th-century cast-iron construction, emphasizing the close relationship between them. From 1892 Victor Horta designed several houses and public buildings in Brussels, for which he used cast iron for structural and decorative reasons.

### **Explain the Tassel hotel, its open planning and rendering in Art Nouveau with sketches.**

The Hotel Tassel is a town house built by Victor Horta in Brussels for the Belgian scientist and professor Emile Tassel in 1893-1894.

It is generally considered as the first true Art Nouveau building, because of its highly innovative plan and its ground breaking use of materials and decoration.

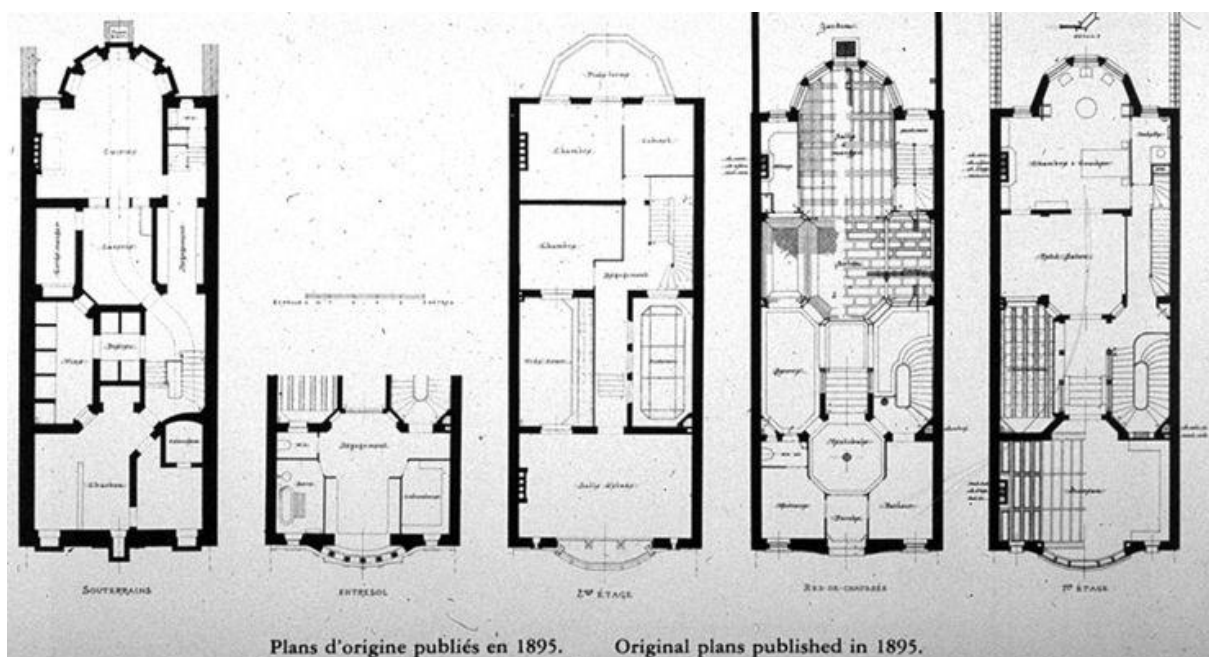
Together with three other town houses of Victor Horta, including

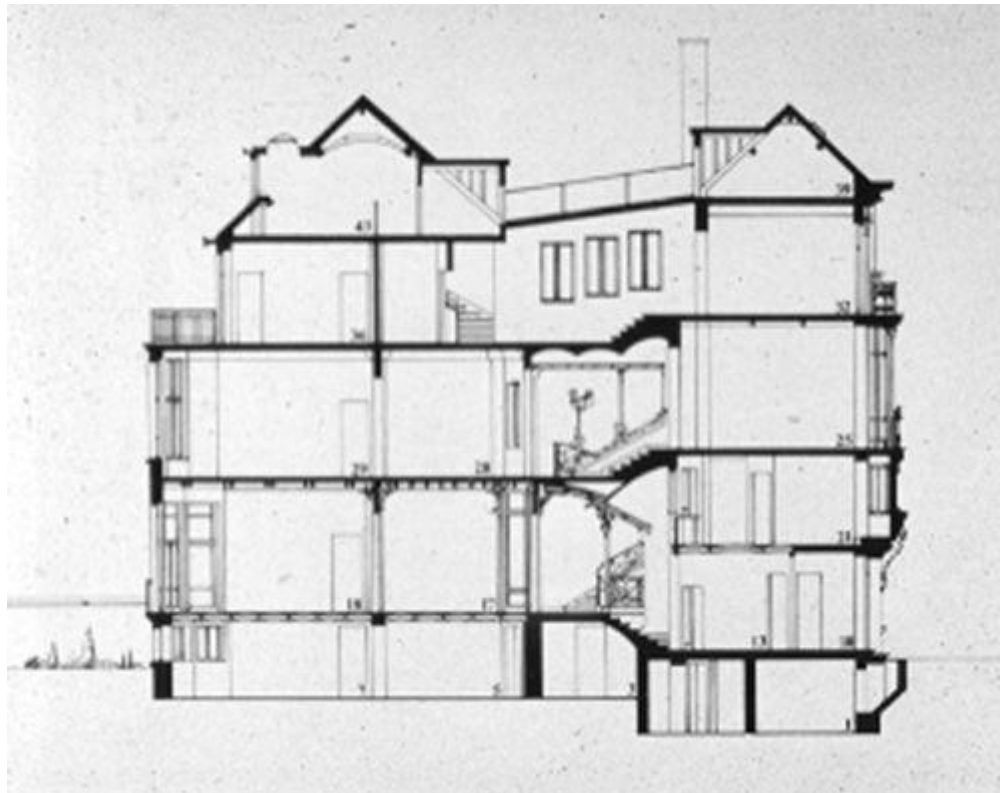
Horta's own house and atelier it was put on the 'UNESCO World Heritage List' in 2000.

It consisted of a suite of rooms on the left side of the building plot flanked by a rather narrow entrance hall with stairs and a corridor that led to a small garden at the back. From the three room suite only the first and the last had windows so that the middle room (mostly used as a dining room) was rather gloomy.

At the Hôtel Tassel Horta definitively broke with this traditional scheme. In fact he built a house consisting of three different parts. Two rather conventional buildings in brick and natural stone — one on the side of the street and one on the side of the garden — were linked by a steel structure covered with glass. It functions as the connective part in the spatial composition of the house and contains staircases and landings that connect the different rooms and floors.

Through the glass roof it functions as a light shaft that brings natural light into the center of the building. In this part of the house, that could also be used for receiving guests, Horta made the maximum of his skills as an interior designer. He designed every single detail; door handles, woodwork, panels and windows in stained glass, mosaic flooring and the furnishing. Horta succeeded in integrating the lavish decoration without masking the general architectural structures.







### **Explain the whiplash in Horta's designs.**

Victor Horta used 'whiplash' decorative style which became a characteristic of his designs. Most other Art Nouveau dwellings in Belgium and other European countries were inspired by Horta's 'whiplash' decorative style which is mostly applied to a more traditional building.

Horta incorporated interior iron structure with curvilinear botanical forms, later described as "biomorphic whiplash" which was notable for the richness of its decoration, shaped by organic forms and soft lines.

He focused on the curvature of his designs, believing that the forms he produced were highly practical and not artistic affectations.