



ITINERARIO LIBERTY



Belgium

Brussels was the first centre in which Art Nouveau reached mature expression capable of exercising influence and promoting its diffusion in the rest of Europe. The artistic circle of the Belgian capital of the nineties was unusually vivacious, characterized by the appearance of numerous magazines and associations, from shows to initiatives of every sort. We would mention only the very important role of the very important group "Les XX", which through shows, conferences and debates made the English artists known and held contacts with the French circles. It was this vivacious and open environment which accepted the new artistic ideas, above all in architecture, but also in the field of furniture and goldsmith's art.

The new decorative motif which characterized the Belgian production most is that, conceived by the architect Victor Horta (1861-1947), of the string line or crack of the whip, then identified as the Belgian line. This motif was to be found in his furniture and his furnishings, the dynamic lines of which designed wide handles, parabolas and open, pot-bellied spirals. Another characteristic, typically Belgian, is the prominence given to the supports which assumed a symbolic – structural character. It can be found in the furniture of Gustave Serrurier-Bovy (1858-1910), in which this new aspect is mixed with the schemes of Art and Crafts and the taste for asymmetry which derives from Japanese art.

An important contribution to Belgian Art Nouveau is own to the figure of Henry Van de Velde (1863-1957), architect, painter and theorist. He worked in the whole of Europe, above all in France, where, between 1895 and 1896, he took care of the furnishing of "Maison Bing" in Paris and afterwards in Germany, where he remained until 1918. In his furniture and his furnishing complement, the attention for structural elements and the constant search for an equilibrium between functionality and ornament emerge. His wavy and curved line dominated the objects but did not go beyond the limits of practicality.

The most important Belgian designer of Art Nouveau jewels was Philippe Wolfers (1858 – 1929) who, in the nineties, began to create asymmetrical jewels with stylized floral motifs, insects or human figures with an extremely refined technique. First of all he used ivory, coming from the Belgian Congo, fully interpreting the taste for the exotic typical of Art Nouveau.