The New Bourgeois Taste Conference
Rome (Italy)
21 March 2013

The author of this report had the privilege and pleasure of serving on the organising committee for the conference on *The New Bourgeois Taste (Il nuovo gusto borghese)* held at the Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Roma on March 21, 2013. The international conference was promoted by the Istituto centrale per il catalogo unico delle biblioteche italiane, the Galleria nazionale d’arte moderna e contemporanea, and the Museo Andersen, in cooperation with the Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Roma. It was held under the auspices of the EC-funded Partage Plus project. About half of the papers were from partners of Partage Plus, with the rest coming from Italian colleagues not directly taking part in the project. Papers were given in Italian or English, with magnificent work by simultaneous translators.

The conference was divided into an introduction and four sessions.

**Introduction:** Participants and delegates of the conference were welcomed by Maria Vittoria Marini Clarelli, Soprintendente della Galleria nazionale d’arte moderna e contemporanea. This was followed by Katie Smith (Collections Trust), *Overview on the Partage Plus project.* Here the speaker discussed the topic of why Art Nouveau was chosen for Partage Plus; the progress of the project, the challenges of the project to date, and future developments.

**Session 1: General Overview.** Chaired by Jolanda Covre, (Sapienza Università di Roma), this session began with her presentation entitled *At the junction between symbolism and proto rationalism.* The presentation noted that an “organic” tendency close to symbolist painting and a trend more prone to geometric synthesis and the straight line can be traced in the architecture and applied arts of the Art Nouveau style. In the paper *The Past in Pre-Raphaelite and Young Poland Art,* Piotr Kopszak (National Museum, Warsaw) discussed the Young Poland painters who embraced Art Nouveau ideals and also fell under the spell of British Pre-Raphaelites. *Specifics of Art Nouveau in Croatia* by Miroslav Gašparović (Museum of Arts and Crafts, Zagreb) closed the session. Here in 1897, the same year as the Vienna Secession, and just a couple of months later, a group of young Croatian artists made a similar radical split from the traditional Croatian Art association, founding the Association of Croatian Artists. Although the ideological grounds for this Croatian secession movement were similar to those in Vienna, the situation in art was quite different.

**Session 2: Actors & Collections** was chaired by Matteo Fochessati, (Wolfsoniana Fondazione). It started with the presentation entitled *Modern Art: Collecting Art Nouveau at Budapest around 1900* by Jékely Zsombor (Museum of Applied Arts / Iparmûvészeti Múzeum, Budapest). He described the world-famous collection of Art Nouveau objects at the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest. The collection was formed during the tenure of director Jenő Radics, who came to office in 1896, the year in which the museum’s new building was opened. The lecture surveyed the strength of the collection formed by Radics.

The presentation *Jugend Fashion in Sweden* by Josefin Kilner (Röhsska museet, Gothenburg) convinced us that the Röhsska Museum in
Gothenburg is Sweden’s only specialist museum for fashion, design & decorative arts. The museum was founded in 1904 and opened to the general public in 1916. The Röhsska Museum’s fashion collection contains garments from the 1800s to the present day, and many of the greatest fashion designers of the 20th century are represented by creations of the highest artistic quality. By linking a garment to a context, a creative process, social change or to its creator, we can discover and be fascinated by the new dimensions of garments. The talk II Liberty in Italia tra modernismo e persistenze storistiche: interni e decorazioni attraverso la collezione e gli archivi della Wolfsoniana by Matteo Fochessati (Wolfsoniana-Fondazione regionale per la cultura e lo Spettacolo di Genova) discussed the spread of taste and Art Nouveau style in Italy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was characterized by an interesting mingling of an opening toward modernist traits internationally expressed by the phenomenon and the eclectic and historicist heritage that had already characterized the art scene in the second half of the nineteenth century. Maria Paola Maino and Irene de Guttry (Archivi delle Arti Applicate Italiane del XX secolo) presented Two episodes of Italian Art Nouveau linked to France. While artists from around the world were visiting Italy on the obligatory leg of the Grand Tour, in the second half of the nineteenth century Italian sculptors and painters were absorbing the culture of the French capital, a living source of talent and stylistic accelerations in all fields. Modigliani and De Nittis are two of the famous Italians who were able to express an original cosmopolitan talent. Philipp Guthrod (Institut Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt) brought to our attention Designing for the new bourgeois taste. The first exhibition of the Darmstadt Artists’ Colony. The exhibition of the Artists’ Colony Darmstadt in 1901 marked the first large-scale architecture exhibition in the world. As an early culmination of the life reform movement, utopian plans for living were explored by presenting an ensemble of fully furnished houses that embodied a heightened unity between art and life.

Session 3, chaired by Diana Alessandrini was devoted to Architecture. It started with Henry van de Velde in Brussels: the origins of an aesthetic revolution by Erik Buelinckx and Marie Resseler (KIK-IRPA, Bruxelles), who brought us closer to the works of this famous representative of Art Nouveau. 1893 saw the birth of Art Nouveau in Brussels with two emblematic houses: Hotel Tassel, by Victor Horta, and Paul Hankar’s personal house, both located in a trendy new area of the young capital. The work of Henry van de Velde is also of first rank. This lecture looked at his Art Nouveau work, but also presented his social views and their influence on his own artistic and theoretic work, and the important role he played as a real European networking avant-garde artist. Northern architecture was discussed in two presentations, starting with The Hvitträsk, a total work of art of the Finnish Art Nouveau style by Ismo Malinen (The National Museum of Finland). The Hvitträsk was built from 1901 to 1903 by Finnish architects Herman Gesellius, Armas Lindgren, and Eliel Saarinen in Kirkkonummi, about 30 kilometres west of Helsinki. At that time these three young architects were enjoying much success, as they just had been responsible for the design of the Finnish Pavilion at the Paris Exposition in 1900. It is one of the most important Finnish total works of art in the Art Nouveau style, and can be seen as The Home as a Work of Art. In Norwegian Art Nouveau from an Alesund perspective, Stina Aadland Jensen (Jugendstilsenteret | Kunstmuseet KUBE, Alesund) traced the roots of Art Nouveau in Alesund,
which date back to one significant and tragic event in 1904. 850 houses burnt down during a devastating fire, leaving 10000 people homeless and almost the entire town in ruins. However, because of this tragic event, which also coincided with the collapse of the building industry in 1899, fifty architects and builders came to Ålesund. During a period of only 3 years, the town was rebuilt. Most of the buildings either contain elements from Art Nouveau or have an entire Art Nouveau look. Iberian architecture was also presented by two speakers. In The adoption of the Art Nouveau movement by the local bourgeoisie, Andreia Vale Lourenço (Aveiro City Museum Art Nouveau Museum) went through the Art Nouveau movement in Aveiro, which dates from the beginning of the twentieth century (more specifically, the years between 1904 and 1920). The advent of the Art Nouveau buildings in the city is related to a period of urban growth and prosperity. The style was imported into the city by the wealthy bourgeoisie - merchants and industrialists - but also by newly arrived immigrants from Brazil. Catalan Modernisme: a mirror of the bourgeois taste by Mariàngels Fondevila, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya described fin-de-siècle Barcelona. This city, which had already built the Eixample district planned by Cerdà and welcomed the Universal Exhibition in 1888, had become the key nucleus of the Iberian Peninsula and the Modernista capital par excellence. This was a time of building effervescence and eminent professionals, including the exceptional architects Antoni Gaudi, Lluis Domènech i Montaner, and Josep Puig i Cadafalch, among others. Unknown Pleasures: The legacy of Art Nouveau architecture in East Anglia by Calvin Winner (Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts) explained that Norwich and the region of East Anglia contain a group of buildings associated with the Art Nouveau period. Architects embraced the style more wholeheartedly in Continental Europe than in Britain (with the notable exception of Glasgow), and few complete Art Nouveau buildings were created. However, some of the buildings in the region do contain many of the essential ingredients such as asymmetrical shapes, arches, and decorative surfaces with curved, plant-like designs.

Session 4 was devoted to Technical Issues. Chaired by the Coordinator of Partage Plus project Gordon McKenna (Collections Trust), it included three presentations reporting progress in collecting materials for Europeana. Caroline Keilholz (Steinbichler) and Chris Vastenhoud (KMKG) gave an overview of 3D model creation of Art Nouveau collections throughout Europe. They proved that shape and form are characteristic in Art Nouveau. 2D images sometimes fall short in reproducing and depicting the maker’s intentions. Partage Plus tries to overcome these shortcomings by the application of technical solutions giving the spectator more possibilities to view the objects from different angles and sides. 3D models are created using different technologies such as structured light scanning and photogrammetry. Franc J. Zakrjašek and Vlasta Vodeb from Slovenia tried to convince us of the Benefits and Approaches to Geocoding of Art Nouveau Collections. Art Nouveau is characterised through differently localised tendencies. Digital images, texts, virtual 3D objects, and other types of digital presentations of cultural content are already recognized as having added value for research, tourism, and similar uses of cultural heritage. The presentation demonstrated the benefits of the geographical data and maps of the Art Nouveau collections. The session ended with Gordon McKenna (Collections Trust) underlining in his presentation Open Digitisation work in Partage Plus that part of the concept of open digitisation is the
use of Web social media to obtain cultural heritage digital content and descriptive metadata about the items. They use the power of wikis, crowdsourcing, and open content licensing to create digital assets that are inherently open, shareable and capable of being reused across multiple digital applications. This paper focused on the Collections Trust’s experience in using these techniques in Partage Plus.

Through the wonders of new technologies it is possible to see the papers again, or for the first time, by visiting the conference website at: http://www.partageplusromaconference.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/59/programma-programme

Gordon McKenna, Collections Trust

Following the Henry van de Velde’s tracks - the cross-border tourism
Zielona Góra (Poland)
5-6 September 2013

On 5-6 September 2013, the County Office of Zielona Góra in cooperation with the Touristische Gebietsgemeinschaft NEISSE-LAND organized the international scientific conference entitled Following the Henry van de Velde’s tracks - the cross-border tourism. The co-organizers of the event included the Association for the renovation and restoration of the Henry van de Velde’s works in Poland, the City of Trzebiechów, and the Provincial Conservator of Monuments in Zielona Góra. The honorary patronage over the event was held by the Ambassadors of Germany and of the Kingdom of Belgium in Poland, the Polish Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Lubuskie Province Governor, and the Head of the Regional Assembly. The Polish National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites was the main patron of the conference.

The conference was aimed at promoting the works of Henry van de Velde on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his birth. Special attention was given to the interior designs of the building of the former sanatorium in Trzebiechów, the present-day Nursing Home, commissioned by Princess Marie Aleksandrine of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach (married to Prince Heinrich VII Reuss of Köstritz) and created by van de Velde. The conference attracted large crowds from the cultural sectors of Poland, Germany and Belgium. Ninety-four Polish and foreign guests were present.

During the two-day conference the following subjects were presented:
Ireneusz Plechgan, Head of the County Office - The Henry van de Velde’s works in Trzebiechów as the obligation of the local government,