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Press release

Opening this coming spring of the new galleries dedicated to decorative art in the 19th century, Art Nouveau and Art Deco

The Art & History Museum announces the opening of its biggest project in years. In June 2025, two galleries, over an area of some 1200 square metre, will highlight the rich collections of furniture and decorative objects from the 19th century and the later periods of Art Nouveau and Art Deco. Exact dates for the opening of events will be announced soon.

Those collections are spectacular, but remained hidden from the public for many years. A first part of the collection was presented in 2017 with the opening of the so-called Magasin Wolfers and the display of smaller decorative Art Nouveau and Art Deco objects, both of Belgian and international origin.

A first gallery of about 715 square metre will feature the Belgian Art Nouveau and Art Deco. The focus is on Art Nouveau, the style that emerged in Belgium around 1900 and that experienced a phenomenal growth. Visitors will get an overview of the diversity of formal interpretations that were so typical of that style in prosperous Belgium. In addition to impressive achievements by famous names like Victor Horta and Henry van de Velde, other architects and designers such as Paul Hankar, Léon Sneyers, Paul Hamesse, Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, Oscar van de Voorde will also be extensively presented. One of the masterpiece will undoubtedly be the winter garden designed by Victor Horta for the Brussels engineer Jean Cousin. This monumental structure was dismantled in the 1960s and has now been fully restored.

The Belgian Art Deco will be displayed in the same gallery. That style was decisively promoted in 1925 thanks to the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts held in Paris. Works of art from Belgium were then highly acclaimed. Echoes of this event will be found among the works on display, as well as numerous other outstanding features of the Art Deco style that flourished during the interwar period. 1940 is marking the end of the circuit.

The unique Art Nouveau and Art Deco collections of the Art & History Museum have grown through historical and deliberate purchases and loans over the years. In which the artistic quality of the works of art played a key role.

The second new gallery spreads about 500 square metre and features the decorative arts from the 19th century. The circuit follows the evolution of the Empire, neo-Gothic and Japonism styles, which preceded Art Nouveau. In addition, social changes have been thematically organized. For example, themes such as industrialization, transportation, leisure time, attention paid to children and the division of home interior into various living rooms mainly focus on the social class of the bourgeoisie. Of course, several masterpieces will be exhibited as well. These include some furniture made by the French Jacob family, used at the ball of the Duchess of Richmond on the eve of the battle of Quatre Bras and three days before the decisive battle of Waterloo. Candlesticks made by the French prestigious silversmith Odiot and out of the estate of Count Thierry de Looz-Corswarem will be on

display too, as a loan from the King Baudouin Foundation. The 19th century will further shine in full glory with numerous international and Belgian creations.

Further details will be announced soon.

www.artandhistory.museum

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