

Declaration of the Second Plenary Session of the Art Nouveau European Route

The representatives of the member cities and institutions of the Art Nouveau European Route gathered in Barcelona on 2 February 2007 declare:

“Towards the end of the 19th and in the early 20th centuries, a series of artistic movements with new styles, generally known today as Art Nouveau, developed in Europe. This 'new art' manifested itself in diverse artistic disciplines, mainly in architecture and the decorative arts, but also in many cases in painting, sculpture, literature and music.

“This artistic phenomenon received different names that corresponded to varying characteristics and expressions, such as Jugendstil, Secessionstil, Glasgow Style, Liberty, Modernisme, Style Sapin, Arte Nova and, of course, Art Nouveau. These different denominations had in common a fundamental trait of each of these movements: their profound roots in the culture, history, traditions and legends of each area in which they appeared and flourished. Each movement or individual Art Nouveau style was closely identified with the nation, region and, especially, the city in which it developed.

“At the same time, however, all the Art Nouveau movements were characterised by a constant exchange of ideas and influences among themselves: an exchange and communication that transcended borders and limitations in an international artistic dialogue without precedent, which developed throughout Europe and beyond, extending to other continents, especially America and Africa.

“The artistic creations of the Art Nouveau “family's” movements also stood out for their capacity to revive the traditional and historical techniques and styles of every region in which they developed, fomenting the sturdy rebirth of ancient crafts such as glassware, iron, woodwork or ceramics. In the same way, the inspiration of nature was a universal constant, an inspiration that expressed itself clearly in shapes and structures, among which stands out the *coup de fouet* ('lash of the whip'), the free flowing volute that is peculiarly and uniquely Art Nouveau.

“At the same time, Art Nouveau maintained from its beginnings a firm desire to incorporate all the innovations and new technologies that the turn of the century had to offer: new building methods, new materials, new energies. And the masters of this art were characterised by their unceasing research and



innovation. For the first time, art associated itself unashamedly with industry, with the clear aim of producing beauty using industrial processes that rendered it accessible to everyone, regardless of their purchasing power. This was clear in the decorative arts, but also in architecture, for Art Nouveau architects were the first to incorporate consciously new technologies, such as electricity, gas, central heating, running water, drainage systems and lifts etc into every project - all without abandoning their commitment to nature, which found expression in the importance they attached to natural light and ventilation.

“We wish to affirm the great value that these characteristics of Art Nouveau have today, one hundred years later, for Europeans and citizens around the world. The Art Nouveau artists and architects were pioneers in concepts whose importance is still recognised today. They understood that modern quality of life implies a balanced combination of respect for nature with a wise use of new technologies. They also had the foresight and courage to do what today we all consider desirable and necessary for Europe and humanity in general: to find a formula that allows each city, region and nation to preserve and cultivate that which is theirs, their own language, culture and traditions, at the same time maintaining the capacity to engage in dialogue, exchange and a truly international understanding.

“To value and preserve nature, to foster traditions and at the same time research and technological innovation, to find the path that will allow us to live in peace and united, all the while cultivating our own cultures: that is the legacy of Art Nouveau. It is also our challenge for the future.”