



FRIZZ BUILDING

86-88 BOULEVARD DU JUBILÉ MOLENBEEK-SAINT-JEAN
CÉCILE DUBOIS



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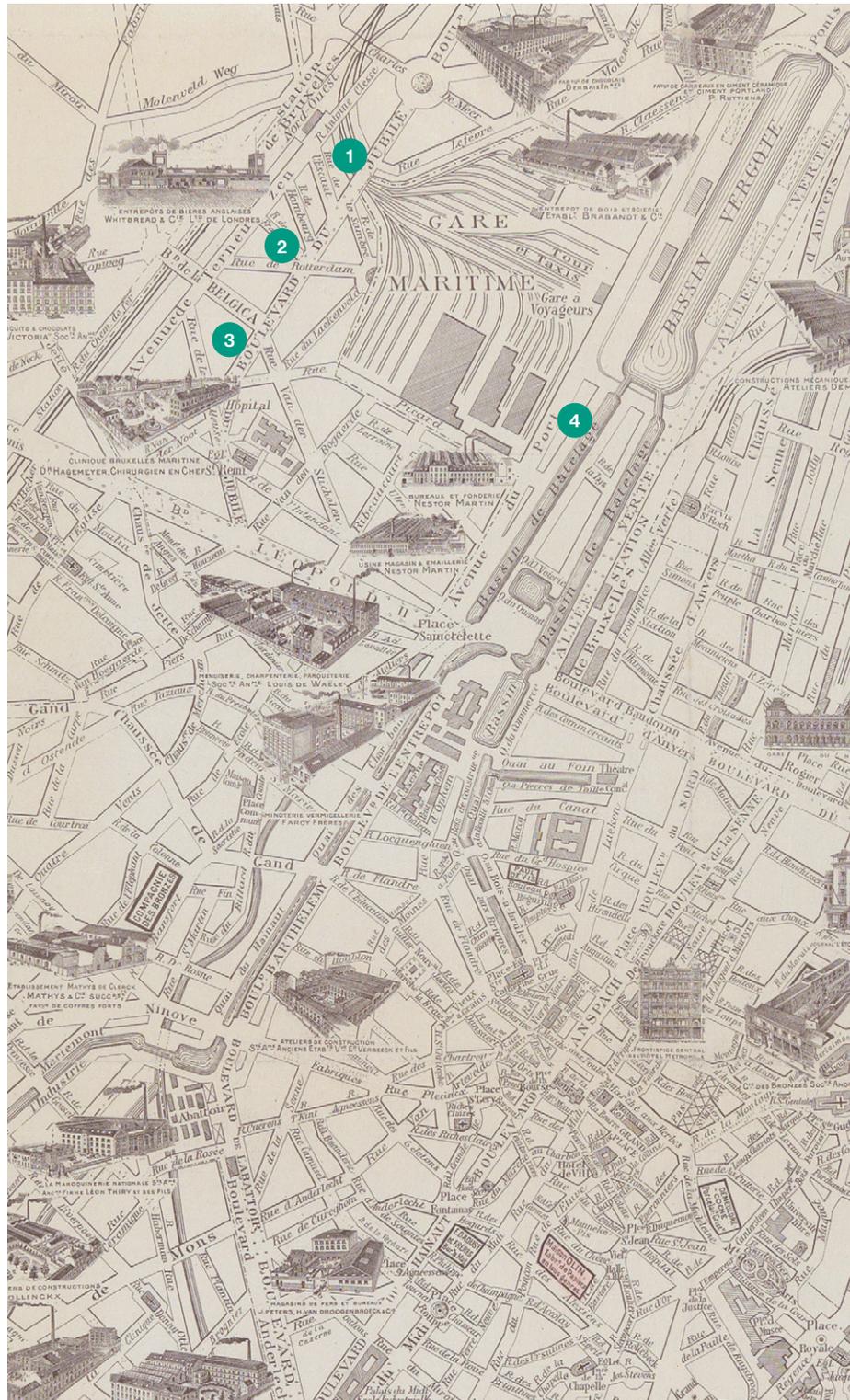
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The Riez building timeline

Extract from the *New Plan of Industrial Brussels 1910*². The port district around the Tour & Taxis site. **1.** The Jubilee Bridge overlooking the Tour & Taxis site. **2.** 158 Boulevard du Jubilé, first address of Joachim Riez. **3.** Site of the Riez building, built before Avenue Henri Hollevoet was laid out. **4.** 51 Avenue du Port, site of Joachim Riez's warehouses.



A PRESTIGIOUS BUILDING IN THE PORT DISTRICT

The widening of the Willebroeck Canal and the creation of a new inland port at Brussels at the end of the nineteenth century led to the construction of the Tour and Taxis site, containing warehouses, a railway goods station and customs offices, located at the edges of

ings, but also, in the early years of the twentieth century, of two prestigious main roads, Boulevard du Jubilé and Boulevard Émile Bockstael, laid out to improve access to the rapidly expanding suburbs of Laeken and Jette. The first buildings on Boulevard du Jubilé



The Boulevard du Jubilé and the Jubilee Bridge before the First World War.

the areas covered by Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council and Brussels city council. The development of this new economic hub in an area that had hardly been built-up before led to the growth of the port district, made up of business offices, warehouses and workers' dwell-

were recorded in 1906¹. This boulevard was the location of several remarkable large buildings, including the Riez building, commissioned by business owners with interests in and around the port.

¹ The Brussels Directory of Commerce and Industry, classified by street, 1906. <https://archives.bruxelles.be/almanachs>. ² Extract from A. Verwest, M. Vanderroot and F. Xhardez, *Nouveau Plan de Bruxelles industriel. Avec ses suburbains*, Brussels, Khlat, 1910.

In 1925, Joachim Riez, a construction materials merchant, married to Félicie-Anna Bovy, placed the winning bid at an auction held at the request of the City of Brussels Hospitals and Public Assistance Board (now known as the CPAS), for a plot of land on the corner of Boulevard du Jubilé and the new Avenue Henri Hollevoet³. On 5 January 1927, he applied to Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council for a building permit for four houses with a combined facade 60 metres long⁴. He had commissioned the architect Jean-Baptiste Dewin to design and build two houses for rent at numbers 3 and 5 Avenue Henri Hollevoet, plus, on the corner of Boulevard du Jubilé, another building with offices for the Rupel Industrial Company on the ground floor and an apartment for him and his wife on the first floor, each with its own entrance. The architect asked for an exemption from the rule on the height of the railings required to separate the houses in Avenue Henri Hollevoet from the pavement⁵. Given the design of the facades, this exemption was granted when the building permit was issued on 27 January 1927, a mere three weeks after the application was made, which was not unusual at that time! The contract to build the houses was awarded to the Edouard François et Fils firm, of 43 Rue du Cornet in Etterbeek, which provided a team of twenty builders⁶. This building contractor was well known at the time, having already been employed by Victor Horta to build the Solvay mansion (1894-1903), and by Michel Polak as one of the contractors to build the Résidence Palace (1922-1927), and

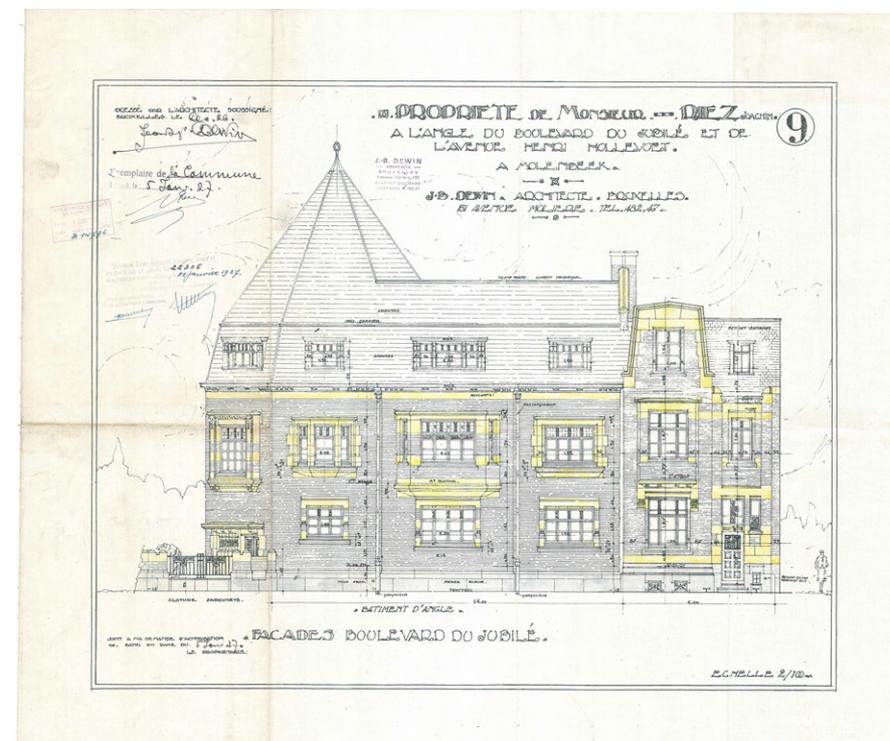
it would go on to be contracted by Michel Polak to build the Villa Empain (1930-1934).

The construction work was almost complete when Riez asked if he could make some small changes to the original plans. He asked for the second floor at the rear of the main building, then being built, to be raised, and for a small service lift (for coal etc.) to be installed. The council granted a second permit on 16 December 1927⁷ covering these changes and the construction work was declared complete on 7 April 1928. In 1929, the Brussels Directory of Commerce and Industry shows that the Rupel Industrial Company had its offices at 88 Boulevard du Jubilé and that Joachim Riez was living at 86 Boulevard du Jubilé. The two houses in Avenue Henri Hollevoet were quickly put up for rent.

3. Deed of Purchase of the plot at 86-88 Boulevard du Jubilé and 1 Avenue Henri Hollevoet, 1963, CDA archive. 4. Urban Planning Archive of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council 14796. 5. The rules stated that the railings must be made of a base of dressed stone 25cm tall, topped with railings 130cm tall to give a total height of 155cm above the pavement. However, the plans indicate that the planned railings had a base of between 50 and 65 cm tall topped with railings 60cm tall, thus creating a total height of between 110 and 125cm. Urban Planning Archive of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council 14796. 6. Urban Planning Archive of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council 14796. 7. Urban Planning Archive of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council 15356.

Félicie-Anna Bovy, Joachim Riez's wife, died in 1935 and Riez himself died in 1948, at the end of a long and successful career as an industrialist. The buildings passed to his two unmarried sisters, Denise and Elmyre, and the Rupel Industrial Company continued to rent its offices from them. Denise died in 1959 and, in 1963, Elmyre sold the offices and apartment to CDA, a mutual, co-operative, fire-insurance company founded

in 1909, whose head office was already located in Molenbeek-Saint-Jean. CDA then moved into the building on Boulevard du Jubilé, which it still occupies today. In 1992, the building underwent a restoration and conversion that retained its heritage character by the Lantin-Schoreels-Clinquart-Minden architectural practice under the direction of André de Molinari.



Main elevation of the Riez building from Boulevard du Jubilé. On the left is n° 86, with the entrance to the apartment, and on the right is n° 88, with the entrance to the offices. Urban Planning Archive of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council 14796.

Joachim Riez was born in 1871 in Soignies⁸, and is first mentioned in the Brussels Directory of Commerce and Industry in 1905⁹. He was then working for Léopold Massonet and Company, a specialist construction materials merchants, which he soon took over under his own name. Around 1910, he moved to a recently completed building at 158 Boulevard du Jubilé. In 1913, he was one of the founders of the Boom Mechanical Brick and Tile Works Company Limited, with its head office in Brussels, whose purpose was “the manufacture and sale of construction materials, the construction of buildings, the management of timber workshops and anything else linked directly or indirectly to this purpose”¹⁰.

The initiator of this company was Lucien Beckers (1880-1959), an engineer, industrialist, businessman, permanent member of the Board of Governors of the Free University of Brussels, philanthropist and investor, following the reorganisation of the Boom Brickworks that he had purchased in 1909¹¹. In 1920, the company changed its name to the Rupel Industrial Company¹².

JOACHIM RIEZ

AND THE RUPEL INDUSTRIAL COMPANY

(1871-1948)

From 1925 onwards, the company’s activities were expanded, following Joachim Riez’s decision to merge all of his construction materials business into it, and to assume the position of Managing Director.

The Rupel Industrial Company’s offices were moved to 88 Boulevard du Jubilé, the building that Joachim Riez had built as much to house its offices as for his own residence, while the company’s main warehouse, among others, was the former warehouse of Riez’s company at 51 Avenue du Port. The Rupel Industrial Company’s other warehouses included one at 180 Chaussée d’Alseberg that Joachim Riez had commissioned in 1921 from François Van Meulecom, an architect who had worked in Jean-Baptiste Dewin’s practice.

8. <https://gw.geneanet.org/eric69?n=riez&oc=&p=joachim+jean+baptiste>. 9. <https://archives.bruxelles.be/almanachs>. 10. Annex to the *Moniteur belge* (Belgian Official Journal) 28 June 1913 – Act n° 4788. 11. Entry for Lucien Beckers in the Belgian Dictionary of National Biography, volume 43, Brussels, 1983, col. 56-75. 12. Annex to the *Moniteur belge* (Belgian Official Journal) 28-29 June 1920 – Act n° 7346.



Joachim Riez’s warehouses at 51 Avenue du Port, Brussels. In 1925, they were transferred to the Rupel Industrial Company. Belfius postcard collection – Royal Academy of Belgium.



Joachim Riez’s warehouse at 180 Chaussée d’Alseberg in Forest, shortly after its completion to the design of architect François Van Meulecom in 1921. © AAM collection / CIVA Foundation Brussels.



The Riez building is a perfect example of Art Deco in Brussels. The Art Deco style incorporated some of the decorative themes of Art Nouveau, and became the quintessential style of the inter-war period. It symbolised refined luxury, with its many sources of inspiration and its stylised, often geometric, forms. The designation

ART DECO?

“Art Deco” was given to the style in the 1960s and refers to the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts (*Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*) held in Paris in 1925, which was the apogee of this architectural style and marked the start of its worldwide popularity.



THE FACADES

The Riez building extends to either side of the corner of Boulevard du Jubilé and Avenue Henri Hollevoet. On the Avenue Henri Hollevoet side, there is a small front garden, as there is for the neighbouring houses, numbers 3 and 5, built at the same time. The pillars supporting the railings are of white stone and orange brick. The railings are of wrought iron with spiral and geometric design motifs. The architect's signature is carved into the low wall in front of the main entrance on the corner.

The facades are built on a basement of blue stone and are made of white stone and orange brick, decorated with an oriel window and bow windows, placed at regular intervals.

On the Boulevard du Jubilé side, the façade ends in a separate entrance, officially reserved for the offices of the Rupel Industrial Company, but which also leads to a staircase leading to an apartment in the second-floor attic. The bay housing this entrance extends upwards into a gable with a window. These two separate bays suggest the idea of a building separated from the residential part, but this is not evident in the internal layout.

On the Avenue Henri Hollevoet side, a garage door and service entrance remind us that this is a prestigious building whose owner would usually travel by car and who employed domestic staff, who would certainly have included a chauffeur.

All the original woodwork, including the frames of the decorative stained-glass windows, has been preserved.

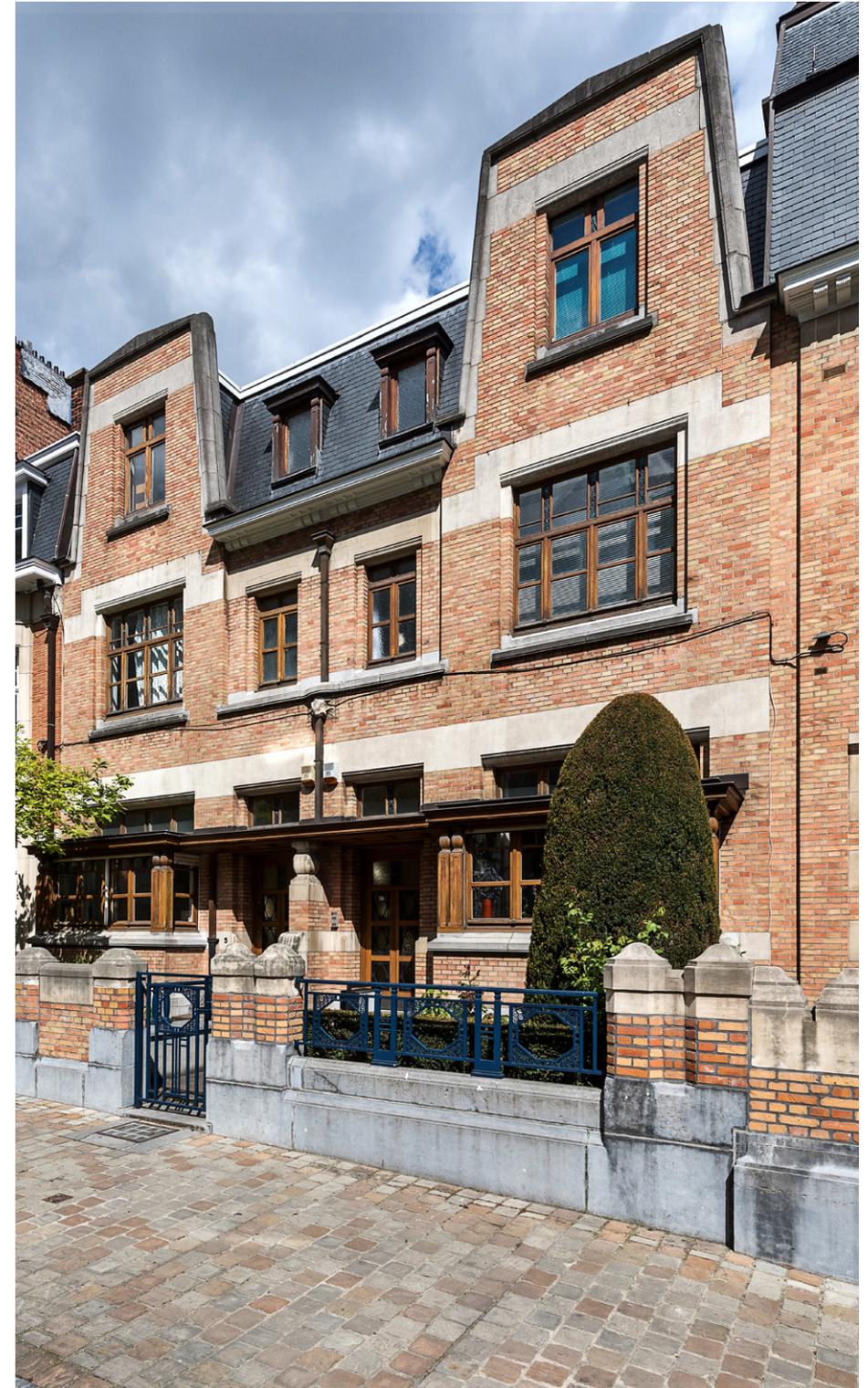
The second floor is under a slate-tiled mansard roof. Over the corner, the roof becomes a monumental hexagonal pinnacle reminiscent of the entrance block of St Peter's Hospital on the corner of Rue Haute and Rue des Faisans in Brussels (1925-1935) designed by the same architect, Jean-Baptiste Dewin.

Of course, it is the handling of the corner that attracts our eyes, but not only to the roof. The main entrance to the offices is set in a bay that slices diagonally across the corner between the two streets, with a narrow garden in front of it. The entrance is emphasised by a light stone canopy resting on three receding pilasters on each side, on whose consoles are carved strange birds, among which a pelican and an eagle can be identified. The central part of the canopy is more delicate. The front door is protected by grilles featuring sea horses facing each other. Above the entrance is a projecting window whose support ends in two carved mascarons, flanked by two pilasters whose capitals are carved to depict pairs of doves on a background of stylised flowers.

The two houses for rent at 3 and 5 Avenue Henri Hollevoet are built of the same materials as the main building. Their main bays rise up into gables with trapezoid windows. The two front doors share a porch that blends into the projecting windows of the ground

floor, while the mirror design suggests a single house rather than two semi-detached houses and invests these two facades with a sense of monumentality.

Detail of the three carved birds at the main entrance of the Riez building.



3 and 5 Avenue Henri Hollevoet.



Born in Hamburg to a Belgian decorative sculptor father – from whom he probably inherited his taste for decoration – and a German mother, he spent part of his childhood in Germany and it is said that he never lost his slight German accent¹³. He received practical training as a bricklayer and then as a ceiling plasterer, which enabled him, years later, “to seize a workman’s trowel and give him a lesson in technique, surrounded by his astounded colleagues”¹⁴. From 1891 to 1896, he trained as an architect at the Brussels Academy of Fine Arts. He then worked as a draughtsman for several architects, including Georges Hobé, in whose office he met Dr Antoine Depage who, in 1903, commissioned from him the design of his private clinic in Place G. Brugmann in Ixelles. This encounter and commission led Dewin to become a specialist in designing and building hospitals. In 1920, he was commissioned to design the St Peter’s university teaching hospital in Brussels which involved a two-month study tour of the USA in 1921. The hospital complex was built to his design between 1925 and 1935.

JEAN-BAPTISTE DEWIN (1873-1948)

During a career of just over forty years, Dewin also designed many bourgeois and more modest houses, as well as social housing, ending in his late Art Deco masterpiece, the Town Hall in Forest, the district where he lived, built between 1925 and 1937.

Between 1898 and 1914, he designed in a sober, elegant Art Nouveau style, influenced by Paul Hankar and the Vienna Secession. On 22 September 1912 in Brussels, he joined a group of other “Modernist” architects on a guided tour of the recently completed Stoclet Palace, the masterpiece of Austrian architect Josef Hoffmann. This tour appears to have created a strong impression on each member of the group, who each reacted in their own way to it.

¹³. J. Morjan, “Jean-Baptiste Dewin” in *L’Académie et l’Art nouveau. 50 artistes autour de Victor Horta*, Brussels, Les Amis de l’Académie, 1996, vol. 1, p. 101. ¹⁴. G. Verdavaine, « L’architecte J.-B. Dewin », *Savoir et Beauté*, January 1924, p. 7.

Dewin suddenly began talking in an animated manner and continued for five minutes without stopping¹⁵! The Stoclet Palace's influence can be felt in all his buildings.

From 1920 to 1938, his style evolved into a very refined version of Art Deco that developed from his earlier style. However, he did move on from facades decorated with sgraffiti and mosaic and designs featuring animals and insects to more three-dimensional decoration with sculptures, such as those found around the main entrance to the Riez building.

To cope with the huge number of commissions he received, Dewin employed and trained interns, assistants and draughtsmen. Among this large group was François Van Meulecom (1889-1963), who worked for him from 1909 to 1914 and from 1919 to 1922.

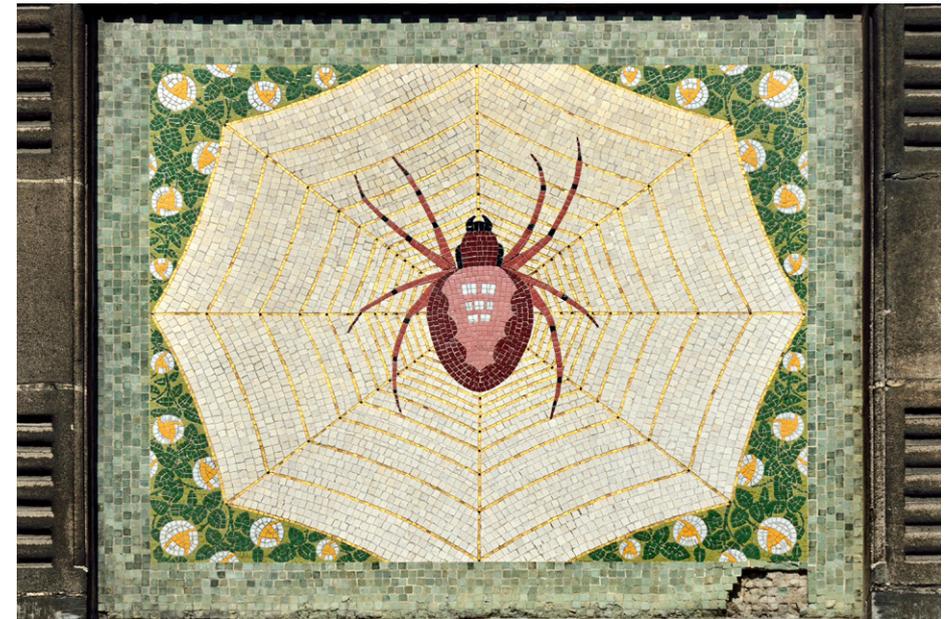
The new St Peter's hospital at the end of the 1930s.
Architect: Jean-Baptiste Dewin. Author's collection.



15. As recounted in an article in the magazine *Tekhné*, n° 78, 28 September 1912, quoted in M.Culot and C. Mierop, *Vienne-Bruxelles ou la fortune du palais Stoclet*, Brussels, Archives d'architecture moderne, 1987.



Jean-Baptiste Dewin welcoming Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians to the foundation stone-laying ceremony of St Peter's Hospital on Saturday 1 June 1929.
Photo credit: Jacques Hersleven photographic collection
© KIK-IRPA, Bruxelles.



Mosaic detail from the façade of 206-208 Avenue Jean Dubrucq, Molenbeek-Saint-Jean. Architect: Jean-Baptiste Dewin, 1909. Photo: www.alamyimages.fr.

THE INTERIOR LAYOUT OF THE RIEZ BUILDING

Now let us turn to the interior layout of the residential building. To assist us in this, we have the ground-floor plan submitted as part of the application for the first building permit¹⁶ (plan 1) and the second-floor plan (including a small part of the first floor and the basement) submitted as part of the application for the second building permit¹⁷ (plan 2). No complete plan of the first floor exists, but the interior decoration scheme has been so well preserved that it is fairly easy to read how the spaces were intended to be used.

The ground floor (plan 1) is laid out around a central hall (1), from which the main staircase leads up to the first floor. Today, all the rooms are used as offices and extensions have been built into the interior courtyard. Originally, it seems that the space on the Avenue Henri Hollevoet side around the service staircase (2) was used as the garage and accommodation for the chauffeur. On the other side of the building, the rooms that could also be accessed through the front door at 88 Boulevard du Jubilé (3) were the offices used by the Rupel Industrial Company, a dining room and a kitchen.

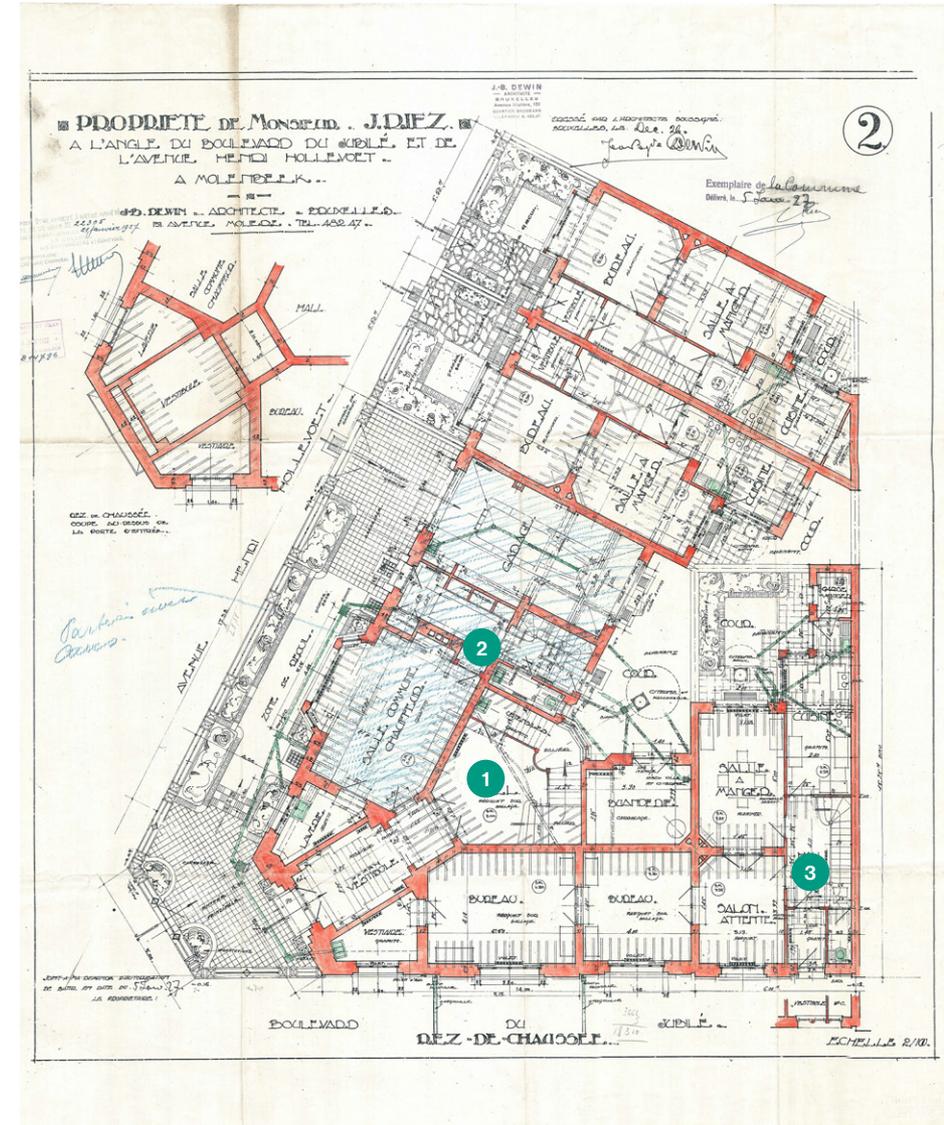
On the first floor, for which no complete plan has survived, a large central landing leads to a sitting room and a dining room, on the corner and the Boulevard du Jubilé side. On the Avenue Henri

Hollevoet side, accessed by the service staircase (2), is a large kitchen, where the staff probably ate their meals. Finally, on the Boulevard du Jubilé side, are the bedrooms, a bathroom, a study, a sewing room and a guest bedroom (4, plan 2).

The second floor (plan 2), within the mansard attic was given over almost entirely to a self-contained apartment, accessed from the front door at 88 Boulevard du Jubilé (3). However, the space over the ground-floor garage and the first-floor kitchen was separated from this apartment and was an extension of the main apartment on the first floor, accessed via the service staircase (2). It contains a maid's bedroom, a walk-in wardrobe, probably for the owners' clothes, and a staff toilet.

Finally, the basement plan (5, plan 2) shows us that the spaces were shared between a coal cellar and storage cellars for the Rupel Industrial Company and the tenant of the second-floor apartment. The Rupel company name on the plan is evidence that Joachim Riez had this prestigious home built for himself when he was preparing to assume his new position as managing director of the renamed company.

¹⁶. Urban Planning Archive of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council 14796. ¹⁷.Urban Planning Archive of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council 15356.



Plan 1. Ground-floor plan of the building constructed on the corner of Boulevard du Jubilé and Avenue Henri Hollevoet, December 1926. Urban Planning Archive of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council 14796.

1. Central hall and main staircase. **2.** Service entrance and staircase. **3.** Entrance to the offices of the Rupel Industrial Company and staircase leading to second-floor apartment.

THE INTERIOR DECORATION

The sumptuous interior decoration is evidence of Joachim Riez's status, a merchant who became a company director and finally an industrialist¹⁸.

It appears that the decorative scheme was the fruit of a collaboration between the architect Jean-Baptiste Dewin and the De Coene Brothers Art Studio in Courtrai. Joseph De Coene was a friend of Jean-Baptiste Dewin, who had already commissioned work from his famous firm for previous projects.

The walls of the ground-floor entrance hall are panelled with grey Sainte-Anne marble which is also used to cover the radiators beyond the steps. Warm air

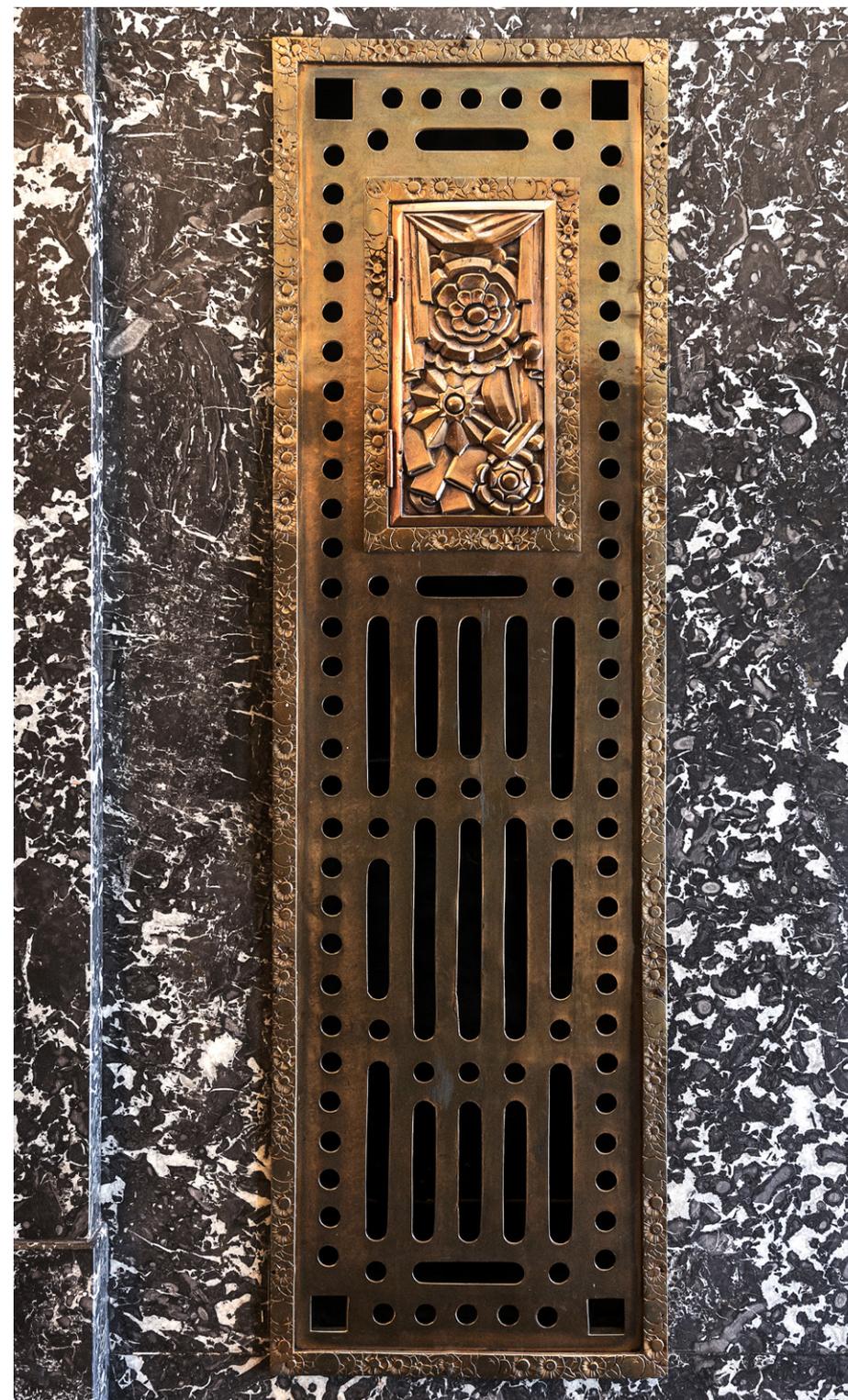
from the radiators is diffused via copper grilles decorated with geometric motifs that include small doors decorated with stylised flowers.

Double doors lead to the main hall from where an oak staircase leads to the first floor. The newel posts on the staircase extend vertically into oval shapes that suggest acorns, which are also suggested by the shape of the cupula. The flowing lines may also refer to the design in the stained-glass window described below. The acorn shape can also be seen as the discreet signature of the De Coene firm, which often used it in its work.



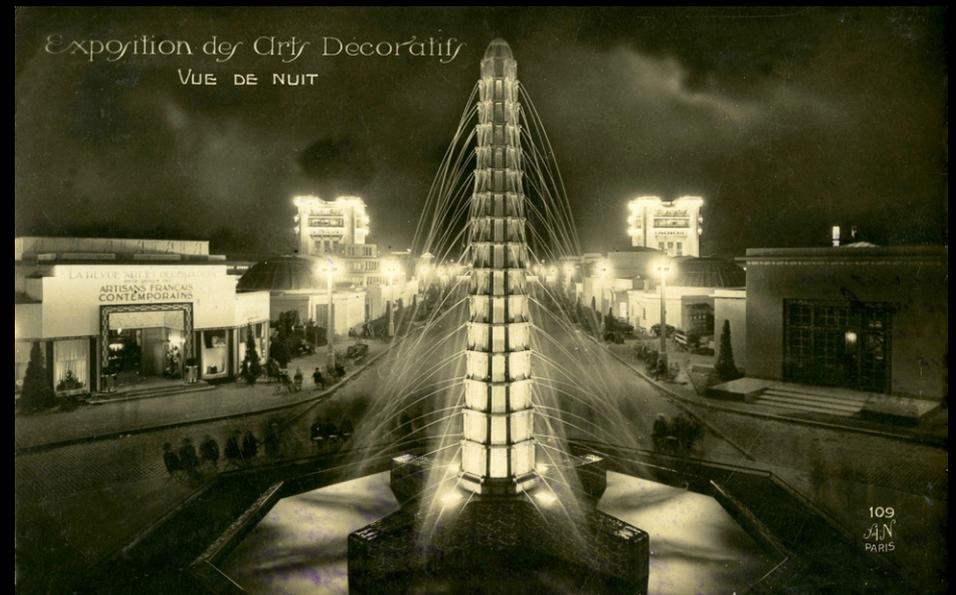
Main entrance of the Riez building.

¹⁸. These are the successive occupations of Joachim Riez that appear in the Brussels Business and Industry Directories throughout his career. See <https://archives.bruxelles.be/almanachs>.



Radiator-cover grille in the entrance hall.

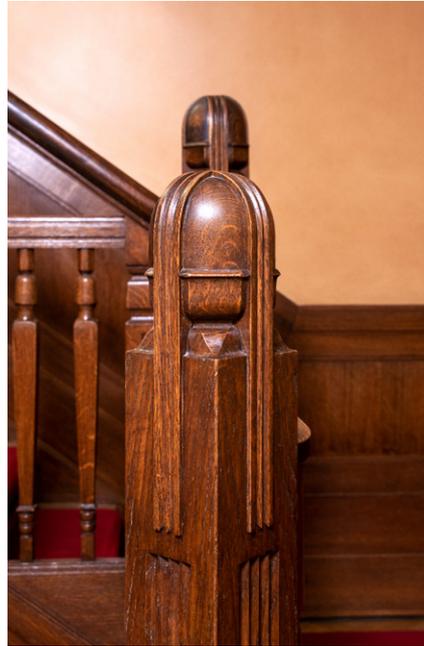
Stained-glass window in the main stairwell.



René Lalique's fountain at the Paris Exhibition in 1925. © Art Deco collection of Rheims and the Cities of the Greater East.

The main feature of the stairwell is, of course, the large stained-glass window which originally flooded it with daylight. Following the 1992 extensions, the window no longer admits natural light and is backlit by electric lights.

The central motif is a large fountain flowing symmetrically. This type of motif is typical of the Art Deco style, especially following the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts held in Paris in 1925, where visitors were able to admire an impressive 15m-tall illuminated fountain by René Lalique.



Newel post on the main staircase.



Hall and main staircase.

On the first floor, the sitting room and dining room are the grandest rooms in the building, where the attention to detail is pushed to its zenith.

the sitting room and which was the dining room. However we can make an educated guess that the first room we come to having climbed the stairs was the dining room, as it is closer to the kitchen.



Double doors leading to one of the reception rooms on the first floor decorated with glass bands painted with floral motifs. The door handles on the living room and hall sides are deliberately different in order to blend in with the decor.

As no original plans of the first floor have survived, it is difficult to be sure which of the two reception rooms was

Today it is laid out as a sitting room. Either side of the marble fireplace, with its wood-paneled mantelpiece are two sideboards, whose door keys are signed "De Coene Frères Courtrai". The bronze key plates of the sideboard doors are decorated with spiral motifs that are typical of the firm's work.



Sideboard keyplate with spiral motifs and key inscribed "De Coene Frères Courtrai".

The lower part of the walls are panelled to match the mantelpiece and the sideboards. The walls are divided into sections by bands of carved wood.

The central part of the room has a raised ceiling to show off a magnificent chandelier with a bronze frame, made up of pieces of moulded glass decorated with stylised flowers, also made by the De Coene firm. Either side of this central part, the ceiling is lower, which gives the room a sense of balance and intimacy.



Here, the copper radiator screens are decorated with geometric designs and also with medallions featuring profiles of young women carrying stylised flowers. On this floor, all the window fanlights contain shimmering stained-glass panels depicting baskets of fruit and flowers, which were frequently used motifs following the 1925 Exhibition.

The owners have decided to carefully furnish the rooms in the spirit of the period, including furniture by Jacques Adnet (1900-1984) and Jules Leleu (1883-1961), two French furniture and interior design-

Since 2003, the walls in both rooms and those of the landing have undergone a restoration by Marianne De Wil, a specialist in decorative paintwork. The current owners have let her take inspiration from the building and the other works of Jean-Baptiste Dewin to create an unusual decorative scheme that brings to mind the Vienna Secession and Art Deco.

An examination of photos taken before the building was restored shows that the walls in the reception rooms were originally decorated with gilded embossed material that looks like leather. This may



ers who became particularly famous during the Art Deco period. The light fittings on the landing and some of the office lamps were supplied by the Jean Perzel studio in Paris who, since 1923, have continued the tradition of manufacturing light fittings in streamlined shapes.

The sitting room, today used as an office, is located on the corner and is flooded with beautiful daylight. The radiator screens are topped with yellow Sienna marble shelves and are decorated with stylised flowers in their centres. The matching light fitting is probably also original and made by the De Coene firm.

have been gilded “cardboard stone” a product often used by the De Coene firm, which was one of the first to develop a process of mixing paper pulp with powdered clay and chalk.

A link can be made with the Art Deco sitting room of the De Castillon hotel in Bruges, also decorated by the De Coene firm (1934). Either side of a double mirror the light fitting is identical to the one in the Riez building.

From the landing, we go through to the kitchen, which can also be accessed

from the service staircase. It represents the height of domestic comfort, light and hygiene at the time. Here the wooden parquet floors and panels give way to ceramic tiles that are easier to clean. Shades of grey predominate, with bands of small black-and-white tiles that hint at the Vienna Secession and give the space a sense of rhythm. At eye level, regularly spaced, low-relief, elongated palmette motifs add a decorative dimension. The same motifs are also reproduced in a large coloured stained-glass window at the back of the room. The original water pump, radiator with integral plate-warmer, bell-board to summon the staff and built-in kitchen units have all survived in situ.



Art Deco sitting room of the De Castillon hotel in Bruges. Photo by the author, 2022.

The second floor of the building is decorated more soberly and is not open to the public. Today it is all used as offices by CDA. The corner room, under the pointed roof, has an open ceiling showing the structural beams.



CDA reception in 1982 in the presence of the CDA Chairman, Philippe Clément (making a speech), Irène de Molinari De Fremme, daughter of CDA's founder (seated on the left), André de Molinari (Managing Director, standing second from left) and Christine de Molinari-Deschamps (standing on the far right). In the background can be seen the mantelpiece and the walls covered in a gilded material that looks like leather, but which is probably "cardboard stone".



Overall view of the sitting room, today an office.



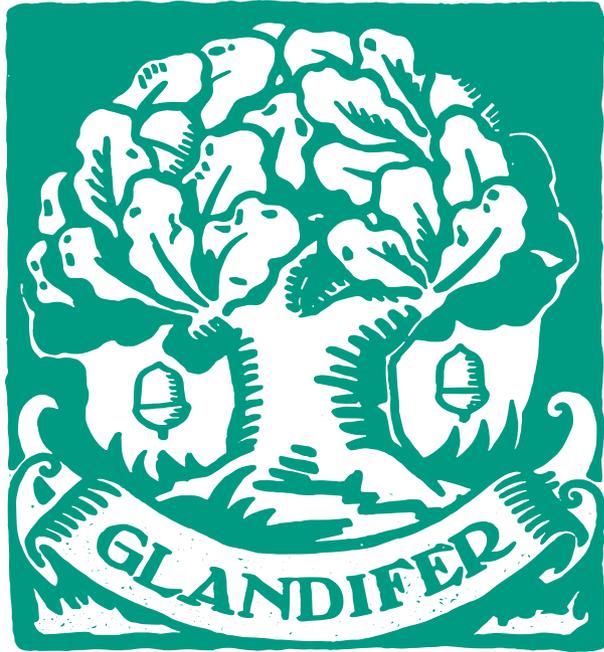
Structural roof beams on the second floor. Almost an abstract work of art.



Stained-glass window at rear of kitchen.



Kitchen.



REVUE MENSUELLE DE L'ART
D'AMEUBLEMENT, DÉCORA-
TION, MEUBLES, RÉDIGÉE ET
ÉDITÉE AUX ATELIERS D'ART
DE COURTRAI

COURTRAI

The De Coene Brothers Art Studios was founded in Courtrai by Joseph and Adolphe De Coene in 1905, and played an important, international role in construction, the development of interior design, furniture, building techniques and architecture.

At the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts held in Paris in 1925, the firm exhibited a “Flemish combined dining room and sitting room” which was awarded First Prize by the international jury: this created new opportunities for De Coene at home and abroad.

The huge amount of Art Deco designs produced by De Coene are still highly prized today. In 1929, just before the great depression,

JEAN-BAPTISTE DEWIN AND JOSEPH DE COENE:

a long-lasting friendship and
a fruitful collaboration

the firm reached the apogee of its success and employed almost 2,700 artisans in its various workshops, where entire tree trunks were sawn into planks or veneers before being transformed into sets of furniture exhibited in the company's showrooms accompanied by accessories made in the firm's various other workshops: ornaments, metalwork, carpets, marblework, glasswork and light fittings. The firm's in-house design studio produced detailed designs for both mass-produced and custom-made products, the latter often designed for collaborative projects with architects and others.

In the firm's art and design magazine *Glandifer*, printed in-house, “it can be said that here ‘the acorn has grown into a tree’ and, seen from a bird's eye view, the top of this oak tree seems to be an entire

forest!”¹⁹ This no doubt explains why acorns and oak leaves were so often used to represent the De Coene firm.

Joseph De Coene (1875-1950) and Jean-Baptiste Dewin were friends. We do not know when they first met, but it may well have been at the Brussels Fine Arts Academy, where Joseph De Coene studied in 1894. They travelled to the USA together in 1921. De Coene was introduced there to the flourishing triplex industry, based on the process of gluing together three fine wooden veneers, a technique he later developed in his own workshops.

Jean-Baptiste Dewin called on the firm’s services many times, among others for three villas at Courtrai (1924), and also for the Danckaert house at Forest (1922). Parallels can be drawn between these projects and the Riez building, as similar features can be found in them all. The climax of this collaboration was undoubtedly Forest Town Hall, where Dewin commissioned De Coene to design and furnish the interiors, including the spectacular council chamber and marriage hall.



19. *Glandifer*, issue 2, June 1927, printed by De Coen Brothers Art Studios, Courtrai.

4 MAY 1925

Purchase of plot of land on the corner of Boulevard du Jubilé and Avenue Henri Hollevoet by Joachim Riez.

5 JANUARY 1927

Joachim Riez submits an application to Molenbeek-Saint-Jean council for a building permit for four buildings designed by the architect Jean-Baptiste Dewin on the plot of land.

21 JANUARY 1927

Building permit issued

26 JANUARY 1927

Preparation of site begins, followed by construction of 86 and 88 Boulevard du Jubilé and 1, 3 and 5 Avenue Henri Hollevoet.

16 DECEMBER 1927

Second building permit issued by the council covering some small changes to the initial plans.

7 APRIL 1928

The council's inspector declares the project complete.

30 MARCH 1935

Death of Félicie-Anna Bovy, wife of Joachim Riez.

11 DECEMBER 1948

Death of Joachim Riez. The buildings are inherited by his sisters Elmyre and Denise.

3 JULY 1956

Elmyre and Denise sell 5 Avenue Henri Hollevoet.

28 JUNE 1963

Elmyre Riez sells the Riez building to CDA.

19 NOVEMBER 1963

Elmyre Riez sells 3 Avenue Henri Hollevoet to CDA.

1 AUGUST 1979

CDA purchases 5 Avenue Henri Hollevoet, thus becoming the owner of all the buildings built in 1927 for Joachim Riez.

1992

Restoration and conversion of the building by the Lantin-Schoreels-Clinquart-Minden architectural practice, under the direction of André de Molinari.

2003

Work by Marianne De Wil, decorative paintwork specialist, to create paintwork schemes for the walls of the ground and first floors.

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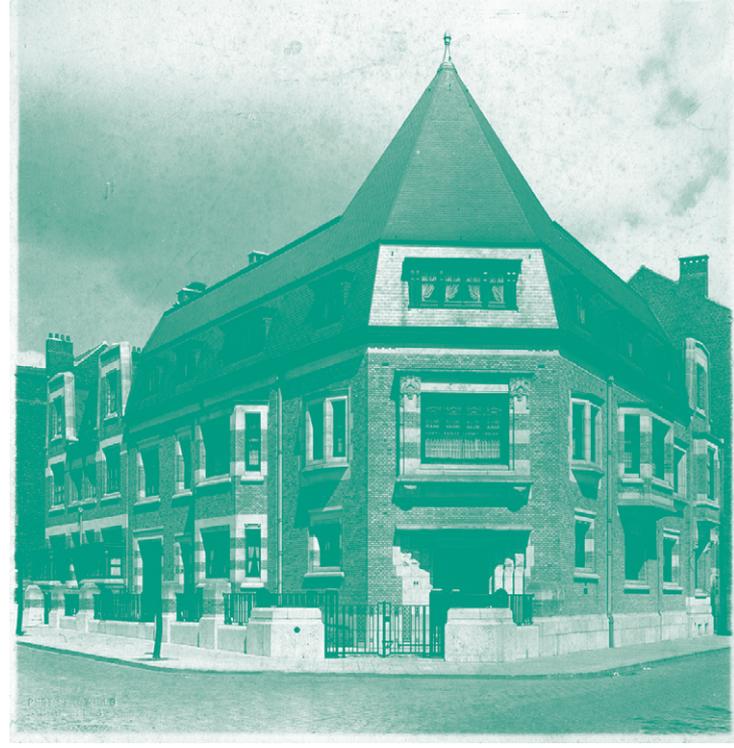
Suggested further reading

Élisabeth Bruyns, “L’hôtel Riez” in *Les Nouvelles du Patrimoine*, n° 149, October-November-December 2015.

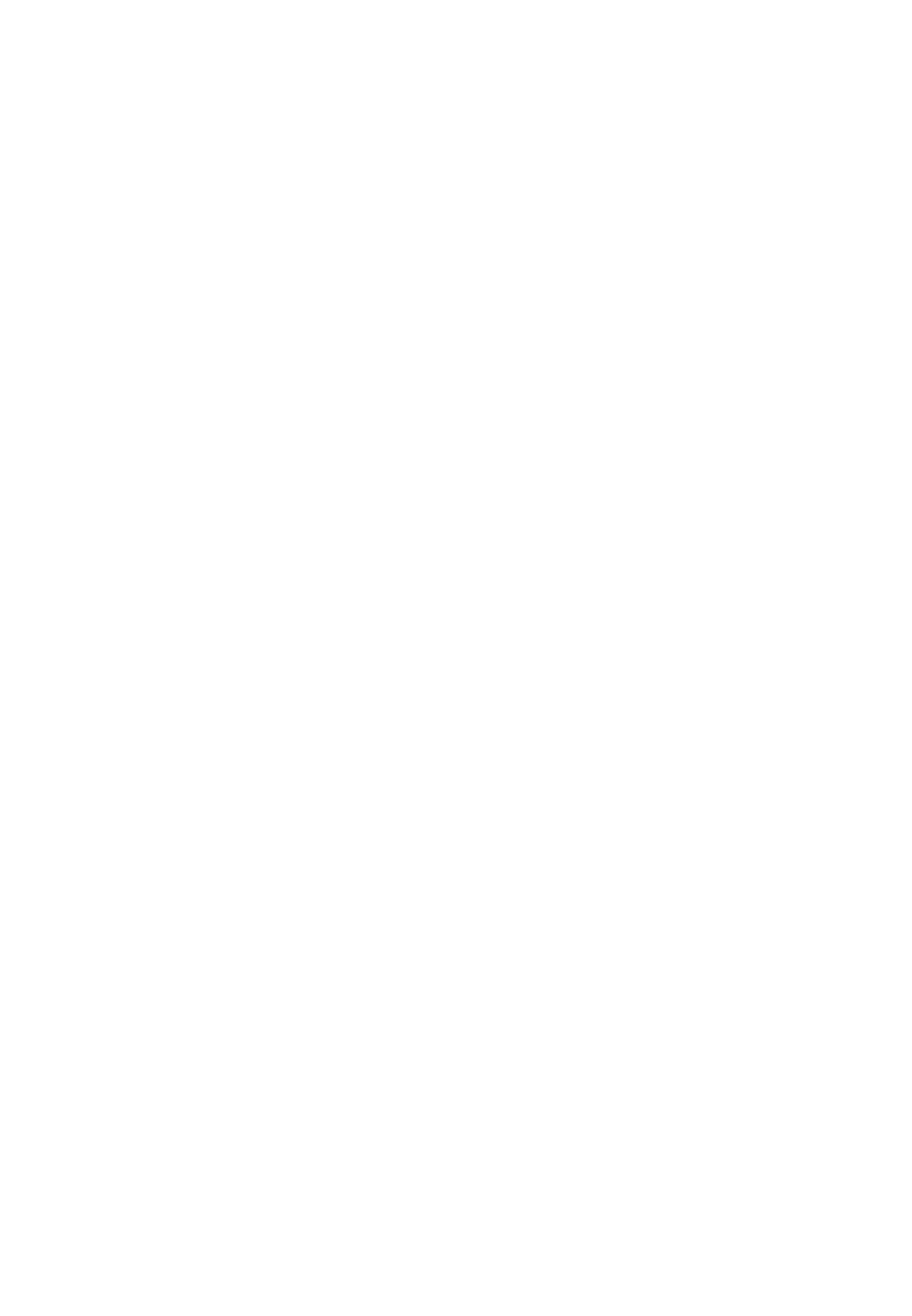
Collective, *Les Ateliers d’art de Courtrai De Coene Frères: 80 ans d’artisanat et d’industrie mobilier-intérieurs-architecture*, Brussels, Le Livre Timperman, 2006.

Revue Art De Coene, Courtrai, Stichting De Coene, n° 3, 2002 and n° 6, 2006.

“Dossier Jean-Baptiste Dewin”, *Bruxelles Patrimoine*, n° 10, Brussels, 2014.



Cover photo: the Riez building shortly after its completion, photo credit Emile Sergysels © AAM collection / CIVA Foundation Brussels.



THE RIEZ BUILDING

There are no more elegant illustrations of the history of Brussels and its economic and industrial development than the city's exceptional buildings of the early twentieth century. The Riez building, built in 1927-28, is one of these unique herit-

age buildings that followed in the wake of Victor Horta. This Art Deco gem, designed by the architect Jean-Baptiste Dewin, reveals the secrets of its construction and the charming details of its sumptuous interior decoration. Its extremely refined

style, reflecting the Modernist spirit and a consummate lifestyle, reaches its peak in the sitting room and dining room of the first-floor apartment, and extends into the kitchen, which boasts the most modern fittings of the period.

