



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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COURSE OF

*Abstract*

**Guimard after Guimard**

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Testo abstract (4000 caratteri max) (Arial 12, interlinea 16 pt). Usare lo stile "Testo Abstract".

By historical convention, Guimard's poetic is an expression of Art Nouveau, in the holistic and symbolist sense of the term, as total art, which pursues the myth of harmony between aesthetics, society, economy. These principles, which are rooted in the revival movement of international research based on quality artistic handicraft, come to compete with the production capacity of industrialization. Since Castel Beranger project and entrances to the Paris Métro, which mark the peak of his popularity, Guimard undertakes a path that increasingly tends to bring the project to the processes of mass production. Driven by an interest in the new, he matures a proposal for innovation that is expressed not only compared to decorative solutions or the development of a new design language, as also in a more radical and substantial form, questioning how to get it through a profound renewal of the building coming to a different organization of the yard. In particular, the attention to some experimental fabrics from America, that reverberate in large construction exhibition in Europe and specifically those of Paris in the late nineteenth century, emerge, finding a significant reference in the application, for the stairwell of the Castel Beranger, the glass panels with double curvature similar to those designed by Wright and produced by Luxfer Prism Company which in 1898 published a manual for the implementation of these materials. A reference which warns about starting issues brought to the center of the debate by those who become the protagonists of the new and who identify with the end of the twenties in the "modern movement". About that it seems significant that AMJ Bluysen, in short written 1936, *Modernism*, published in the journal of the *Société des Architectes Modernes*, agreements to Guimard - who had the idea of founding the *Société* - awareness of the meaning of the same term "modernism ". On these basis, the research aims to deepen the knowledge of a segment of Hector Guimard, who was until now little studied: the production of the 20s and 30s of the twentieth century linked to the invention patent of building elements serial designed to simplify the manufacturing process and lower the cost of implementation, aware that the traditional construction methods could no longer respond to the urgency of the reconstruction. It is therefore wanted to bring attention to a fundamental theme of the debate on which is the focus of research by Guimard of these years: the organization of the yard at a time when the prefabrication, practiced in industry, it is still starting out in the housing. This experience, which may seem to be peripheral to the more crackling Art Nouveau debut of what is known and is considered a "Architect d'art" at all, it actually reveals very significant, if framed in the research of architectural years between the wars. This is not just a response to the current economic and social issues, but it is the testimony of a conscious step towards modernity that can not disregard the industrial process, although history has put out quite the look "regressive" dell 'Art Nouveau as a statement of quality art and craft so exquisitely refined as outdated. How Guimard face right now, too often dismissed as an attempt to stay afloat and retrieve a number of failures, it is therefore the focus of this research. For this purpose, it seemed important a comparison with Henri Sauvage, whose streets seem at times to proceed symmetrically with many points of contact, but that, in the light of a more careful analysis of the projects and works, show a path traced towards' innovation,

dispelling the idea of some contemporary historiography that sees in the Art Nouveau "defense to the bitter end craft" as "prologue negative" of the same Art Nouveau movement. As the link with Sauvage is important in the Guimard path attests also the tribute to his friend and colleague in the resort to the use of its patent for a system of tubular elements in cement and eternit. A tribute that comes no epilogue of his activity with the construction of Guimardière, the villa that Guimard creates at Vaucresson few years before leaving France (1938) for the United States, already poor and disappointed, to die in New York in 1942.





Photo 1: Ecole de Sacre Coeur facade, at n. 9 avenue de la Frillière, Paris, november 2014 (Photo by F. Giusti)

Photo 2: Castel Beranger perspective view at n. 16 rue La Fontaine by a panel of the album Castel Beranger, Hector Guimard, Paris 1898

Photo 3: Facade details of the *immeuble de rapport* at n.38 in rue Greuze, where Guimard use the tubular elements system created by H.Sauvage in 1929, Paris, may 2015 (Photo by F .Giusti)

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