

Riga (Latvia): The Art Nouveau buildings

<http://www.riga-life.com/riga/art-nouveau>

The architectural and artistic answer to the literary Modernist movement that began in the late 19th century was the Art Nouveau movement in Europe. The Art Nouveau movement reached its peak in the early 20th century, which is when the majority of Riga's Art Nouveau houses were built, beginning in 1899. Riga's term for the movement, Jugendstil, comes from the German and Scandinavian movement named after the avant-garde periodical Jugend("Youth"). Unlike the stiffer sensibilities of Victorian style, Art Nouveau stressed a complete creative freedom, mixing fantastic elements with a tendency to show all utilitarian construction elements as artistic value, with very characteristic elements such as dynamic, undulating, and flowing lines and geometrical ornaments. In Riga, Art Nouveau could be split into two main directions, decorative and romantic-nationalistic Art Nouveau.



Riga is one of the largest centres of Art Nouveau, with more than a third of the buildings of its Central District built in the style. The main street for Riga's Art Nouveau district is Elizabetes, which intersects Brivibas Boulevard. In addition to Elizabetes Street, Alberta and Strelnieku Streets also feature impressive examples of the style. In total, there are over 800 Art Nouveau buildings in Riga, but finding them all would be quite an ambitious undertaking.



Significantly, most of the Art Nouveau buildings were designed and built by Latvian architects. Buildings in the decorative Art Nouveau style by one of the most famous architects, Mikhail Eisenstein (father of director Sergei Eisenstein), can be found at Elizabetes 10a and 10b, as well as at Alberta 2, 2a, 4, 8 and 13. On Alberta 13 stands a building from 1904 which now houses the Riga Graduate School of Law, which is fully restored and publicly accessible. Right around the corner, Strelnieku Street also features eccentric examples of the style. Romantic-nationalist Art Nouveau can be seen in the buildings by Latvian architects E. Laube, K. Peksens, and A. Vanags, such as those on Terbatas Street 15/17 and Brivibas Street 47, 58, and 62.

More information can be learned about Art Nouveau and other architecture in Riga in the Latvian Museum of Architecture located in one of the Three Brothers in the Old Town.





The Sun Museum

<http://www.saulsmuzejs.lv/EN/Museum/History.html>

"Three Brothers"

The so-called "Three Brothers" (Tris Brāli), or Maza Pils numbers 17, 19, and 21, are the oldest stone houses still standing in Riga, and an excellent example of medieval architecture.

The oldest brother is the White Brother, it was built in the 15th century and is the most medieval one.

The middle Yellow Brother is from the 17th century.

The youngest Green Brother was built in 18th century.



Why are they called Tree Brothers? Actually no one knows that! Never ever any three brothers have lived there and these buildings have never belonged to any of three brothers. The simple reason might be that these houses are standing side by side to each other, forming a typical ensemble. All three brothers are joined together from inside and hosts the Latvian Museum of Architecture