


Robert Mallet-Stevens (1886-1945)

An architect born in Paris to a family of Belgian origin, he was influenced by the work of the Viennese architect Josef Hoffman, designer of the Stoclet Palace in Brussels. He was interested in the works of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Bauhaus movement in Germany, and worked with the artists of the Dutch De Stijl movement. In 1929 he took part in the creation of the review *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* and the *Union des artistes modernes* (Union of Modern Artists) for which he was named president. He was the author of emblematic buildings such as the Villa Noailles in Hyères (1923-1933) and the private houses located on the Paris street bearing his name (1927-1930), but also of industrial buildings, garages, shops and exhibition halls. Between 1922 and 1928, he produced sets for some ten films including *L'inhumaine* by Marcel L'Herbier. All his productions sought geometrical precision in their shapes, a simplicity in their volumes and a functionality in their spaces. He was appointed director of the École des Beaux-Arts in Lille in 1935. At his request, all his archives were destroyed upon his death.

Visitor information

Guided tours during the week
 Monument accessible to the disabled 

Gift and book shop
 The guide for this monument can be found in the *Itinéraires* collection and is available in 2 languages in the gift and book shop.

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oeuvre de Robert Mallet-Stevens © A. Séguy, crédit photo © J.-L. Pallis / Centre des monuments nationaux, réalisation graphique Marie-Hélène Forcister, traduction ADT international, impression Sipa, imprimé Vert®, papier issu de forêts gérées durablement, mai 2015.

The context behind the order

Paul Cavrois placed an order for a first house project with Jacques Gréber in 1925, but the project was never finalised. He then turned to Robert Mallet-Stevens. He wanted a large, modern house located on land in the town of Croix in what at the time was a country setting in Beaumont. He thus demonstrated his desire to stand out from the traditional buildings of the region by calling upon an architect who had recently made a sensation at the International Exposition of Decorative Arts of 1925. The first plans were drawn up in 1929. The following year, Mallet-Stevens brought Paul Cavrois and his son, Jean, to Holland to see the Town Hall in Hilversum, designed by Willem Dudok (1884-1974). Paul Cavrois authorized him to work in the modernist, geometric spirit of the building and accepted that the façades should be covered with yellow bricks specially produced for the villa. Work began in June of 1930. Mr and Mrs Cavrois inaugurated their home on 5 July 1932, for their daughter Geneviève's wedding.

The Cavrois family

Paul Cavrois (1890-1965) came from the industrial bourgeoisie of Roubaix and owned two spinning operations and dye-works. In 1919, he married Lucie Vanoutryve (1891-1985), his brother Jean's widow. Jean had died during the war in 1915. They had four children together, expanding the family which already included three children from Lucie's first marriage to Jean Cavrois.

Restoration

Starting in 2003, the State undertook a major restoration project for the villa in several phases, including reinforcement to the structures, restoration of the walls and roof, the garden, and the inside areas. The restoration work sought to return the villa to its original historic condition as when it was inaugurated in 1932. The initial volume of the rooms and decors were returned to their original state thanks to old photographs and archaeological traces of the building. The lighting, the furnishings attached to the decorations, as well as the bookcases and benches have all been restored using the original materials. The parquet floorings, metal doorframes and marbles have been restored or returned. The restoration of the park has returned it to the original land's very subtle gradient with the precise layout of the alleyways, while replanting plant species identified from old photographs. The reflecting pool, which had been filled in during the war, and the swimming pool have been restored to their original state. The restoration was carried out by the Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles du Nord-Pas-de-Calais and then by the Centre des Monuments Nationaux between 2009 and 2015. Since 2012, the villa has been part of a worldwide conservation programme for emblematic houses of the 20th century, "Iconic Houses".



villa Cavrois

An architectural manifesto

A family residence

Built between 1929 and 1932, the villa was the result of an order placed by Paul Cavrois with the architect Robert Mallet-Stevens to house his family of seven



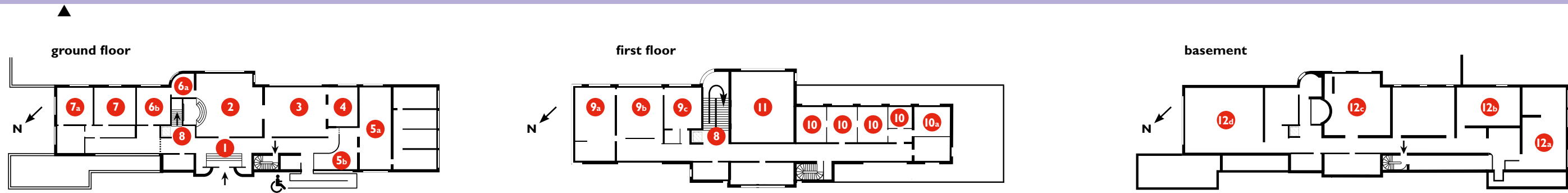
south façade and reflecting pool

children and his domestic servants. Covered in yellow facing bricks set on a concrete frame and double red brick walls, the villa was thought out

as a total work of art comprising an exemplary case of homogenous construction between architecture, decoration and furniture. It is the architect's technical and aesthetic manifesto in terms of the care given to its materials and equipment.

A sorry fate

The villa was occupied by German troops between 1940 and 1944. It was damaged at the end of the war. When he returned in 1947, Paul Cavrois called upon architect Pierre Barbe to add two apartments for his elder sons. The family lived in the villa until 1985. The following year, it was sold to a real estate firm that wanted to subdivide the park. Despite its automatic classification as a historic monument in 1990, the villa was no longer maintained by its owner, who abandoned it to looters. The State bought the property, which was in serious danger, in 2001, and entrusted it to the Centre des Monuments Nationaux on 31 December 2008.



The architectural programme

The book *Une demeure 1934 (A 1934 Home)* sums up the programme: "Home for a large family. Home for a family living in 1934: air, light, work, sports, hygiene, comfort, economical." Alongside these principles, Mallet-Stevens added the advanced technologies of the time: central heating, lighting, ventilation, lift, telephone and wireless (radio) in each room.

The villa was organised in relation to how the spaces were used: reception rooms, functional areas, the parents' wing, the children's spaces, leisure and sport areas, and terraces.

- 1 The vestibule** opens out onto a flight of white marble stairs with black marble risers leading to a long corridor laying out the reception areas. Facing the entrance are two soft boxes in steel and opaline glass equipped with indirect lighting, reminiscent of the sets designed by Mallet-Stevens for the cinema, surrounding a small black door that opens out onto the immense salon-hall. On either side, marble window boxes and aluminium radiator covers complement the four hoop wall sconces by Jacques Le Chevallier and René Koechlin.
- 2 The salon-hall**, a vast room on two levels, looks out over the reflecting pool, with an overhanging mezzanine. The fireside area, with yellow Sienna marble facing, has built-in bench seats. The decoration has been renovated to its original state. The green colour used on the walls echoes the greenery of the park.

- 3 The parents' dining room**, in Swedish green marble, forms a contrast with the furniture in varnished blackened pearwood, restored to its original state. The suspended luminaire in staff* was based on the model by lighting designer André Salomon.
- 4 The children's dining room** overlooks the park. Sculptors Jan and Joël Martel had installed a colourful relief evoking games and leisure. The table and the six chairs in zebrawood are originals.
- 5 The kitchen (a)** and the pantry **(b)** are functional areas. The walls and floors are covered with washable ceramic tiles, the furnishings in painted metal. The dumbwaiter serves the summer terrace. The tables and most of the cupboards are originals. The chairs are later productions.
- 6 The smoking room (a)**, decorated with Cuban mahogany, provides access to Paul Cavrois' **office (b)**, with double indirect lighting, a safe and natural varnished pearwood panelling restored to the original state.
- 7 Each young man's bedroom** has its own bathroom. The one in the corner **(a)** of the house is a tribute to modern Dutch art's De Stijl movement: colourful walls, polychrome furniture, varnished black ceiling.
- 8 The straight-flight staircase** looks out onto the garden through a large, semi-circular bay window. The **lift** car is equipped with doors by Jean Prouvé.
- 9 The parents' wing**: the bathroom **(a)** is one of the rooms that demonstrates the house's modernity and luxury. It has a bathing area and a dressing area with built-in wardrobes. Great care was taken in restoring

the bedroom **(b)** and the boudoir **(c)** with their decoration and furniture made of rare woods. Nearly all the pieces of furniture are originals.

- 10 The children's and governesses' wing** has two bathrooms and three fully equipped bedrooms. The room **(a)** in the corner, which has not been restored, bears witness to the damages inflicted on the site.
- 11 The playroom** (half-floor above the salon-hall): the passageway between the stairs and the terrace could be used as a little stage.
- 12 The basement** is divided into many rooms with precise uses: laundry room **(a)** with a clothes drier, washing and ironing machines, furnace room **(b)**, two wine cellars **(c)**, various areas for preparing bouquets of flowers, for storing trunks and luggage, a depository for sports equipment, a fruit cellar and a two-car garage **(d)**. The wine cellar, transformed into a materials library, presents examples of the old and new materials used at the villa.

Furniture

Designed by Mallet-Stevens, each piece of furniture was produced for its particular use. The remaining furniture was auctioned off in 1987 after Mrs Cavrois' death. The inventory of the collections was used to locate and identify part of the original furniture which is now presented in the children's dining room, the kitchen, the parents' bedroom and the boudoir, in keeping with the layout that can be seen in period photographs.

The park

The same vision was applied to the outdoor areas: the north part was laid out to allow automobiles to drive around easily. To the south, a long reflecting pool fits in with the controlled, open spatial organisation. In the eastern part of the park, vast areas are used to meet the villa's needs: an orchard, vegetable garden, hen house, animal pens and a rose garden (now disappeared).

The caretaker's pavilion

The gift and book shop has been set up in the old garage, preserving the original installations and decoration.

* Staff: material used in decoration, comprising plaster and plant fibres, which is moulded or polished.