The Art Nouveau Movement In Architecture: The Most Prominent Buildings

Ever since it began, architecture was the process of planning, designing and building as it led on towards many architectural styles to be enhanced through time. After a dramatic progression of architectural design, the Art Nouveau movement was introduced. The style thrived between 1890 and 1910 throughout predominantly Europe and the United States where it grew around the world as one of the most famous architectural styles, worshipped for its characteristics and 'deliberate attempt to create a new style, free of the imitative historicism that dominated much of [the] 19th century'. As the Art Nouveau's title may vary from country to country, its features will not. The style focuses on asymmetrical natural forms to represent beauty such as flowers, other plants and insects to depict either a sophisticated feel or a powerful 'rhythmic and whiplike force'. As time passed and the style progressed, the decoration became purer, the curvature of lines became more stylised and several geometric forms were evolved and furthered through the architecture and furniture of the style. However, after 1910, the style became an image for old fashioned and limited architecture which led to a halt for the once new style until the 1960s where it was partially renewed and revived as the 21st century brought the style to new lengths.

Since the Art Nouveau style was introduced, many buildings of significance have impacted architectural design through their features and popularity. Within Barcelona, between 1904 and 1906, the Casa Batllo was completed by Antoni Gaudi who showed his courage to overcome the initial expectation of the buildings demolishment. After being built in 1877 by Emilio Sala Cortes (who was one of Gaudi's architectural professors at the time), the building was set to be destroyed after the purchase made by Mr Josep Batllo y Casanovas in 1903 but enabled a turn of events of full freedom for Gaudi in which he turned the masterpiece into one of Art Nouveau's great accomplishments. Gaudi entirely altered the façade of the building which further drew the building to the style. Gaudi was born in 1852 and showed an architectural instinct so early in his career. This combined with his education as he attended school in Barcelona which he later positioned so many of his works, and his inspiration and influence by Eugene Viollet-le-Duc's 1872 book, 'Entretiens sur l'architecture', gave him the confidence and helped him lead to his success as an architect and ultimately with his creation of the Casa Batllo.

The façade of Casa Batllo significantly expresses both the works of Antoni Gaudi and the introduction of the Art Nouveau style into Barcelona. The building involves a skeletal organic remarkable look to embody its name meaning the 'House of Bones'. The building further demonstrates the style of Art Nouveau through its dramatic use of colour, balconies and curvature. It also incorporates its main feature as a dragon back design on its roof which is shaped and coloured to represent the animals spine. Furthermore, the roof shows life through its tower that is crowned with a cross to display plant life and the announcement of the next flowering. The tower is decorated with monograms of Jesus, Maria and Joseph made from ceramic pieces that present as golden over the green background of the façade to show Gaudi's religion. The centre of the façade demonstrates a lake with water lilies which combines with the ceramic pieces to create the beautifully coloured and blossoming look to the building. As Casa Batllo progressed past the Art Nouveau's period of sensation, the owners were

transferred from the Batllo family to the Bernat family who restored the building and presented it to the world as an architectural dream that symbolises the Art Nouveau style through its features as a new form of architecture for the future of architecture to embrace.

One of the first notable and most influential buildings of the Art Nouveau style was the Villa Majorelle which allowed many other architectural works derive form the masterpiece. Unlike the Casa Batllo, the Villa Majorelle was a household rather than a host for events. It was a home to Louis Majorelle who was a decorator and furniture designer and in particular one of the most exceptional designers for the Art Nouveau style and only had his factory located across the street. After building the house, he hired Henri Sauvage who was one of the most important architects of the style to bring Sauvage's work into his house. As Sauvage quit school before completion, he was primarily self-taught through his own knowledge and experience within architectural design as he progressed into Louis Majorelle's radar to design the Villa Majorelle in 1901 and 1902.

While Antoni Gaudi was faced with dilemma of Casa Batllo's near destruction and independence before his designs, both Majorelle and Sauvage were able to collaborate their work into the house which developed into a 'perfect blend of elegance and comfort'. This contribution of work and experience helped shape the features that the Villa Majorelle displays. The building expresses a subtle yet forceful feel of grace with its use of life within the decoration. Whether it be drainpipes, chimneys, supports for fences, rooves and balconies or windows, they each show their shrewd design of vines and vegetation to influence the Art Nouveau style as it contrasts with the plain walls. The building also utilises curvature combined with its features of balconies and windows tremendously which further express its feeling of elegance and comfort.

The Villa Majorelle contrasts with the Casa Batllo dramatically. While both possess several features of life and vegetation to represent the style that is Art Nouveau, the use of colour is much more expressive with the building located in Barcelona. The Casa Batllo delivers much more brightly coloured features as the façade of the building stands out as an instantly recognisable styled building. However, the Villa Majorelle on the other hand utilises its use of colour at a much duller level allowing the style to be expressed through smaller objects and features to give the building a calmer sense into the style. As the Villa Majorelle progressed past the years of the Art Nouveau style, the building had been badly damaged which was detrimental to the Majorelle family and this distraught emotion worsened as their factory caught on fire as well which caused the building to be sold off in pieces. Nonetheless, this was only a delay for the building as it recovered and advanced into future years to give purpose for architectural designs to learn from its gentle Art Nouveau designs and for the building to ultimately be used for offices by local organisations.

Later into Art Nouveau's lifetime, the Cauchie House was built with the knowledge of previous buildings to evolve the style to a new level. Paul Cauchie constructed the building with the help of his wife in 1905 for private use as a new married couple. Paul Cauchie had an exceptional educational upbringing that led to so many of his outstanding works but most notably the most beautiful achievement in Brussels as none other than the Cauchie House. He was remarkable in all areas of decoration which steered the building to incorporate each area as well. The façade of the Cauchie House entitles 'Par Nous Pour Nous' which means 'By Us For Us' which clearly demonstrates Paul Cauchie's determination to incorporate a joint use of work for their personal use. The façade mainly utilises the Art Nouveau style through the art of human life and

colour. While the building does possess the style, its lack of plant life and significant use of symmetry may suggest otherwise. The building juxtaposes with both the Casa Batllo and the Villa Majorelle. While the Cauchie House is similar to the Casa Batllo by its incredible detail with the art used on their facades, the vivid use of animal and plant life and bright colour distinguishes itself from the Cauchie House. Additionally, as the Cauchie House incorporates a different aspect into the Art Nouveau style, its dull colour and subtle features do acquaint the building to the Villa Majorelle. Furthermore, as the Cauchie House exceeded the Art Nouveau styles significant time, it was further familiarised to the Villa Majorelle as it was abandoned which led to a request for demolition but much alike the Villa Majorelle, the request was overcome as the Cauchie House has become an exhibition into the 21st century.

While the Art Nouveau movement didn't progress into newly constructed buildings of its very own style within the 21st century, its features however, combined with other styles to form into more improved architectural buildings. One of these buildings is the Casa da Música designed by Remment Lucas Koolhaas. Koolhaas is a Dutch architect who travelled around the world to improve his knowledge for his profession. He is considered one of the most important architects and urbanists of the 21st century and has even won several awards and made it into Time's top 100 world's most influential people in 2008. He is a controversial architect where his trouble allows his work to stand out. He is known for shaking up established buildings and giving the architectural world an unbalancing effect where is ideas seem to be endless. When it came to the Casa da Música, Koolhaas unintentionally associated the design to the Art Nouveau style. Their major connection is through the extreme use of asymmetry and curvature with the shape of the building. Although the building possesses square glass windows, dull colour and a lack of vegetation in its design, the distinct polygon shape and rounded roof corresponds the building to the Art Nouveau style which demonstrates the impact that the style had as architecture grew into the 21st century.

The Casa da Música not only compares to the Art Nouveau style itself but it also presents features and traits from some architectural designs of the styles time. While this is the case, the buildings comparison with the Casa Batllo portrays quite a large gap of similarity. While the Casa Batllo is of the Art Nouveau style and does involve much of its features through the life of animals, colour and shapes, it happens to lack the Casa da Música's main Art Nouveau characteristic of asymmetry. Regardless, the Casa da Música brings the Casa Batllo's use of curvature into its design. As a much more parallel use of buildings, the building does acquaint towards the Villa Majorelle. They both have a major use of plain walls and have a much more simple and subtle feel to their buildings. Conversely, the Casa da Música does not embrace and vegetation to give its refined aspect of the Art Nouveau style. In addition to Casa da Música's comparisons, the Cauchie House further gives the buildings significance of plain and simple walls combined with the use of dull colour much alike the Villa Majorelle. However, the Cauchie House does implicate a severe expression of art whereas the Casa da Música has none as it aims for an entire simple and easy look and feel. Therefore, the Casa da Música does possess features of the Art Nouveau style as it represents the progression of the style through time into the 21st century despite its direct link to the movement.

Overall, architectural design has been proven to progress through time, through the Art Nouveau style and so many others as each movement becomes influential for another through buildings and designers. As presented by examples of building's designs, the movement of Art Nouveau was one of the most famous and significant of them all. Through the natural life and vegetation look, their asymmetry, the curvature, the elegance and the gracefulness that style's

buildings possess, each allowed the Art Nouveau style to shine into the 21st century as it inspired so many other designs and designers.