

GUIDO STEGEN  
THOMAS FÖHL

# HENRY VAN DE VELDE'S LA NOUVELLE MAISON

## THE RESTORATION

HISTORY AND REBIRTH  
OF A MILESTONE OF  
MODERN ARCHITECTURE

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Prefaces by Thomas Rabe  
Peter De Wilde

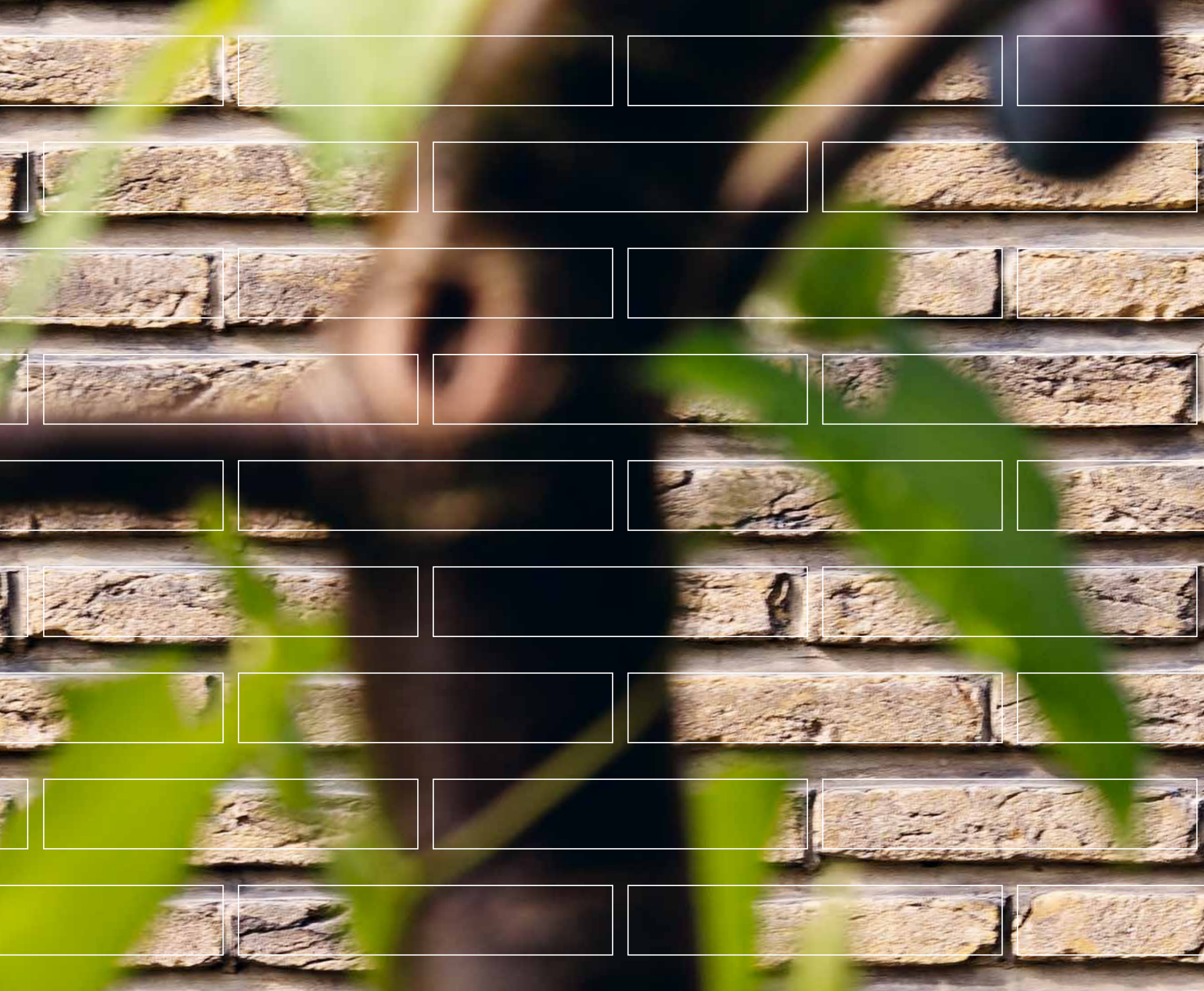
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# Preface

It was a fortunate coincidence: in November 2015, during a walk through Tervuren, I found myself on Albertlaan, right in front of house number 1: La Nouvelle Maison. I had known the house since childhood, as it stood close to my parents' home. Now, a 'For Sale' sign hung in front of La Nouvelle Maison. For my wife and me, the decision was made swiftly: we wanted to buy it. For two reasons: firstly, we appreciate the simple elegance of Modernism and Bauhaus as perfectly exemplified by La Nouvelle Maison. And secondly, it represents a piece of home, evoking memories of my years and our shared time in Brussels and Tervuren.

From 1968 to 1974, my family lived at Albertlaan 13. I grew up there, went to the European School in Uccle, and played in the street where Henry van de Velde designed and built his last residence, La Nouvelle Maison – although I was not aware of it at the time. Later, the family moved closer to the centre of Brussels. After completing my studies in Germany, I returned to Brussels, where I worked for the European Commission and then for a law firm. Most importantly, it was in Brussels that I met my wife. In 1992, Birgit and I were married in Sint-Jan Evangelistkerk (St. John the Evangelist Church) in Tervuren. So, we have many fond memories of Brussels and Tervuren – and now we are back, albeit not yet as often as we would like. My career took me to Germany for many years and, as CEO of Bertelsmann, around the world. My wife and I will spend much more time here and live in La Nouvelle Maison after my planned departure from Bertelsmann at the end of 2026.

We already feel at home there today, but it has been a long journey – truly eye-opening and much longer than we anticipated. At first, we had no idea how complex and time-consuming the restoration of a listed building would be, especially one where, after so many decades, the ambition was to return as far as possible to Henry van de Velde's original vision – much to the delight of our architect, but to the dismay of some of the craftspersons involved.

In 2016, we embarked on the project. Our first and most important decision was to choose the architect Guido Stegen to lead the restoration. We chose him because of his extensive experience in restoring houses from this era, and because,

from the start, we got along well and quickly established a strong relationship of trust. We had countless on-site meetings and discussions: sometimes about outstanding permits from the authorities, sometimes about colour studies, and sometimes about the layout of the garden, which, since 2024, is part of the listed site of La Nouvelle Maison. As the work progressed, our desire grew to document the restoration in book form for a wider audience. Moreover, we decided to make the house accessible to the public. Our view is that La Nouvelle Maison should be a place of encounter, not only for architecture enthusiasts but also for those interested in the historical context of the house and its brilliant creator. Visitors can experience the captivating interplay between functionality and living environment that Henry van de Velde once created for himself and his family, and which to this day has nothing museum-like about it. This includes the rebuilt garden and its organic connection to the house. All of this together means that my wife and I feel a sense of joy every time we enter La Nouvelle Maison, every time we come home. I hope that, through reading, you can share this joy.

I would like to end by thanking everyone who made both the building and book project possible: first and foremost, the architect Guido Stegen, without whom the restoration would not have come to fruition; the main contractor, Renotec; Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau; the garden architect Ann Voets; the landscape gardener Jo Groven and his team at elm landscaping; Katharina Haderer and Markus Eisen from Prestel Publishing, graphic designer Justus Oehler from Pentagram, and my dear Bertelsmann colleagues, Karin Schlautmann, Helen Müller, and Silke Tilk.

**Thomas Rabe**

Owner of La Nouvelle Maison, 2025