

Villa Gaverzicht Waregem

- Address: Churchillaan 16, Waregem
- Architecture type: house, garden
- Architects: Gentiel Van Eeckhoutte
- Style: modernism
- Year: 1937-1939
- Region: Kortrijk
- Epoch: Interwar



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The Villa Gaverzicht was built and designed by architect Gentiel Van Eeckhoutte in 1937-1939. In 1933 Van Eeckhoutte bought the property together with his father Gustaaf Charles Van Eeckhoutte. The monumental villa was built as the residence for the architect and his family. In the beginning Van Eeckhoutte's sisters and their father lived in the villa with him until the death of their father in 1946. Afterwards the architect stayed in the residence with his wife until his own death in 1963. His widowed wife stayed in the villa until the age of 90. The villa gained recognition after its bathroom was featured on the album cover of "Jonge Helden" by the popular Flemish electronic-rock band Arbeid Adelt! in 1983.

At the time of its construction Waregem just started developing from a rural area to a more urbanized area and city. The size of the property and its garden was very unusual at the time in Waregem. The neighbourhood of the villa started developing in the 1920s and contained mostly smaller terraced houses. It showcased the wealth of the family Van Eeckhoutte and its social status in Waregem at the time.

The villa and its garden were listed as a protected monument by the Flemish government in 2010 because of their artistic, historical and socio-cultural value. The protection included some of the furniture pieces still preserved in the villa. The garden itself was also listed in 2010 as a protected city or village view. In 2015 the residence was sold to a new owner. By then the villa had been uninhabited for several years and was in need of renovation. The new owner became French real estate developer Yves Plançon. After a year the residence was restored by its new owner who still lives in the villa up till today. To make the villa more appealing Plançon searched and bought furniture pieces and decorations which corresponded to the time and style of the villa.



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The architect: Gentiel Van Eeckhoutte (1906-1963)

Not much is known about the architect Gentiel Van Eeckhoutte. A profound study about the life and architecture of Van Eeckhoutte is yet to be made. We don't know much about the circle of contacts and influences the architect had. Van Eeckhoutte was born in the district Gaverke in the city of Waregem. His father Gustaaf Charles was a carpenter specialised in crafting staircases. The architect studied at the Sint-Lucasinstituut in Ghent where he graduated in 1929. After his studies Van Eeckhoutte returned to his hometown where he started his own architectural firm. His first known building was built in 1932 in the Churchillaan 23 in Waregem.

Van Eeckhoutte found a lot of success in the area with his modern buildings. His studies in Ghent would encourage him to approach his designs artistically and very carefully which would result in high quality designs. He developed a modern architectural style which was

revolutionary for the surroundings of Waregem, which were at that time still very rural. He specialized in the usage of reinforced concrete in his constructions which wasn't used often in buildings. His modern Art-Deco influenced style would be highly appreciated by high class citizens. Most of his known buildings were designed under the patronage of wealthy inhabitants. This allowed him to develop a modern architectural style influenced by the *International Style* architecture and the "*Paquetbot*" Style or *Streamline Moderne Style*. His architecture shows similarities and influences by the architecture of Dutch architect Willem Marinus Dudok and French-Swiss architect Le Corbusier. By the 1950's Van Eeckhoutte had changed his architectural style to a less progressive one. He primarily designed traditional cottages in Oostduinkerke.

Van Eeckhoutte's main architectural activity was located in Waregem where most of his buildings still exist. He also designed buildings in neighbouring cities such as Kortrijk, Izegem and Wingene. His own Villa Gaverzicht is considered as his most important building. According to the city archives of Waregem the architect had also designed stores and factories. Underneath is a selection of his buildings located in Waregem:

- Waregem Boulezlaan 14 (1938)
- Waregem Boulezlaan 20 (1933)
- Waregem Boulezlaan 24 (1937)
- Waregem Boulezlaan 38 (1938)
- Waregem Bruggestraat 19-21 (1938-1940)
- Waregem Churchillaan 21 (1935)
- Waregem Churchillaan 22 (1934)
- Waregem Churchillaan 23 (1932)
- Waregem Churchillaan 30 (1941)
- Waregem Churchillaan 79 (1938)
- Waregem Churchillaan 87 (1938)
- Waregem Franklin Rooseveltlaan 28 (1939)
- Waregem Franklin Rooseveltlaan 30 (1938)
- Waregem Guido Gezellestraat 53 (1944)
- Waregem Koningin Fabiolalaan 5 (1938)
- Waregem Kruishoutemseweg 36 (1944)
- Waregem Nachtegaallaan 13 (1957)
- Waregem Oscar Verschuerestraat 24 (1933)
- Waregem Oscar Verschuerestraat 26 (1933)
- Waregem Pieter Baesstraat 11 (1935)
- Waregem Roger Vansteenbruggestraat 117 (1943)
- Waregem Stormestraat 140 (1945)
- Waregem Westerlaan 46 (1929-1932)
- Waregem Westerlaan 100-102 (1933)
- Waregem Zeswegenstraat 19 (1950)

The construction

The villa is a remarkable example of modernist architecture in the surroundings of Waregem. It is the most important construction built by the architect in his career. As it was his own residence, the architect had the liberty to explore his own architectural style at the fullest without any limitations by owners of the property. The villa can be considered the purest realisation of the architectural ideas of Gentiel Van Eeckhoutte. The architect used his own property to showcase his architectural abilities to people visiting the villa. It also had to showcase the wealth and status of his family.

Stylistically the villa is a rare example in the area and in Flanders of the *Paquetbot style* or *Streamlined Modernism*, an international architectural style inspired by the aerodynamic

designs of railroad locomotives and packet boats. It is a continuation of the Art Deco style from the 1920's. Typical elements which can be attributed to the *Paquetbot style* is the usage of different rounded forms and the three-dimensional approach of the building. The typical variety of colours in the building was obtained by the usage of different materials, mainly different coloured bricks and tiles. The structure itself was built with reinforced concrete which allowed the architect the liberty to arrange his home how he wanted it. The usage of concrete is also very remarkable at the time in residential buildings. It was mostly used in industrial buildings at the time.



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The Art Deco designed interior is still exceptionally well preserved and is also included in the protection of the building. The bathroom is especially remarkable as it wasn't usual at the time to have a bathroom inside residential buildings. It shows that the architect was wealthy enough to be able to afford this kind of luxury back in the day. As a whole the interior is a rare example of a well preserved Art Deco interior in Flanders.

Sources and Literature

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