



Ducale House

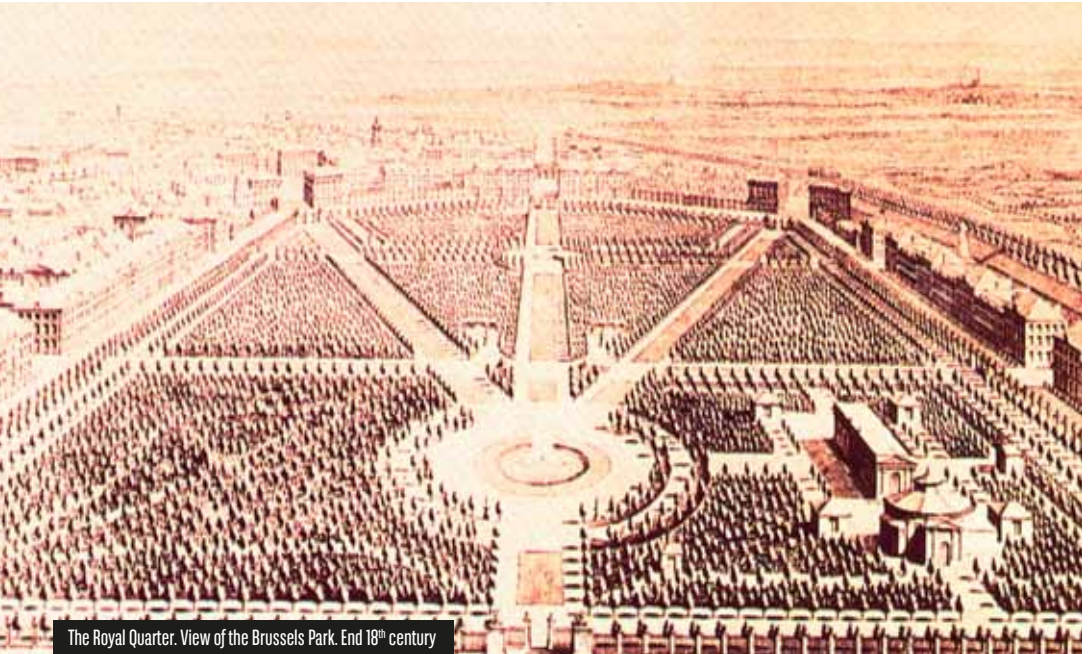
Brussels



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DUCALE HOUSE

Ducale House is built in 1779 at 11 rue Ducale, a residential street of the Royal Quarter of Brussels, which has emerged as one of the city's most prestigious addresses. This area abounds in history and is the city natural heart of political power and decision making. Rue Ducale still boasts outstanding buildings including the Prime Minister's residence and several embassies.



The Royal Quarter. View of the Brussels Park. End 18th century

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Today **Ducale House** is mainly used for elegant entertaining. There, the **BNP Paribas Group** holds business functions and hosts high-profile guests - whether clients or visitors with professional relationship - in what is a very special and welcoming environment.

The **French urban architect Barnabé Guimard** is responsible for the mapping of the street. However **Rue Ducale** takes its name from the area, which for many centuries was home to the court of both the Dukes of Brabant and the Dukes of Burgundy. Together with rue Royale, rue de la Loi and place des Palais, it makes up the rectangle of streets surrounding Brussels Park, a public garden designed in 1774 by **Joachim Zinner**, an **Austrian landscape architect and gardener to the Austro-Hungarian court**.



The Lobby after the renovation works of 2008

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Jules Van Praet

Characterised by its even and harmonious architecture, rue Ducale immediately became one of the most highly-regarded residential arteries of the Royal Quarter. The private mansions which line the street were mainly inhabited by wealthy merchants and diplomats from Geneva, and accordingly became known as **rue des Genevois**. Later, under French rule, it was renamed **rue de l'Égalité**, a name kept until 1811. After the fall of the Emperor Napoleon Buonaparte, many British people came to live there like the famous romantic poet **Lord Byron**. But other eminent personalities were seen residing there too such as the French political figure **Jean-Jacques-Régis Cambacérès**.

Like the other mansions along the street, Ducale House is a **neoclassical style** building, which is the usual architectural trend during the 18th century. It has a ground floor and two storeys, with an evenly-balanced and symmetrical straight-lined façade which pervades simplicity, restraint and elegance.

From 1831 to 1887, it served as the home of **Jules Van Praet**, the secretary to King Leopold I and subsequently the Minister of the Royal Household before being appointed an auditor of the Société Générale de

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Belgique under Leopold II's reign. Parallel to his career as a famous politician he became a great art collector and a well-known historian. He enjoyed staying at his rue Ducale residence where he installed his Belgian and French masterpieces: Millet, Rousseau, Corot, Géricault, Delacroix...

In 1892, Ducale House became the property of the **Count t'Kint de Roodenbeke**, the Speaker of the Belgian Senate. In 1946, his heirs sold the building to **Banque Belge pour l'Etranger** which was initially a subsidiary of the Société Générale de Belgique. Then the Banque de la Société Générale de Belgique, an offshoot of the Société Générale and a forerunner of BNP Paribas Fortis, bought the mansion on 27 June 1961.

In 2008, extensive work was undertaken to restore and modernise this magnificent building, while still preserving its original and historically distinctive architectural characteristics. The internal space features a wide central staircase leading to two floors with several reception and dining rooms. Each floor is furnished and decorated to reflect a different period and style.



The Garden : sculpture of Belgian Blue Stone and Metal, Dogan Çakır

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On the ground floor, the early 19th century **Empire style** prevails, while the first floor is enhanced by the 18th century wood panelling adorning the walls of the two reception rooms and their **Louis XV furniture**. On the second floor, the meeting rooms are equipped with multimedia facilities and the Oriental room

displays magnificent **Chinese porcelains from the Kangxi period** and a Japanese screen from the early 18th century.

The works of art assembled at Ducale House are major and exquisite items from the collection acquired



A Reception room on the 1st floor

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continuously by the financial institutions that were the forerunners of BNP Paribas Fortis. Almost all of them are signed by artists either Belgian born or foreigner living in Belgium. They are beautifully displayed in this wonderful setting, providing visitors with a tour of several centuries of artistic creation from the 17th

century Flemish masters to the 21st century talented young artists. Hence the very cultural significance and grand atmosphere bestowed upon Ducale House.



The Oriental room : the Japanese screen, gold leaf, 18th century



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