

Born in 1860 in a small Czech town, Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939) was an artist on the forefront of Art Nouveau, the modernist movement that swept Paris in the 1910s, marking a return to the simplicity of natural forms, and changing the world of art and design forever. In fact, Art Nouveau was known to insiders as the “Mucha style” for the legions of imitators who adapted the master’s celebrated tableaux. Today, his distinctive depictions of lithe young women in classical dress have become a pop cultural touchstone, inspiring album covers, comic books, and everything in between. Patrick Bade and Victoria Charles offer readers an inspiring survey of Mucha’s career, illustrated with over one hundred lustrous images, from early Parisian advertisements and posters for Sandra Bernhardt, to the famous historical murals painted just before his death, at the age of 78, in 1939.

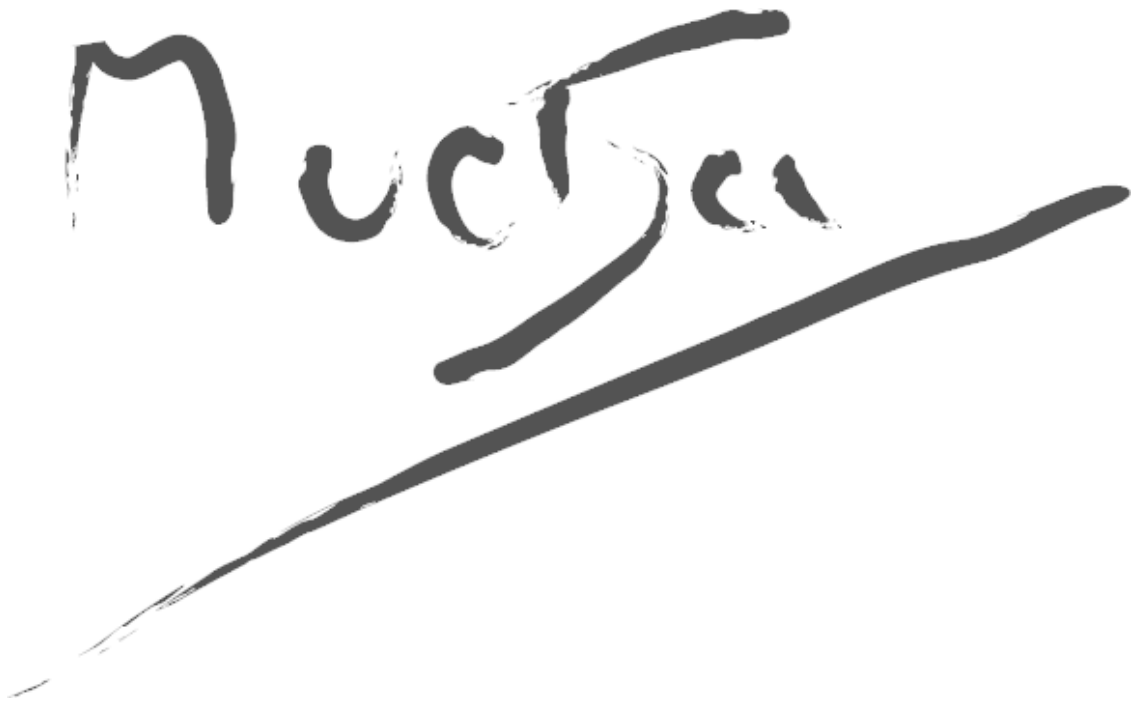
Содержание

Art Nouveau	6
The Origins of Art Nouveau	7
England: Cradle of Art Nouveau	22
Belgium: The Flowering of Art Nouveau	29
France: A Passion for Art Nouveau	36
Art Nouveau at the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris	39
The French Pavilion	40
The English Pavilion	43
The American Pavilion	50
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	51

Patrick Bade and Victoria Charles Alfonse Mucha

© Confidential Concepts, worldwide, USA
© Parkstone Press International, New York, USA
Image-Bar www.image-bar.com

* * *

A stylized, handwritten signature of the name 'Mucha' in a dark, thick, brush-like font. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends from the bottom of the 'a' across the page.

Art Nouveau



Mucha in his studio, rue du Val-de-Grâce, Paris, c. 1898.

The Origins of Art Nouveau

“One can argue the merits and the future of the new decorative art movement, but there is no denying it currently reigns triumphant over all Europe and in every English-speaking country outside Europe; all it needs now is management, and this is up to men of taste.”
(Jean Lahor, Paris 1901)



Biscuits Champagne Lefèvre-Utile, 1896.

Colour lithograph, 52.1 × 35.2 cm.

The Mucha Trust Collection.

Art Nouveau sprang from a major movement in the decorative arts that first appeared in Western Europe in 1892, but its birth was not quite as spontaneous as is commonly believed. Decorative ornament and furniture underwent many changes between the waning of the Empire style around 1815 and the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris celebrating the centennial of the French Revolution. For example, there were distinct revivals of Restoration, Louis-Philippe, and Napoleon III furnishings still on display at the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris. Tradition (or rather imitation) played too large a role in the creation of these different period styles for a single trend to emerge and assume a unique mantle. Nevertheless, there were some artists during this period that sought to distinguish themselves from their predecessors by expressing their own decorative ideal.

What then did the new decorative art movement stand for in 1900? In France, as elsewhere, it meant that people were tired of the usual repetitive forms and methods, the same old decorative clichés and banalities, the eternal imitation of furniture from the reigns of monarchs named Louis (Louis XIII to XVI), and furniture from the Renaissance and Gothic periods. It meant designers finally asserted the art of their own time as their own. Up until 1789 (the end of the Ancien Régime), style had advanced by reign; this era wanted its own style. And (at least outside of France) there was a yearning for something more: to no longer be slaves to foreign fashion, taste, and art. It was an urge inherent in the era's awakening nationalism, as each country tried to assert independence in literature and in art.

In short, there was a push everywhere towards a new art that was neither a servile copy of the past nor an imitation of foreign taste.

There was also a real need to recreate decorative art, simply because there had been none since the turn of the century. In each preceding era, decorative art had not merely existed; it had flourished gloriously. In the past, everything from people's clothing and weapons, right down to the slightest domestic object – from andirons, bellows, and chimney backs, to a drinking cup – were duly decorated: each object had its own ornamentation and finishing touches, its own elegance and beauty. But the 19th century had concerned itself with little other than function; ornament, finishing touches, elegance, and beauty were superfluous. At once both grand and miserable, the 19th century was as “deeply divided” as Pascal's human soul. The century that ended so lamentably in brutal disdain for justice among peoples had opened in complete indifference to decorative beauty and elegance, maintaining for the greater part of one hundred years a singular paralysis when it came to aesthetic feeling and taste.



Gismonda, 1894.

Colour lithograph, 216 × 74.2 cm.

Mucha Museum, Prague.



Cassan Fils (print shop), 1895.
Colour lithograph, 174.7 × 68.4 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.



The Seasons: Summer, 1900.
Colour lithograph, 73 × 32 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



La Dame aux camélias, 1896.

Colour lithograph, 207.3 × 72.5 cm.

The Mucha Trust Collection.

The return of once-abolished aesthetic feeling and taste also helped bring about Art Nouveau. France had come to see through the absurdity of the situation and was demanding imagination from its stucco and fine plaster artists, its decorators, furniture makers, and even architects, asking all these artists to show some creativity and fantasy, a little novelty and authenticity. And so there arose new decoration in response to the new needs of new generations.

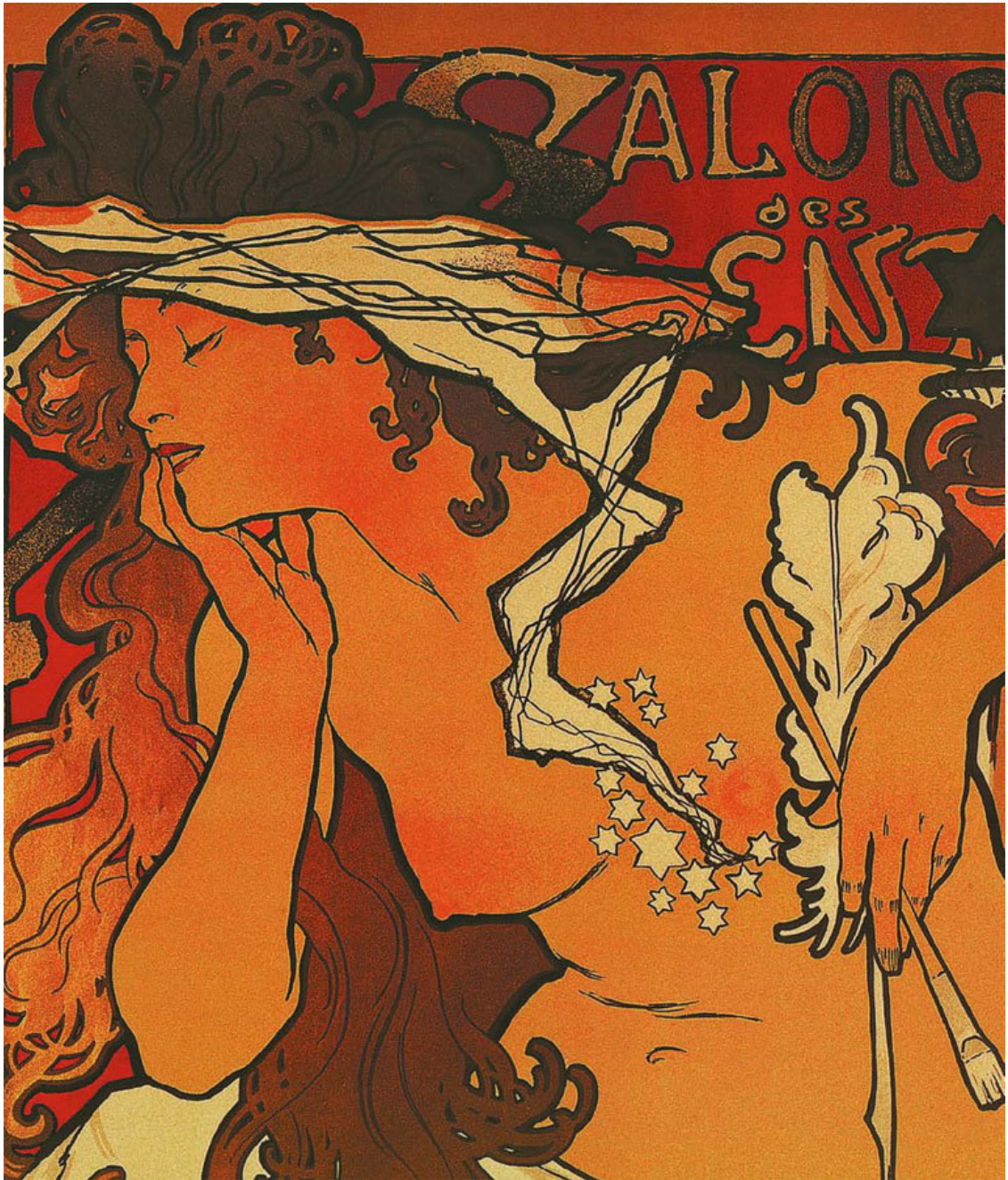
The definitive trends capable of producing a new art would not materialise until the 1889 Universal Exposition. There the English asserted their own taste in furniture; American silversmiths Graham and Augustus Tiffany applied new ornament to items produced by their workshops; and Louis Comfort Tiffany revolutionised the art of stained glass with his glassmaking. An elite corps of French artists and manufacturers exhibited works that likewise showed noticeable progress: Emile Gallé sent furniture of his own design and decoration, as well as coloured glass vases in which he obtained brilliant effects through firing; Clément Massier, Albert Dammouse, and Auguste Delaherche exhibited flambé stoneware in new forms and colours; and Henri Vever, Boucheron and Lucien Falize exhibited silver and jewellery that showed new refinements. The trend in ornamentation was so advanced that Falize even showed everyday silverware decorated with embossed kitchen herbs.

The examples offered by the 1889 Universal Exposition quickly bore fruit; everything was culminating into a decorative revolution. Free from the prejudice of high art, artists sought new forms of expression. In 1891 the French Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts established a decorative arts division which, although negligible in its first year, was significant by the Salon of 1892, when works in pewter by Jules Desbois, Alexandre Charpentier, and Jean Baffier were exhibited for the first time. And the Société des Artistes Français, initially resistant to decorative art, was forced to allow the inclusion of a special section devoted to decorative art objects in the Salon of 1895.

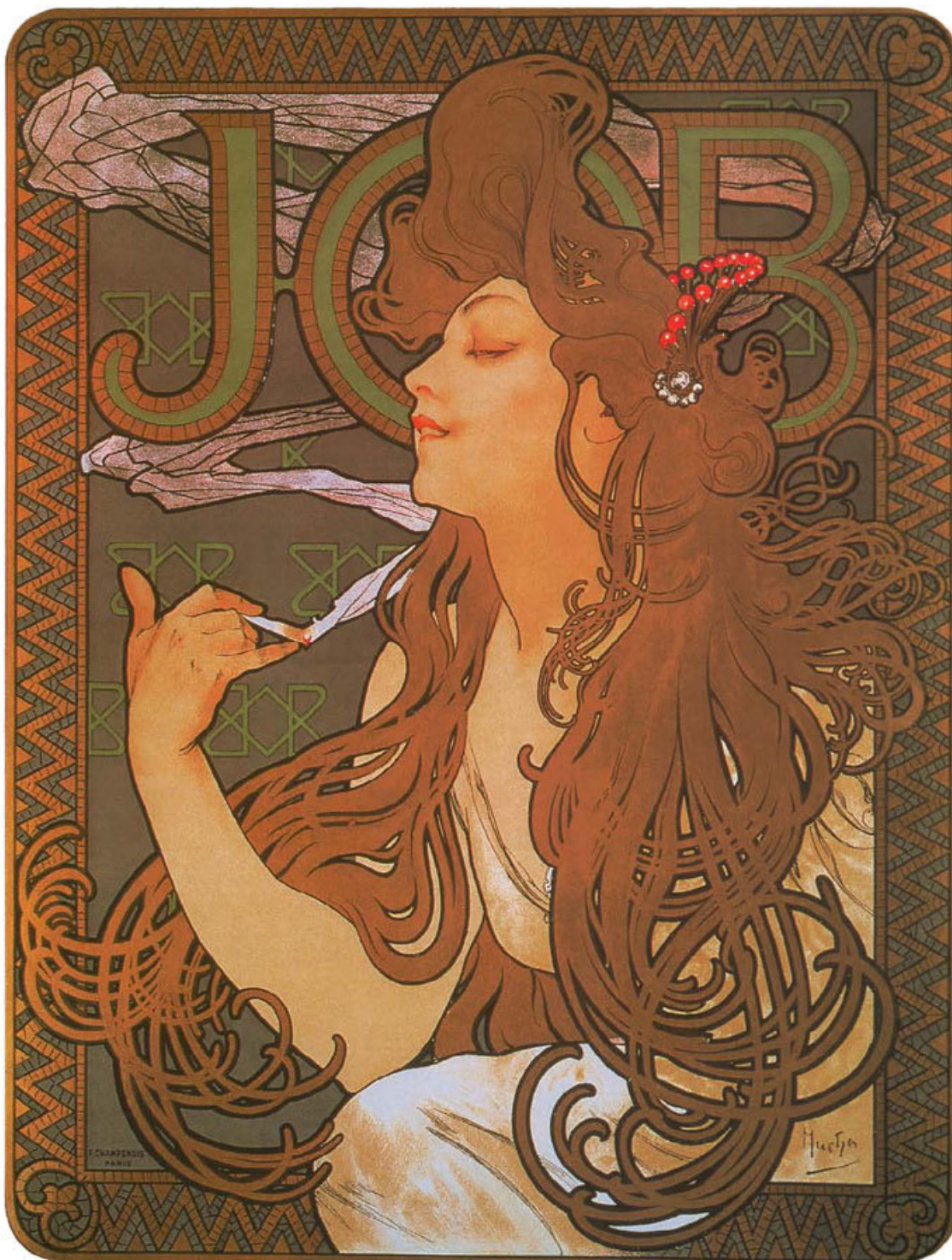
It was on 22nd December that same year that Siegfried Bing, returning from an assignment in the United States, opened a shop named Art Nouveau in his townhouse on Rue Chauchat, which Louis Bonnier had adapted to contemporary taste. The rise of Art Nouveau was no less remarkable abroad. In England, Liberty shops, Essex wallpaper, and the workshops of Merton-Abbey and the Kelmscott-Press under the direction of William Morris (for whom Edward Burne-Jones and Walter Crane provided designs) were extremely popular. The trend even spread to London's Grand Bazaar (Maple & Co), which offered Art Nouveau to its clientele as its own designs were going out of fashion.



L'Estampe Moderne: Salomé (detail), 1897.
Colour lithograph, 40.6 × 30.7 cm.
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.



Poster for Salon des Cent: 20th Exposition (detail), 1896.
Colour lithograph, 63 × 43 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.



Poster for «The Cigarette Poster Job», 1896.
Colour lithograph, 66.7 × 46.4 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



Sarah Bernhardt as Princess Lointaine: Poster for the magazine La Plume, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 69 × 51 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

In Brussels, the first exhibition of La Libre Esthétique opened in February 1894, reserving a large space for decorative displays, and in December of the same year, the Maison d'art (established in the former townhouse of prominent Belgian lawyer Edmond Picard) opened its doors to buyers in

Brussels, gathering the whole of European decorative art under one roof, as produced by celebrated artists and humble backwater workshops alike. More or less simultaneous movements in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark (including Royal Copenhagen porcelain) had won over the most discriminating collectors well before 1895.

The expression “Art Nouveau” was henceforth part of the contemporary vocabulary, but the two words failed to designate a uniform trend capable of giving birth to a specific style. In reality, Art Nouveau varied by country and prevailing taste.

As we shall see, the revolution started in England where, at the outset, it truly was a national movement. Indeed, nationalism and cosmopolitanism are two aspects of the trend that we will discuss at length. Both are evident and in conflict in the arts, and while both are justifiable trends, they both fail when they become too absolute and exclusive. For example, what would have happened to Japanese art if it had not remained national? And yet Gallé and Tiffany were equally correct to completely break with tradition.

England: Cradle of Art Nouveau

In the architecture of its palaces, churches, and homes, England was overrun with the neoclassical style based on Greek, Roman, and Italianate models. Some thought it absurd to reproduce the Latin dome of Rome’s Saint Peter’s Cathedral in the outline of Saint Paul’s Cathedral, its Protestant counterpart in smoky, foggy London, along with colonnades and pediments after Greece and Rome, and eventually England revolted, happily returning to English art.

The revolution occurred thanks to its architects, first to A. W. N. Pugin, who contributed to the design of the Houses of Parliament, and later to a whole group of mostly Pre-Raphaelite artists who more or less favoured pre-pagan art of the 16th century, before the classicising trend which was so hostile in its origins and its nature to English tradition.



Spring (from the Seasons series), 1896.
Colour lithograph, 103 × 54 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



Summer (from the Seasons series), 1896.

Colour lithograph, 103 × 54 cm.

The Mucha Trust Collection.

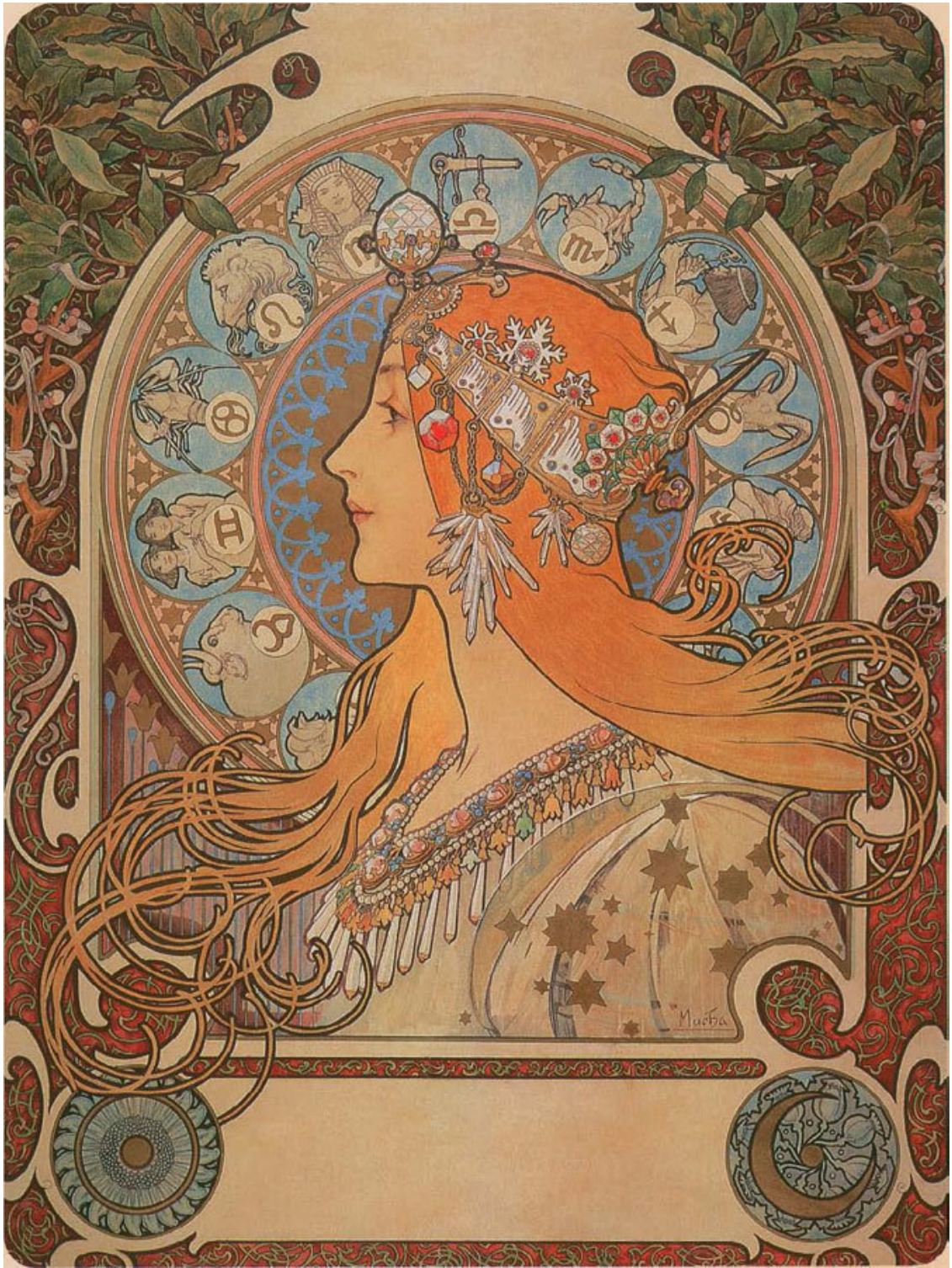
The main proponents of the new decorative art movement were John Ruskin and William Morris: Ruskin, for whom art and beauty were a passionate religion, and Morris, of great heart and mind, by turns and simultaneously an admirable artist and poet, who made so many things and so well, whose wallpapers and fabrics transformed wall decoration (leading him to establish a production house) and who was also the head of his country's Socialist Party.

With Ruskin and Morris among the originators, let's not forget the leaders of the new movement: Philip Webb, architect, and Walter Crane, the period's most creative and appealing decorator, who was capable of exquisite imagination, fantasy, and elegance. Around them and following them arose and was formed a whole generation of amazing designers, illustrators, and decorators who, as in a pantheistic dream, married a wise and charming fugue to a delicate melody of lines composed of decorative caprices of flora and fauna, both animal and human.

In their art and technique of ornamentation, tracery, composition, and arabesques, as well as through their cleverness and boundless ingenuity, the English Art Nouveau designers recall the exuberant and marvellous master ornamentalists of the Renaissance. No doubt they knew the Renaissance ornamentalists and closely studied them, as they studied the contemporaneous School of Munich, in all the 15th and 16th century engravings that we undervalue today, and in all the Munich school's niello, copper, and woodcrafts. Although they often transposed the work of the past, the English Art Nouveau designers never copied it with a timid and servile hand, but truly infused it with feeling and the joy of new creation.

If you need convincing, look at old art magazines, such as *Studio*, *Artist*, or the *Magazine of Art*, where you will find (in issues of *Studio* especially) designs for decorative bookplates, bindings, and all manner of decoration. Note in the competitions sponsored by *Studio* and *South Kensington*, what rare talent is revealed among so many artists. The new wallpapers, fabrics, and prints that transformed our interior decoration may have been created by Morris, Crane, and Charles Voysey as they dreamed primarily of nature, but they were also thinking about the true principles of ornamentation as had been traditionally taught and applied in the Orient and in Europe in the past by authentic master decorators.

Finally, it was English architects using native ingenuity and artistry who restored the English art of old, revealing the simple charm of English architecture from the Queen Anne period, and from the 16th to the 18th centuries in England. Quite appropriately they introduced into this revival of their art – given the similarity between the climates, countries, customs, and a certain common origin – the architectural and decorative forms of Northern Europe, the colourful architecture of the region, where from Flanders to the Baltic, grey stone was subordinate to brick and red tile, whose tonality so complements the particular robust green of the trees, lawns, and meadows of northern prairies.



Study for "Zodiac", 1896.
Pencil, ink, and watercolour, 65.7 × 48.2 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.



Bières de la Meuse, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 154.5 × 104.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Now, the majority of these architects saw no shame in being both architects and decorators, in fact achieving perfect harmony between the exterior and the interior decoration of a house by any other means was unfathomable. Inside, they sought harmony as well by composing with furnishings and tapestries to create an ensemble of new co-ordinated forms and colours that were soft, subdued, and calm.

Among the most highly respected were Norman Shaw, Thomas Edward Collcut, and the firm of Ernest George and Harold Ainsworth Peto. These architects restored what had been missing: the subordination of all the decorative arts to architecture, a subordination without which it would be impossible to create any style.

We certainly owe them such novelties as pastel decor (as in the 18th century domestic interior) and the return of architectural ceramics (likely Oriental in origin), which they had studied and with which they had much greater skill and mastery than anyone else, given their constant contact with it. Thanks to these architects, bright colours like peacock blue and sea green started to replace the dismal greys, browns, and other sad colours that were still being used to make already ugly administrative buildings even more hideous.

The reform of architecture and decorative art in England was therefore national at first. This is not immediately obvious, however, in the work of Morris. But it was the fundamental inclination of this artist and (whether consciously or not) of those in his orbit, who like him passionately embraced English art and history as their own. It meant a return to profiles, colours, and forms that were no longer Greek, Latin, or Italian: an art that was English rather than classical.

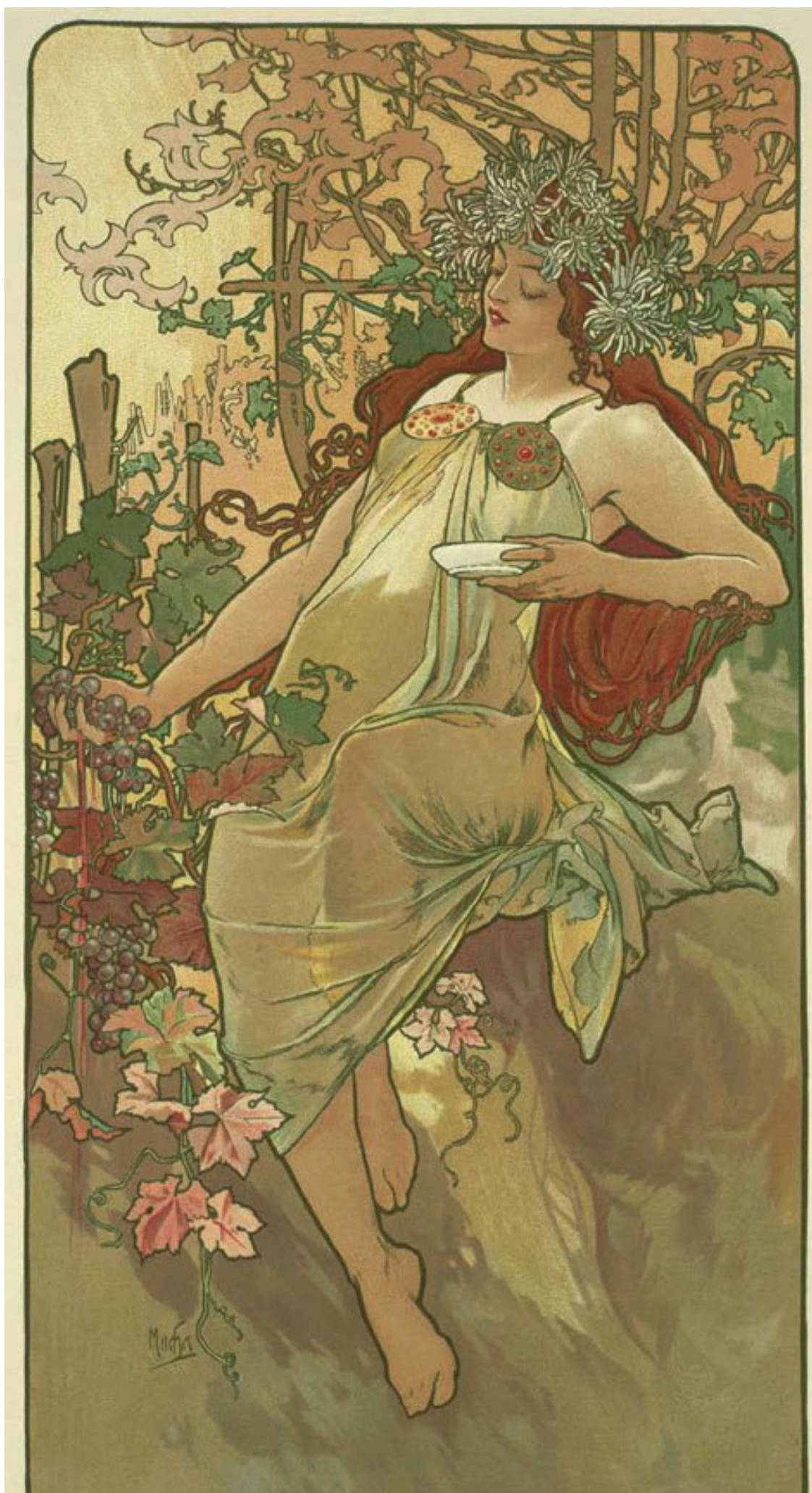
Along with wallpaper and tapestries there was truly English furniture being designed that was new and modern, often with superb lines, and English interiors often displayed decorative ensembles with equally superb layouts, configurations, and colours.

Finally, throughout England, there was a desire to go back and redo everything from overall structural ornamentation, the house, and furniture, right down to the humblest domestic object. At one point even a hospital was decorated, an idea retained by the English and later adopted in France.

From England, the movement spread to neighbouring Belgium.

Belgium: The Flowering of Art Nouveau

Belgium has long recognised the talent of its most famous architect, Victor Horta, along with that of Paul Hankar and Henry Van de Velde, and the furniture maker and decorator Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, one of the founders of the Liège School. Art Nouveau owes much to these four artists, who were less conservative than their Flemish counterparts and mostly unassociated with any tradition whatsoever. Horta, Van de Velde, and Hankar introduced novelties to their art that were carefully studied and freely reproduced by foreign architects, which brought great renown to the Belgians, even though the reproductions were executed with slightly less confidence and a somewhat heavier hand.



Autumn (from the Seasons series), 1896.

Colour lithograph, 103 × 54 cm.

The Mucha Trust Collection.



Winter (from the Seasons series), 1896.

Colour lithograph, 103 × 54 cm.

The Mucha Trust Collection.

These four had a great impact. Unfortunately, much of their impact was due to students and copyists (as is often the case with masters) who were sometimes immoderate, exhibiting a taste that comprised the masters.

This first became noticeable in relation to Horta and Hankar, even though Horta and Hankar had initially employed their decorative vocabulary of flexible lines, undulating like ribbons of algae or broken and coiling like the linear caprices of ancient ornamentalists, with restraint, distributing it with precision and in moderation. Among imitators, however, the lines grew wild, making the leap from ironwork and a few wall surfaces to overrun the whole house and all its furniture.

The result was seen in torsions, in dances forming a delirium of curves; obsessive in appearance and often torture to the eyes. The love of tradition was not as strong in Belgium as it was in England and Belgian artists were preoccupied with discovering new and comfortable interior designs. However successfully they met that challenge, however pleasing the interior arrangements, however unexpected the curves seemed, the new decor still had to be enlivened to satisfy the Flemish taste for abundance and elaborate decoration.

Serrurier-Bovy started by imitating English furniture, but eventually his own personality emerged. Nevertheless, his creations, which for the most part excelled in novelty, generally remained more restrained than the work of subsequent Belgian artists.

These Belgians were no less talented and imaginative but, in order to make their work more impressive, they exaggerated linear decoration in the leitmotif of the line. Curved, broken, or cursive, in the form of the whiplash, zigzag, or dash, the leitmotif of the line would reach a level of contagion by the 1900 Universal Exposition.

If we linger over the Belgian artists, it is because of the important role they played in the renewal of the decorative arts, especially furniture. In this, Belgium, for better or worse, deserves as much credit as England. From England and Belgium, the movement then extended to the northern countries and to France, the United States, and Germany.

It is true that Germany needed these decorations to help make its Art Nouveau pillars and its geometric furniture decorated with rigid mouldings borrowed from ancient Greek monuments more palpable.



Cover for *Chansons d'aïeules*, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 33 × 25 cm.
Collection of Victor Arwas, London.



Amants, 1895.

Colour lithograph, 106.5 × 137 cm.

The Mucha Trust Collection.



The Months Postcard: December, 1899.
Colour lithograph, diameter 8.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Displaying the individual character that comes from local resources, customs, and taste, Art Nouveau then also appeared in Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

At no point did England, the Netherlands, or Germany excel in statuary, which almost completely disappeared from their versions of Art Nouveau. In order to entertain the eye their artists instead gave precedence to shiny brass decoration cut in the form of openwork arabesques and attached to woods that were either naturally rich in colour or artificially highlighted.

France: A Passion for Art Nouveau

The passion for Art Nouveau was different in France. Instead of decorating with schematically stylised flora and fauna, French artists concentrated on embellishing new forms with sculpted ornamentation that retained the flower's natural grace and showed the figure to best advantage. This was already the focus of French exhibitors in 1889.

But those artists were looking for novelty in absolute realism. Their successors remembered that the refined art of the 18th century had derived its charm from the free interpretation of nature, not its rigorous imitation.

The best among the artist craftsmen endeavoured to instil their designs with the gentle harmony of line and form found in old French masterpieces and to decorate them with all the novelty that the rich and vibrant flora and fauna could provide when freely interpreted.

Although the best furniture makers, such as Charles Plumet, Tony Selmersheim, Louis Sorel, and Eugène Gaillard, had little use for sculpture, it was sometimes a handy aid, as seen in certain ensembles by Jules Desbois and Alexandre Charpentier. By employing freely interpreted flora and the human figure, these two designers (who also designed stunning contemporary jewellery) were able to produce dynamic new poetic effects in which shadow and light played an important role.

Such was also the case with René Lalique, whose works evoked exquisite fantasies, or the more robust jewels executed by Jean-Auguste Dampé, Henry Nocq, and François-Rupert Carabin, for example. French objects such as these were more sumptuous and more powerfully affecting than the graphic rebuses seen in Brussels and Berlin.

Art Nouveau exploded in Paris in 1895, a year that opened and closed with important milestones. In January, the poster designed by Alphonse Mucha for Sarah Bernhardt in the role of Gismonda was plastered all over the capital.

This was the event that heralded the Art Nouveau poster style, which Eugène Grasset had previously tackled, in particular in his posters for *Encres Marquets* (1892) and the *Salon des Cent* (1894). Then December saw the opening of Bing's Art Nouveau boutique, which was entirely devoted to propagating the new genre.

It was also around this time that Hector Guimard built Castel Béranger (c. 1890). Two years later, Baron Edouard Empain, the engineer and financier of the Paris Metro construction project, selected Guimard to design the now famous Metro stations. Empain's choice, however, was strongly opposed at the time.

Some feared that Guimard's architecture represented too new an art form and that the style, derided as *style nouille* (literally translated "noodle style"), would ruin the look of the French capital. An obstinate jury prevented Guimard from completing all the stations, in particular the station near Garnier's Opéra: Art Nouveau appeared totally at odds with Garnier's style, which was a perfect example of the historicism and eclecticism the new movement was fighting against.

At the same time, French brasseries and restaurants offered themselves as privileged sites for the development of the new trend. The Buffet de la Gare de Lyon opened in 1901. Renamed Le Train Bleu in 1963, it counted Coco Chanel, Sarah Bernhardt, and Colette among its many regulars.

With the addition of Maxim's restaurant on the Rue Royale, dining establishments henceforth became perfect models of Art Nouveau.

In 1901, the Alliance des Industries d'Art, also known as the École de Nancy (School of Nancy), was officially founded. In accordance with Art Nouveau principles, its artists wanted to abolish the hierarchies that existed between major arts like painting and sculpture and the decorative arts, which were then considered minor.

The School of Nancy artists, whose most fervent representatives were Emile Gallé, the Daum brothers (Auguste and Antonin) and Louis Majorelle, produced floral and plant stylisations, expressions of a precious and fragile world that they nevertheless wanted to see industrially reproduced and distributed on a much larger scale, beyond coteries of galleries and collectors.

Art Nouveau ultimately proliferated endemically throughout the world, often through the intermediary of art magazines such as *The Studio*, *Arts et Idées* and *Art et Décoration*, whose illustrations were henceforth enhanced with photos and colour lithography. As the trend spread from one country to the next, it changed by integrating local colour, transforming itself into a different style according to the city it was in.



The Months Postcard: July, 1899.
Colour lithograph, diameter 8.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Art Nouveau at the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris



Decorative Plate with Symbol of Paris, 1897.

Ceramic, diameter: 31 cm.

The Mucha Trust Collection.

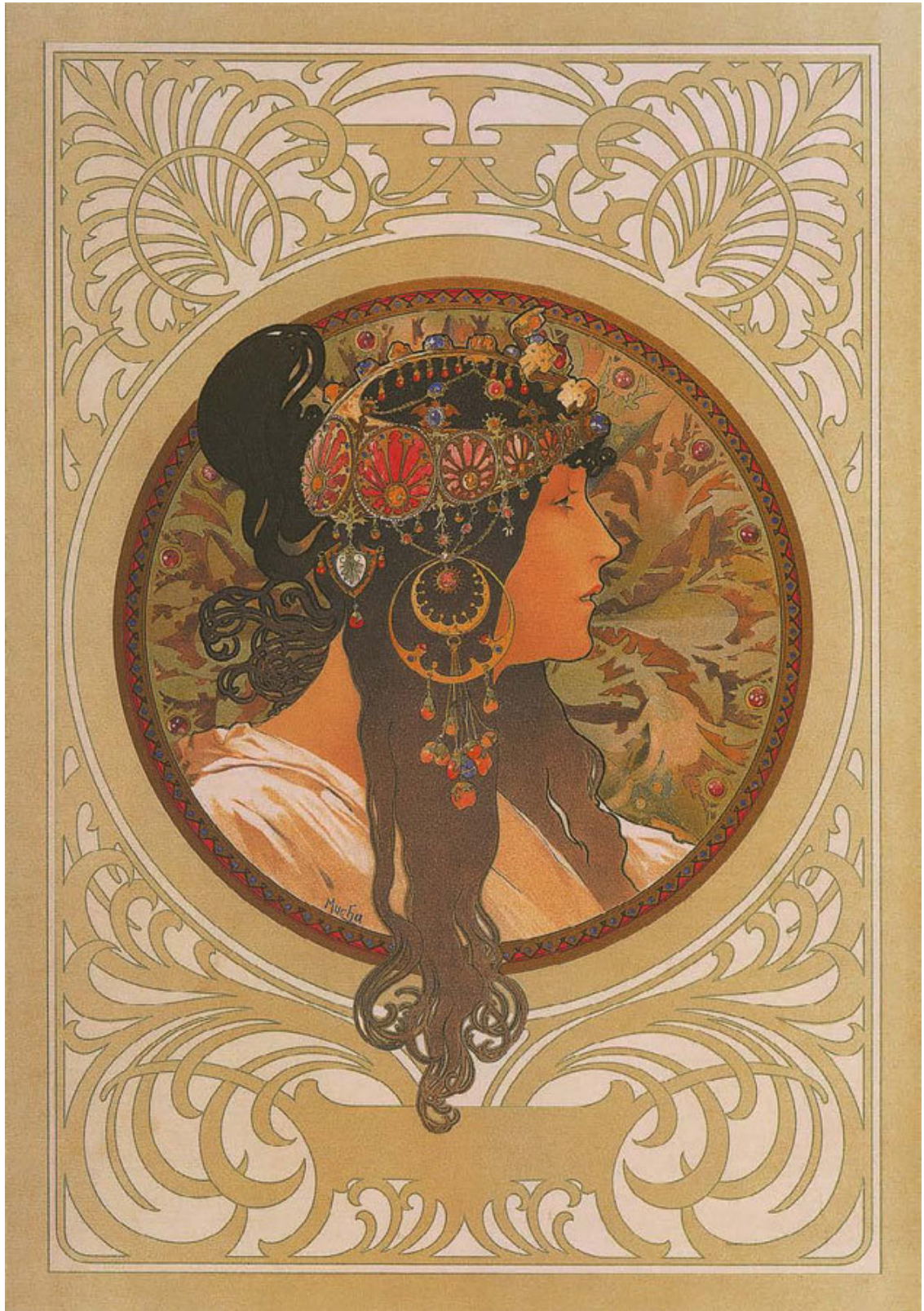
History has selected England, Belgium, and France as the undisputed primary sources of Art Nouveau's development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but contemporaries were unaware of this supremacy. In its section devoted to the decorative arts, the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris, which called for the construction of both the Grand and Petit Palais, among other buildings, offered a sampling that gave a taste of the real flavour of the period. For example, Gaudí, now inseparable from Spanish Art Nouveau and a major architect who gave us the image of Barcelona we know today, was the Exposition's major no-show: he failed to participate in the construction of the pavilions and none of his plans were shown. At the same time, countries such as Russia, Hungary, and Romania, long since forgotten in the history of Art Nouveau, were well represented alongside other countries that history wrongly seems to barely remember.

The French Pavilion

France showed great artistic merit in bijouterie, joaillerie, ceramics, and glassware – all magical arts of fire – as well as in sculpture and medallions. The triumph of France in all of these arts was unmistakable.

In the enchanting art of glass, one of the world's oldest arts, and one that seemed to have exhausted every conceivable combination of line and colour, every quest for a perfect union between stones, precious metals, and enamel, between chasing and the gluing of precious stones and pearls, Lalique was a genius who could surprise, dazzle, and delight the eye with new and truly exquisite colourations in all his creations, with the fantasy and the charm of his imagination with which he animated them, and with his bold and inexhaustible creativity. Like a philosopher grading stones on their artistic value alone, sometimes elevating the most humble to the highest honours and drawing unfamiliar effects from the most familiar, and like a magician who can pull something out of thin air, Lalique was a tireless and perpetual inventor of new forms and beauties, who truly created an art form in his own style, which now and forever bears his name.

As is the prerogative of genius, Lalique steered his art into uncharted territory and others followed whatever direction he took. There was joy and pride at the triumphant manifestation of French taste in its plateresque palace, thanks to the masters of French bijouterie, joaillerie, and silver, such as Lalique, Alexis Falize, Henri Vever, Fernand Thesmar, and many others, all relatively prestigious, and thanks to the masters of glass and ceramics, such as the still unrivalled Gallé, the Daum brothers, and the artists of the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, and Albert Dammouse, Auguste Delaherche, Pierre Adrien Dalpeyrat, and Lesbros among others.



Byzantine Heads: Brunette, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 34.5 × 28 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



Byzantine Heads: Blonde, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 34.5 × 28 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

It was a splendid victory for Art Nouveau as a new decorative art movement, given what Lalique and the other French masters set out to accomplish. They had endeavoured to free themselves from imitation, from the eternal copy, from the old clichés and plaster casts that were

always being recycled and had already been seen and were now overly familiar and worn-out. Their work was new, even to them. These masters on the Esplanade des Invalides therefore deserve our utmost gratitude, because in this exhibition they made certain that France's artistic supremacy would be revealed once and for all. The French exhibitors included the artists of the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, whose revitalised works of perfect beauty may have saved the life and the honour of French manufacturers; other masters of the applied arts; and no doubt a few practitioners of the fine arts, whose work did not always display the same quality as the work of the minor artists they were so contemptuous of. But whatever one's opinion of the new decorative art, similar victories were henceforth more and more difficult to win, as France's steady rivals made even greater strides.

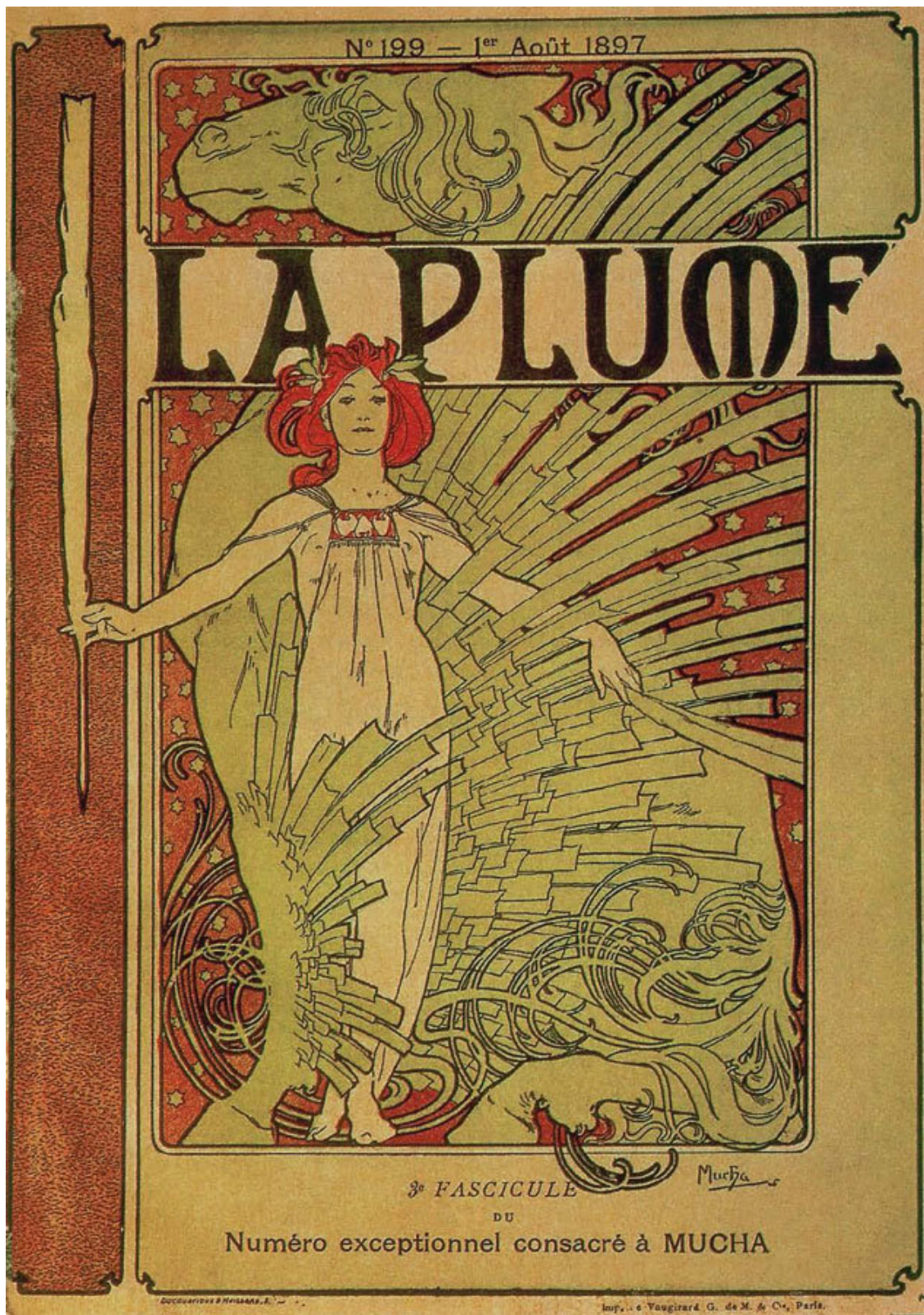
The English Pavilion

Art Nouveau was already brilliantly represented in England by 1878, especially in furniture. The movement was in its early stages, but England and Belgium, for various reasons, were underrepresented at the 1900 Exposition in Paris.

English furniture was only prominently displayed by Mr Waring and Robert Gillow and by Ambrose Heal.

For every few well-conceived pieces displaying an elegance that was truly new, there were countless others that were overly contorted and ornate, in ugly colours and poorly adapted to function, or designed with such excessive simplicity and pretence that English furniture was seriously compromised in the eyes of critiques – and everyone else. One could grope and search about, but with a few exceptions, the furniture was too often imperfectly designed – without logic and serious purpose, a structural frame, or even comfort in mind. These criticisms, however were perhaps best directed less at England and Belgium than to other foreign countries.

England failed to show anything really new or exceptional that year. And yet there was one perfect example of its highly developed artistic mastery: the little pavilion that housed the miniature fleet of the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company, a supremely elegant piece owing to the collaboration of Collcutt (architect), Moira (wall decoration), and Jenkins (sculptures).



La Plume, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 24.5 × 18 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



Fruit, 1897.

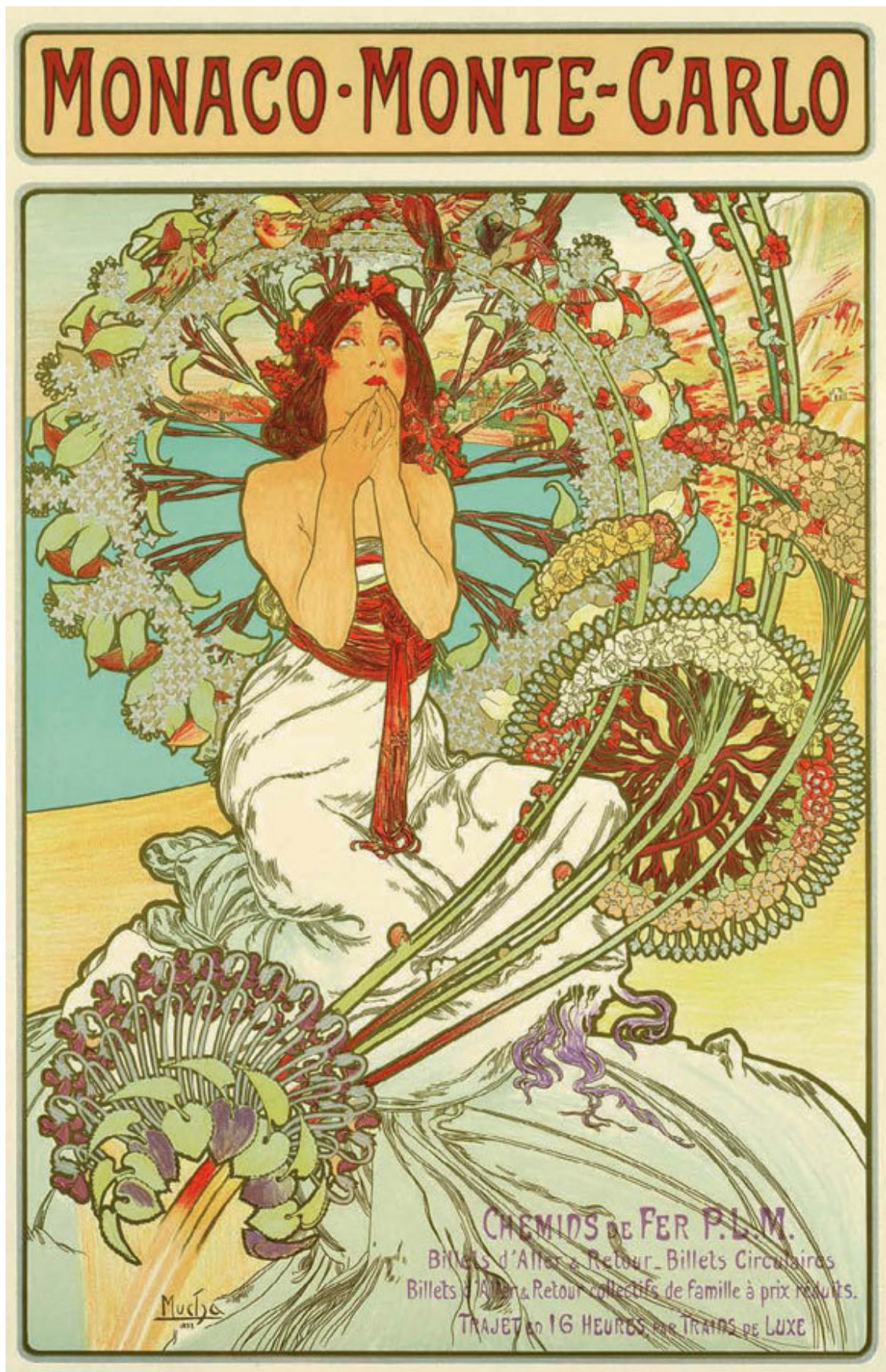
Colour lithograph, 66.2 × 44.4 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



Flower, 1897.

Colour lithograph, 66.2 × 44.4 cm.

The Mucha Trust Collection.



Monaco Monte Carlo, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 110.5 × 76.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

The American Pavilion

The decorative arts owe much to the United States, at least to the admirable New York artist Louis Comfort Tiffany, who truly revived the art of glass, as did Gallé in France but with different techniques. Like the brilliant artist from Nancy, Tiffany was not satisfied with being a prestigious glass artist: he was also a silversmith and ornamentalist. Above all he was a great poet, in the sense that he was continually inventing and creating beauty. For his young country, bursting with energy and brimming with wealth, Tiffany seems to have dreamed of an art of unprecedented sumptuousness, only comparable to the luxurious art of Byzantium in its combination of gravitas and bedazzlement. Tiffany has provided us with much joy. One senses his desire to revive lost grandeur and to create new splendours such as had never been seen before. He meant for his mosaics to create a sense of wonder when they decorated stairways and adorned residences. Such homes would be illuminated by day with dazzling and opalescent Tiffany windows and by night with Tiffany lamps and chandeliers, splendid and calm like mysterious stars; in such settings Tiffany glass would emit sparkling beams as if shot from precious stones or would filter in the tender, milky, lunar gleam of the light of dawn or of dusk. Tiffany was among the biggest winners of this Exposition, along with certain French masters, the Danes, and the Japanese.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.