

Art Nouveau GRAPHIC DESIGN - Social & cultural

Designer: Alphonse Mucha

1. The Arts and Crafts movement

The arts and crafts movement, in reaction to the cheap, mass-produced goods of the Industrial Revolution, placed value on **craftsmanship and quality of design**. The Art Nouveau philosophy was in favour of applying artistic designs to everyday objects, in order to **make beautiful things available to everyone** – the poor and not just the rich.

- *This influence can be seen in Mucha's poster '.....' as it is a work of art as well as advertising a product, however the image takes focus over the product. Mucha's posters were displayed in the streets of Paris, making his art accessible to all.*

2. The Paris International Exhibition 1900

The exhibition promoted the new International Art Nouveau style and helped to increase the popularity of Art Nouveau designers' work, such as Mucha.

- *This was an important influence in raising Mucha's profile and his poster '....' clearly displays the Art Nouveau decorative style, for example, the highly feminine and beautiful woman at the centre of the image bordered by intricate patterns. His work became so well known it was called 'le style Mucha'.*

3. Jules Cheret

Cheret revolutionised poster art by the way he combined lettering with imagery, and moved away from previously basic Victorian designs into a more colourful and bold graphic style. This influenced other Art Nouveau designers, such as Mucha, to do the same. Cheret's posters often featured pretty women, known as 'Les Cheretes', this use of women to sell products could be seen to have also influenced Mucha's work.

- *Cheret's influence can be seen in '....' in the way Mucha has used bold colours and a beautiful woman centred on the page.*

4. Nature and Art Nouveau style

In the Art Nouveau period, nature was seen as the true source of good design. The natural characteristics and motifs of Art Nouveau influenced Mucha's designs, these included:

- Plants, vines, lilies, insects, flowing women's hair, birds, peacocks and butterflies.
- The WHIPLASH LINE - a swirling, flowing and sinuous line, representing flowing vines.

- Decorative, patterned borders also adorned Mucha's posters which emphasised the highly decorative style of Art Nouveau
- *The influence of typical Art Nouveau characteristics can clearly be seen in Mucha's poster '....'. The use of the woman's swirling hair creates a whiplash line effect as well as the patterned border adding to the decorative style of Art Nouveau.*

5. **The famous actress Sarah Bernhart**

Sarah Bernhardt was highly influential person on Mucha's work and she used him to advertise her productions as well as sets and costumes. Her status as a famous actress helped raise Mucha's status as an international artist/designer. He helped raise her status, immortalising her 'divine' image as an actress and consolidating her iconic status.

- *Was your poster design made for Sarah Bernhardt or advertise one of her productions?*

6. **Haussman's redesign of Paris streets**

Paris streets were redesigned by Baron Haussman and old neighbourhoods of crowded, unhealthy streets were demolished and replaced by the open boulevards and parks of Paris today. This created a 'café culture' in Paris which gave Art Nouveau designers more opportunities to design posters for the various events (theatre, dances, etc) that were taking place at this time.

- *This influence can be seen in Mucha's poster '....' as it relates to the lifestyle of the Parisians who were now socialising in the cafes and bars.'*

7. **Pre-Raphaelite painters**

The imagery used by Pre-Raphaelite painters of the 19th Century, often depicted feminine, beautiful woman with long flowing hair. This imagery can be seen to be hugely influential on Mucha's own work and style.

- *This influence can clearly be seen in '....' as the central figure is a highly feminised, beautiful woman with flowing hair.*

8. **Japonism**

As commerce with Japan began to develop European artists saw Japanese woodblock prints and artefacts for the first time and were mesmerized. **Nature** was often the source of inspiration in Japanese prints which fitted in well to the Art Nouveau aesthetic. With its **bare, minimal style** of drawing and flattened space, with **large flat areas of colour**, and outlining, Japanese printmaking was a huge influence on the graphic works of Art Nouveau.

- *This influence can be seen in Mucha's poster '....' as he has used flat areas of colour in the background combined with outlining to highlight the woman's hair in the poster.*