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## DREAMS AND DESIGNERS (1895-1905)

*Art nouveau, the Glasgow Style, the Vienna secession, and the transition from artist to designer*

### What world events influenced design in this period?

As industrial mass-production increased, working conditions continued to decline. **Trade unions** grew rapidly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to defend workers' rights. Men and women wanted better pay and better working conditions.

Women were fighting for **the right to vote**: in 1893 New Zealand became the first country let women vote in parliamentary elections. In 1903 British political activist **Emmeline Pankhurst** founded a militant Women's Social and Political Union. The media labelled these rebellious women **the suffragette movement**.

About 100,000 people made their way to the Klondike (Yukon) region of north-western for **The Last Great Gold Rush** of 1896-1899. (Also called the Yukon Gold Rush, or the Alaska Gold Rush.)

The first **Nobel Prizes** were awarded in 1901. Designed to reward those who "conferred the greatest benefit on mankind", they were the brainchild of Alfred Nobel, the Swedish inventor of dynamite. He invested the bulk of his fortune into creating the annual event, perhaps out of regret for his own harmful inventions.

### What were the key scientific/technological influences?

**Science:** 1899 – **Sigmund Freud**, the Austrian founder of psychoanalysis, introduced his theory of the unconscious in his book **The Interpretation of Dreams**. 1905 – **Albert Einstein** published his **theory of relativity**.

**Transportation:** 1900 – The Paris Métro opened in exquisite art nouveau style. 1900 – The German **Count Ferdinand Zeppelin** pioneered a passenger carrying airship. During World War I the German military used Zeppelins to bomb the enemy. 1903 – **Orville and Wilbur Wright** made the first successful self-propelled flight. Orville's inaugural flight lasted for 12 seconds and covered 120 feet.

**Technology:** 1895 – The French **Lumière Brothers** produced the first cinematic film, **Sortie de l'Usine Lumière de Lyon**. 1901 – Italian Guglielmo Marconi sent the first **transatlantic radio message** from Signal Hill, St. John's, Newfoundland.

### What were the key design and literary influences?

The Arts and Crafts movement morphed into the art nouveau movement, beginning in Paris around 1890. Like Arts and Crafts, it encompassed interiors, furniture and graphic design. Art nouveau's reach also included art and architecture. The Arts and Crafts movement had limited popular influence because of costly, hand-crafted elitism. Art nouveau embraced commercial mass production and made beauty accessible to a wider audience.

Art nouveau style is defined by its elegant organic shapes, whiplash curves, decorative borders, earthy palette and imagery of women, flora and fauna. Following the lead of French poster artists, the interplay of text and image is also a familiar trait.

The movement shared much of its inspiration with Arts and Crafts: Gothic art, Celtic ornament, the Renaissance, rococo style and Japanese ukiyo-e. It also drew on Pre-Raphaelite painting, William Blake's book illustrations and the work of Van Gogh, Gauguin and the Nabis painters (Pierre Bonnard, Félix Vallotton, Paul Sérusier, etc.)

Jules Chéret had made advertising art posters popular in France. Now art nouveau embraced the medium. **Eugène Samuel Grasset**, a Swiss-born artist working in Paris, was a pioneer in art nouveau poster design. His print-making blended Arts and Crafts and art nouveau styles. French artist **Paul Berthon** worked in a similar style. However, it is Czech artist **Alfons Mucha** who perhaps best defines the art nouveau poster style. He was also a prolific painter. Mucha worked in Paris in the same period as Italian-born **Leonetto Cappiello**. The Italian's more conceptual and innovative approach to advertising poster design earned him the title of 'the father of modern advertising'.

**Adolfo Hohenstein** was the Chéret of Italy. Artist and entrepreneur, he had a team of artists working with him including **Leopoldo Metlicovitz** and **Giovanni Mataloni**. The Italian pictorial tradition had its own unique style that separated it from the typical art nouveau style. At the turn of the twentieth century British artist Dudley Hardy brought the pictorial qualities of the French and Italian poster styles to London.

Art periodicals (magazines) flourished in the 1890's. One such magazine, **The Studio**, launched in London in 1893. Its coverage of emerging fine arts and decorative arts styles pollinated new work from country to country. It accelerated the spread of the Arts and Crafts and art nouveau movements across Europe.

Two British artists whose work featured in The Studio and who shared links to both movements were **Aubrey Beardsley** and **Charles Ricketts**. Beardsley was considered the enfant terrible of art nouveau as his work emphasized "the grotesque, the decadent, and the erotic".

In the mid-1890s a unique hybrid of Arts and Crafts and art nouveau style emerged from Scotland's **Glasgow School of Art**. It grew from a network of about seventy-five mostly female artists/designers. Their distinctive work is known as the **Glasgow Style**. The group's most famous representatives are known as **The Four** (or the Spook School). They were four architecture students: **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** and **J. Herbert McNair** and two sisters **Margaret and Frances Macdonald**. The Four were heavily influenced by the work of Beardsley. His Gothic influenced use of elongated figures and formats, along with strong black outlines is very obvious in their work. Sadly The Four were almost ignored by Britain's art community outside of Scotland. However, thanks to



The Studio Magazine, they found an admiring audience among young artists in Germany and Austria.

In Vienna, Austrian **Sezessionstil (Secession Style)** emerged as a distinct variant on art nouveau. The movement became known as the **Vienna Secession**. It was formed in April 1897 by a group of artists including **Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Max Kurzweil, and Otto Wagner**. Klimt became the president of the group. The movement was a rebellion against the conservatism and protectionism of the Vienna Künstlerhaus union of artists. The Glasgow School was a major influence on the Secessionists. The Secession style was more feminine and lighter than Jugendstil.

In Germany **Jugend magazine** exposed art nouveau to artists like **Peter Behrens, George Hirth, and Thomas Heine**. There the movement was called **jugendstil** (young style). It also spread to Belgium and the Netherlands, as reflected in the work of artists like **Georges Lemmen, Henri van de Velde, Privet Livemont, Gisbert Combaz, JH and JM de Groot, Chris Lebeau, SH de Roos, Otto Eckmann, Hans Christiansen and Jan Toorop**.

Around this time in the U.S., Americans Will Bradley and Edward Penfield were producing illustrations and advertising posters for Collier's and Harper's magazines. Their style didn't follow the art nouveau trend. Penfield became the leading American illustrator in an era known as the **Golden Age of American Illustration**. He is considered the 'father of the American poster'.

Sans serif typefaces were increasing in popularity in the 1890s and in 1896 Berlin's **Berthold Foundry** launched **Akzidenz-Grotesk**. With 10 styles and weights, it was the first extended type family and is still in use today.

In the 1890s twenty-three American type foundries merged to form the **American Type Founders Company**. ATF soon released two more successful sans serif faces: **Franklin Gothic** in 1905, and **Alternate Gothic** in 1906.

Jules Chéret launched the lyrical painterly art posters that set the tone for twenty years. Two British painters, James Pryde and William Nicholson took a completely new direction when they opened their advertising design studio in 1894. They called themselves The Beggarstuffs. They developed a new technique that would later be named collage. Their unique approach was a commercial flop, but an inspiration to other artists.

### What were the key cultural influences?

Art nouveau brought design sense and elegance to **mass-produced furniture**, which had largely replaced hand-crafted pieces by this time.

In the US, the firm of **Louis Comfort Tiffany** was instrumental in introducing art nouveau to North America through his glassware business. It became known as **Tiffany Style** in the U.S. In 1895 his work was featured in the Bing gallery in Paris. The Tiffany lamp became one of the icons of the art nouveau movement and Tiffany's would later become a household name as a jewellery empire.

In 1896, the ancient Greek tradition of **Olympic games** was resurrected and the first modern-day summer games took place in Athens, Greece.

In 1903, the **UK Daily Mirror** newspaper abandoned illustration entirely in favour of photography—the new realism of photography and film changed the way we perceive the world.

### Architecture:

Art nouveau had a significant impact on architecture in countries like France, Belgium and the Czech Republic: **Hector Guimard** (Paris metro); **Victor Horta** (Emile Tassel House, Brussels); Joseph Olbrich (the Secession building, Vienna). In Spain, a spectacular variant of the style called **Catalan Modernisme** emerged: **Antoni Gaudí** (Casa Batlló, Casa Milà); **Lluís Domènech i Montaner** (Palace of Catalan Music).

**Louis Sullivan** (the father of the skyscraper) although most remembered for his tall buildings, was another important figure in American art nouveau architecture. Another American architect, **Frank Lloyd Wright**, studied under Louis Sullivan in Chicago. He was active during this period. His work is covered in more depth in Survey 7.

### Fashion:

The suffragette movement and women increasingly entering the work force, led to a more comfort-driven relaxed fashion trend. Bustles and corsets were falling out of favour, giving way to flowing, layered dresses that embraced the art nouveau earthy colour palette.

### What were the key artistic influences?

Art nouveau was an international style of modern art that became fashionable from about 1890 to the First World War. The term art nouveau was coined in Paris when German-born **Siegfried Bing** opened his **Art Nouveau Gallery** in 1895.

This was still the era of **Post-Impressionism**. Visionaries including **Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh**, continued pushing painting further from reality towards expressionism and fauvism. While some early Expressionist work took place during this short period, the movement really took hold in the twentieth century.

This was also still the period of the **Nabis** group of painters and of **Symbolism**. The latter was a reaction against Victorian attitudes and increasing materialism. It voiced the rising social dissatisfaction. Like ukiyo-e, it expressed a desire to escape. (See Survey 5 handout.)

