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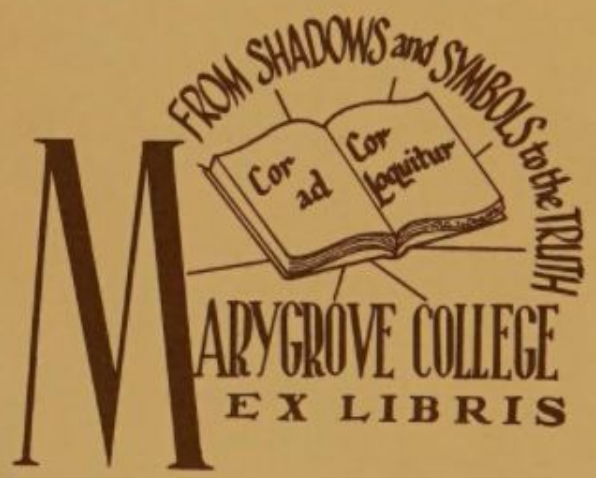
ART NOUVEAU



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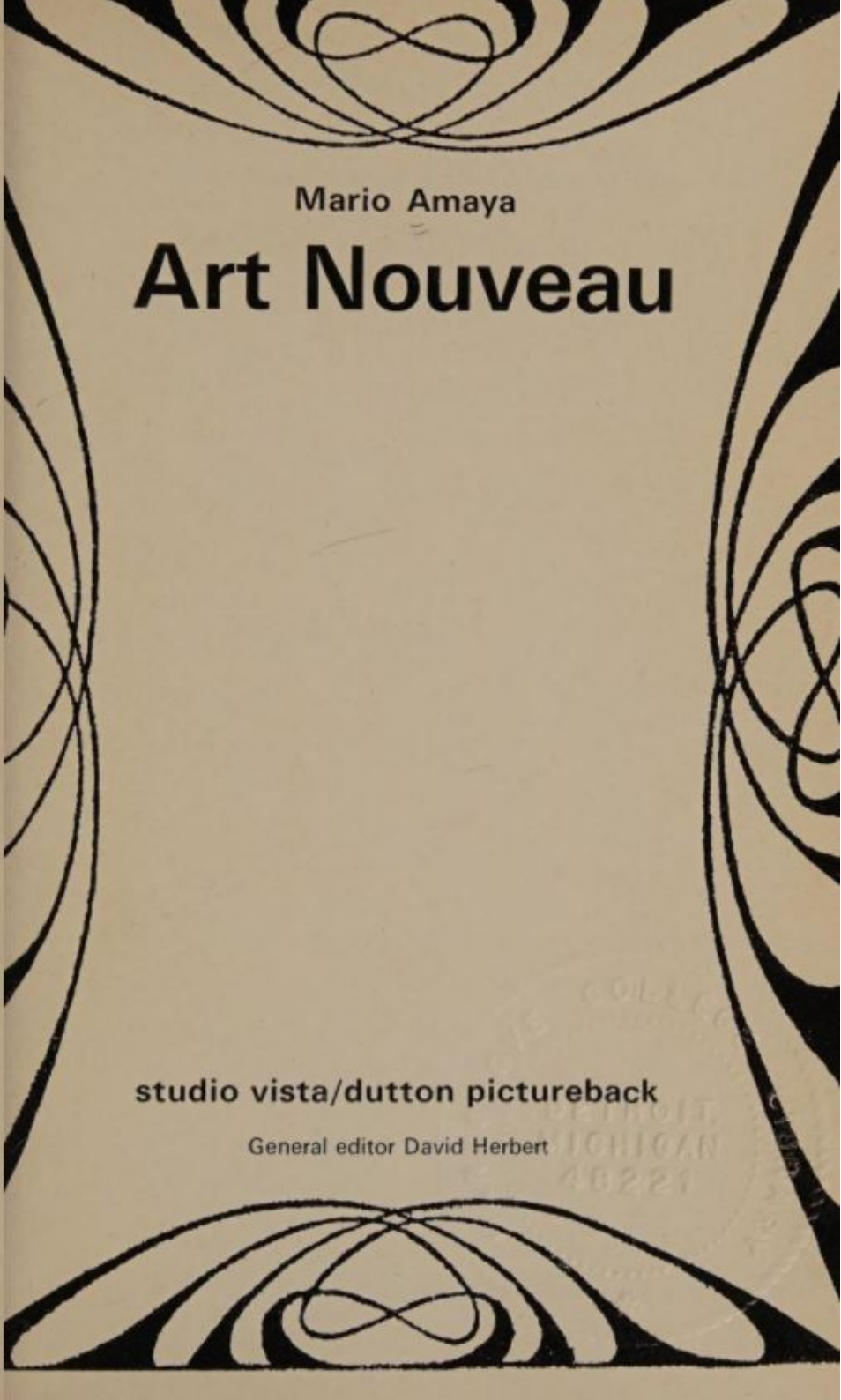
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Art Nouveau

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Mario Amaya

Art Nouveau

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General editor David Herbert

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To Maria Mezzatesta Amaya Hunter Garofalo

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Origins

Art Nouveau, as both a style and a movement, is one of the most imaginative innovations in the history of design. Even half a century after its zenith, it continues to fascinate us with its fantasy of invention, its predictions of mid-twentieth-century functionalism and its touching desire to unify all elements of life into a perfectly ordered new world of social reform.

Arriving in the early 'eighties in a dawning era of change and confusion, and brought to a halt by the First World War, Art Nouveau not only had its dreamers who looked beyond reality to a world of symbolic mysticism, and its romantics who harked back to medieval handicrafts, but its practical modernists who saw the new machine as a means of spreading beauty as evenly through society as comfort and hygiene.

In fact, one of the most intriguing aspects of Art Nouveau is its attempt to reconcile two diametrically opposed attitudes, one of which believed the arts to be the handmaiden to life, at the call of machine technology, while the other held that life was to be enslaved by art—shaped, formed, moulded to suit any aesthetic fancy. To put it another way, some thought Art Nouveau would provide 'the hope of life', while others were sure it would be 'the outcome of degeneracy'.

'That strange decorative disease', as Walter Crane called Art Nouveau (despite the fact that he himself had done much to promote it with his book illustrations and wallpaper designs), eventually confused even its originators, who saw it no longer as a whole new revolutionary approach to the arts, but rather as a stylistic free-for-all, where its easily identifiable curvilinear or whiplash motif was turned into a meretricious trademark used by manufacturers as a calling-card to culture.

What exactly was Art Nouveau? Often the term has referred to a decorative object made about the turn of the century, of free-flowing or organic form, based on some floral abstraction, linear, swirling, flatly patterned, with a skipping or undulating rhythmic design that often obscures the entire surface or structure of the thing it decorates. Its restless, moving, agitated line takes on a nervous, expressive quality, either dictating the shape of the

When Lilies of the day are done,
And sunk the golden westering sun.



English Walter Crane 1888–89
Flora's Feast, Book of Children's Verses



French **M. Girard** 1900
 'American Bench'

object or else complementing it in some unusual or unpredictable way. Above all, Art Nouveau gives an ornamental value to the line which overrides all other considerations.

But many other designs that are definitely central to Art Nouveau in both conception and inspiration do not have the sinewy, snake-like motif at all, or if they do it is held closely in check. This other branch of the movement reaches out in the direction of logical and geometric construction which strives not so much for the organic as for the architectonic form. Only a superficial appreciation of the style limits us to those ladies on ashtrays, their floating tresses outlining impossible balloon shapes, or those top-heavy goblets of glass, with necks too small for drinking and sur-



British **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** 1904
 Chair for the Willow Tea-rooms, Glasgow



American **Louis Comfort Tiffany**
 Group of vases, all inscribed
 Left and right, collection *Charles Jerdein*
 Centre, private collection

faces covered with trailing, twisted patterns of flowers that could never be contained within them.

Whether it was called *Jugendstil* in Germany, *Le Style Moderne* in France, *Sezession* in Austria, *Stile Liberty* in Italy, *Modernista* in Spain or Art Nouveau in England and America, the movement was all part of one aesthetic that consciously set out to revolutionise design in interiors, architecture and household objects. 'Le Home' and 'Le Studio' (the latter the name of one of its most famous publications) was a major preoccupation. Often the style overflowed like one of its more exigent patterns into the fine arts. Music, painting, sculpture, poetry, literature, all played their part in influencing and being influenced by Art Nouveau; but



French Paul Ranson c. 1897-98
 'Femmes sous un arbre en fleurs'
 Tapestry for S. Bing's *Maison de l'art
 nouveau*, Paris

French Aristide Maillol 1897
 'Concert des Femmes'. Tapestry
 hanging; Museum of Decorative Art,
 Copenhagen



taken as a whole, it was mainly a decorative movement, which at best had serious connections with the social and political reforms of the day, and at worst provided through machine-made mass production debased decorative objects for a swelling middle class, hungry for the new.

Art Nouveau, despite its quirks, its confusions, its consistent refusal to be categorised, is a movement which not only reaches into the twentieth century but up to the present day; and one could even go so far as to say that its aesthetic is an integral part of some of today's design and architecture, particularly in post-war Europe. Moreover, it also stands at the head of a long series of twentieth-century anti-styles, which consciously set out to react against what had preceded them—styles whose very existence depends solely on the new, the original for its own sake, the desire to shift ground constantly and negate all that has come immediately before. Art Nouveau was the first of such styles which trained the spectator to look for the new trademark and the innovation; for the flamboyant change of appearance as well as the essential spirit which produced it. To be different, unique, unpredictable was its main theme.

But there was a deeper motivation behind this restless desire for change. With a new social conscience first and foremost in their minds, some artists began to look for ways in which technology could be used realistically, to make life better and to incorporate new advances in science into the hermetic world of the arts. During the nineteenth century the artist and the manufacturer declared a cold war on each other. The manufacturer showed no inclination to slow down rapid mass production in order to think about either the form or function of his products, which flooded a mushrooming consumer market. The artist had decided that the machine was to be shunned like a bad dream; the only hope was to retreat into a romantic world of his own invention, where craft and morality went hand in hand.

But in 1859, Darwin's *Origins of the Species* must have gone far to reconcile the new industrial developments with the world of poetic imagination. In its implied belief that progress was inevitable and that in the struggle for existence only the fittest survive, new forms of commercialism began to find sanction under the banner of science. Pure science produced advances in chemistry and physics; fact and observation became all important; even art movements as diverse as the Pre-Raphaelites and the Impressionists

prided themselves on their 'scientific' look at nature—the former did so minutely, as if through a magnifying glass, the latter by recording objectively the fleeting impressions of the moment.

By the 'eighties, the arts were in the process of becoming sciences—reaching a high point in painting, with Seurat, who instituted a complex 'scientific' system of *pointilliste* dots to depict form, colour and atmosphere within the terms of strict geometric design.

Although John Ruskin, William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites continued to back away from the machine into the world of nature, their disciples began to see industry in a new light. C. R. Ashbee, who was one of Morris's and Ruskin's most enlightened pupils and one of the great designers and craftsmen of the period, came round to the belief that 'modern civilisation rests on machinery, and no system for the endowment or encouragement of the teaching of art can be sound that does not recognise this'. Such a belief seemed compatible with a nation that had produced a Telford and a Paxton and, later, enviously looked across the Channel to Monsieur Eiffel's tower. Lewis F. Day, another designer in the English Arts and Crafts movement who gave much to Art Nouveau, stated flatly: 'Whether we like it or not, machinery and steam power, and electricity, for all we know, will have something to say about the ornament of the future.' And C. F. A. Voysey, who was one of the leading exponents of English Art Nouveau, insisted that one must live and work in the present.

Nevertheless nature, which had so dominated the fine and applied arts for the first half of the nineteenth century, would continue as a source of inspiration to a greater or lesser degree until the First World War; with the one difference that the new aesthetic demanded more than just a close scrutiny of nature and a faithful transcription of plant forms. Instead, nature would now be transformed and transcended, and eventually abstracted. A hint of this new approach was perhaps first shown in the designs of Owen Jones, who as early as 1863 wrote: 'I call upon attention to the demoralising influence of imitating Nature so directly as is the custom in the present day.' His knowledge of Eastern ornament helped him to see the way towards abstracting plant and flower forms rather than translating them into accurate descriptions.

Ruskin's teachings were at the root of the mid-nineteenth-century reverence for nature and its faithful depiction. To him,

studying and drawing nature became almost a religious pursuit, and it would be tantamount to tampering with God if one used what one saw as a means of making abstracted 'pure' design. Although Morris followed the same basic ideas, he was more intent on re-creating nature than copying it, at the same time staying close to the model, as long as it was true to the surface it ornamented, within the bounds of simplicity and freshness.



English Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo 1884
End piece design for the magazine *Century Guild Hobby Horse*

Selwyn Image, a pupil of Ruskin's and co-founder with Arthur Mackmurdo of the Century Guild, the first Art Nouveau guild in the Arts and Crafts movement, also advised: 'Fine art is not the counterfeit of Nature, but another world of imaginative creation out of which the raw material of Nature supplies it with symbols.' Mackmurdo himself, who travelled with Ruskin through Italy on a sketching trip, wrote: 'There will be one characteristic in each work—namely a strict conformity with all organic structure', the word 'structure' being the operative one. Christopher Dresser, whose work predicted Art Nouveau design in England, also felt that accurate imitation of nature in ornament was pointless, unless the source itself was consciously revised and changed.

These means of abstracting from nature were an essential part of the initial aesthetic of Art Nouveau ornament, for it was basically nature, reformed and restyled, that provided the curvilinear motifs, the twisted, twining plant forms and tangled seaweed rhythms which became such a hallmark of the movement.



French Emile Gallé before 1889
Vase, inscribed on base: 'Cristallerie d'E.Gallé
Forme déposée'
Bears two signatures, an Oriental one on the side
and an engraved one on the base
Collection Sir Colin Anderson



English; Designer unknown, made by Wm Haseler for Liberty & Co. 1900
Silver cup with Celtic *entrelac* motif. Collection Charles Jerdein

It has often been said that Art Nouveau was short-lived. But if one considers it from the time of its conception onwards—as indeed one must do if it is to make sense at all—this is not true. The whole movement in fact lasted for over thirty years, or about as long as Rococo, a healthy life-span for any decorative movement. Moreover, the whiplash or curvilinear stroke which was its *leitmotiv* was in evidence as far back as German and French Rococo and some of its organic forms continue to persist in the works of Paul Rudolph, Eero Saarinen, Nervi and even Le Corbusier. But today's designers who either consciously or unconsciously employ Art Nouveau traits are interested mainly in the style's essential qualities of streamlined simplicity, a sculptural moulding of form (perfectly suited to poured concrete) and a sense of innate, growing structure compatible with function.

Art Nouveau was longing to break with the slavishly copied historicism of the past, but like all things that insist on being totally new, it was bound in some degree to the past which it rejected and which indirectly inspired its existence. Oriental art was seen

afresh: Japanese prints, architecture and furniture in particular provided a source of design strange to Western culture, yet structurally logical. Rococo art, with its soft, organic curves and its decorative interior unity was borrowed to some degree, as well as the solid, plain oak furniture of Tudor England. Celtic illuminated manuscripts, particularly the *Book of Kells*, were examined for their unity of page design and typography, as well as for their romantic remoteness. Even curious foreign sources as far afield as Tunisia, Persia, Moorish Spain and Turkey were all to some degree the basis of the new. But however much Art Nouveau designers returned to these *recherché* periods and places, they never actually copied them as their predecessors had imitated accurately the Byzantine, the Renaissance or the Gothic. Instead, they used their models as a jumping-off point for their own invention; part of the excitement was to disguise the source of inspiration so that it contained the spirit of the original, without actually indicating whence it came. It had to be 'strange', 'exotic' or 'quaint'—adjectives all much used at the time.

A strong drive towards mysticism added its own rarefied flavour to Art Nouveau. The religious conversion on their deathbeds of such famous 'immoralists' as Beardsley and Wilde was a case in point. More important, a group of French decorative artists called the Nabis (a Jewish word for Prophets) saw themselves as a closed fraternity, no doubt harking back to the Pre-Raphaelite idea of 'brotherhood'. 'Sar' Péladan founded the Rosicrucian order, a symbolist, idealist, religious, mystical, spiritualist group whose influence perhaps reached its apogee in the Art Nouveau designer and poster artist, Alphons Mucha. But it was Paul Gauguin at Pont Aven from 1886 onwards who headed the Symbolist or Synthesist movement, using symbolic colours and forms that implied a sense of primitive religiosity, borrowed from the Catholic peasants of Brittany who lived in almost medieval simplicity.

The expression *l'art pour l'art* was first popularised by Gautier in 1845, and as early as 1884 the word 'decadent' was used to denounce a book by Huysmans called *A Rebours* (*Against the Grain*) which described an aesthete's search for pleasure through the senses. The novel dealt with the tastes of Monsieur Des Esseintes as he retreated from the world into a secluded house, decorated carefully by himself and filled with rare first editions set and bound in the most luxurious forms. Here he spent his evenings choosing his drinks from a variety of coloured decanters to suit his mood, and gave a black supper where décor, table, service and food were all *en noir*. Such a *modus vivendi* presented the other side of the Art Nouveau coin: weird, fantastic, mysterious, rich, wasteful and esoteric, with a strong smell of the unhealthy. It was this approach that led to the 'art for art's sake' attitude adopted by Wilde, which argued that life itself should be an art, arranged and set out like a display of rare jewels with no utilitarian value. Perhaps such an approach indirectly produced those *kitsch* maidens of Art Nouveau in terra-cotta or *bronze doré*, with their free-flowing draperies entangled with freer-flowing hair, a dreamy expression on heavy lidded eyes, semi-erotic, semi-chaste, like goddesses of an exotic cult whose aims and purpose were never to be divined.





French **Alfons Mucha** 1901
Brooch pendant (*Parure de corsage*) in gold and enamel for Fouquet of Paris
Possibly a romanticised portrait of Sarah Bernhardt

As an indication of how closely woven the Art Nouveau spirit was, it is worth recalling that Henri Van de Velde, one of the most inventive figures of the period, (who later put his mind to designing functional railway carriages and steamships), was himself seduced into giving a supper for Toulouse-Lautrec at his house in Uccle, Belgium, at which the consistency and colour of the food were made to harmonise with the table arrangements, the curtains and the furniture. (Ironically, the only thing that Lautrec seemed to be impressed by was Van de Velde's white-enamelled bathroom.)

The Symbolist poetry of Mallarmé and Verlaine (and in England, the work of Swinburne) was labelled 'decadent' and was perhaps associated with Rodolphe Bresdin, Odilon Redon and Gustave Moreau, whose exotic, curious themes were popularised at the turn of the century by the applied artists as well as by the restaurant mural painters. Yet Symbolism was not confined to France; indeed earlier, in England, the Pre-Raphaelites had indulged in similar exercises, mostly of a religious nature, inspiring in painters

such as Simeon Solomon and G. F. Watts an intense interest in religious subjects which carried with them a kind of mystical strangeness and ambiguity.

British **G. F. Watts**
'The Sower of the System'
Collection James Coats, New York





English; Designer unknown, Liberty & Co, c. 1900
 Pendant in gold, *cloisonné*, baroque pearls, with symbolic scene of sailboat
 and sunset
 Sold in a box marked 'Cymric'
 Collection Mrs M. Garofalo, New York

Just as painters began to lose interest in examining scientifically the natural appearance of things seen in a fleeting impression, so designers now wished to give the idea or the symbol, the mood or the implied meaning behind their objects: poems might be inlaid on table tops, verses carved on bed-heads or *repoussé* on metal objects, symbolic pictographs introduced in jewellery or glass. The visual, the sensual and the imaginative were to be called upon all at once to respond to words, shapes and textures combined within one stylistic entity. This was felt to be a distant approximation to Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, where music, poetry, drama and myth were combined. Indeed, the *Révue Wagnerienne* of 1885 celebrated the composer as the instigator of a new art form, and designers were keen to attempt their own 'total art'.

If Mallarmé could write; 'to suggest it, that's the dream', his champion, Jean Moréas, who wrote the Symbolist manifesto in 1886, unwittingly summed up what was to be the 'decadent' *fin de siècle* side of Art Nouveau when he wrote: 'We carry analysis of *Self* to the extreme, we let the multiplicity and intertwining of rhythms harmonise with the measure of the Idea.' One wonders if he ever saw any of Arthur Mackmurdo's fabrics.

With so many contradictory styles and moods in the air in the early 'eighties, it is no wonder that Art Nouveau developed as a means of synthesising design. It stood as an ark where the best could be brought together and rescued from the flood of cheap, shoddy imitation that poured mechanically from the machine. And, as such, it provided a meeting-place for the ideals and theories that grew out of the restless impatience with Victorian domestic life, which not only looked backwards in time, but refused to move forward towards a new century. The major objective became a search for a style that could institute a sense of design compatible with its age in all the applied arts: glass, jewellery, silver, furniture, china, murals, carpets, even clothes. One relentless aim in this pursuit was to reject the arbitrary division between fine and applied art, using the Middle Ages as a shining example, when no such *bourgeois* division existed.

Along with the Pre-Raphaelites, most of whom made fabrics or furniture, applied artists felt equal to the easel painters; and with some sense of guilt the easel painters stepped out of the *salons* into the workshop to decorate furniture and design fabrics or posters.



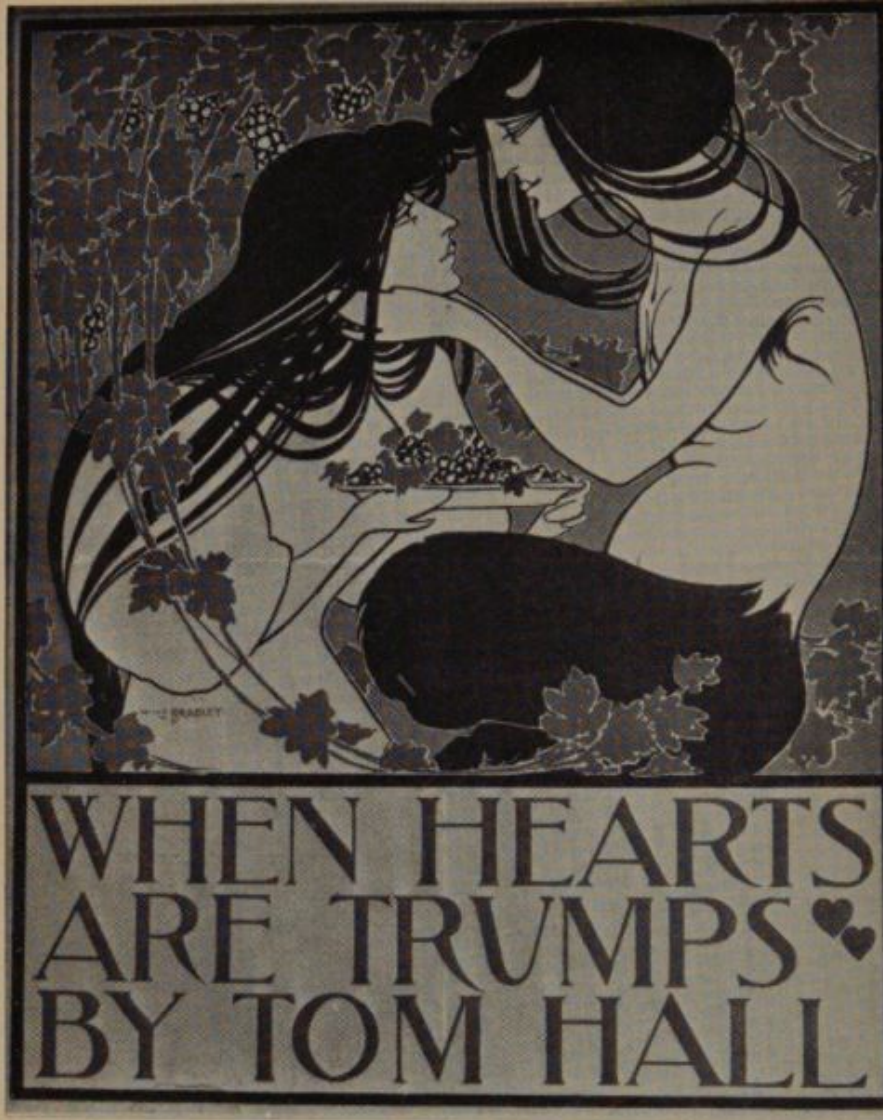
French **Louis Majorelle** 1900
Cabinet in mahogany and oak veneered with kingwood and amboyna and enriched with carving and marquetry of pearl, amboyna, sycamore and other wood
Victoria and Albert Museum, Donaldson Gift, Crown Copyright

If Emile Gallé could 'paint' a landscape in glass on his vases or 'draw' a scene in inlaid wood on a table top, was it any wonder that in the mid 'nineties the Nabis, who included Maurice Denis, Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard, worked for S. Bing's decorative arts shop called *La Maison de l'art nouveau*, designed stained-glass windows for Louis Comfort Tiffany, did murals for the walls of theatres as well as set designs, painted furniture and screens, and declared boldly in their manifesto: 'There is no painting, only decoration.' This echoed the feelings of their mentor Paul Gauguin, who carved his own furnishings for his house in Tahiti and who produced ceramics. Having announced: 'I was born to do decorative art', Gauguin naturally expressed strong affirmative feelings in 1894 when asked if there was a new style and whether he believed in it.

Many applied artists, like Henri Van de Velde in Belgium, actually gave up promising careers as painters to produce tapestries, metalwork, wallpaper and furniture. It got to the point where Henri Rivier declared: 'A beautiful table is just as interesting as a statue or a picture', and Walter Crane in England pointed out that the objective was 'turning our artists into craftsmen and our craftsmen into artists'.

Belgian **Henri Van de Velde** 1893
Tapestry '*La Veillée des Anges*'
Kunstgewerbemuseum, Zurich





American **William Bradley** 1894–95
Poster for 'When hearts are trumps' by Tom Hall, Lords Gallery

The poster itself, a new means of outdoor commercial advertising, was elevated to the level of fine art by Alphonse Mucha, Toulouse-Lautrec, Bonnard, Eugène Grasset and Will Bradley, and there were few artists who thought themselves too grand to design them. All of them followed Jules Chéret in attempting to make the poster design a unity of form, colour and typography—an aesthetic whole for the product it was advertising. (It was, at the time, a sort of Pop Art in reverse, where the artist worked for



French **Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec** 1895
Poster 'May Milton', Lords Gallery

commerce, rather than commenting dryly on its banalities.) From the 'seventies on, Chéret's posters had shown the way with bold linear patterning and freely drawn lettering, rendered through the medium of colour lithography. As Art Nouveau in furnishings was finding its own solutions to the problem of achieving a new sense of style and unity, so poster designs, worked directly on to the lithographer's stone, became a further extension of the decorative motifs of the time. By the end of the 'nineties the poster, along



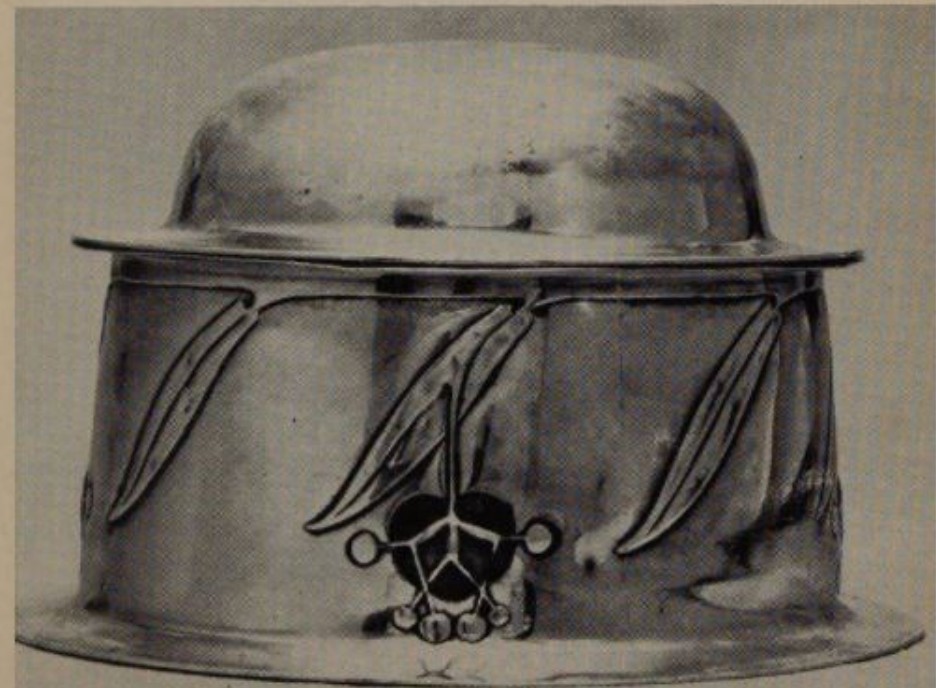
French Alphonse Mucha 1898
Panneau décoratif, 'Autumn'
Print, signed in the block
Grosvenor Gallery

with its more pretentious sibling, the *panneau décoratif*, had been accepted as a high art form, equal to painting and sculpture; societies of collectors were formed and magazines were produced to discuss the comparative merits of new poster-artists and their progress in this field.

Britain

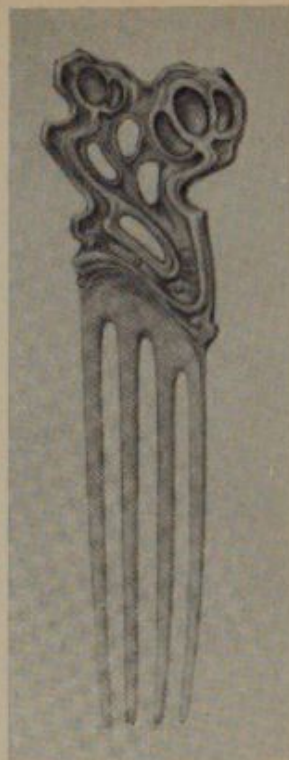
Curiously, the first winds of change with a smell of a new style blew across to the Continent and America from England—a country that up to now had been better known as a receptacle for such styles than as an innovator of them. Art Nouveau was a direct descendant of the Arts and Crafts movement, which continued to feed and be fed by Art Nouveau. Moreover, behind it was the name of William Morris, whose very mention meant change and reform in the applied arts. Even towards the end of the century, when High Art Nouveau had developed into something wholly personal and unpredictable and totally divorced from those early craft essays by Morris & Co., the name Morris itself was a catchword for any Art Nouveau designer who wished to prove his integrity. Applied artists as different as Van de Velde, Tiffany, Gallé and S. Bing all bandied his name about, and it was to him—and England—that credit was given for initiating a new movement.

English; designer unknown 1903
Made by W. H. Haseler for Liberty and Co (Cymric)
Covered silver box, decorated with embossing and green/blue enamel.
English Arts and Crafts
Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright





English **Kate Harris** (designer for Wm. Hutton & Son, suppliers to Liberty & Co) 1901
Scent bottle of green glass, silver with enamel plaque inset. Collection Martin Battersby



English **David Veazey** 1901-2
Comb in beaten silver with ivory prongs

That England was considered in the *avant garde* of the new style is borne out by continental terms such as *Modern Style*, *Yachting Style*, or *Stile Liberty*, as well as the more obvious *Style Anglais*. These were all popular descriptions until the name of S. Bing's shop *La Maison de l'art nouveau* caught on as an international label after the Paris Exhibition at the turn of the century. Strangely, the name 'Art Nouveau' has remained an English one, while the term 'Modern Style' is still used in France.

Morris was a product of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, an admirer and close friend of Rossetti (who was in love with his wife), and a fellow student and companion of Burne-Jones. When he first moved into a flat in Red Lion Square with Burne-Jones in 1857, the two young men, no doubt soliciting advice from Rossetti, commissioned from a local carpenter some plain solid furniture in deal, which from all accounts was strongly medieval in design. A

couple of years later, when Morris decided to marry, he asked Philip Webb, with whom he had studied architecture, to help him build the Red House, Bexley Heath, a plain-faced red brick, gabled house in semi-medieval style, which was to have everything *en suite*—doors, windows, hinges, wallpapers, furniture and fabrics. In 1861, the firm of Morris, Marshall & Faulkner, which later became Morris & Co., was established—a venture that was to inspire applied artists well into the new century and which itself would continue until the outbreak of the Second World War. Morris, with all his medieval yearnings, his horror of the machine-made and the mass-produced, and his wish to prolong the life of pure craft into an age of industry, was to become the *sine qua non* among Art Nouveau designers. In fact, his products became increasingly expensive and impractical, at the very moment when some designers were finding cheaper methods through the machine. Ironically, this meant that only the very rich could afford things which had been intended to brighten and enlighten the lives of everyone, particularly the working classes. Such a paradox perhaps has its best contemporary parallel in Mies Van der Rohe's Barcelona chair which, despite its mass-produced, machine-made appearance, requires hand-craftsmanship and costs more than a Chippendale copy.

English; Maker unidentified 1900
Coffee service, enamel and silver (a Hutton pattern)





English Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo c. 1886
Settee in light mahogany, hung with William Morris fabric
Made by the Century Guild and formerly attributed to Morris & Co
William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow

Morris's significance for Art Nouveau lies mainly in the fact that he is the first force after the 1851 Exhibition not only to voice disapproval of industrial design, but actually to institute methods of improving the applied arts of the day. If his own decoration now looks 'historical' or even 'Victorian' with its Gothic-medieval trappings, we must remember that it was Morris's ideals and theories, rather than his taste, which were so influential at the time and which inspired a whole new generation to approach design with a moral sense of fitness, truth to materials and respect for craftsmanship. Without Morris, the founding of Mackmurdo's *Century Guild* would never have been possible in 1881; the *Art Workers' Guild*, formed in 1884 by Walter Crane and Lewis Day, might never have come about; the same two men might not have been encouraged to work with the *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society* in 1888; and it is doubtful whether the *Guild of Handicraft* would have been brought into being the same year by C. R. Ashbee. It is Morris's taste for the simple, the honest, the unaffected and the straightforward which inspired Art Nouveau at its beginning, and which was later to become a central objective when the style's more excessive themes had run themselves into the ground.

On the other hand, certain symbolist-romantic ideas in Morris's theories actually led to some of those excesses; particularly that most over-worked of all Art Nouveau motifs, the willowy, dream-like lady of the lake (not unlike Morris's wife, whom Rossetti continuously drew and painted) with yearning looks and half-closed eyes, hair streaming out and garments flowing, as remote and distant as a half-remembered troubadour's *villanelle*.

In sharp contrast to Morris is James McNeill Whistler, the cocky American who came to live in England after studying in France and who was too much of an individualist to be part of any circle, although he was friendly with most of the Pre-Raphaelites. Whistler was not concerned with social reforms so much as with a new sense of purified beauty through colour harmonies; his source was the Orient, with its bare interiors, its light, pale colours and its fragile, structural furniture. This seemed more in keeping not so much with 'fitness of design' as with the Wildean philosophy of art for art's sake.

Whistler had returned to London soon after Morris opened his business, talking of blue-and-white china and Japanese fans which were being bought by the Paris *avant garde*. But years

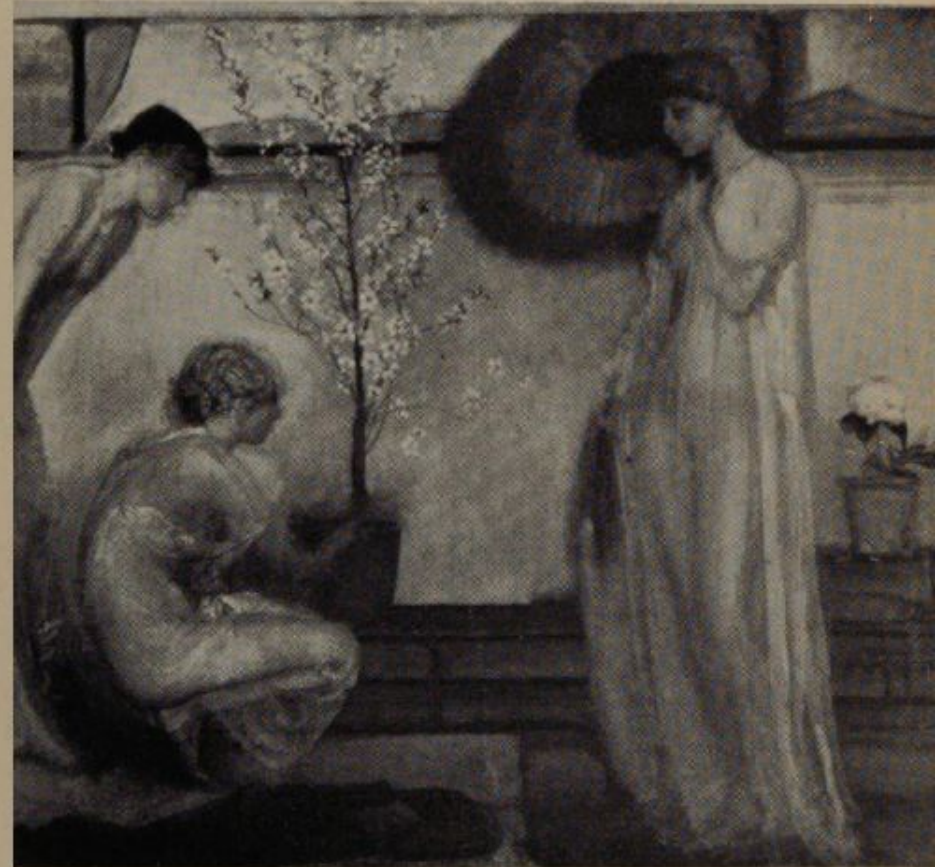
before that, he had reputedly found in an East London tea shop a set of Japanese prints which had excited him.

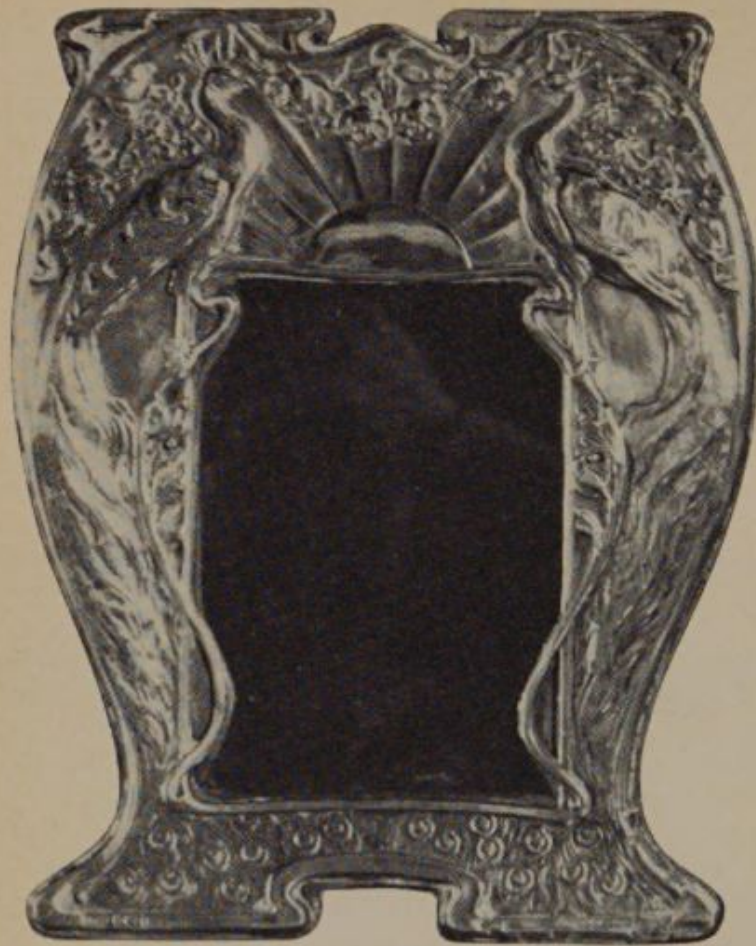
Bracquemond is traditionally believed to have been the first person who was consciously aware of Japanese prints, when in 1856 he bought from the dealer Delâtre a series of Hokusai Mangwa drawings. Commodore Perry had opened up Japan to the West two years earlier, and in 1859 America signed a commercial treaty with Japan, a country which had until then remained closed to Western trade. From that point on, Japanese objects flowed freely into Paris and London. Mme de Soye opened her shop *La Porte Chinoise* in the rue de Rivoli in 1862, where Manet, Fantin-Latour and Whistler could purchase kimonos, fans, blue-and-white china and, most important, prints by Hokusai and Utamaro, which were used as an ABC for a new style in painting of flattened forms, rhythmic linear patterning and ambiguous spatial disposition—all qualities which were later worked into Art Nouveau. If Manet used the *essence* of Japanese art to advance his Impressionist technique, Whistler remained dazzled by the novelty of the actual objects themselves and incorporated them into his oriental pictures almost as stage props during the next three years.

The first large public display anywhere of Japanese wares was installed at the 1862 Exhibition in London, and Rossetti and Morris were much impressed by what they saw. It is an affirmed fact that the Pre-Raphaelites were first presented with oriental art by Whistler, who initiated the blue-and-white craze that lasted until the First World War, and which moved Wilde to exclaim that he only hoped he could live up to his blue-and-white collection. Whistler's taste for *japonaiserie* was a reflection to some degree of the taste of his friend William A. Godwin, who had furnished his house in the Japanese style in 1862. When Whistler decorated his own house in 1863, and again in 1867, he also followed the Japanese manner, using flesh-coloured walls with yellow and gold leaf, and painting the dado himself with flowers and oriental motifs.

The most vital factor here for Art Nouveau was the colour harmonies of Whistler: the lemon yellows, pearly whites, flesh colours and silver greys, with furniture covered in golden silks and everything *en suite*, a theme repeated often in the next thirty-five years. Godwin, who was the architect of Whistler's White House in 1877—a monument to his belief in the Japanese prin-

American James McNeill Whistler c. 1868
Three figures: pink and grey
Courtesy of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery





English; Designer unknown, Birmingham 1903
Picture frame. Marked 'S. & Co'

ciples of interior decoration—designed in the same year Anglo-Japanese 'art furniture' which was to provide in its light, structural forms, its surprising asymmetry and its top-heavy shapes, the basis of many later Art Nouveau suites of furniture which were made for bedroom, *salon* or dining-room. In 1878 they designed a display interior for the Paris Exhibition. Comfort was not a declared intention—in fact, Whistler made it clear that he was not concerned with bourgeois comfort at all, and thus foreshadowed another Art Nouveau trait.

Most of all, Whistler's fascination for the oriental produced a favourite Art Nouveau symbol, the peacock, with its splayed-out

fan of feathers and trailing tail, its shimmering iridescent greeny-blue. This was to find its way into fabrics, murals, mosaics, enamels, silver, dresses, china and glass, book design, posters and a thousand other *fin de siècle* forms.

The 1862 stand for Japanese goods was significant to Art Nouveau in yet another way: it was purchased by Farmer & Rogers, who put a young man, Arthur Lazenby Liberty, in charge of their Oriental Warehouse. Through the years with Farmer & Rogers, Liberty became friendly with the Pre-Raphaelites and Whistler, and when the firm shut down in 1874 he bought up their stock of oriental wares and opened his own shop in Regent Street in 1875. Thus one of the most famous Art Nouveau stores was directly linked both to the Pre-Raphaelites and to Whistler as well as to oriental art. When Liberty fabrics became one of the most popular proselytisers for Art Nouveau, the shop's early connections with oriental design were never forgotten.

Perhaps it is important here to point out that Art Nouveau's three most influential shop owners—Liberty in London, Tiffany in New York and S. Bing in Paris—were all avowed collectors of oriental art, and claimed that the East had inspired their taste.

The Whistler/Godwin theories of interior design were sharpened to needle-point in Wilde's own house in Tite Street, Chelsea, which they decorated for him in 1884–5. There were, of course, the favoured yellow distempered walls, Anglo-Japanese furniture and a large quantity of Japanese gold leaf paper. The drawing-room was divided by Japanese folding doors and had white

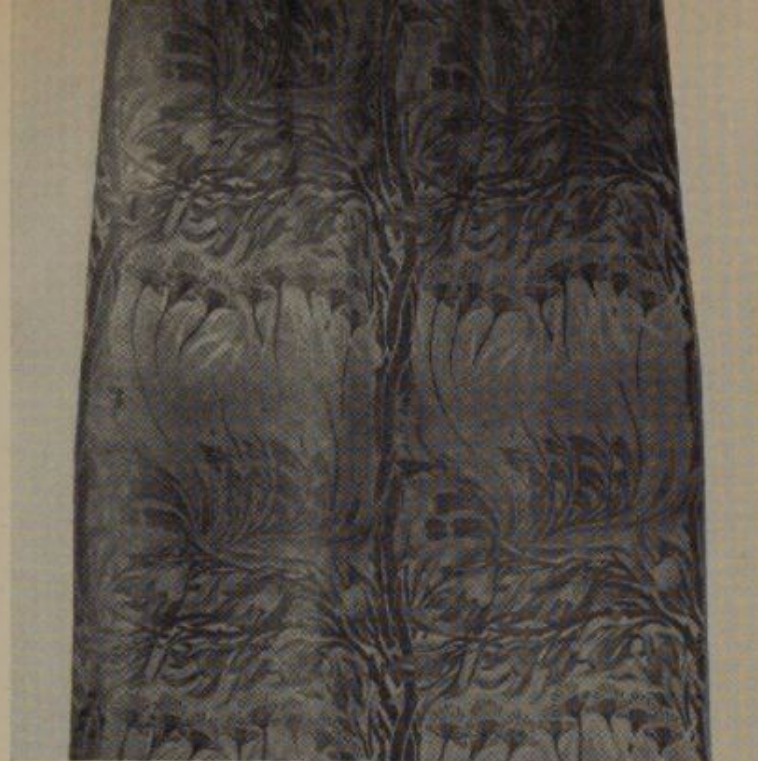
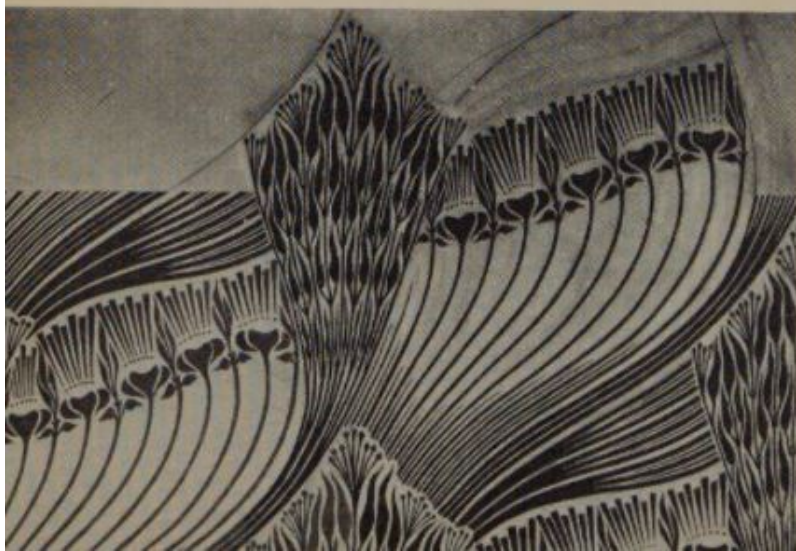
English Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo 1884
Made by *The Century Guild*. 'Cromer Bird' fabric, printed cotton
William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow



lacquered dados, with flesh-pink walls, and a frieze of lemon-coloured gold. At wide intervals on the walls were drawings by Burne-Jones and Simeon Solomon and etchings by Whistler in simple gold frames. The dining-room was the most exotic in the house—all white, with white lacquered panels, chalk-white walls and ivory-white furniture built into the walls in Japanese fashion. Even Wilde must have thought that such aestheticism had been carried too far, for he wrote to Godwin: 'We find that a rose leaf can be laid on the ivory table without scratching it—at least a white one can.'

However interesting Whistler's innovations were, and however much certain elements were used later, they did not in themselves signal the advent of Art Nouveau, but were rather an indication that it was time for a change. The first designer who could be said to have wholly converted his sense of style to the new objectives of symbolic patterning, curvilinear motif and structural simplicity was Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo. Combining both the symbolism of the Pre-Raphaelites and a wish to reform design, Mackmurdo relied vaguely on the well-proportioned shapes of the Renaissance, and used light-coloured mahoganies and a new sense of structure borrowed from the East. As early as 1882 he had designed a chairback with a motif of long, floating, twisted tendrils moving back and forth across the fret-work splat. It was in this year that he and Selwyn Image founded the *Century Guild*, which produced the first complete Art Nouveau fabrics and book designs. Mackmurdo's importance cannot be underestimated, since

English Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo 1882
Design of wallpaper
Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright



English Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo c. 1882
Made by *The Century Guild*. Tapestry hanging in wool and silk
Formerly in the collection of Mackmurdo's niece, Miss E. Pugh

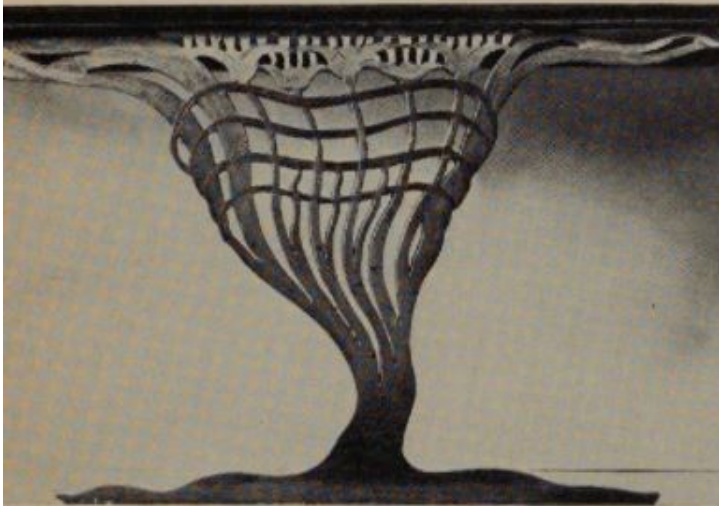
by 1886 his work was hailed at the Liverpool exhibition, which many foreigners visited, as the most advanced and unusual in Europe.

Mackmurdo's designs depended on a complicated counter-change system where the rhythm of a pattern, as it gathered strength and momentum in one direction, would suddenly switch course and move mysteriously in the other. Bold pattern plays against delicate, sharp against soft, strong against weak. Space shifts from foreground to background, and figuration cannot be placed in either, but rests, or rather moves, on the surface of what is decorated. Such distinctly Art Nouveau motifs in tapestries and fabrics were used by Mackmurdo as early as 1882, and so strong was their influence that German and French designers continued to use them beyond the turn of the century, adapting them to plastic architectural forms, as well as to jewellery, silver and book designs.

English Sir Edward Burne-Jones 1881
'The Pelican'. Cartoon on paper, possibly for a tapestry
William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow



English Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo c. 1882
Fretwork detail of Cabinet, mahogany, tinted green
William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow



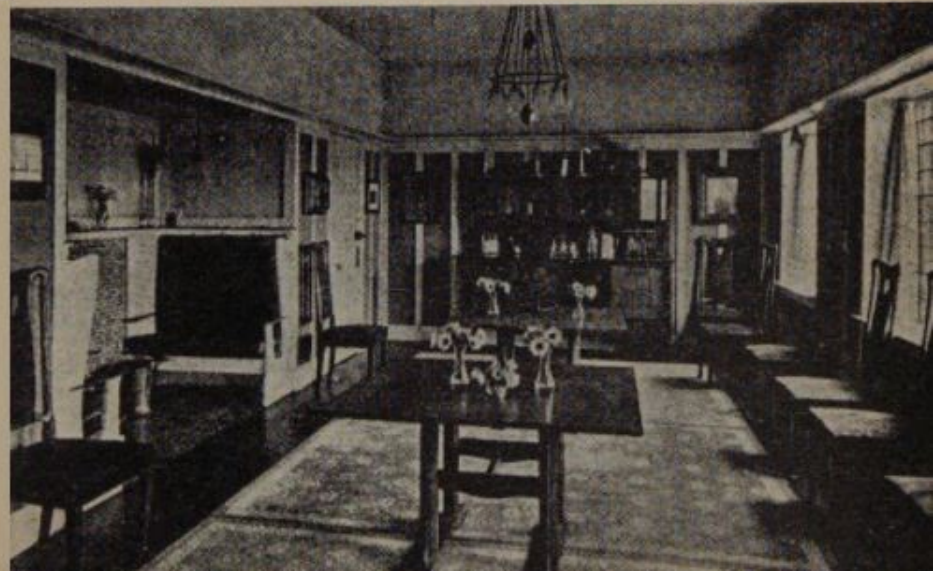
This counterchange system, reminiscent of seaweed caught in opposite currents or a tree branch fighting against a two-way hurricane, has its roots not only in Japanese prints by Hokusai, but also in the work of William Blake. Much has been made of Blake's influence on Art Nouveau, and certainly the Pre-Raphaelites were well aware of his illuminated symbolic poetry. Rossetti owned an original manuscript of his poems, and Mackmurdo's early editions of his magazine the *Hobby Horse*, which appeared in 1884 and again in 1886 until 1892, reproduced Blake's illuminations. The poet's strongly rhythmic motifs, twisting organically and twining their way round the pages of the *Songs of Innocence*, were well known to Mackmurdo. But it is not merely Blake's sense of decoration that was the inspiration for Mackmurdo's designs of

1882 to 1886; it was as if Blake had been seen through the eyes of a Japanese woodcut artist, so simplified and flattened are his forms, so one-dimensional the space that surrounds them. To appreciate the originality of these designs, one need only look at Burne-Jones's *Pelican* of 1881, where the same source has been solidified and over-worked in too literal a manner.

Mackmurdo was also true to that other essential branch of Art Nouveau—the structural—which was much emphasised after the turn of the century. He is the first designer of the period to use the stalk-like vertical strut in architecture and furniture, topped with a stylised capital that again appears as if it has been sieved through an oriental eye. The tall, thin support was employed later almost as much as the curvilinear plant forms, and might be called a submotif of the movement, particularly in the hands of C. A. Voysey, C. R. Mackintosh, Herbert McNair, George Walton and Talwin Morris—the last four working in Glasgow. When this motif was used by Hector Guimard, Serrurier-Bovy and Victor Horta on the Continent, it was employed organically, like a fantastic mushrooming growth, rather than architectonically as it was in Britain.

Mackmurdo's brilliance as a designer of fabrics is shown by the manner in which he could take a plant prototype and abstract it beyond recognition, so that the flame-like, moving undulations were totally independent of the model from which they were originally borrowed. They remind one of much surface patterning in formal abstract art, which is on the surface of the picture plane, and is not meant to relate to any recognisable form.

Scottish George Walton 1901. The Leys in Elstree, entrance hall





English **Aubrey Beardsley** 1893
 'How Sir Tristram Drank of the Love Drink'
 Illustration for *Morte d'Arthur*, published by J. M. Dent

The re-translation of plant and line through the Japanese print was carried to its ultimate conclusion by Aubrey Beardsley, the *enfant terrible* of Art Nouveau, whose own brief life is itself like an Art Nouveau motif—springing up suddenly and brilliantly, swelling and moving through a variety of styles and ceasing as quickly as it began. In 1893, at the age of twenty-one, Beardsley provided illustrations for the first issue of *The Studio* magazine—one of the most widely read and influential of dozens of Art Nouveau magazines. Two years earlier, he had broken into the highly sophisticated Pre-Raphaelite circle with an introduction from Burne-Jones to Morris; but he never won Morris's admiration and it was John Dent who commissioned his *Morte d'Arthur*.

Morris's Kelmscott Press, founded in 1891 with Mackmurdo as advisor, was a much more luxurious affair than the *Hobby Horse*.

Le *Morte d'Arthur*, with its complicated page decorations by Beardsley, outdid both in its stylised Art Nouveau Gothic-medieval design. Again, it all looked as if it had been translated into the language of Utamaro, a strange and, in this case, not totally resolved combination. But Beardsley was soon in his stride with his illustrations for Wilde's *Salomé* in 1893. Perhaps his most successful illustrations, along with the pornographic *Lysistrata* series, the *Salomé* group shows a new understanding of flat, black areas as a foil for the large shapes of white, held together by the most delicate sweep of black line. The rhythmic value of the line was worked up to a new pitch of neurotic sensibility, and bears out Wilde's own belief that 'all art is at once surface and symbol'. Japanese stylisation had never been taken so far in Western art before, and may never be again. But in his drawings Beardsley did not so much seem to be opening new

English **Aubrey Beardsley** 1893
 Book cover for *Morte d'Arthur*, published by J. M. Dent





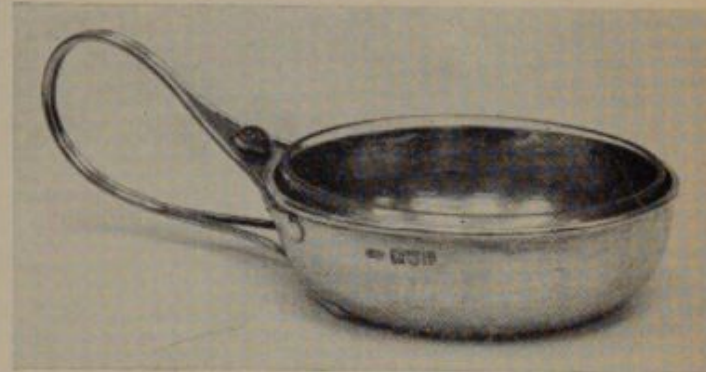
English **Walter Crane** c. 1910
Group of Pilkington pottery, including peacock plate

vistas of design, as resolving what was already in the air—honing the fashion, as it were, to suit his own purpose, until it could be refined no further. It was not surprising that before he died of consumption at the age of twenty-five he had turned to the coming mode of *dix-huitième*, concentrating on eighteenth-century fancy-dress, Louis Quinze furniture, and tiny, rosebud patterns.

Against these wilder expressions of Art Nouveau illustration was set all the soberness of purpose, if not of mood, of the pure Arts and Crafts exponents, whose work continuously criss-crossed with the new style. Walter Crane's iridescent decorative dishes for Pilkington and highly fanciful children's book illustrations—*Flora's Feast* of 1889 in particular—were circulated on the Continent and particularly in Belgium, where, as a friend of Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites, he was hailed as being in the vanguard of the new English style. Crane had founded the Art Workers' Guild in 1884 with Lewis F. Day, and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1888, whose products were influential. But the applied arts of C. R. Ashbee made just as much impact in Belgium and France.



English **C. R. Ashbee** c. 1902
Pendant, silver and gold, set with baroque pearls and diamonds and an olivine in the form of a peacock
Made by Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft
Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright



English **C. R. Ashbee** 1900
Porringer, silver set with semi-precious stone
Guild of Handicraft, London
Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright

Ashbee's work can only be called semi-Art Nouveau and really belongs to the Arts and Crafts movement, but some of his designs were so original and pure in conception, so cleanly realised in detail, that for many abroad he seemed the epitome of England's *Style Moderne*. His brooch with peacock motif, and his silver porringer with its swinging, exaggerated handles—like lines of silver drawn in space—appear as stylistic innovations.

This same line swinging into space is seen in his architectural metalwork. There is none of that overgrown floral line that covered continental Art Nouveau, but rather a sober, restrained approach which was later to reach German *Jugendstil* from England.

In Charles Annesley Voysey another compromise was found between Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau. Although the name of Voysey meant English Art Nouveau on the Continent, this architect and furniture designer worked towards the simplified structural interiors which were to lead Art Nouveau out of its floreated fantasies into the Modern Movement, and to the Bauhaus in 1919. A student of Mackmurdo's, Voysey in his furniture has the same rectilinear balance and classic proportions, with the



English Liberty and Co, influenced by **Charles Annesley Voysey** 1903-4 'Tudric' pewter clock with copper face, numbers and hands

English **Charles Annesley Voysey** 1896
Silk and wool double cloth. Woven by Alexander Morton & Co. Carlisle
Trondheim Museum, Norway



addition of a strong vertical emphasis, whether in chairback or in thin vertical struts with a mushroom finial, which he invented and which became his signature. Such elongated forms were so widely admired at the turn of the century that they even found their way to Nancy in France. The only touch of whimsy appeared in cut-out heart shapes which he never tired of using. Voysey's fabrics were less daring than Mackmurdo's, less experimental, but no doubt more pleasing to live with. They made the most of bright, simplified patterns of tulips or stylised trees interlaced with birds or animals, in the manner of Walter Crane or Morris. Delicate mauves, pinks and greens, against natural-wood panelling, decorated interiors, with the ubiquitous white enamelling to complement the décor. Plain tiles were used functionally around fireplaces, which always dominated the room with their exaggerated over-mantles and extended width and height. Voysey's houses are perhaps his greatest achievement—for their pleasing asymmetry, the placing of their windows from inner necessity rather than

English **Charles Annesley Voysey** 1899
Interior of the architect's house, Chorley Wood





English **Charles Annesley Voysey** 1897
Chairs, cabinet, clock, carpet and wallpaper

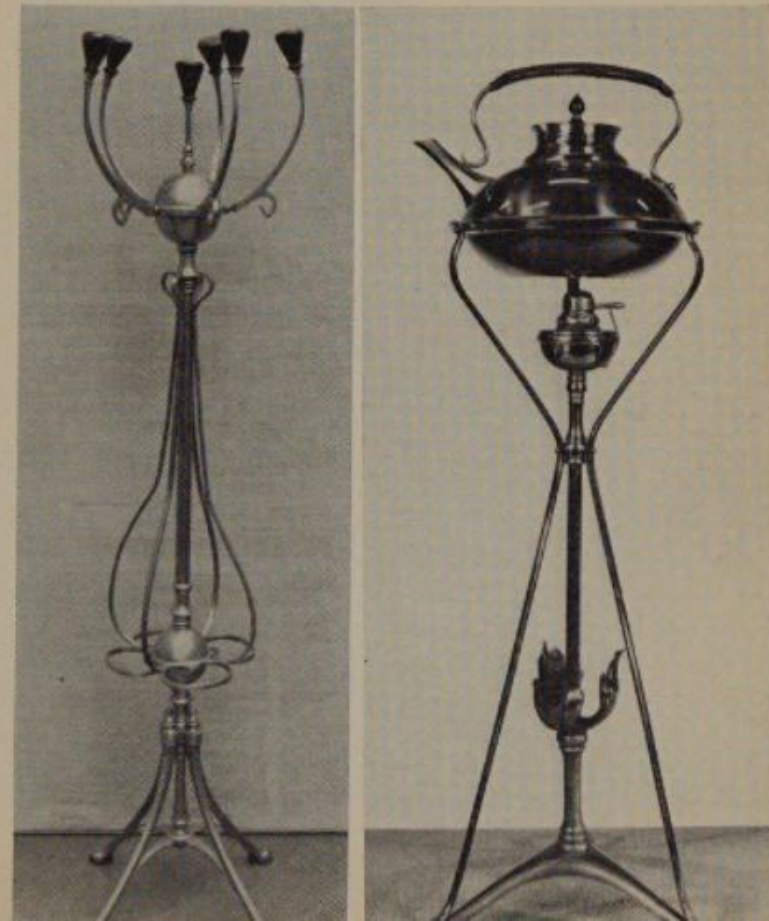
outward appearances, and their plain, white-washed pebble-dash walls. The medieval buttress was his only affectation, but even this feature was used with architectural meaning. Oriel windows gave the whole an oriental note, which curiously was not out of harmony with certain medieval features, since the total effect was one of restraint and delicate balance. His 1906 interiors for E. Horneman of Garden Corner, Chelsea, place him firmly on the functional side of Art Nouveau, with their clear surfaces, simple architectural shapes and plain, rectilinear furniture, all of which come indirectly from the Japanese. Alongside his buildings the work of Harrison Townsend (see p. 145) seems 'far out'.

The metalwork of J. A. S. Benson meant much to continental Art Nouveau designers. Exhibited at the opening of S. Bing's shop in December 1895, Benson's metalwork epitomised for many Europeans the sensible, sound English approach to the new age of the machine. Although one of Morris's pupils and friends, Benson was one of the few designers in the Arts and Crafts circle who actually set out to employ the machine actively to mass-produce his merchandise. Tea kettles, electric lamps, fire fenders and a variety of other functional objects in brass or copper, or a

combination of both, were designed with the potentialities of the machine in mind, and seem to have won the approval of the craft-minded Morris. Benson's standing tea kettle and burner, and his standing lamp in particular, made use of a metal line freely deployed through space as a structural support, not out of keeping with the object's function. Yet his shapes had enough fantasy to intrigue Beardsley, who could not resist incorporating a Benson lamp in his caricature of Whistler in 1893.

Another English artist who was represented at Bing's shop from the start was Frank Brangwyn, who had been discovered by Mackmurdo and had become closely associated with the Arts and Crafts movement. Bing gave Brangwyn the important commission of covering the entire outside façade of the shop in the rue de Provence with decorations done on canvas and mounted on to the

English **W. A. S. Benson** (Benson & Co) c. 1895
Coat-rack made for the Victoria and Albert Museum Restaurant, in brass
Tea kettle and stand, in brass and copper
Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright





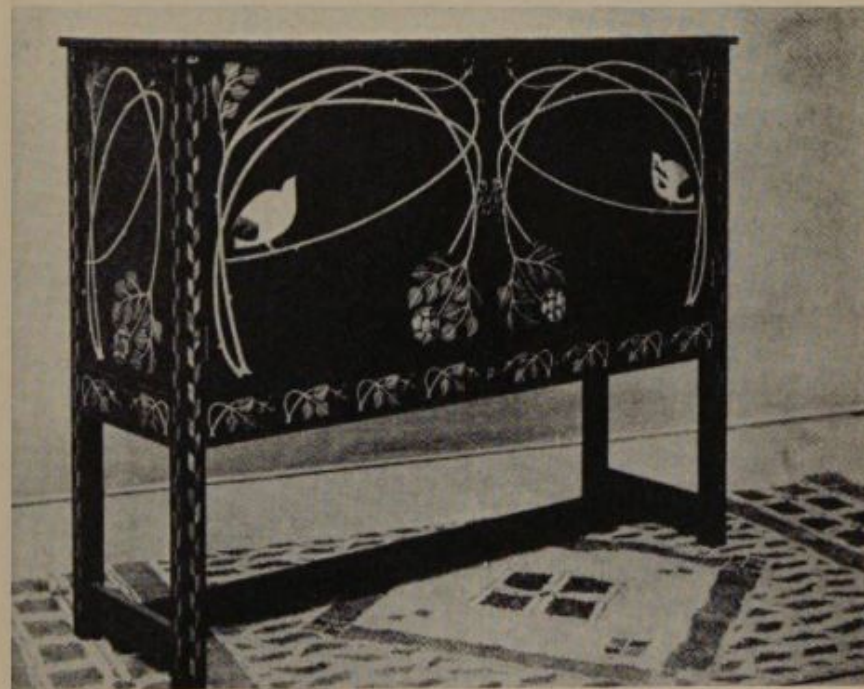
English Sir Frank Brangwyn 1899
Stained-glass window
Made by Louis Comfort Tiffany and possibly exhibited at the Grafton Galleries

building. Such decorations do not sound very permanent, but from all accounts they created the desired eye-catching effect, and passers-by were struck by the over-blown floral and fruit forms blossoming over the entrance to the shop. Brangwyn also produced designs for Louis Tiffany in America, which were turned into stained glass windows and exhibited at the Grafton Galleries in 1899 with bronzes by Meunier. He also designed carpets, textiles, tapestries and a group of furniture which was structural in the extreme; although their date was 1901, these settees and cabinets were so plain and square-lined that they might have been designed in the mid 'thirties.

Of all the English artists who enjoyed impressive reputations abroad Hugh Mackay Baillie Scott was the most fanciful. Quaint folk design was the centre of his style, seen afresh and applied as light decoration on solid pieces of geometric furniture. Baillie Scott was primarily a colourist in his interiors; and high-key colour

combinations of red, acid green, lemon yellow, hot orange and searing blue predicted the Fauve palette of a few years later. It is odd that Baillie Scott, with his affection for English peasant art motifs and primitive stylisations, should be so admired in Germany, where *Jugendstil* after 1900 moved towards squared-up simplicity and rational structure. What is more, Baillie Scott's floral patternings had none of the rampant asymmetry so closely connected with the style of that time. Here again was the rational approach to Art Nouveau, with the curvilinear or floral abstraction used as playful relief to conventional form. It was he who was chosen in 1898 by the Grand Duke of Hesse to decorate the royal palace at Darmstadt, where a new art colony was formed in 1901. Moreover, he also built houses in Poland, Russia and Switzerland. His curious early Tudor floral motifs, which might have been taken from a piece of Crewel work, must have been in the mind of many German designers when they spoke of the *Englische Stil*, before the overwhelming persuasion of Charles Rennie Mackintosh from Glasgow took full effect.

English Baillie Scott 1898
Cabinet and carpet, possibly for the Royal Palace of Darmstadt





Scottish Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald 1902
 'Opera of the Seas', oil and tempera on canvas with paper collage. One of
 twelve panels commissioned by Frau Wärndorfer for her music salon in
 Vienna. Inspired by Maeterlinck's poem *The Dead Princess*
 Author's collection

Mackintosh who led the Glasgow four (his wife, Margaret Macdonald, and Herbert and Frances McNair), seemed to the Vienna Secessionists such as Josef Hoffmann, Joseph Olbrich, Koloman Moser and Gustav Klimt to be the natural solution to the Art Nouveau quandary into which floreated abstractions had worked themselves by this time. It was obvious to all but the most



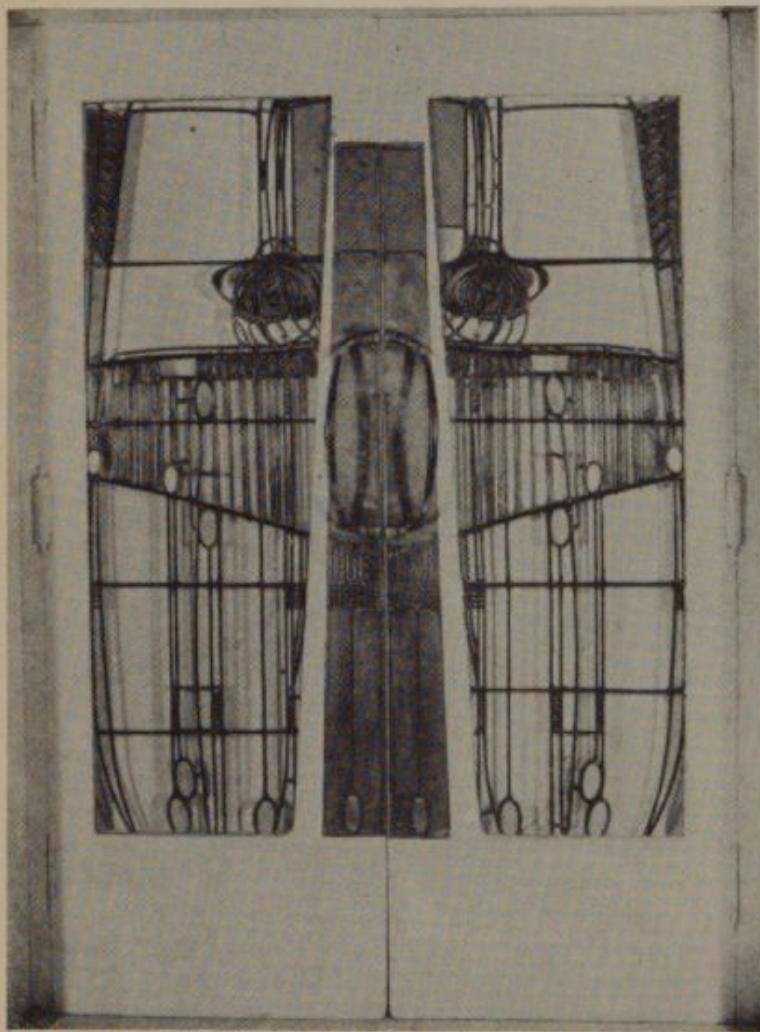
Scottish Frances McNair c. 1896
 'Eve', watercolour
 Author's collection

rabid escapists in Paris after 1902 that the structure of a building or of a chair had to express its function in architectural terms, rather than organic, linear ones. Mackintosh, with bold Scots directness, a rectilinear neatness, and sound structural sense, seemed to offer the solution. Basing many of his designs on geometry, particularly the cube, Mackintosh worked his way out

of the *entrelacs* of a Celtic twilight, into the bright dawn of the Modern Movement, which culminated in Walter Gropius's Bauhaus in Weimar in 1919—itself based largely on the principles of Morris and Henri Van de Velde.

Mackintosh's most rampant Art Nouveau designs were those done for a series of tea-rooms in Glasgow, on commission from Miss Cranston, who wished to bring to soot-covered Glaswegians

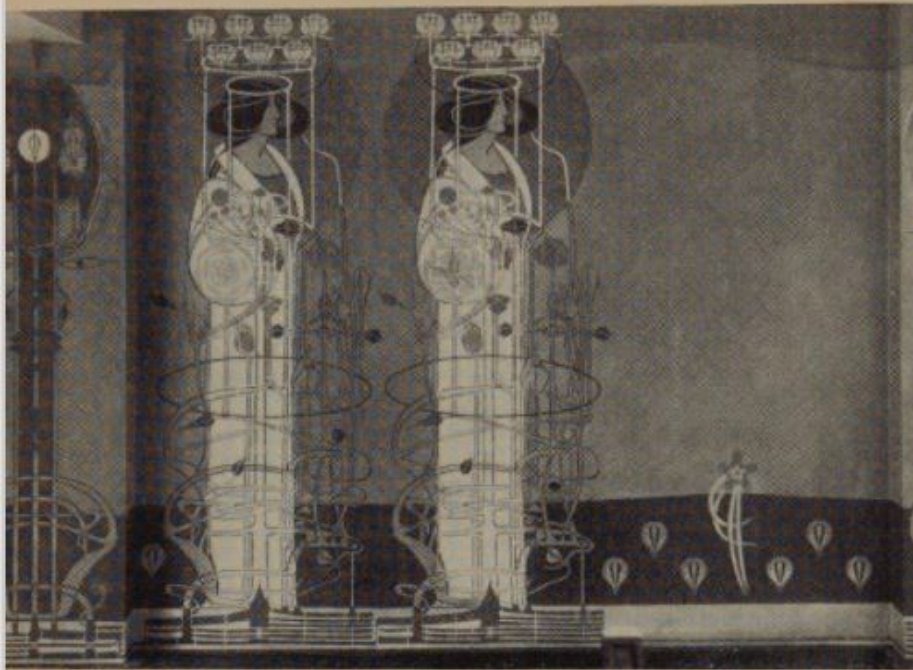
Scottish **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** 1904
Pair of doors in leaded multi-coloured glass and metal for the Willow Tea-rooms, Glasgow



Scottish
Charles Rennie Mackintosh, 1901–2
Silver finger ring, set with pearls, amethysts and rubies
right Silver brooch and pendant heart, set with rubies
pearls and turquoises
collection Mrs Sturrock



a tea-time way of life, divorced from their grim surroundings. The tea-rooms, the first of which was commissioned from Mackintosh, became her own rallying point for social reform, revealing to shop assistants and the wives of industrialists alike a new sense of cleanliness, hygiene and symbolic fantasy, which could remove them from their day to day existence in a dirty industrial seaport while they nibbled their *petits-fours*.



Scottish **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** 1897
Mural decoration for Miss Cranston's Buchanan Street Tea-rooms, Glasgow
Photo courtesy Glasgow University

The tea-rooms, as well as the School of Art, which Mackintosh designed from 1897 to 1912, avoided any reference to period styles (depending solely on the austerity of Scottish castle architecture), and used light metalwork or mural decoration in curvilinear abstracted forms as relief from the severity of geometric simplicity. His use of the cube as a basic measure in architecture and furniture design, as well as in decoration on furniture and fabrics, was copied by the Vienna Secessionists in the next decade and might be said to have foreshadowed the debased 'cubist' style of interior decoration of the 'thirties.

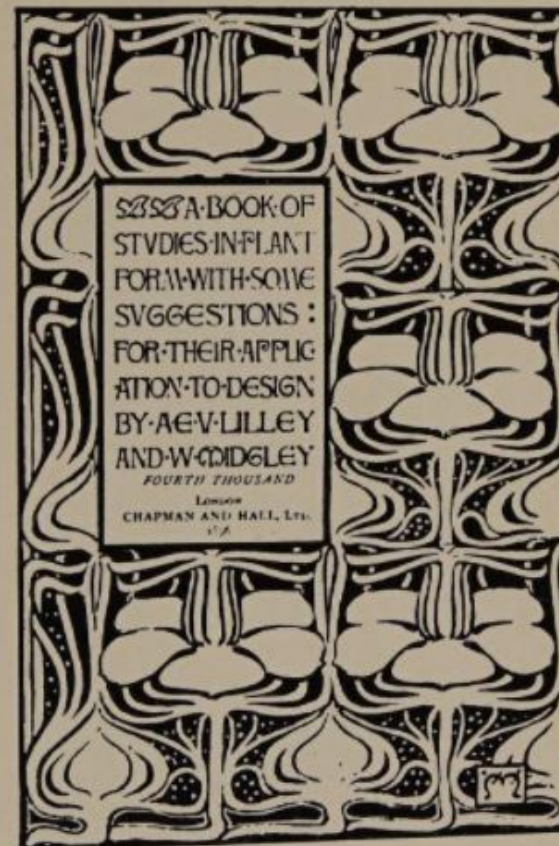
Of all the Art Nouveau architects, Mackintosh was foremost in his disposition of interior space in a dramatic, yet rational manner. Balconies, multi-levels, vistas and a sense of openness, enclosed by the most fragile vertical struts in wood or metal, make him an important forerunner of the functional architecture of the post-Second World War period.

Mackintosh designed everything for the Cranston tea-rooms: vases, silverware, china, table-cloths, as well as chairs, carpets, leaded-glass decorations, metal work reliefs and murals. The in-

terior was seen as a complete unity of colour, form and design, and as such it depended on nothing that had come before, although it predicted much that was to follow.

Of all methods of spreading a style, books are probably the quickest and most efficient, being portable and easily exchanged. Britain certainly led in the production of Art Nouveau decorated

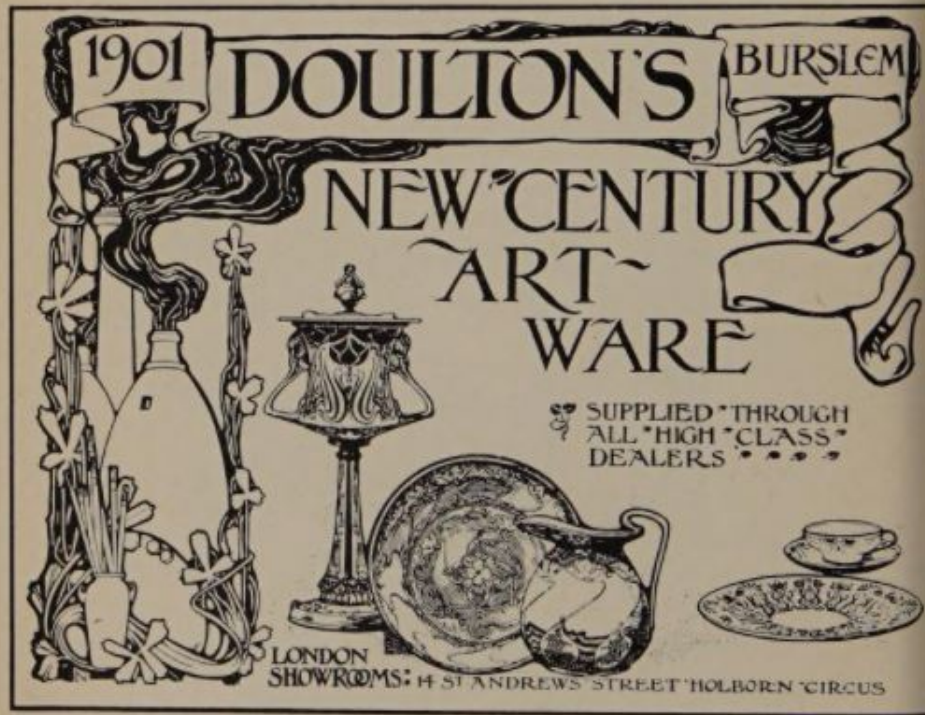
English **W. Midgley** 1896
Title page for *Book of Studies in Plant Form*, A. E. V. Lilley and W. Midgley





English; Designer unknown 1896 (?)
Fireplace tile in green, orange and yellow

English; Designer unknown
Advertisement for Doulton's 'New Century Art Ware'
From *The Studio*, special number 'Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration'



books at this time, and produced the first Art Nouveau magazines seen on the Continent and in America. *The Studio*, which began in 1893, with its first issue enlivened by a series of Beardsley illustrations, was followed by a number of continental equivalents towards the end of the century. *The Studio*, however, remained in the forefront by reporting on the latest trends in a style that seemed to be competing with itself to remain original and new; and one issue after another from 1895 to 1910 is like an endless serial of Art Nouveau, rather than a magazine of the fine and applied arts.

English
Advertisement for 'new and artistic' fireplaces, made by R. W. Crosthwaite, Thornby-on-Tees and showing an armchair by Louis Majorelle (French) 1900—bought for the George Donaldson Collection from the Paris Exhibition that year and exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1901
From *The Studio*, August, 1902



The fine art books of the Kelmscott Press, illustrated by Burne-Jones, Morris and others; children's books by Walter Crane, and any number of well-illustrated books on styles, particularly the oriental (one on blue-and-white china was illustrated by Whistler); Heywood Sumner's bindings of *Cinderella* in 1882, and his *Undine* of 1888; Frederick Shields's binding for *The Life and Works of William Blake* in 1880; all these had strong linear motifs that were twenty years ahead of their continental counterparts in their sophisticated elegance and tense rhythmic counter-change. Charles Ricketts's designs for his magazine *The Dial*, which he edited with his friend Charles Shannon from 1889 onward, were much copied and could be said to have provided a style book for many contemporary continental illustrators. Still, it was Mackmurdo's *Hobby Horse*, which first appeared in 1884, which was the most inventive and beautifully produced of all these Art Nouveau books, and which the others rarely equalled in typography, linear decoration and page design.

Along with books, the earliest and most important carriers of the new style were fabrics, and it was in this line that Liberty & Co. of Regent Street excelled. From the 'eighties onward, they prided themselves not only on their oriental wares, and 'art furniture'—some made with Godwin's seal of approval—but on their Japanese silks, fine linen and printed cotton. In 1889, after he returned from Japan, Lazenby Liberty opened a branch in the Avenue de l'Opéra to commemorate the Paris Exhibition, and no doubt to catch some of its business. This shop, which continued till 1931, sold not only furnishings and *objets d'art*, but a new line in fabrics. Liberty's fabrics of the next decade, which were seen everywhere and which became a status symbol for the *avant garde*, did more to spread the message of Art Nouveau curvilinear design than almost anything else produced at the time. Many of the earlier Liberty fabrics in printed velveteen are reminiscent of Mackmurdo designs; around 1896 onwards, their designers began to assume an individuality and style which was used as a source on the Continent for everything from mural decorations to chair-backs and tea sets. Italians, for their part, celebrated the new style as *Stile Liberty*, named after the English shop.





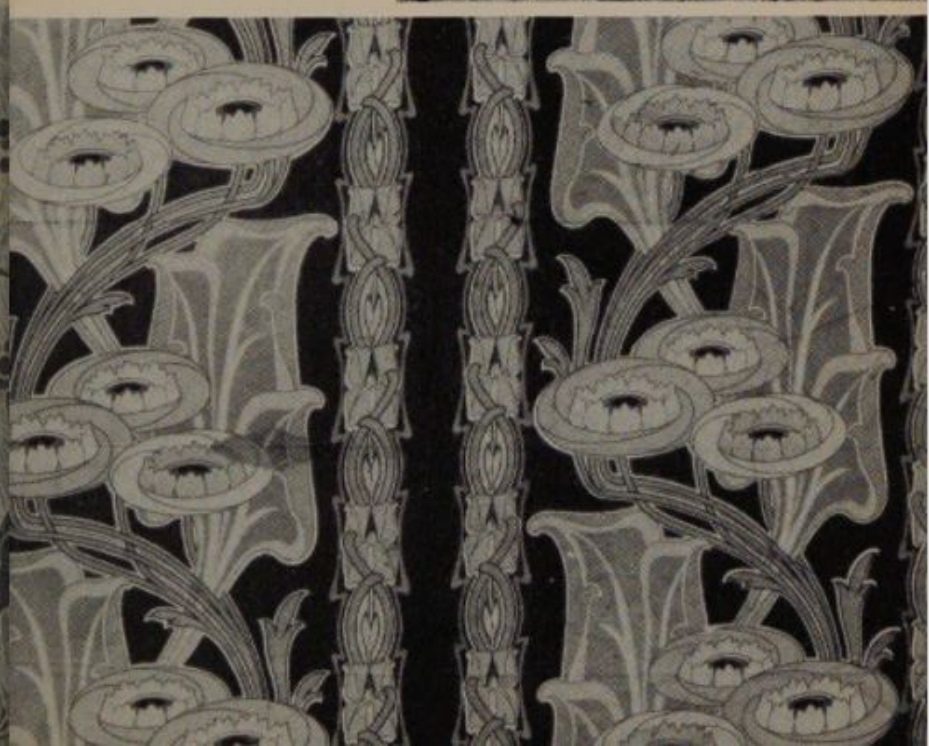
English **Arthur Wilcock** Liberty & Co, c. 1890
Roller-printed cotton, printed by E. J. Buckley, Manchester
Used by Walter Crane in his dining room
Trondheim Museum, Norway

English **Arthur Silver** Liberty & Co, c. 1896
Printed cotton
Trondheim Museum, Norway



English **Lindsay Butterfield** Liberty & Co, c. 1896
Silk and wool double cloth
Trondheim Museum, Norway

English **Harry Napper** 1902-3
design printed by Harry Steiner for Mull & Stockdale



Liberty employed the leading artists of the day, such as Voysey, Lindsay Butterfield, Sidney Mawson, Arthur Wilcock, Arthur Silver and Harry Napper, and by the turn of the century they led the world in invention, production and distribution of fabrics. Arthur Silver for one, who opened the Silver Studio in 1880, concentrated on producing for Liberty's a range of fabrics in cheap materials which would be within the reach of the middle and lower classes. Later, Silver's son Rex designed for Liberty's a wide assortment of household objects and jewellery in silver.

The Liberty metalwork was a unique venture in the entire Art Nouveau output: with the Celtic name of *Cymric* (pronounced Kūm-rick) as a trademark, one of the most active and inventive facets of Liberty's began in 1901 and continued well into the 'twenties. What is more, designs which were executed in silver for the more affluent customers were quite often translated into pewter with a high content of silver, called *Tudric*, which made its appearance around 1903. An outstanding designer of *Tudric* was Archibald Knox from the Isle of Man, whose formalised plant

English Archibald Knox 1902-3
'Tudric' pewter jam pot and inkwell, made for Liberty & Co



English; Designer unknown, Liberty & Co,
c. 1904
Flower vase in silver plate, marked 029
Photo Carl Christian



English Bernard Cuzner 1904
Turquoise matrix bowl on supports, inset with four
turquoise matrix bosses
designed for Liberty & Co



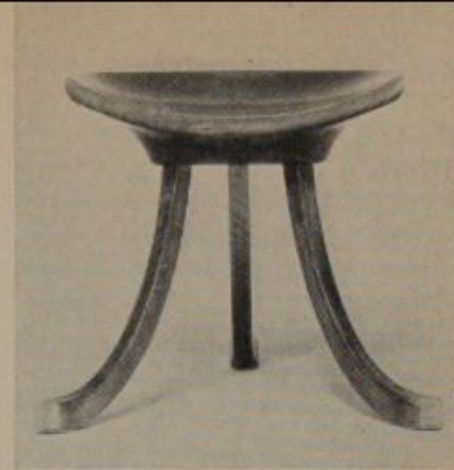


English Archibald Knox
Tea set for Liberty & Co, c. 1903 'Tudric'
In silver, pewter with blue/green enamel inset plaques, wicker work handles
Photo Carl Christian

English; Designer unknown, Liberty & Co, c. 1901-2
Drawing-room 'suite'
From Liberty's furniture catalogue



English; Designer unknown,
Liberty & Co, 1884 'Thebes Stool'
Sold at S. Bing's *Maison de l'art nouveau*
in Paris in 1895
Trondheim Museum, Norway



forms and delicate *entrelac* motifs, borrowed from the *Book of Kells* and medieval manuscripts, enjoyed immense popularity. Few designers of *Tudric* and *Cymric* are known today, since many of them were young students at Birmingham working anonymously for the firm of William Haseler—who produced most of Liberty's silver-work after 1899. Perhaps their identities were kept secret to stress the ideals of the anonymous craftsmanship of the middle ages; it seems more likely, however, that the firm wanted to be its own self-advertisement for Art Nouveau, rather than the promoter of personal reputations.

Liberty's jewellery and metalwork were noteworthy not only for their witty adaptation of certain fashionable Celtic and medieval motifs (along with the more advanced designing in England and on the Continent) but for an inventive means of combining various types of metal, semi-precious stones and materials in exciting and unusual ways. They also excelled in giving their objects a hand-finished Arts and Crafts look by inseting enamelled plaques, hand-beating, burnishing, etc., although the basic forms were mass-produced by the machine. The compromise between handicraft appearance and industrial production was perfectly solved by Liberty's, which may be the reason why it enjoyed such a high reputation long after Art Nouveau ceased to be a vital force.

Liberty's also produced a large assortment of 'quaint' furniture in suites, which were cheap adaptations of pieces by Voysey, Mackintosh and others whose work might easily be copied from *The Studio* magazine. One most original design, curiously, was an early one: the Thebes stool, a three-legged seat patented in 1884, but considered *moderne* enough by S. Bing to be sold at his new

shop in Paris. Liberty's furniture was never as advanced as Ambrose Heal's or as inventive as J. S. Henry's, but it gives a truer reflection of the popularisation of Art Nouveau in England. It also presents a clear picture of what a wide middle class might be willing to buy, for Liberty was clever enough at business to titillate with the new without exasperating his public.

With Liberty's, one reaches a high plateau of the best and worst principles of Art Nouveau: shameless commercial adaptation of truly inventive ideas in cheap, popular forms, as well as brilliant mass production of hand-finished goods, which never ceased to be unusual and at the same time functional.

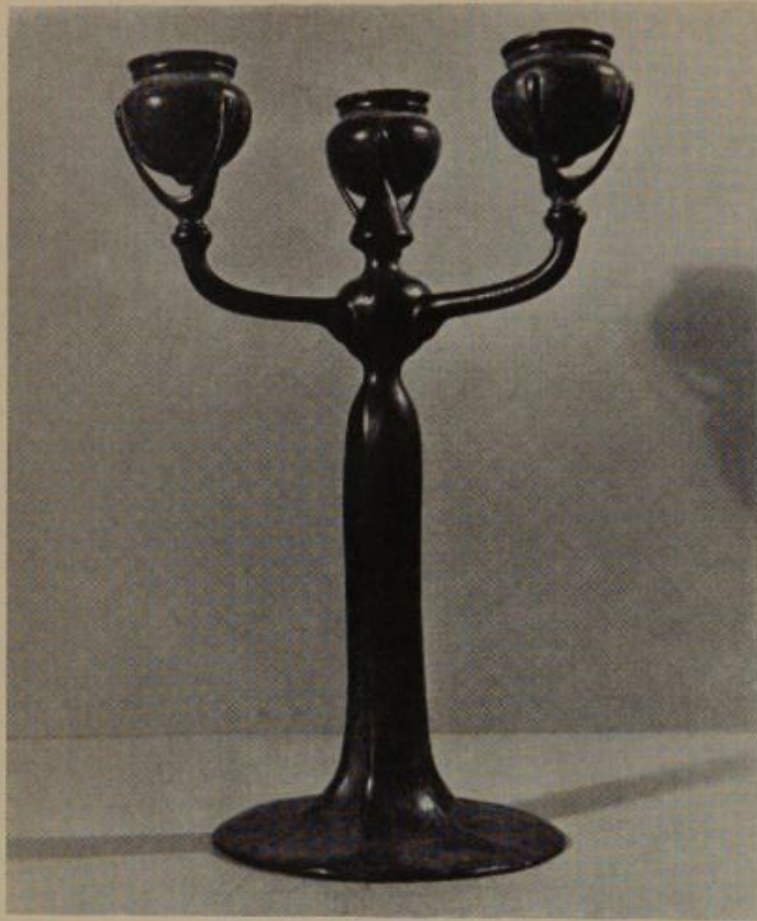
English; Possibly made by Maples, c. 1900
Washstand, mahogany, inlaid in various coloured woods
Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright



America

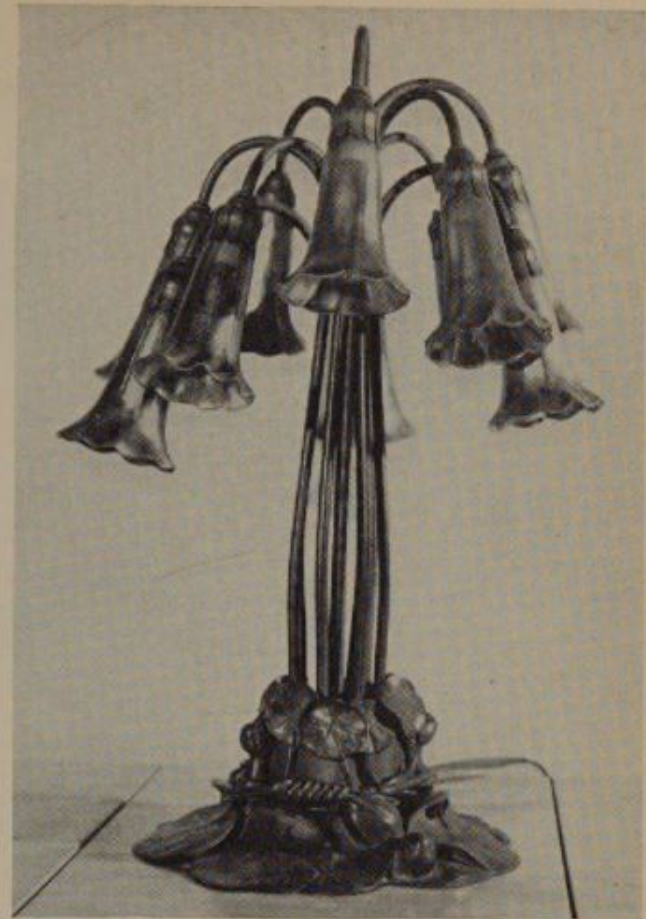
American **Louis Comfort Tiffany**
Group of Favrite Glass, from left to right:
Two vases, c. 1895 (Private collection)
Bowl and saucer, c. 1895 (Coll: Charles Jerdein)
Tumbler, inscribed, c. 1900 (Coll: Sir Colin Anderson)
Vase, c. 1893-94 (Coll: Charles Jerdein)





American **Louis Comfort Tiffany** c. 1900
Bronze candlestick
Courtesy of Lillian Nassau

As the new aesthetic gained attention, it was transformed and adapted in a number of ways both on the continent of Europe and in America. Louis Comfort Tiffany of New York, the son of America's most fashionable and expensive jeweller, employed the principles of Morris in a manner acceptable to a new society of newly rich. Tiffany, who had studied as a painter in Paris, knew of Morris and Ruskin from several trips to London, where his father had a branch in Regent Street from 1868 onward. When in 1878 he formed his own company of Associated Artists, it was Morris's principles that he invoked. At first he decorated the White House in Washington, the home of Mark Twain as well as the palaces of the



American **Louis Comfort Tiffany** c. 1900
Ten electric-light Pond Lily lamp, signed 'Tiffany Studios,
New York'
Courtesy of Lillian Nassau

rich, but it was not until the early 'eighties that he found a channel to a new style, first through Hispano-Moorish architecture and then through the art of Japan. From the start, Tiffany's fame rested with his work in glass, particularly for rich Americans. He had experimented with glass from 1875, and in 1880 he patented Favrite glass, an iridescent technique produced by exposing hot glass to a series of metallic fumes and oxides. Iridescent glass, which had been produced in England since 1878 by Thomas Webb, became through Tiffany as much a trademark of Art Nouveau as the whip-lash curve, and by the turn of the century glass firms throughout America and the Continent were attempting



American Victor Durand 1900
Vases and candleholder, signed 'Durand,' collection of Durand Glassware
Courtesy of Lillian Nassau

cheap methods of producing iridescence to supply a growing market. However, Tiffany's Favrite glass, which was seen regularly in Europe from 1892 on, could never be matched for brilliance of colour, fantasy of form or quality of workmanship. It is significant that Tiffany's factory was run by an Englishman, John Nash, who had patented *vasa murrhina* glass, a type of 'art glass', in 1882, and who had worked for Webb before joining Tiffany.

In 1892, a stained glass domestic window, made two years earlier and called 'The Four Seasons', was displayed in Europe, showing very advanced Art Nouveau tendencies in its simplification, its economic use of black leading as pure line and its bright, clear colours, which seemed to reflect the works of the Symbolist-Synthesist painters of Pont Aven. S. Bing saw Tiffany mosaics and glass at the Chicago Worlds Columbian Exposition in 1893, and it was a foregone conclusion that Tiffany would be one of his prize exhibitors when he opened his own shop. From that moment on, Favrite glass was seen at every international exhibition throughout the world. But perhaps some of Tiffany's most inventive designs were his metalwork lamps, where a clever combination of iridescent glass and pure sculptural bronze shapes resulted in objects of unbelievable fantasy, some of them as abstract to the modern eye as a Brancusi or an Arp.

Despite the fact that Tiffany had several important followers in America—among them the Quezal glass works in Brooklyn and the art glass of Victor Durand in New Jersey—Art Nouveau for Americans remained mostly a foreign import, strange, exotic and above all French.

Just as Tiffany had convinced the new American industrial princes that their decorative arts did not have to be foreign to be interesting, so Louis Sullivan at the same moment was attempting to forge an architectural language not dependent on European prototypes, yet sophisticated enough to appeal to culture-prone Americans. He arrived at an amazing combination of new methods of building in cast iron, and a highly decorative sense of ornament depending on Celtic *entrelacs*, medieval floral motifs, Byzantine prototypes, and pure abstract curvilinear design. However simplified and geometric his plain-brick surfaces and pure rectangular shapes tended to be later, his unselfconscious use of light, curvilinear relief in carvings or in metalwork placed him in the rare limelight of American Art Nouveau. Along with Tiffany, he can be said to have represented an important experimental

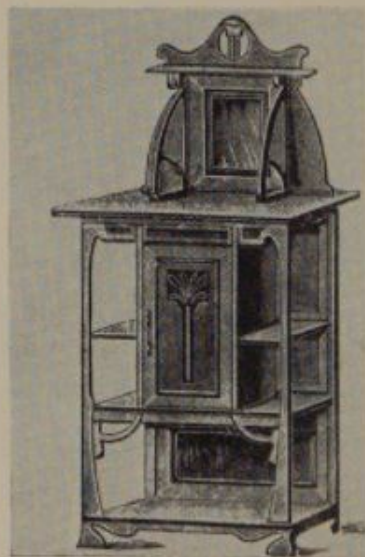
American Louis Sullivan 1907
Owatonna Farmers National Bank



factor in the style's heyday, although, unlike the glass-maker, his work was never seen in Europe.

A rare excursion by Sullivan into the Glasgow style of Art Nouveau can be seen in his Bradley Residence, completed in 1909 in Madison, Wisconsin. Here Romanesque and Byzantine themes were abandoned for the Voysey/Mackintosh world of Japanese structure from which Frank Lloyd Wright drew so much inspiration. Although there are close connections here with Wright's work, the furniture for the entrance hall in particular indicates that Sullivan was aware of Voysey's distinctive chairs, as well as of Mackintosh's solution for electric lighting.

On the other hand, the early works of Frank Lloyd Wright, although they copied Japanese structural themes developed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, were too straight-laced to move into the centre of the Art Nouveau maelstrom of experimental design. His houses in Buffalo of about 1904 are so faithfully Japanese in their rectilinear severity that they can hardly be considered Art Nouveau. Paradoxically, Wright, America's most controversial architect, came closer to the style at the end of his life, with the Guggenheim Museum designed in 1946 and completed in 1959; the Guggenheim's play of interior space, free use of curves and eccentric, even bizarre forms seem romantically to recall a chance he had missed in youth.



American; Designer unknown, c. 1900
Pseudo Art Nouveau cabinet

American Louis Sullivan 1909
Entrance Hall of Bradley Residence, Madison, Wisconsin

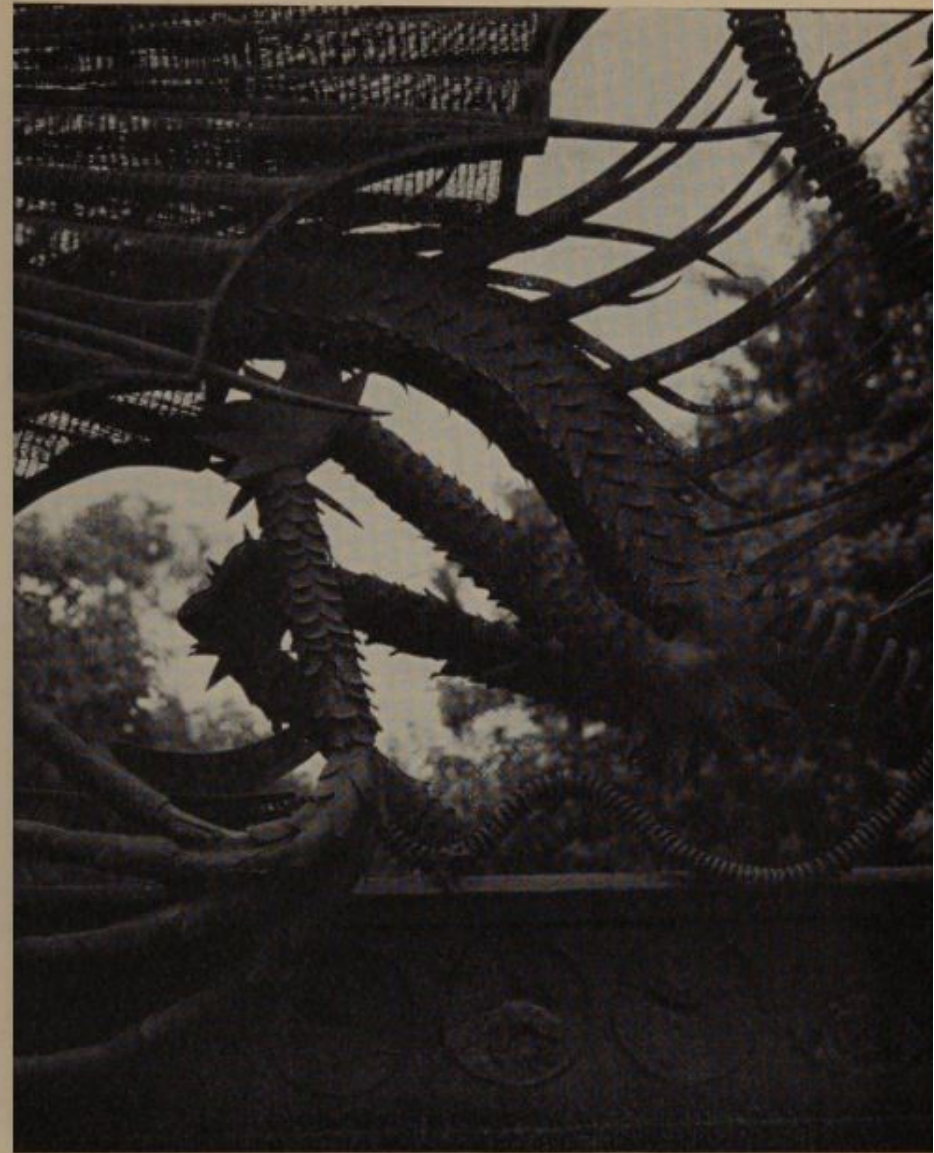


Spain

Just as Tiffany used Art Nouveau as a means of escape into a world of organic design, Antonio Gaudi in Barcelona saw the future in terms of undulating surfaces and moving planes, which on the surface appeared to have no architectural logic, but which depended on a highly sophisticated understanding of both materials and engineering. Although Gaudi, like Tiffany, began by paying homage to Hispano-Moorish architecture, he left tradition at a remarkably early period for something so totally

without precedent that it stands as one of the pinnacles of Art Nouveau fantasy and invention. What is more, despite the wildly imaginative, eccentric shapes he incorporated into his buildings, all his work has a strong structural basis; and some of his methods (such as the inclined support or the tile vaulted roof strengthened by stiffer ribs or diaphragm arches) are used today by contemporary architects with Gaudi's favourite material, poured cement. Foreshadowing Spain's *Modernista* by over a decade, some of Gaudi's Art Nouveau forms appeared in Catalan architecture even before Mackmurdo's fabrics in England. Like Morris, Gaudi emerged from the medieval revivalism of the day to produce the Palacio Güell of 1885–89, one of the most advanced Art Nouveau buildings of its time—with its wrought iron decorations of twisted stalks, its enormous parabolic arches filled with curling and twisting ironwork, and its mushrooming brick columns in the underground stables. The Teresan School of 1889–94 is remarkable for its simple but strong structural lines of articulated plain-brick facing, its piers of one-brick thickness and its parabolic arches supporting the ceilings. By the time he was commissioned to do the Park Güell, Gaudi's forms had assumed a new fantasy, with pieces of coloured tile, large sweeping curves of moving surfaces, and not a straight line in sight. His Casa Batlló of 1905–7 is perhaps his most organic structure. Even its walls and ceiling do not meet in a straight line, but move gently towards one another. The furniture has freely shaped legs, the windows and doors soft curves, and no room in the house is square.

Gaudi's works may have been a culmination of what was called *Renaixença*—a renaissance in Catalonia which was not merely artistic, but industrial, political, literary and musical; the idea was to revive the glories of Catalonia's Gothic age. Although other Art Nouveau architects, such as Luis Domenèch y Montaner, emerged in Barcelona, and a variety of artists and illustrators about the turn of the century adapted facets of the linear style from French examples, it was Gaudi who remained the foremost innovator and the original genius of Spanish Art Nouveau. The fact was recognised by the Catalans, who continue today to build his unfinished Sagrada Familia church in Barcelona, begun as long ago as 1882.



Spanish **Antonio Gaudi** c. 1882
Wrought-iron decoration on Dragon Gate, Finca Güell
(See also page 156)

Belgium

The English gospel of Arts and Crafts found its most attentive congregation in Brussels, where products of Morris & Co. and Mackmurdo's *Century Guild* were exhibited side by side. The Belgian *avant garde*, under a lawyer and critic, Octave Maus formed a society called *Les XX* to counteract the effects of historicism in Belgium, which was wallowing in imitations of Rococo and Italian Renaissance. *Les XX* became a rallying point for the French Post-Impressionist movement, and from 1884 onwards Rodin, Whistler, Odilon Redon, Toulouse-Lautrec, Signac, Gauguin, Cézanne and Van Gogh were all exhibited through *Les XX*. Whistler was asked to exhibit every year from 1884 to 1894,

Belgian; Designer unknown, 1897
Room 'in the English taste', with chairbacks similar to those produced by Gustav Serrurier-Bovy two years later. (see page 81)



Belgian Privat-Livemont 1897
Poster for Van Houten chocolate

and Maus himself admitted that contact with Whistler and the Pre-Raphaelites had a tremendous influence on Belgian art as well as on interior decoration and dress. Even before *Les XX*, Belgian periodicals of ten years earlier showed a strong interest in the Pre-Raphaelites and Morris.

By 1892, the English were exhibiting applied arts in Brussels, and one of Belgium's leading Art Nouveau architects, Victor Horta, used Mackmurdo's *Century Guild* wallpaper, designed by Heywood Sumner in 1892–93. The following year, Ford Madox Brown's work was seen, and in 1894, when Octave Maus acknowledged a changed interest from fine art to applied art, *Les XX* was dissolved and reborn as *La Libre Esthétique*, a society which was to pay more attention to the decorative arts. From the time

Belgian Gustav Serrurier-Bovy
1899
Dining-room



of the first exhibition, Brussels was deluged by English Arts and Crafts products: Ashbee silver, Selwyn Image wallpaper, Heywood Sumner's fabrics, William Morris furniture; and, most important, illustrations from Beardsley's *Morte d'Arthur* and *Salomé*, were put before the eyes of the revolutionary Belgians. That same year, Walter Crane exhibited with the *Cercle Artistique*; he had shown his works in 1891 and Georges Lemmen wrote an essay

pointing out his complete idea of expression through line, form and arabesque.

Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, the son of a building contractor, was strongly committed to the English style of decoration long before any of his other countrymen, having travelled to England in 1884 where he studied at close quarters the work of Morris. He became a furniture designer, and exhibited in the first *Libre Esthétique*

exhibition a furniture *ensemble*, which was considered to be directly under English influence, but which he himself felt 'as a first attempt, emphatically contradicts it'. But drawings and photographs of this year do in fact show English-looking rooms: unpainted wood, fitted cabinets and fireplaces, with chairs as one unit, simple shapes and the asymmetry that had existed in English furniture since the Anglo-Japanese art pieces of Godwin. From 1895 to 1900 Serrurier-Bovy developed this line as a speciality. His major break with the English was the use of gently curved trusses as a decorative rather than a structural feature, which was to become a signature of Belgian Art Nouveau, particularly as it was used by Van de Velde. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Serrurier-Bovy had begun to straighten out his curves and move towards the square and the rectangle, as Mackintosh and the Vienna Secessionists were also doing. But before his death in 1910, there is no doubt that his influence on his own countrymen, as an importer of the English style, was enormous. Van de Velde himself wrote as early as 1910: 'Serrurier-Bovy was unquestionably the first artist on the Continent who realised the importance of the English Arts and Crafts style, and had the courage to introduce it to us and to defend it.'

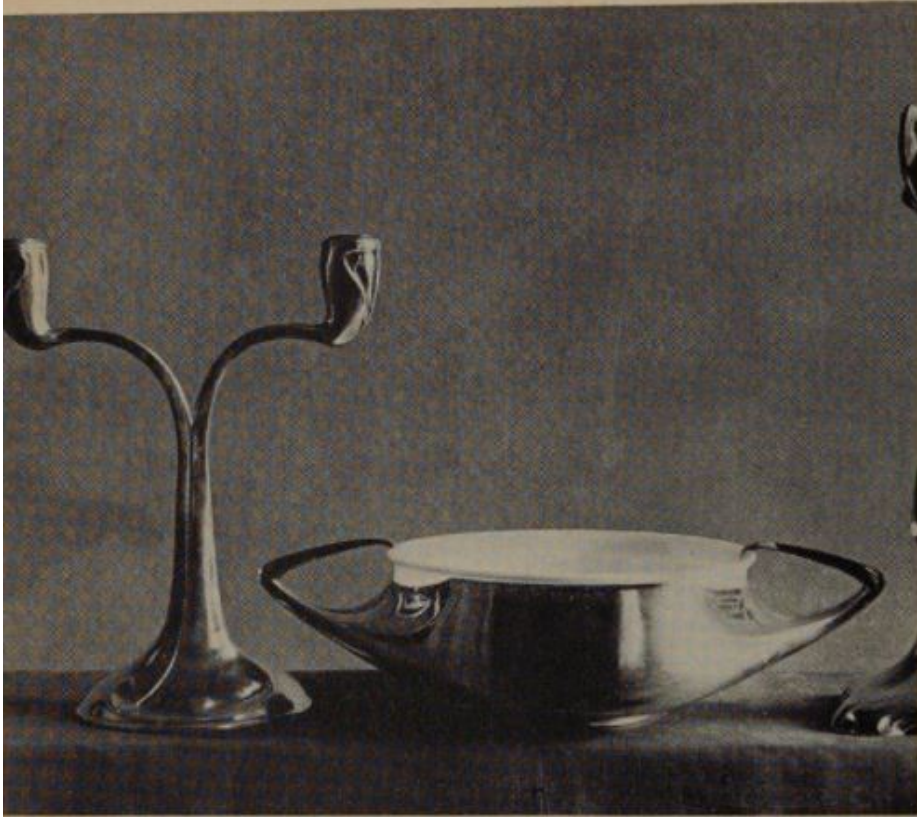
If Serrurier-Bovy was the first, then Van de Velde was the loudest and strongest: 'Ruskin and Morris chase ugliness out of a man's heart,' he wrote rather melodramatically in his *Formules* of 1917, which were of such influence on the Bauhaus; 'I, out of his intellect.' Thus he saw himself as a direct link, despite the differences in style, with the Arts and Crafts movement. What is more, he may be credited with giving the style its most accepted and widely used name, since it was he who in 1894 was the first to write of the formulation of *un art nouveau*, a term no doubt picked up from him by S. Bing, who used it as a name for his shop a year later. Van de Velde's championing of a new style in his *Formules*, along with his revolutionary furniture, fabrics and metalwork, not only provided a rational theory for the movement, but indicated how it could best be expressed.

It is significant that Van de Velde began as a painter, under the influence of Seurat's *pointillisme*; he promised to be one of the most talented painters in Belgium after Van Rysselberghe, who himself had the distinction of painting the largest *pointilliste* picture in the world for Horta's Hotel Solvay. It is this instinct for flat plane decoration which Van de Velde first translated into



Belgian Henri Van de Velde 1897 (?)
Smoking-room (*Herrenzimmer*)

three-dimensional objects, and from which his strong linear tendencies came. His first applied art work was for menus, book illustrations and silk tapestries sewn together, which looked like Nabi pictures in fabric. But by 1896 he began to apply his theories of functional aesthetics, first in his own house at Uccle, Belgium.

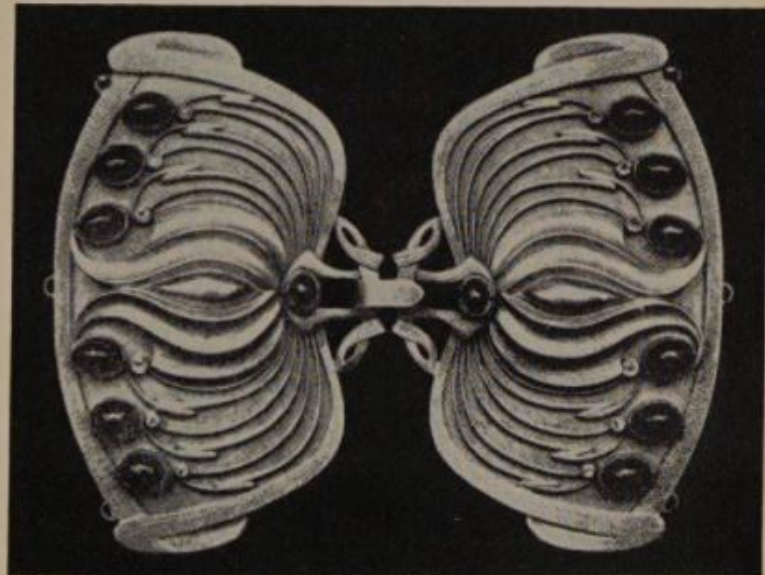


Belgian Henri van de Velde c. 1900
Candlesticks and dish
Folkwang Museum, Essen

Its interior appears to be a direct copy of an English house by Voysey, Mackmurdo and Ashbee combined: space flows freely through the light-coloured rooms, and windows and door frames are of naturally finished wood. This house, although understated, seems an excellent illustration of what Van de Velde meant when he wrote: 'Form and construction can be justified only in the light of their own absolute logic . . . the nature of the material employed must determine form and construction . . . the refinement of all form and construction must be limited by their own essential characteristics.'

The year before, both S. Bing and J. Meier-Graefe visited Van de Velde, and Bing commissioned him to design four rooms for his shop in Paris, soon to be opened, which must have given the public a clear idea of how the new style had changed faces in crossing the Channel. In 1899 Meier-Graefe, who opened the

Belgian Henri Van de Velde c. 1900
Jewellery in gold and silver, made by Theodor Fahrner
(bottom Trondheim Museum, Norway)





Belgian **Henri Van de Velde** 1902-3
Samovar, silver
Kunstgewerbemuseum, Zurich

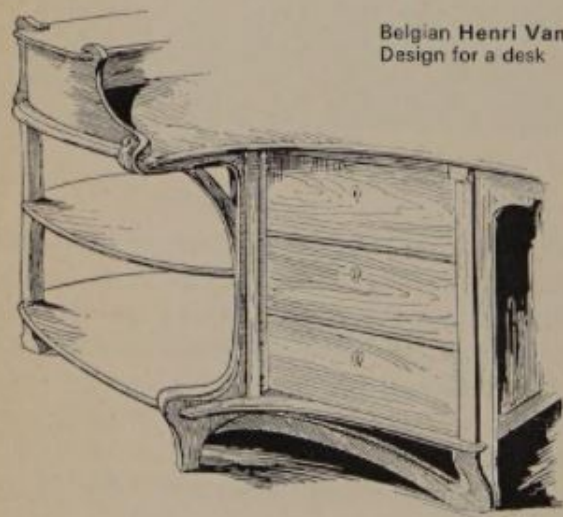
Maison Moderne, perhaps emulating Bing, also commissioned interiors from Van de Velde. The German art-historian was responsible for introducing him to patrons in Germany, which resulted in important commissions after the turn of the century and which helped to spread the style there; while living in Germany, Van de Velde lectured from 1900-1, published his theories in German and designed the Folkwang Museum, Essen in 1902, as well as a great many German houses up to the outbreak of war.



Belgian **Henri Van de Velde** c. 1900
Candelabrum, silver
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Van de Velde's greatest qualities as a designer are displayed in his smaller objects: the tea sets for Meissen Dresden, the coffee and tea pots in silver, and his jewellery, which shows a remarkable range of linear invention, within the terms of the function and structure of the object decorated. It is not surprising that after he designed the new School of Applied Arts in Weimar in 1905 (the forerunner of the Bauhaus), his work became more streamlined, and he later designed interiors of railway carriages and steamships for the Belgian government.

Van de Velde's theorising was too rational and functional to allow him the linear wildness that Victor Horta carried out in three dimensions. Perhaps the most adventurous manipulator of the whiplash line throughout the entire period, his house for Professor Tassel of 1892-93 is generally considered the first example of High Art Nouveau, marking a break in the style, which made everything and anything possible from then on. Using linear motifs that might easily have been borrowed from English book illustrations, the Tassel house cleverly combined cast-iron structural supports disguised as plant forms, and wildly curvilinear wall decorations which reflected both the curves of the wrought-iron balustrades and the mosaic curvilinear designs on the floor. All were woven into an intricate three-dimensional unity of restless, moving, searching lines, which had no beginning, middle or end, but continued on their own eely way without starting or stopping. Such hysterical linearism achieved its distinctive quality from its whole-hearted devotion to its own peculiarities; if Horta had restrained himself for a moment, or paused to reflect, the entire effect of such an interior would be lost. Horta's best work was done in cast iron, where he was restricted to some degree by the material itself in the play of line. The *Maison du Peuple* (1896-99), tragically demolished by the Belgians in 1965, was a masterpiece of both sense and sensibility, possessing curved, undulating façades,



Belgian Henri Van de Velde 1897 (?)
Design for a desk

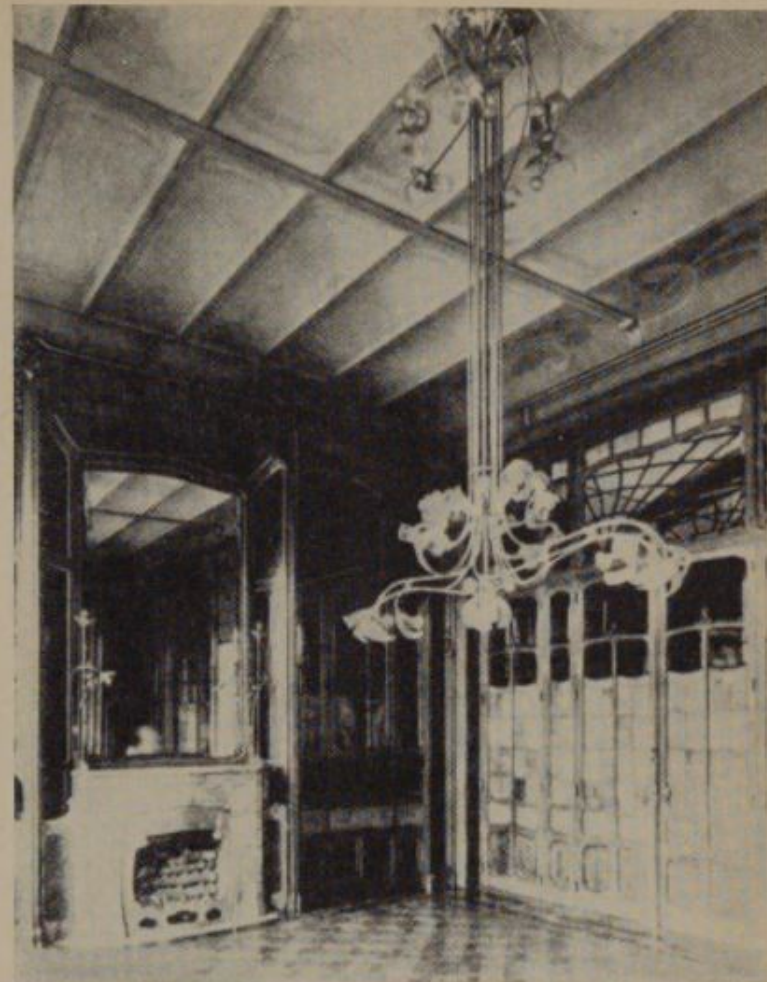
Belgian Henri Van de Velde 1900
Havana Company Cigar Store, Berlin



and curved doors and balconies, within a tense rectilinear framework of iron and glass. It was one of the most advanced buildings in Europe for its time and brought to an aesthetic conclusion the theories inherent in Viollet-le-Duc's iron-work and Eiffel's tower. Horta's linearism reached a more sober sense of refinement in the Hotel Solvay (1895-1900), in which every detail was carefully designed by the architect: door handles, built-in vitrines, even the parquet on the floor and panellings and mouldings. Everything had the same elegant, twisting, counterchange movement which wormed its way over rich wood and metal surfaces. By this time the curved line had begun to transform itself into a more restrained Louis Quinze Rococo, saved from historicism by its new simplicity and directness and its large areas of plain, undecorated surface.

Taken as a whole, the spread of Art Nouveau in Belgium was wider than in almost any other country. Not only were shops and public buildings designed in the new style, but a variety of middle- and lower-middle-class dwellings as well, so that today the suburban streets of Antwerp and Brussels are lined with houses which give one a perfect idea of the style at its height, as well as what its total effect might have been during its widest popularity. They have jutting balconies, square or rounded, overhanging windows, a profusion of leaded glass, protruding decorations in carved wood, mosaic-covered fronts which mysteriously announce in gold lettering, *Nuit* and *Jour*, or *Printemps* and *Hiver*, free-form neo-gothic pinnacles with pygmy windows, doors ten feet tall and two feet wide, and sensitive spiralling motifs carved in stone to enliven what would otherwise be very ordinary façades.

One of the most active designers of the modest town dwelling was Paul Hankar, who between 1889 and his death in 1901 built at least fourteen private houses. He was copied shamelessly by little known architects of the period who were obviously providing the latest fashion at a cut-rate price, for eager clients. Using the English Arts and Crafts as a starting point, Hankar moved towards an Oriental style of Art Nouveau that remained faithful to the model. He transplanted pure Japanese idioms (such as the oriel window, rectangular wood panelling, rectilinear strips geometrically placed and sunburst patterns) into solid brick buildings. His interiors were filled with real Japanese furniture or furniture he designed in a Japanese style; and the large horse-shoe arch, which became such a feature of continental Art Nouveau, was used by him to open up interior space so that one room could flow easily



Belgian Victor Horta 1895-1900
Dining-room, Hotel Solvay, Brussels

into another. It seems fitting that he designed a house for the jeweller Philippe Wolfers, who also showed such an affection for oriental design. But with the death of Hankar, with Van de Velde working in Germany, and Horta's return to tradition, Art Nouveau had to look elsewhere for its geniuses.

Holland

In Holland the style never really caught on, and the sober, almost bleak face of Hendrik Berlage's Stock Exchange building (1898–1903), which still dominates Amsterdam, seems to be that country's only monument to the new international style.

Berlage's details were more felicitous, but always in a refined, restrained manner; extremes were never employed, and the national character of Dutch architecture was respected throughout. In book design there were some adventurous excursions by illustrators such as de Bazel and Nieuwenhuis, and in decorative china by designers such as J. Jurriaan Kok for Rozenberg. But Dutch Art Nouveau in interior decoration seemed to remain safely within a *petit-bourgeois* framework that had no place for exotic experiment. Only the painters Jan Toorop and Johan Thorn Prikker overcame the restrictions of a solid middle-class environment to make fanciful sorties into the world of mystical symbolism, expressed in pure Art Nouveau terms. Toorop closely followed the Celtic inter-twining line in his graphics, which depicted bone-rigid maidens whose floating hair took over all available space in the picture and had a formal abstract quality. In some cases the hair was twisted into sharp-angled curves, in others it moved freely over the page, but always bound together the long narrow forms. The surface patterning itself became the point of the exercise, an objective made more understandable by Charles Ricketts, who described Toorop's method as beginning with an almost abstract ornament or 'vessel' which was then filled with



Dutch J. Jurriaan Kok c. 1900
Produced by the Royal Rozenburg Manufacturers of Porcelain and Pottery. The He
Courtesy of Lillian Nat



Dutch Jan Toorop 1895
Poster for Delftsche Slaolie (Salad Dressing) lithograph on paper
Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum



Dutch Jan Eisenloffel c. 1900
Copper teapot and silver tea service
right, Landesmuseum, Darmstadt

figurative elements. Toorop's motifs came to some degree from the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly the hair fetish which was such a mark of Art Nouveau design, but it was the poet Maeterlinck who inspired Toorop to turn towards Symbolism. Toorop's rigid, schematised figures bear some relationship to those by Mackintosh and his wife Margaret Macdonald in Glasgow a few years later, and it is significant that Toorop's *Three Brides* was reproduced in the first issue of *The Studio* in 1893 as a 'strange, fantastic, sibylline work'. He was probably an influence on the Glasgow school, who simplified and stylised such formalised figures even further, and applied them to murals, jewellery, furniture, fabrics and metalwork.

It is curious that the French, who gave the most widely used catch-word for the new style, were themselves trapped in its most ephemeral aspects. Plant motifs became for them not a means of searching out a structural synthesis in the applied arts, but a delightful excuse for plastic decoration, always a French trait. From about 1895 onwards Paris went wild with Art Nouveau, covering every spare surface with a confusion of whiplash lines and floral motifs, undulating hair and trailing peacocks, twisted lily leaves and twining stalks, culminating in an all-out frenzy of curvilinear decoration for the occasion of the 1900 Exhibition. This so debased and popularised the new style that its easily recognisable and most superficial traits became the fashionable clichés of the moment, until they turned themselves into pure *kitsch* for fair-grounds.

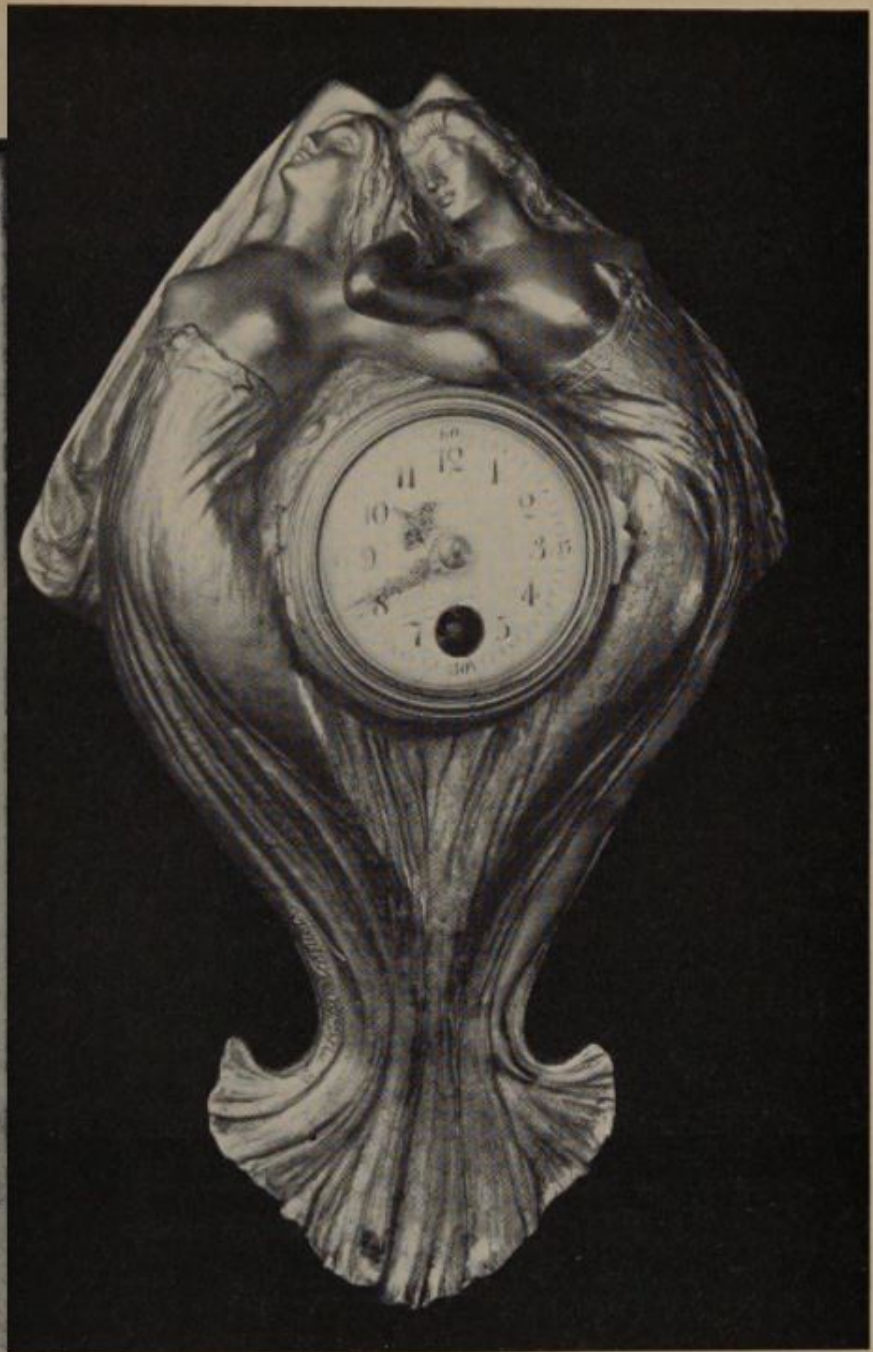
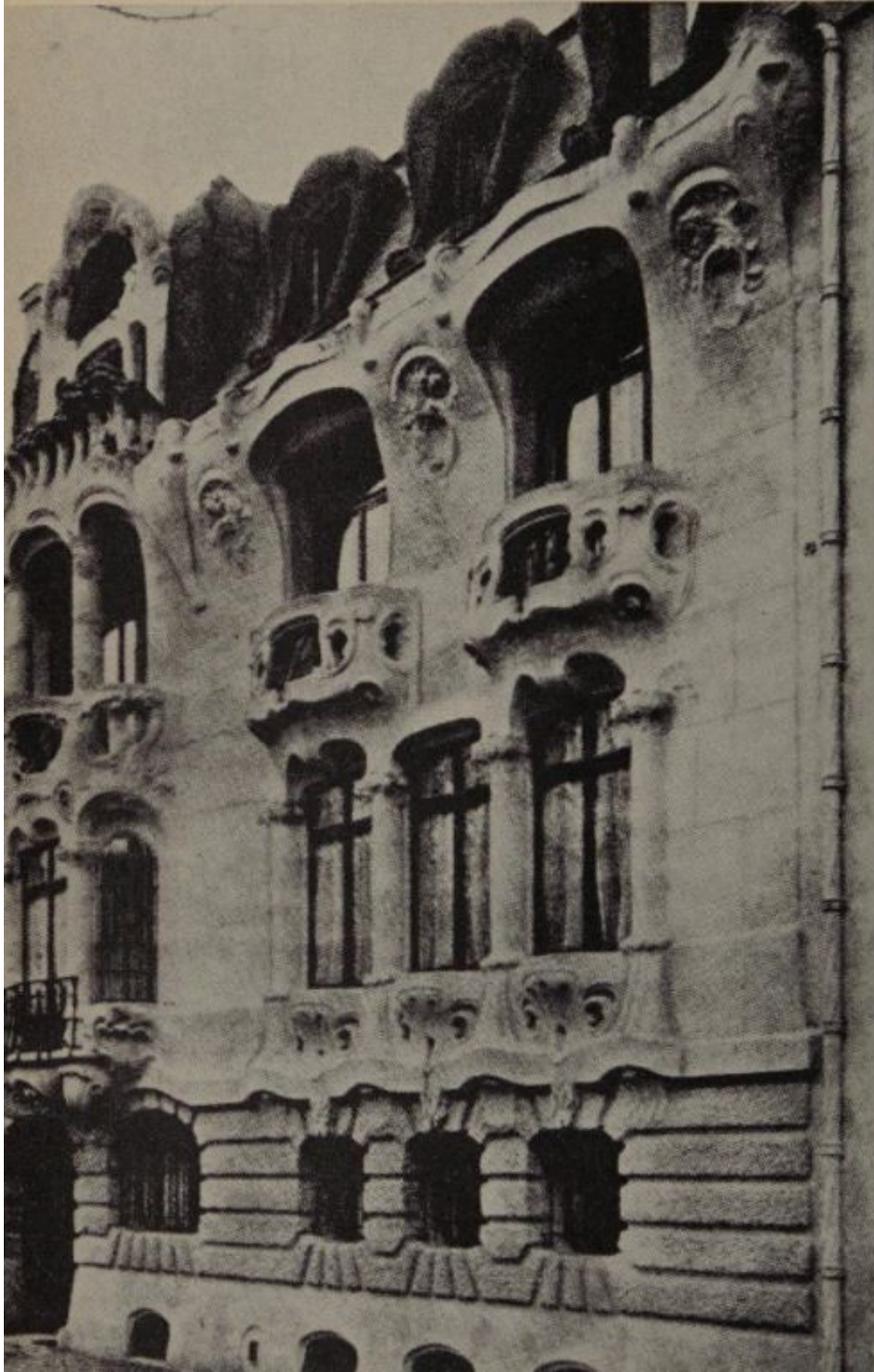
Moreover, the botanical aspect of French Art Nouveau was increasingly seen in terms of the fluid curves of neo-Rococo and Louis Quinze, which were in the end more acceptable; by 1914 this aspect of the style had resolved itself into the fashion for *dix-huitième*. Proust, who saw his own age so shrewdly, seemed to heave a sigh of relief at the coming end of French Art Nouveau in *Le Temps Retrouvé*, when he wrote: 'Moreover, the Verdurins, by the inevitable progression of aestheticism which eventually ends in devouring its own tail, said they could not endure *Le Style Moderne* (besides it came from Munich), nor apartments done in white, and now they liked only old French furniture in a sombre setting.'

In 1919, when France tried to gather together its cultural heritage after a crippling war, M. Emile-Bayard, the Inspector at the Ministry of Beaux-Arts, produced a book called *Le Style Moderne* which attempted to pull out of the Art Nouveau cake the most rational and functional plums: architecture by Bonnier, Plumet and Guimard; interiors by Lambert; the more restrained furniture of Majorelle and Guimard; sculpture by Rodin, Bourdelle and Despiau; posters by Alphonse Mucha; fabrics by de Feure and Gaillard and pottery by Delaherche.

French Jules Lavirotte
Ceramic hotel with façade constructed in Grès tiles. Sculptor: Laph
Photo Christian Taill



French Xavier Schollkopf 1900
House for Yvette Guilbert, Paris
(now destroyed)



French P. Moreau-Vauthier c. 1900
Ormolu wall clock, with draped figures of 'Day' and 'Night' surrounding the face
Collection Martin Battersby

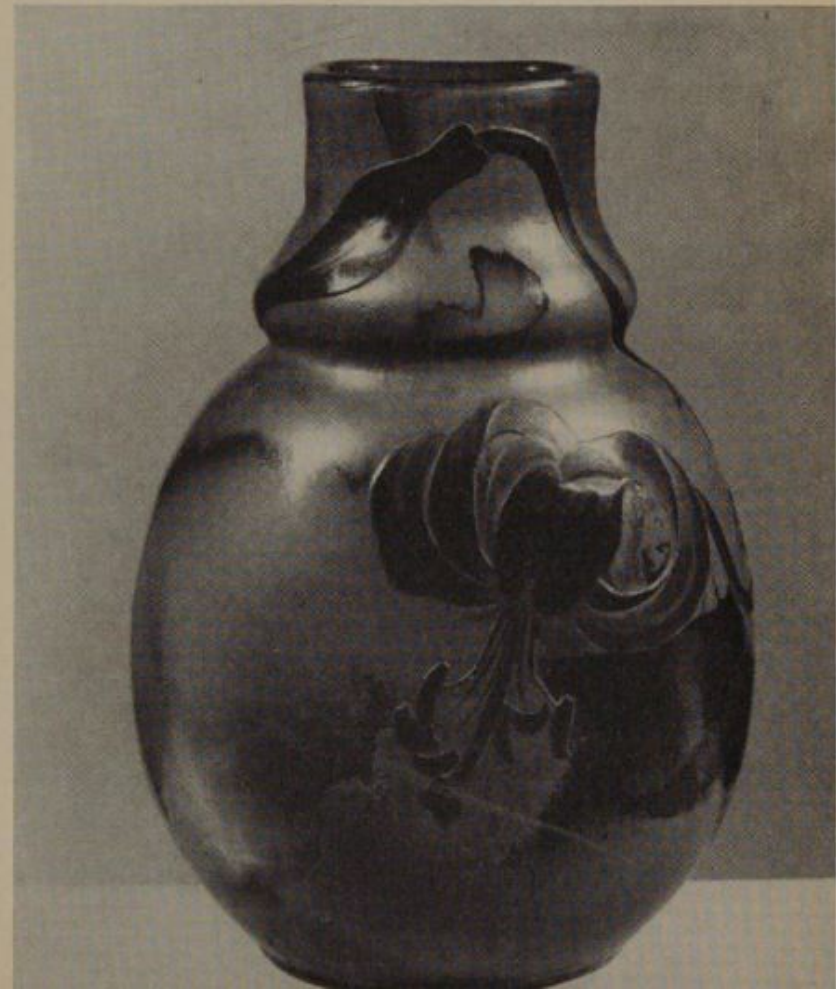


French **Emile Gallé** 1900
 Fire-screen in carved ash, with applied oak, zebrawood and sabicue, with
 marquetry of amboyna and walnut
 Victoria and Albert Museum, Donaldson Gift, Crown Copyright

The first great exponent of Art Nouveau in France was Emile Gallé of Nancy. After studying botany, he went to England in 1872 where he examined the techniques of oriental glass and china at the Victoria and Albert Museum, at the same time becoming interested in Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. His father owned a pottery and *faïence* workshop, and from the

early 'seventies he started to perfect a technique of glassmaking for the family business which was to do more to advance the botanical aspect of Art Nouveau than any other single factor. By the 'eighties he had begun experimenting with forms of oriental glass-patterning in which the decoration stands out in relief. This technique, based on Chinese cameo glass, was done with emery wheels which ground the glass down, leaving the decoration in sharp relief. His other, later method was acid-etching, whereby the design on the glass was covered with wax and the remaining areas were eaten with acid, thus creating a double surface of matt against shiny high-relief. He used *verre doublé*, or

French **Emile Gallé** c. 1889
 Vase in cut glass, multi-coloured. Inscribed on base: 'Cristallerie de Gallé,
 Modèle et décor déposés' Collection Charles Jerdein





French Emile Gallé
Group of vases: left to right
Mauve figuration on white ground, c. 1895. Orange on white ground, c. 1900
Sapphire blue on white ground, c. 1890

glass in layers, so that when he cut into the material, various shadings of colour resulted. Although he began with traditional oriental forms, by the early 'nineties he had freed himself entirely from tradition; and although his shapes never became as fantastic and free-flowing as Tiffany's, they were often exaggerated into strange, elongated proportions which complemented the growing plant forms on them. Gallé was too much of a botanist to go as far in abstraction as Tiffany; rather, he gave Impressionistic versions in what he called *marqueterie de verre* of various species of flowers, delineated faithfully. One feels Ruskin himself would have approved of such a pure naturalist. The colours are in the contemporary Impressionist palette of apple green, light yellow, rose, violet and delicate orange, often set against smoky white.

Gallé also made a name for himself as a furniture designer, but his tables and chairs rarely show the freedom and daring of his glass production. They depend more on Louis Quinze prototypes, only showing dramatic Art Nouveau tendencies in their beautiful marquetry floral designs, in a variety of mixed woods, or in a fretwork decoration. Gallé's workshop, like Tiffany's, employed hundreds of workers, but whatever his methods of mass-production (and the thousands of surviving Gallé vases prove that they

French Emile Gallé 1900
Commode in carved oak, with marquetry of oak, walnut, maple, sycamore, hawthorn, etc., with mother of pearl
Victoria and Albert Museum, Donaldson Gift, Crown Copyright





French **Louis Majorelle** 1900
Boudoir for Paris Exhibition

were truly mass-produced), his furniture and glass always had the look of something hand-made. All pieces were signed with his name, which was worked into the pattern in a decorative manner; the more freely shaped signatures are usually earlier than the tight, compressed ones. After his death in 1904 the workshop continued until 1913, but the glass had a manufactured look, the decoration became mechanical in appearance, and the furniture grew conservative.

Although Gallé often used plant stalks as structural supports for his earlier furniture, he never achieved the daring of his contemporary Louis Majorelle, who took over his father's business in Nancy in 1879. Working at first in the neo-Rococo tradition, which was so perfectly inspired by the Louis Quinze architecture and metalwork of Nancy itself, he did not turn to full Art Nouveau furniture design until around 1897, probably under the guidance and influence of Gallé. But what he lacked in initiative, he made up for in invention; he took the twisted stalks and floral motifs to such plastic lengths that the function of the objects often seemed

French **Emile Gallé** 1900
Work table of carved ash and walnut, with marquetry of walnut, amboyna, hawthorn, sycamore and other woods.
Inscribed: *'Travail est joie'* and *'Chez Gallé'*
Victoria and Albert Museum, Donaldson Gift, Crown Copyright





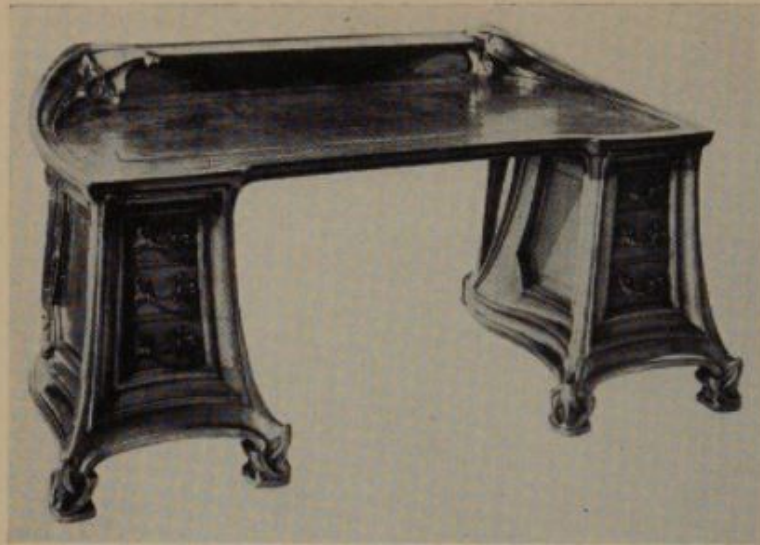
French **Louis Majorelle** 1900
Table inlaid with various woods, ormolu mounts (signed)
Courtesy of Lillian Nassau

to bend to the will of the form. The cartouche, the cabriole leg, the serpentine front, and floreated ormolu mounts were used by him in a totally new way, yet still belonged to the family of traditional French design. His forged iron and cast bronze has a sweep of movement that denies the properties of the material, and often looks like cascading hair or water rather than durable metal. Working in clay, like a sculptor, Majorelle literally moulded these forms to suit his fancy, and then translated the model into carved

wood or cast metal. His sense of design was so exquisite and refined that, as in Beardsley's work, the line always seems under control and never irrational, no matter how unexpected or unpredictable. He was the great master of the non-functional aspect of Art Nouveau, and he never allowed himself to be vulgarised.

French **Louis Majorelle** 1900
Armchair in carved walnut, stained green; back and seat covered with embroidered and painted mauve satin
Victoria and Albert Museum, Donaldson Gift, Crown Copyright



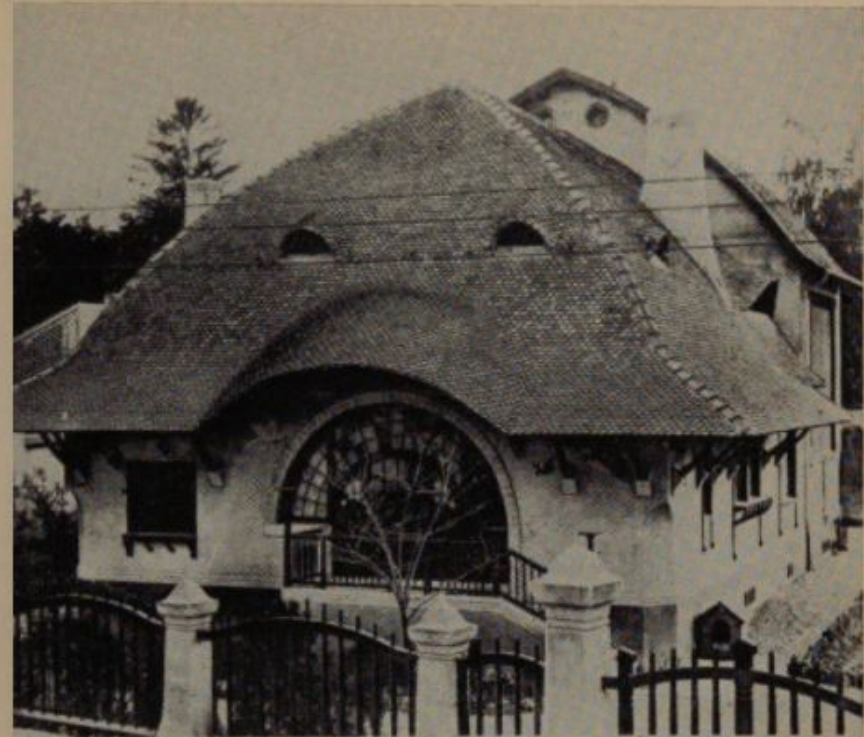


French Eugène Vallin 1899
Musée Corbin, Nancy

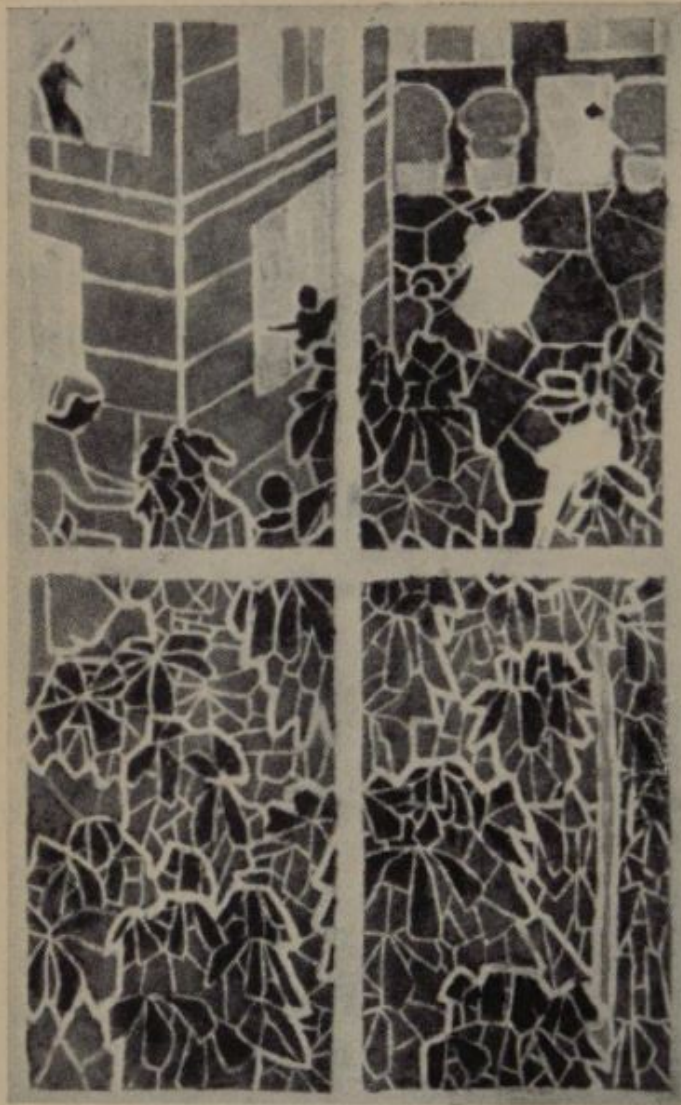
Other designers at Nancy who became famous throughout Europe were Emile André and Jacques Gruber, and Eugène Vallin. Vallin produced heavy, solid forms that seem to defeat the point of the easy, flowing line that Nancy had made its own.

The showcase for these innovations in Paris was S. Bing's new shop, opened in December 1895 in the rue de Provence. As the shop's artistic director and owner, Bing provided a clearing house

French Eugène Vallin 1900
Dining-room, now installed in the Musée Corbin, Nancy



French ; Architect unknown 1901
Heymann House, Nancy
Photo courtesy Mr and Mrs Heymann



French Edouard Vuillard c. 1895–96
Stained glass window for S. Bing's *Maison de l'art nouveau*; made by Louis Comfort Tiffany

for the latest revolutions in painting, furniture, interiors, sculpture, ceramics, fabrics, metalwork and anything else he considered totally *moderne*—that is, divorced from historicism. Whereas Art Nouveau design in England had depended on new simplified forms dictating suitable decoration, in Paris, under the championship of Bing, a new sense of decoration dictated form. His opening

exhibition showed an exterior by Brangwyn, metalwork by Benson, rooms by Van de Velde, paintings by Vuillard, Besnard and Denis, glass by Tiffany and stained-glass windows by Bonnard, Ibels, Ranson and Vuillard. It was received with disdain by the critic of *Le Figaro*, who thought the new style sick: 'All this seems to have the air of a vicious Englishman, the Jewess addicted to morphine, or the Belgian spiv, or an agreeable salad of these three poisons.'

French Eugène Gaillard 1900
Book-case; mural decorations by José Maria Sert
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner





French Lucien Gaillard c. 1900
Vases in silver, possibly for S. Bing's shop. Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner

Undaunted, Bing continued to commission jewellery, furniture, wallpapers, fabrics, silver, in fact everything that could be considered *l'art décoratif*. He was responsible for promoting Georges de Feure, Eugène Gaillard and Eugène Colonna, as well as the potter, Auguste Delaherche. Against this formidable group at *La Maison de l'art nouveau* stood another called *Le Cinq*, which had its first exhibition the year Bing's shop opened. It included Alexandre Charpentier, Jean Dampy, Felix Aubert and the architect Tony Selmersheim; and later the architect Charles Plumet joined them. To add to the swelling flood of Art Nouveau production, the art critic Julius Meier-Graefe opened his shop, *Maison Moderne*, in the rue de la Paix in 1899.

The most apt application of the French floral fixation was in jewellery, and Paris excelled in producing some of the best pieces of the period. Jewellers such as Vever, Fouquet and Lalique outdid themselves in extravagant mixtures of enamelling, *cloisonné*, diamonds, rubies, the baroque pearl (itself Art Nouveau in appearance) and the daring combination of sapphires and emeralds.

French jewellery

top Joe-Descomps, c. 1900

Gold pendant with translucent coloured enamel, enriched and embossed, diamonds and precious stones

left Maker unidentified, early twentieth century

Gold pendant, enriched with modelled enamel in the form of a Medusa head

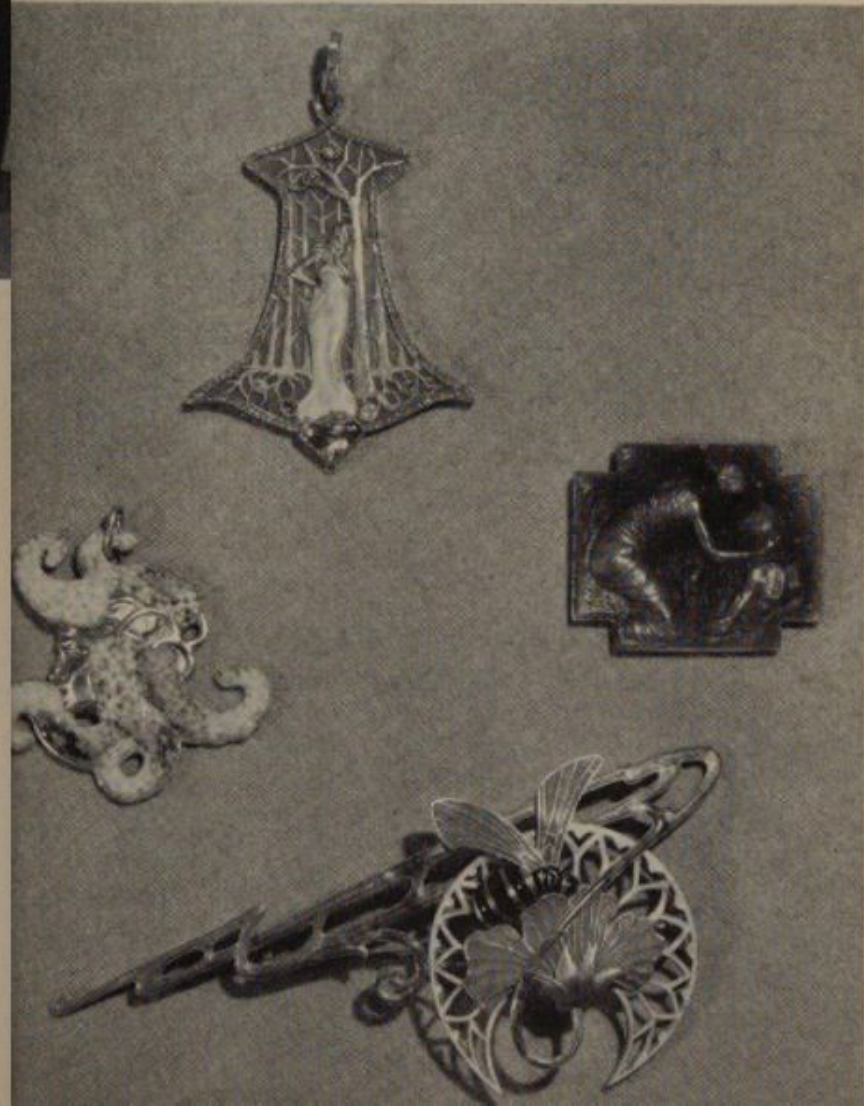
right René Lalique c. 1900

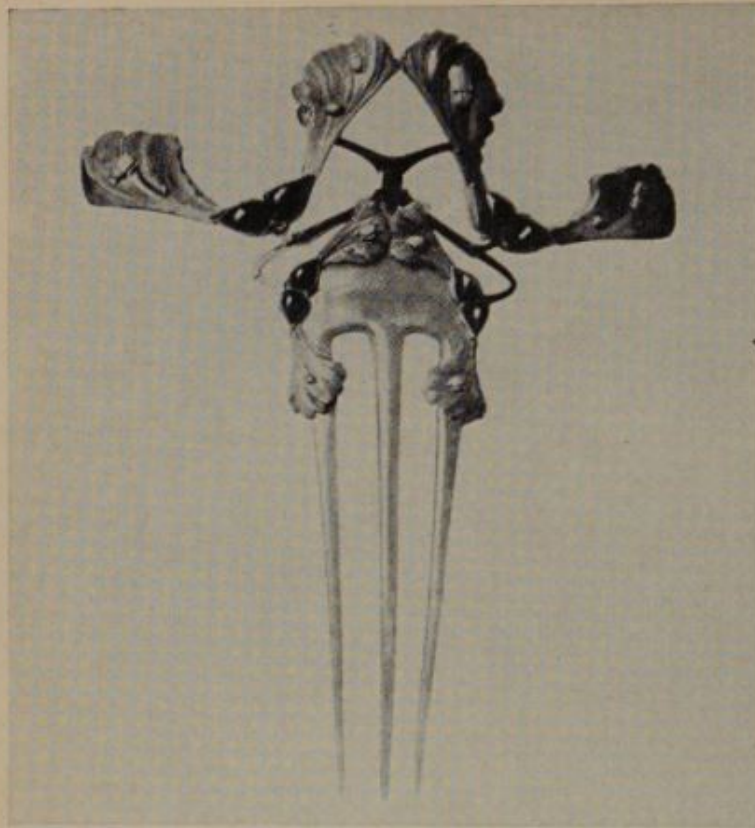
Plaque in translucent enamel on embossed gold

bottom C. Desrosiers for Fouquet

Gold *plique à jour* and translucent enamel

Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright





French **René Lalique** 1901–2
Comb in horn, silex, black enamel and obsidian; insects in gold

While England and Belgium were content to work with the metal itself, formed into almost purely abstract curvilinear shapes, Paris achieved a luxurious effect with an over-abundance of rich jewels, set in carved jade or mounted on precious metal whose surface had been treated to disguise its identity. Fouquet produced some of the most fantastic pieces, designed by the poster artist Alphonse Mucha, who exploited the Sarah Bernhardt cult in his designs by inseting stylised enamel portraits of the 'divine' actress among a fantastic tangle of hair and bats' wings or snakes and insects. Lalique's designs were the most botanical, with their drooping branches of lily of the valley or tropical blossoms in gold, enamel



French **René Lalique** 1900
Silver dish set with opals
Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna
Photo Anton Feisel

and precious stones in free-form shapes, often uncut. If Lalique's pressed glass objects became common currency in Art Nouveau, his jewellery always remained rare and expensive. Maison Veveur had a more conservative line of floral transcriptions in gold and precious stones, and were fond of incorporating willowy figures of ladies into their designs; but they also went into the luxury-item class. French Art Nouveau jewellery remained outstanding for its richness and exotic appearance, while the Germans, under the influence of Van de Velde, tended to stay close to the more simple, direct manipulation of metal into unusual curvilinear or *entrelac* designs—the invention and mainstay of the English.

Of all Bing's artists, Georges de Feure seems the most conservative in retrospect; his safely proportioned, calmly balanced interiors and furniture would never be out of place in a *dix-huitième hôtel*. His jewellery and metalwork lamps, with their delicate, tender manipulation of plant stalks, are more interesting; and his fabrics, which are boldly abstract, have a central place in the most revolutionary work of Art Nouveau.

Gaillard is certainly adventurous, making lyrical overstatements in carved detailing. He could be ponderous on occasion, but the best of his works have a plastic, linear freedom employed gracefully and intelligently; and his whiplash motifs are almost totally abstract in conception. Colonna falls between the two; he is elegant and feminine, yet capable of strength and vigour when necessary.

French Eugène Colonna 1901
Oak and ash table, veneered with pearwood, legs of carved pearwood. Made by S. Bing
Victoria and Albert Museum, Donaldson Gift, Crown Copyright



French Georges de Feure c. 1900
Bronze clock, signed
Courtesy of Lillian Nassau





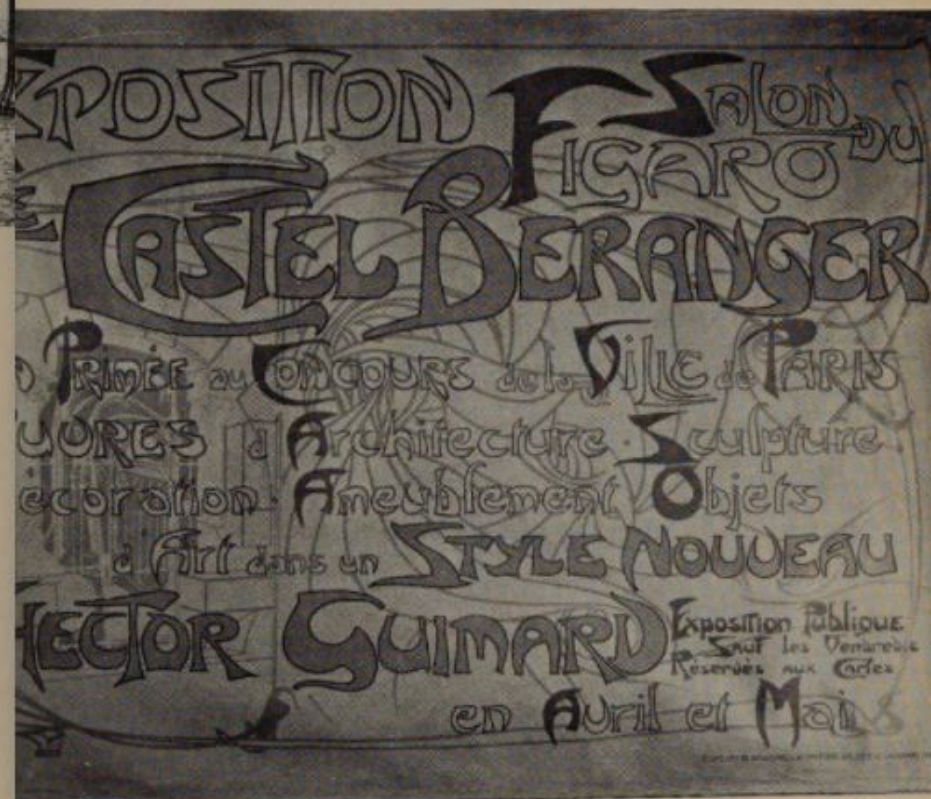
French Hector Guimard 1900
 Metro entrance, Place de l'Etoile, for the Paris Exhibition of 1900
 (now destroyed)
 Cast iron, painted green to look like bronze

At the 1900 Exhibition, Bing's exhibition house, decorated outside by de Feure and inside by Colonna, de Feure and Gaillard, was a major attraction, and it is from this time on that the term Art Nouveau began to be applied to the new style in English and American journalism.

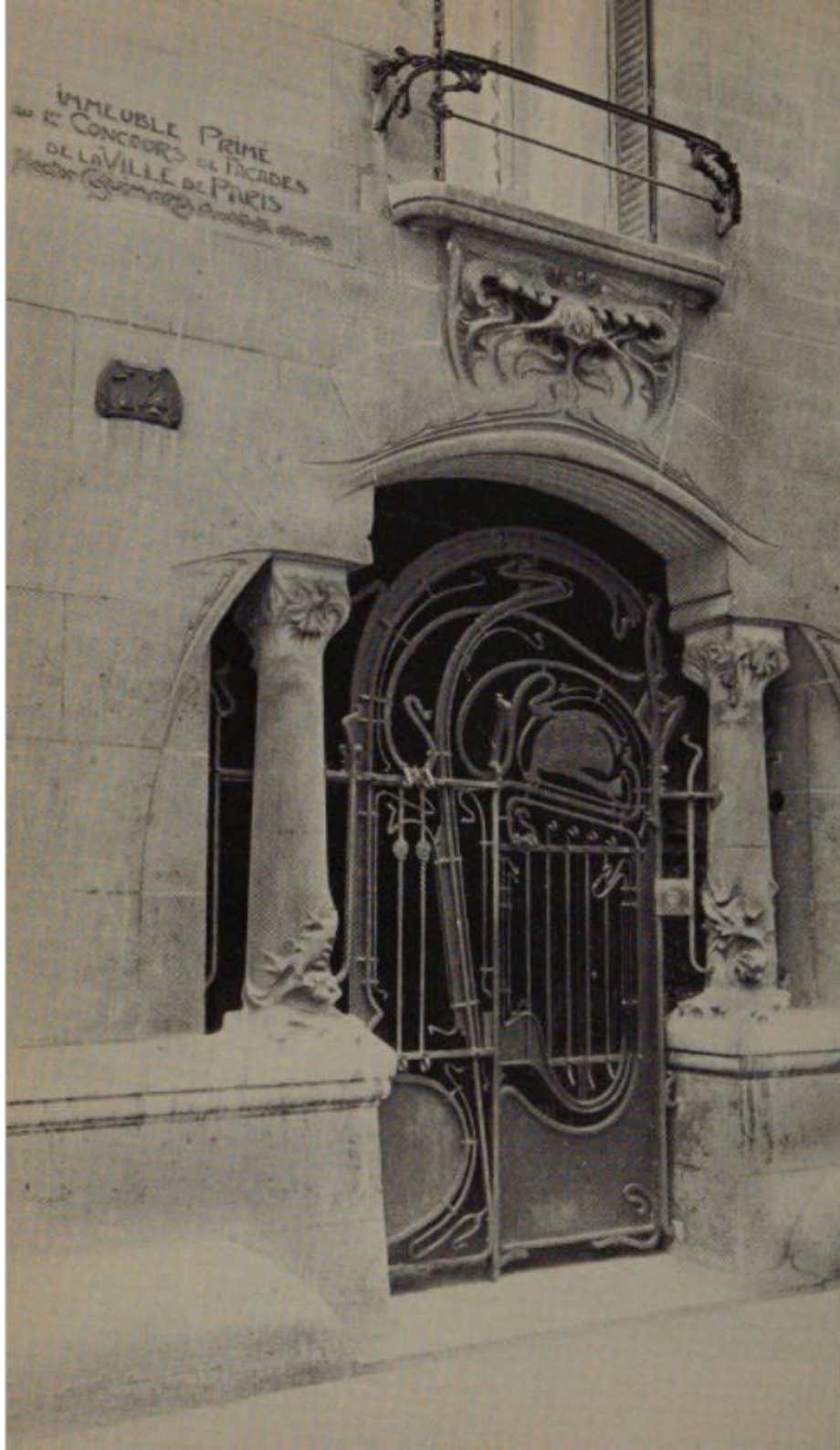
For the occasion of this Exhibition, which was to be the high water mark of acceptance of floreated Art Nouveau throughout Europe and America, a series of new Metro entrances were de-

signed by Hector Guimard. Of all the Parisians working in *Le Style Moderne*, Guimard was at once the most imaginative and the most rational. Like Gaudi, he saw a solution in an organic whole, moving from base to top like the upward growing surge of a plant. His three principles were logic (construction which took into account all the conditions involved), harmony and sentiment. His Metro stations, with their linear rhythms derived in part from Celtic ornament and in part from abstracted nature, are imaginative

French Hector Guimard
 Poster for exhibition of Guimard's work
 Museum of Modern Art, New York
 Courtesy of Lillian Nassau



IMMEUBLE PRIME
DU CONCOURS DE FACADES
DE LA VILLE DE PARIS
Hector Guimard



essays in cast iron. Here the growth of the plant is used symbolically, with the strong stem-like struts supporting branches and foliage made of iron and glass. Guimard's furniture also has a wonderful asymmetrical flow, lashing back and forth around space—as purely sculptural as its function will allow. His Castel Béranger (1894–98), a block of flats in Paris, is his masterpiece. No detail is overlooked, and even the water-pump in the back yard and the letter boxes echo the same motifs, which are repeated incessantly in doorways, windows, mosaics and metalwork ornamentation.

French Hector Guimard 1894–98 (signed 1897–98)
Entrance to Castel Béranger, Paris
Photo Christian Taillander

French Hector Guimard 1894–98
Entrance hall of Castel Béranger
Photo Christian Taillander



French Pérol Frères 1900

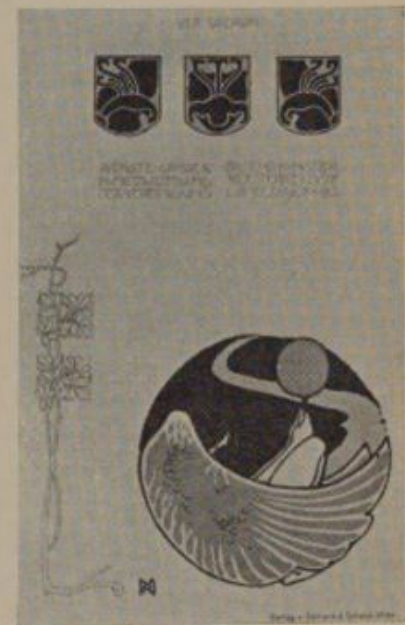
Bedstead in oak and mahogany, with marquetry of Hungarian ash satinwood, sycamore and holly, with applied carvings in sabicue Victoria and Albert Museum, Donaldson Gift, Crown Copyright



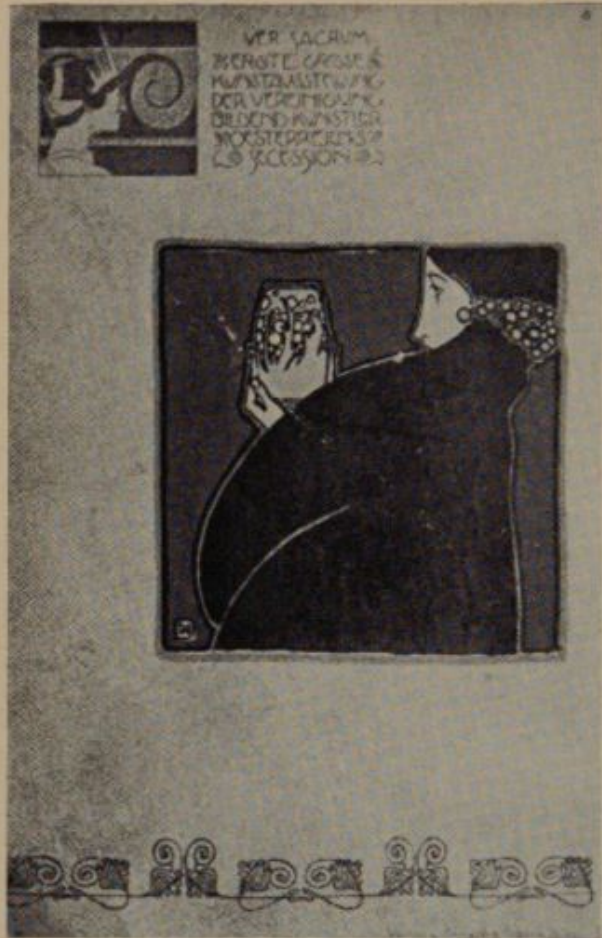
Germany and Austria

The streak of linear hysteria continued in France with popular architects such as Jules Lavirotte and furniture makers such as Pérol Frères. But Paris was up against formidable competition at the Turin exhibition in 1902 from Voysey, Townsend, Crane, Day and Ashbee, all of whom had maintained a level-headed attitude towards the curved line and towards organic form. Moreover, the display that stole the show in Turin was arranged by the 'Glasgow Four'—Herbert McNair, his wife Frances, her sister Margaret Macdonald and Margaret's husband, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Under the influence of Mackintosh, Germany and Austria in particular were to be guided towards a new rational approach to design which would eventually lead to the Bauhaus.

Before the end of the century, the Art Nouveau mainstream had meandered along from the Seine to the Rhine and Danube, making new inroads which would eventually leave behind the eclectic confusion of the age. The Germans, who so efficiently exchanged ideas with the Austrians at Darmstadt in 1900–1, first discovered



Austrian Koloman Moser 1897
Postcard for the Vienna Secession,
advertising the magazine *Ver Sacrum*



Austrian Koloman Mo
1897 Postcard for the Vienna
Secession, advertising the m
azine *Ver Sacrum*

Art Nouveau through two publications, *Die Jugend*, founded in Munich in 1896, which gave the movement the name of *Jugendstil*, and *Pan*, begun in Berlin by the critic Julius Meier-Graefe a year earlier. The Belgian Henri Van de Velde, with all his clearly thought-out theoretical doctrines, was chosen as its leader about 1895, when he was invited to lecture on the new style at Krefeld. He held an exhibition of his work at Dresden in 1897 and his leadership in Germany seemed firmly established when he moved to Berlin in 1899 to live and work. The only threat came a year later in 1900, from Mackintosh's Glasgow Four, who exhibited their interiors at the eighth Secessionist exhibition in Vienna. The Scotsmen gave both Austrians and Germans a wholly different idea of the potentialities of Art Nouveau.

Before that, the much sought-after freedom and youthfulness of design in the applied and fine arts depended to a large extent on the botanical patterns and organic forms allied to fantastic or symbolic content which characterised so much continental Art Nouveau.

Belgian Henri Van de Velde 1900





Austrian **Hermann Obrist** 1895
'Cyclamen' wall hanging

The first and foremost exponent of this school was Hermann Obrist (1863–1927), who used his Munich embroidery workshop to invigorate the hide-bound conservative taste in Germany. Exhibiting for the first time in Munich in 1894, Obrist began to explore new means of two-dimensional design through embroidered pattern—'organic embroideries' as he called them. The son of a Scotswoman, he had studied botany, geology, chemistry and biology; his works carry strong undertones of William Blake. Since he travelled frequently to England, no doubt he knew at first hand the work of Mackmurdo, and his powerful linear rhythms strongly resemble those of the first Art Nouveau designer. Around 1895 he exhibited an embroidery of gold on a pale turquoise ground, which was described in *Pan* as possessing 'frantic movement . . . of the sudden violent curves occasioned by the crack of a whip'. Turning to sculpture from embroidery, Obrist created his most adventurous work, three-dimensional pieces which could truly be considered as pure abstract art. Toughly modelled lumps of stone and roughed out chunks of clay, squeezed, twisted, chiselled into whirling, flowing forms which did not relate either to nature or

geology, but existed on their own terms for themselves. His design for a monument in 1902 best fulfils his wish to create plastic volumes which give 'pleasurable sensations, imparted by touch and the joys of touching'. This dynamic sculpture, spiralling round a central shape which leans at an angle, gives a foretaste of Italian Futurism.

German **J. M. Lauwericks** c. 1900
Silver bookbinding
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner

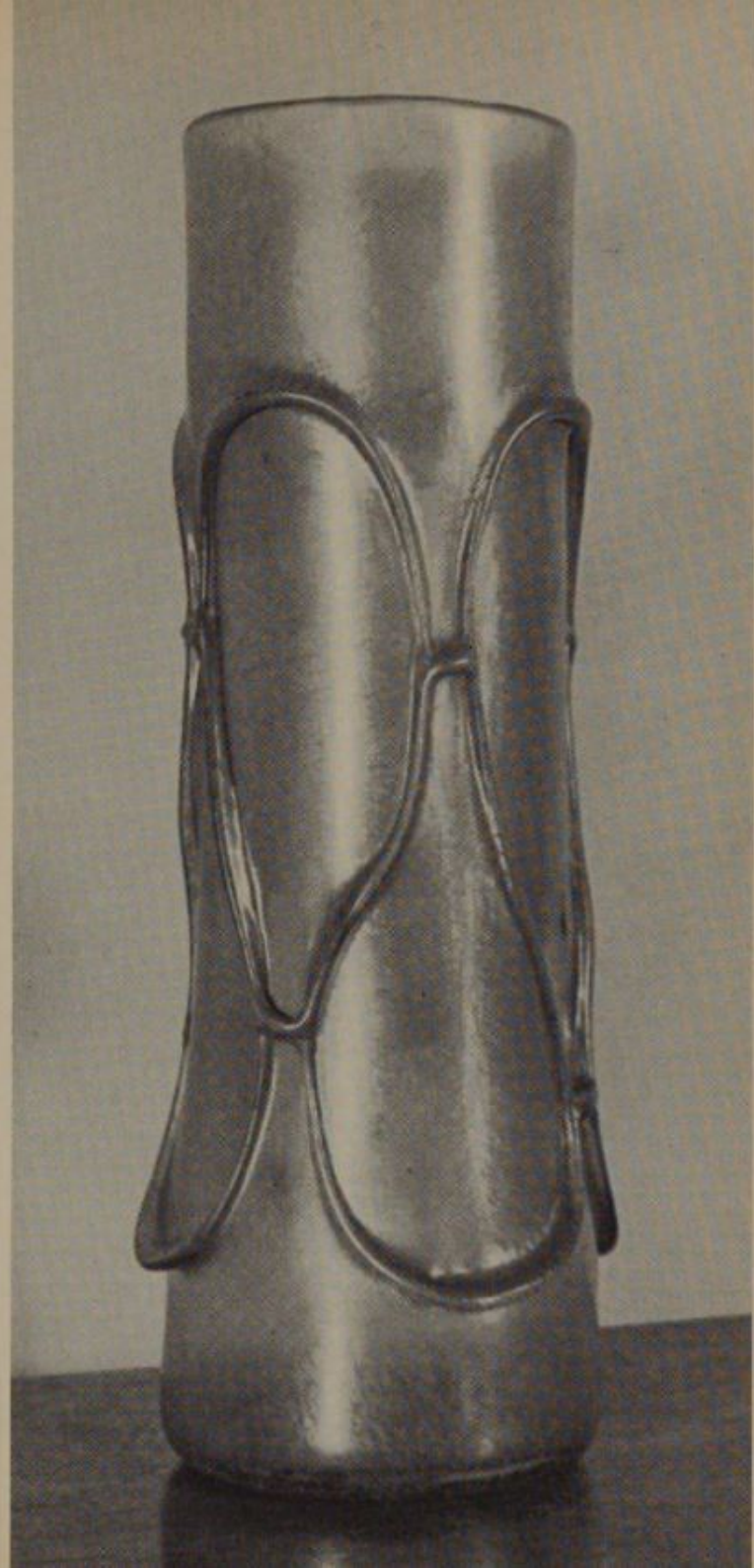


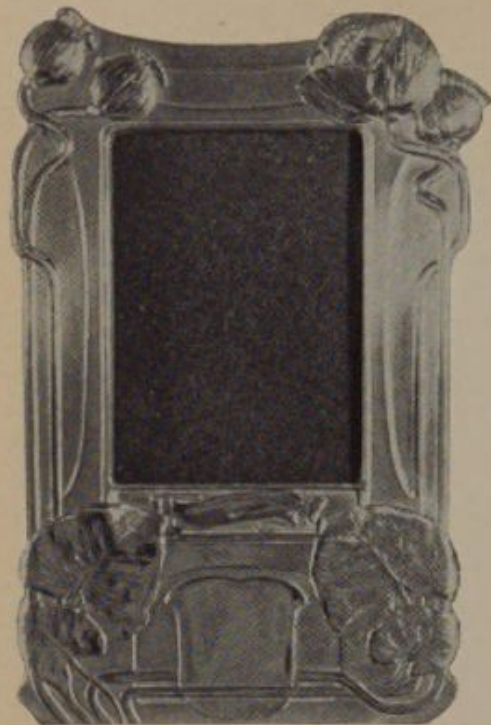


German ; Designer unknown c. 1900
 Made by Theodor Fahrner
 Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner

Austrian **Lötz-Witwe** c. 1
 Flower vase, golden-silver iridescence

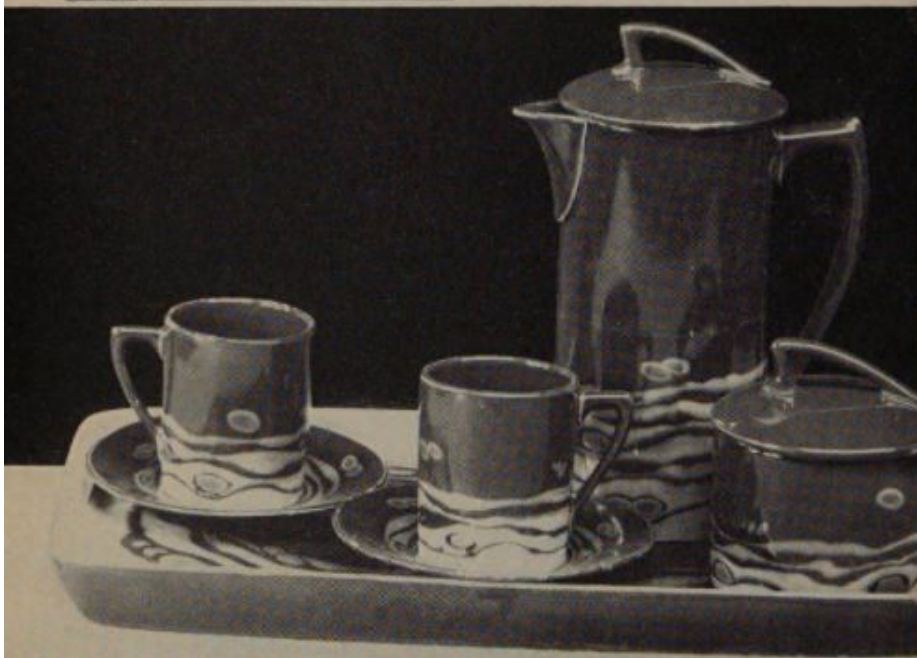
In Germany and Austria, the smaller household and decorative objects for the most part depended directly on either the English Arts and Crafts or on Van de Velde, whose jewellery in particular was the foundation of the style at the Fahrner-Pforzheim factory. Viennese craftsmen working in metal or pottery tended to use the Secession symbols of squares or rectangles, applied rather uncomfortably to geometrically shaped vessels, or else to adapt the close-patterned technique of Klimt. The Viennese glass-making firm of Lötz-Witwe came closest to Tiffany of all his Continental imitators, and for a while superseded the American in popularity. But however fine Lötz's iridescent golden-silver colours were, the forms eventually declined in inspiration and became repetitive and conservative.





German ; Designer unknown, c. 1900
Picture frame, stamped KAYSER ZINN
Pewter with high silver content

German ; Designer unknown, c. 1900
Made by the Wächtersbach
Blue and lilac chi
Österreichisches Museum, Vienna
Photo Anton Feisel

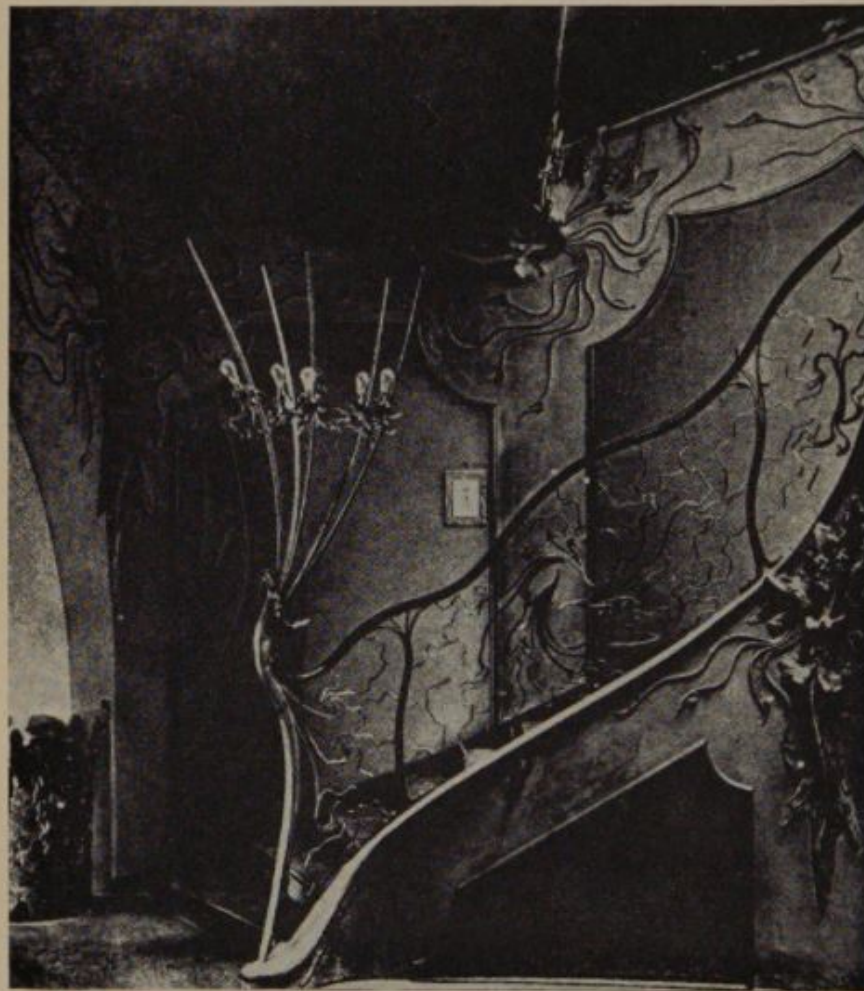


German **Oskar Thiede** 1901
Österreichisches Museum, Vienna
Photo Anton Feisel

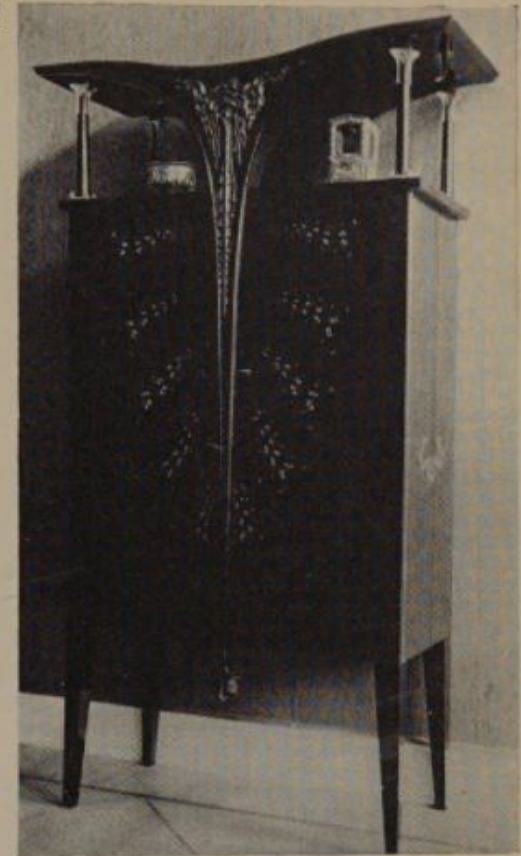


The fantastic aspect of Art Nouveau was a speciality of the earlier Munich designers, not the least of whom was August Endell. His façade decorations for the Elvira Photographic Studio (1897–98) relate so closely to Obrist, that they might have been taken from one of his embroideries. Endell went in for the more exotic motifs of Orientalism—particularly the Chinese dragon. His interiors display a neurotic fascination for the spidery line and the scaly surface, which creates a displeasing, but nevertheless intriguing atmosphere.

German August Endell 1900
Atelier Elvira, Munich (Treppenhaus)
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner



German August Endell c. 1900
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner



On pages 136/137 German Bernhard
Pankok 1902
Smoking-room (*Herrenzimmer*),
shown at Turin
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner

The *Vereinigten Werkstätten* were founded in Munich in 1897, by Obrist, Peter Behrens and others, under the influence of Van de Velde, Peter Behrens and others, with William Morris very much in mind; the *kunstgewerbliche Anglomanie* had set in and German designers were determined to use the advanced ideas of England to further their own nationalistic beliefs and to assert their competence in design. One of the founder members of the *Werkstätten* was Bernard Pankok, who, despite his desire for reform, continued to follow the fashionable styles of the moment. His interiors and furnishings often seem to be heavy, Germanic translations of the elegant forms of Van de Velde; nevertheless his alcove Smoking-room (*Herrenzimmer*) has an enclosed cosiness, and relaxed, withdrawn atmosphere which is the merely sensational striving for effect. It is a comment on the popularity of this room that it was exhibited both at the Paris Exhibition in 1900 and in 1902 at the





German Richard Riemerschmid 1900
From Liberty and Co; made in Germany and
exhibited at the Paris Exhibition, 1900

Turin Exhibition. Pankok's ideas were by no means original, and one sees close affinities to certain French idioms, but without the audacity and *savoir faire* of the French designers.

Another founder member of the *Werkstätten* was Richard Riemerschmid, who today seems the most mid-twentieth century of the group; indeed an American furniture firm recently reproduced one of his side chairs designed in 1900. This chair is plastically conceived so that its legs and back are naturally inte-

grated into a functional form that makes no concessions to a sculptural objective. Many of these chairs were at some time sold to Liberty & Co.; limed or fumed, and often notched with Tudor designs, they still decorate the Regent Street shop, and may have been specially made for the London firm. Equally, some of Riemerschmid's other furniture has a kinship with Tudor-type Liberty suites, and there may have been a contractual as well as an aesthetic connection between the two.

German Art Nouveau, which was so late a starter, had a bumper year in 1897, not only because of the founding of the *Werkstätten* and Van de Velde's appearance, but because of any number of new German publications: *Kunst und Handwerk*, *Dekorative Kunst*, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, *Kunst und Dekoration*, etc. Meanwhile *Anglomanie* continued, and in 1898 Baillie Scott was

German Richard Riemerschmid and Bernhard Pankok 1900
Dining-room, Paris Exhibition
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner





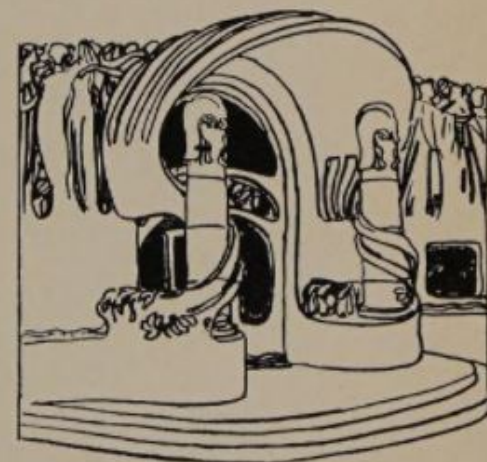
Austrian Josef Hoffmann 1905-11
Palais Stoclet, Brussels

busy decorating the Darmstadt palace of the Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse; in the same year a Munich *Kunstfreund*, who till this day remains anonymous, had the foresight to invite Charles Rennie Mackintosh to design some furniture for his salon; this was the Glaswegian's first appearance on the Continent, but in the next ten years he was to have a greater influence on Germans and Austrians than in his own country.

One of the designers in Munich most influenced by Mackintosh was Peter Behrens. He worked at first in a schematised, flat-plane, rhythmic style of decoration, rather densely patterned and heavy in feeling, but soon moved on to carpets, furniture and eventually

to architecture. He turned here to Mackintosh's type of rectilinear functionalism—square-lined, simplified and conservative. Behrens thus became one of the earliest architects of the Modern Movement; he provides a direct link between *Jugendstil* and contemporary architecture, for at one moment he had working and studying under him no less than Walter Gropius (who later founded the Bauhaus), Mies Van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. What Behrens lacked in vigour, he made up for in rational integration; his buildings are soundly put together with a strong feeling for structure and function, and a reverence for simple, but solid materials. Moreover, the household objects he designed for AEG (the German electric company) indicate a technical understanding of electrical household appliances, which he designed as carefully as if he were composing a painting.

Mackintosh's break-through on the Continent occurred in 1900 at the eighth Vienna Secession, and he became overnight the blue-eyed boy of the Austrian movement. Josef Hoffmann, Joseph Olbrich and Koloman Moser, who had founded the Secession in 1897, saw the Glasgow style as one that was similar in approach to their own, and from that point on they seemed to take sustenance from the Mackintosh idiom. The Glasgow display in 1900 was for the most part rectilinear, structural and based on the measure of the cube and its interplay with the rectangle; the tones were light or white, and curvilinear decoration was reduced to a minor key and relegated to small areas on a large expanse of plain white surface. No doubt the Secessionists saw Mackintosh as the direct heir of the William Morris tradition, as well as a

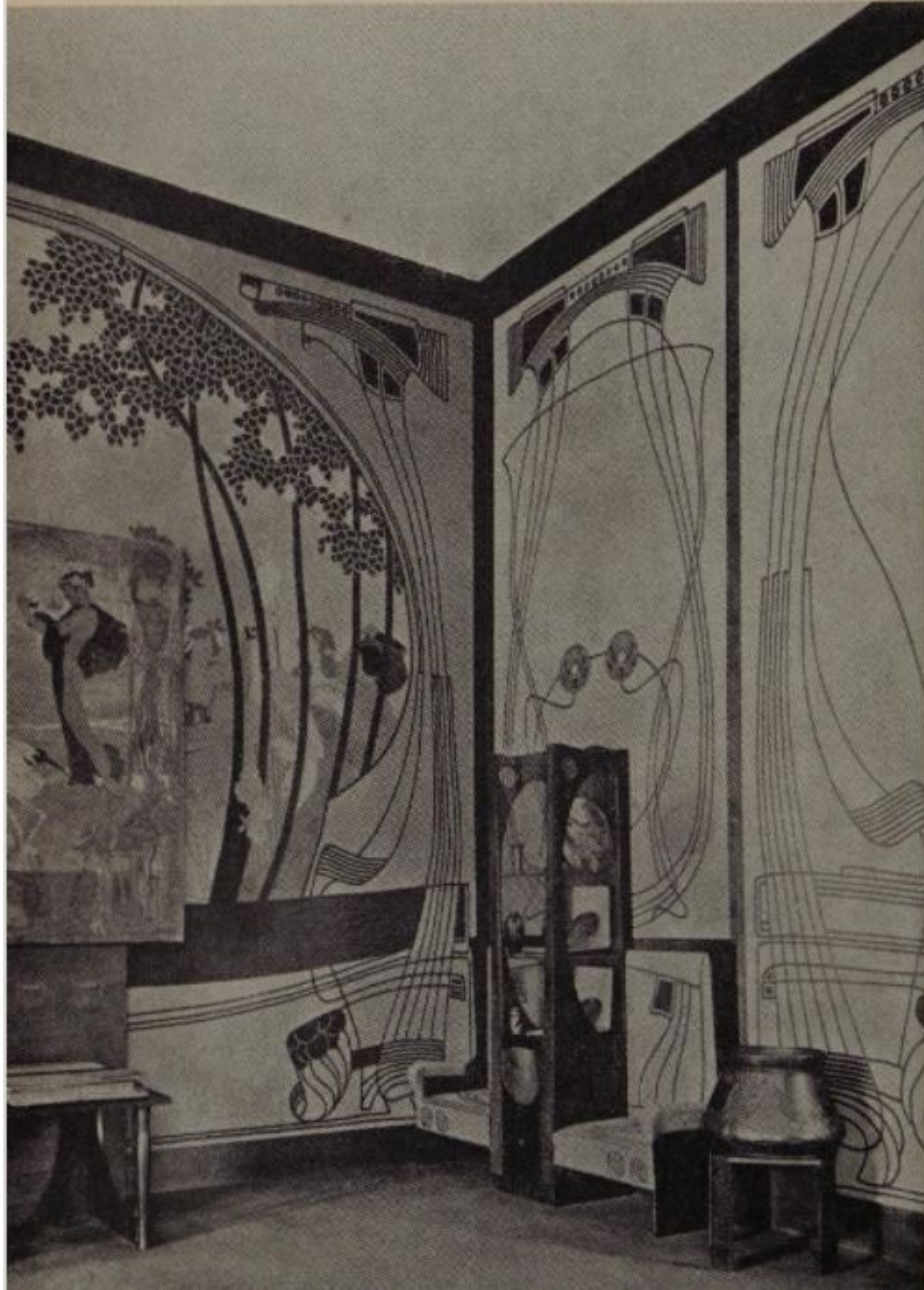


Austrian Josef Hoffmann 1898
Entrance, published in *Ver Sacrum*

Austrian **Josef Hoffmann** 1901

Interior of the Vienna School of Decorative Art

Walls in straw colour with embroidered appliqué, ornamented in red, the same colour as woodwork and furniture



Austrian **Joseph Olbrich** 1901
House in Darmstadt



German **Peter Behrens** 1901
The designer's house at Darmstadt

romantic throw-back to a Celtic past. Hoffmann, who was particularly attuned to the British style, used the square as the dominant motif above all curvilinear considerations, both as decoration and as a unit of structural measure after 1901, and it is still uncertain whether his attitude was changed by Mackintosh or whether he arrived at his own style independently. A hint that the Scotsman may have inspired the Austrian more than he liked to admit is given in a review in *The Studio* in 1901 of Hoffmann's interiors for the Vienna School of Decorative Art, which makes a slighting reference to his having 'somewhat too strong a suggestion of the familiar motifs of the Glasgow school...' This indicates that Glasgow had already established a marked style of its own under Mackintosh, and that Hoffmann was merely following this lead. Certainly Mackintosh's Mains Street flat of 1900, with its square chairs, its simple white bare interior, its plain duck-cloth floor covering, and lack of curvilinear doodling, was a more advanced interior than Hoffmann's rooms, which were still saddled with a tense line that swooped over the walls, floors and furniture.



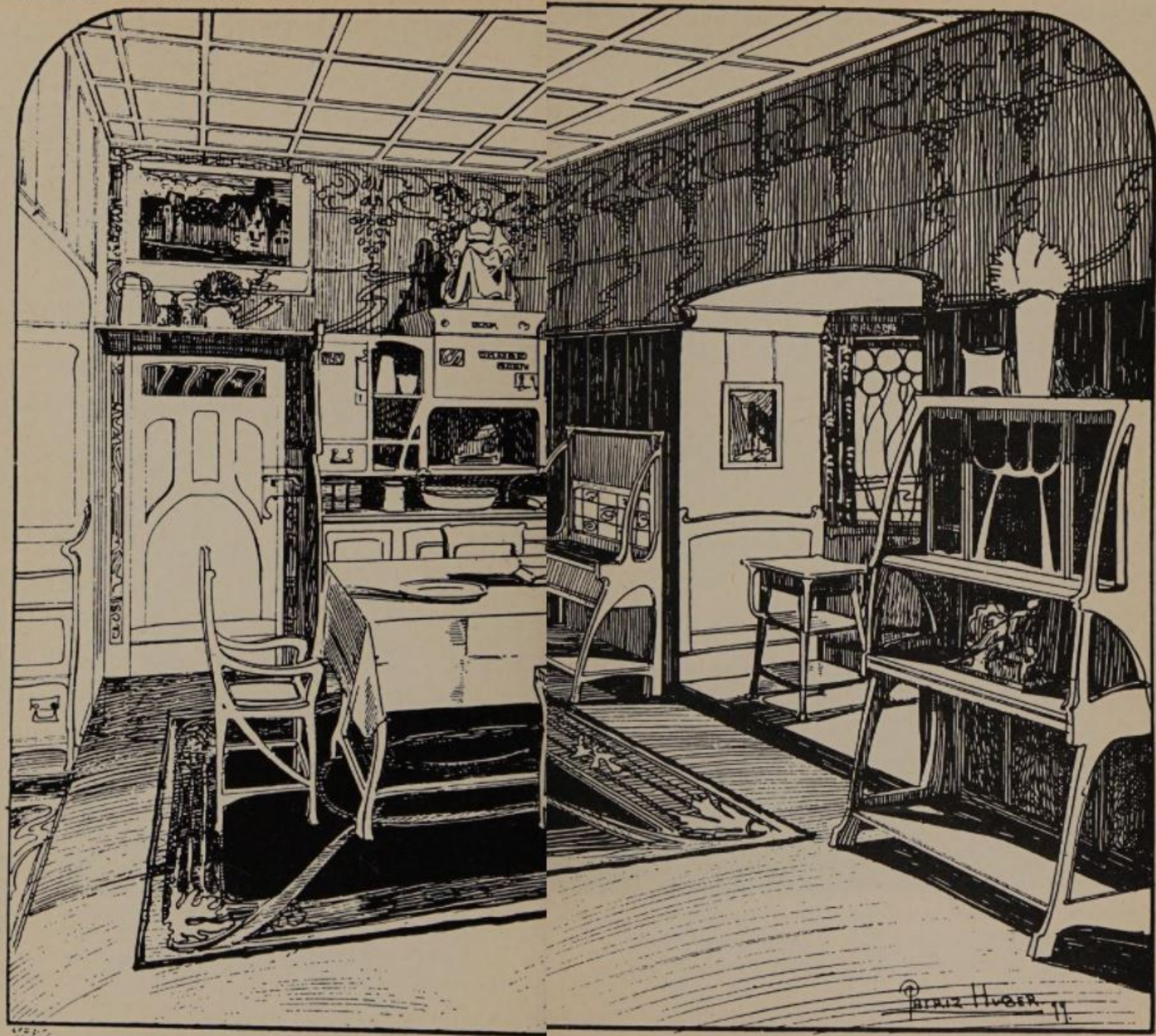
Austrian **Joseph Olbrich** 1898
The Secessionist Building in Vienna
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner

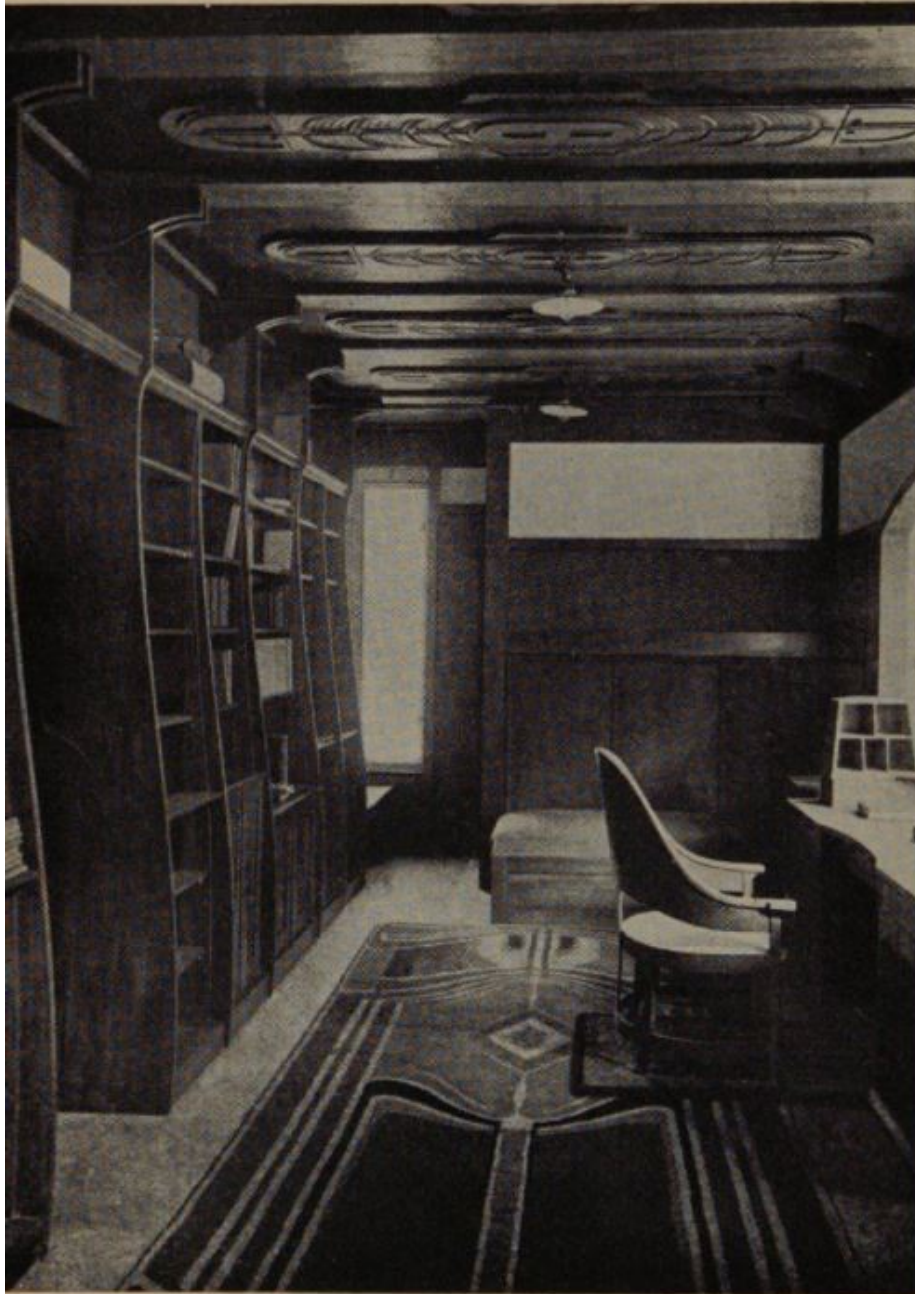
Mackintosh's School of Art in Glasgow (1897–99), the drawing-room at Dunglass Castle in 1899 and the rooms at the Vienna Secession in 1900 prove that he had already resolved rectilinear forms in terms of their plasticity and function.

Joseph Olbrich was actually the first to erect a building in the new 'Cubist' style in 1898 when he built the Vienna Secession Exhibition Hall. If its dome were removed, it might be taken for any number of buildings erected in the 'twenties, although the delightful interlacing 'Frampton' stem decorations, relegated to enclosed areas on the façade, would still make it distinctive. This exhibition hall was conceived, like Cézanne's art, in terms of the cube, the sphere and the rectangle; and it has a curious resemblance to the London Whitechapel Art Gallery by Townsend built in 1897, with the advantage of being conceived in the round, not merely as a street façade.



English **Charles Harrison Townsend** 1897–1901
The Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
Drawing by Joseph Pennell





German Peter Behrens 1901
Library at the designer's house in Darmstadt
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner



German Peter Behrens 1901
The artist's house on the Matildenhöhe, Darmstadt

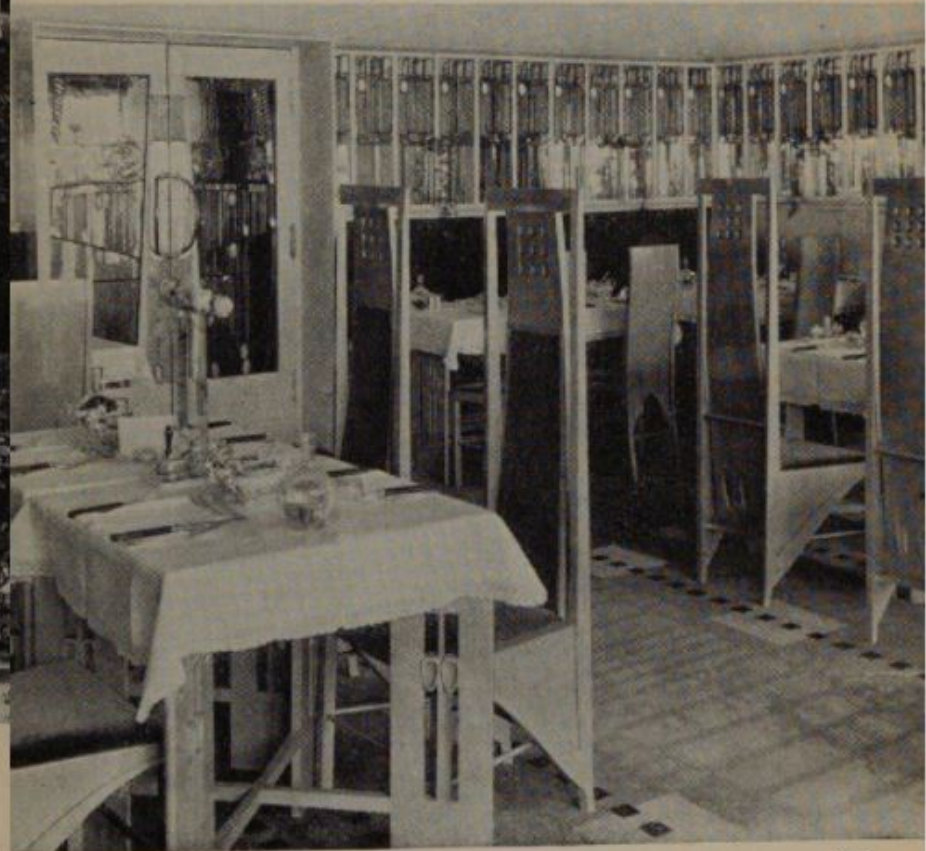
The greatest chance for Secession designers was the Grand Duke of Hesse's invitation to build an artists' colony on Darmstadt's Mathildenhöhe, and Olbrich designed most of the houses for it. Completed in 1901, the huge project fused the style of Mackintosh with that of Voysey and Baillie Scott, who himself was working for the Grand Duke. Of all the interiors at Darmstadt, those by Peter Behrens for his own house are perhaps the most advanced, particularly his library, with its gently curved verticals of bookcase sections, the delicate asymmetry of the walls, the echoing curves of carpet and ceiling set against the straight-functional aspect of the desk, chair and storage units. Compared to Patriz Huber's dining-room for Darmstadt, dated 1899, where all the lines are set in constant motion, whether on walls, furniture or floors, without interruption, solidity or rest, the Behrens library was a decided step forward towards rational functionalism.



Austrian Joseph Olbrich 1901
Designer's house at Darmstadt
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner

While working on the almost purely rectilinear Hill House, Helensburgh (1902), Mackintosh designed a music salon in Vienna for the Wärndorfers, who were great patrons of art and music, and in whose house all the *avant garde* of Vienna met. The music salon was the most talked about room of the time and its influence on contemporary architecture cannot be measured fully, except by saying that certain generic ideas which first appeared there were used throughout the next decade by Austrians and Germans alike, before the founding of the Weimar Bauhaus after the war.

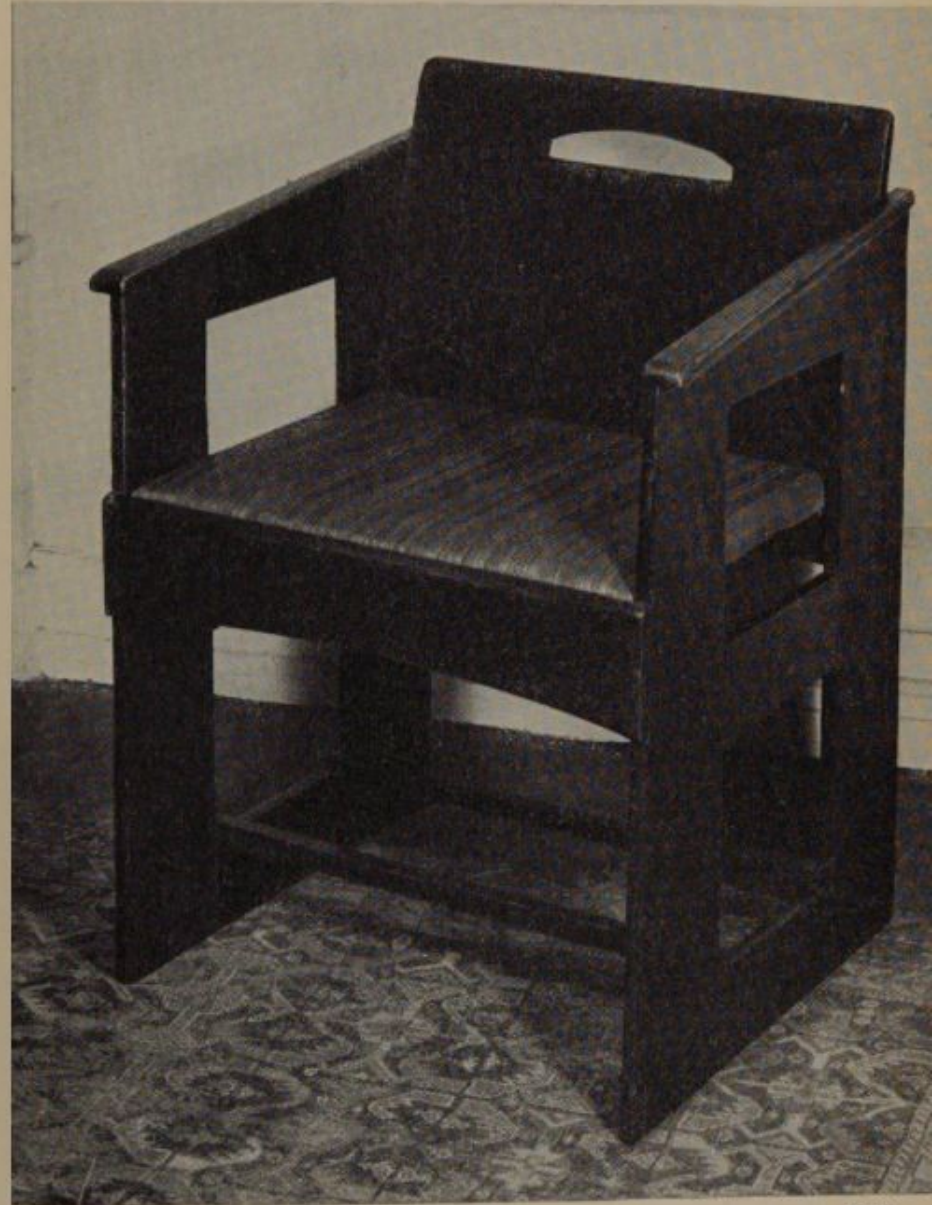
Scottish Charles Rennie Mackintosh 1904
The Willow Tea-rooms, Glasgow. 'Room de luxe'

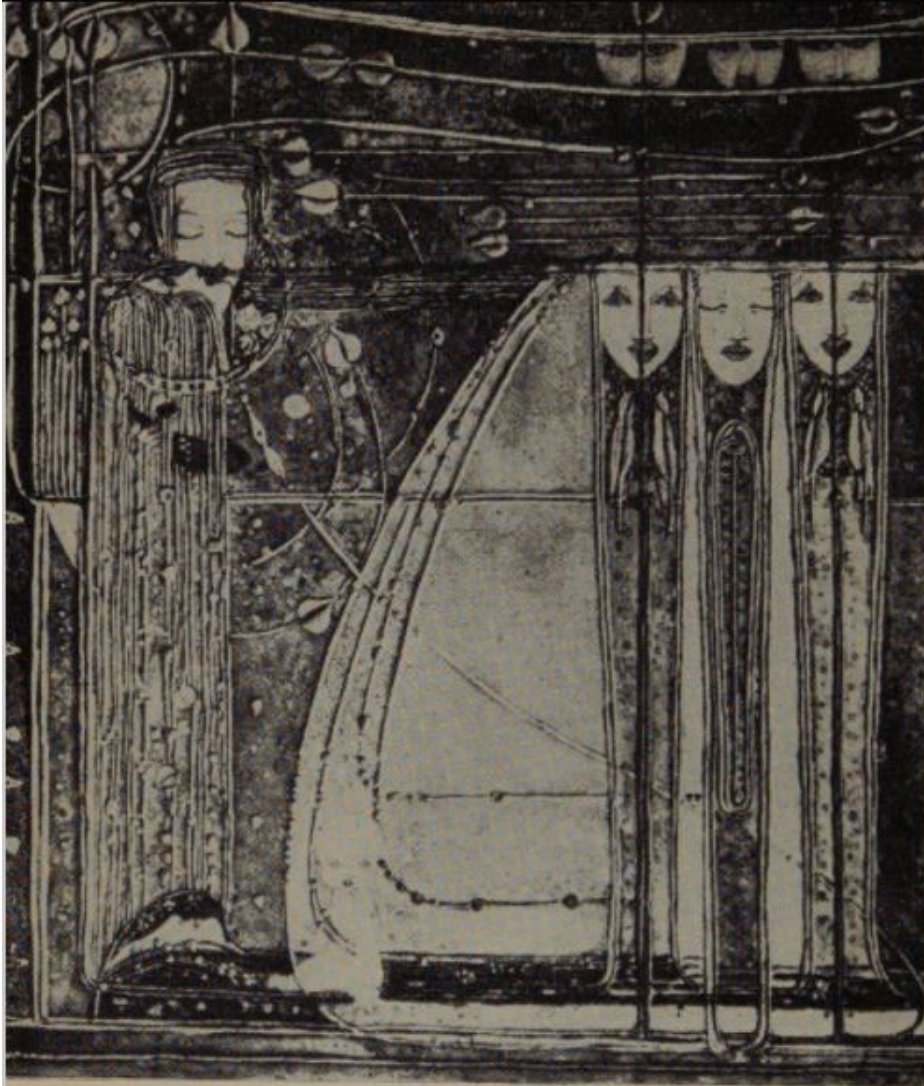


ish **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** 1902
in silver pewter with painted black squares
or's collection



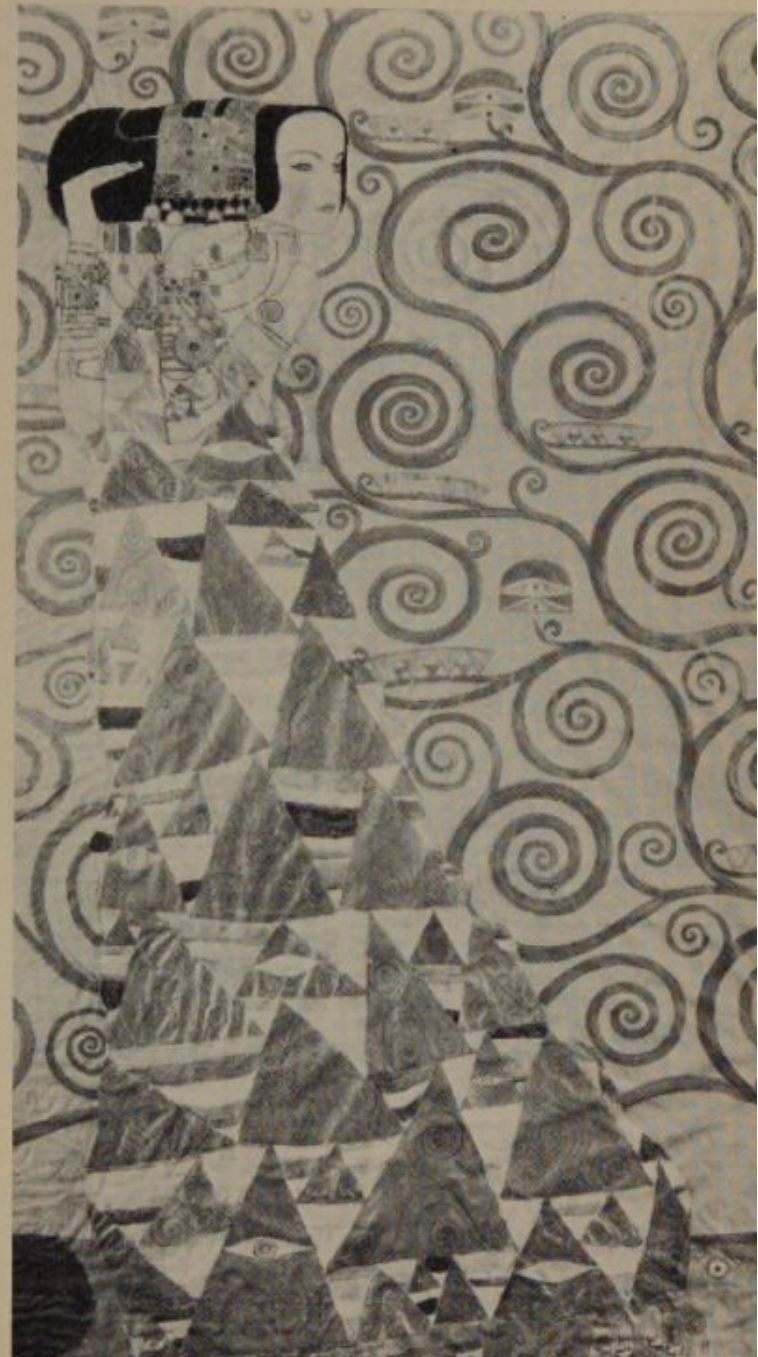
Scottish **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** 1904
Chair in black stained oak for Miss Cranston's Tea-rooms





Scottish Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald 1902-3
 'The Opera of the Winds', one of twelve decorative panels for the Währdorfer
 Music Salon, Vienna, in gesso and stones

Austrian Gustav Klimt 1905-11
 Cartoon for mural decorations in mosaic for the Palais Stoclet, Brussels
 Österreichisches Museum, Vienna. Photo Anton Feisel

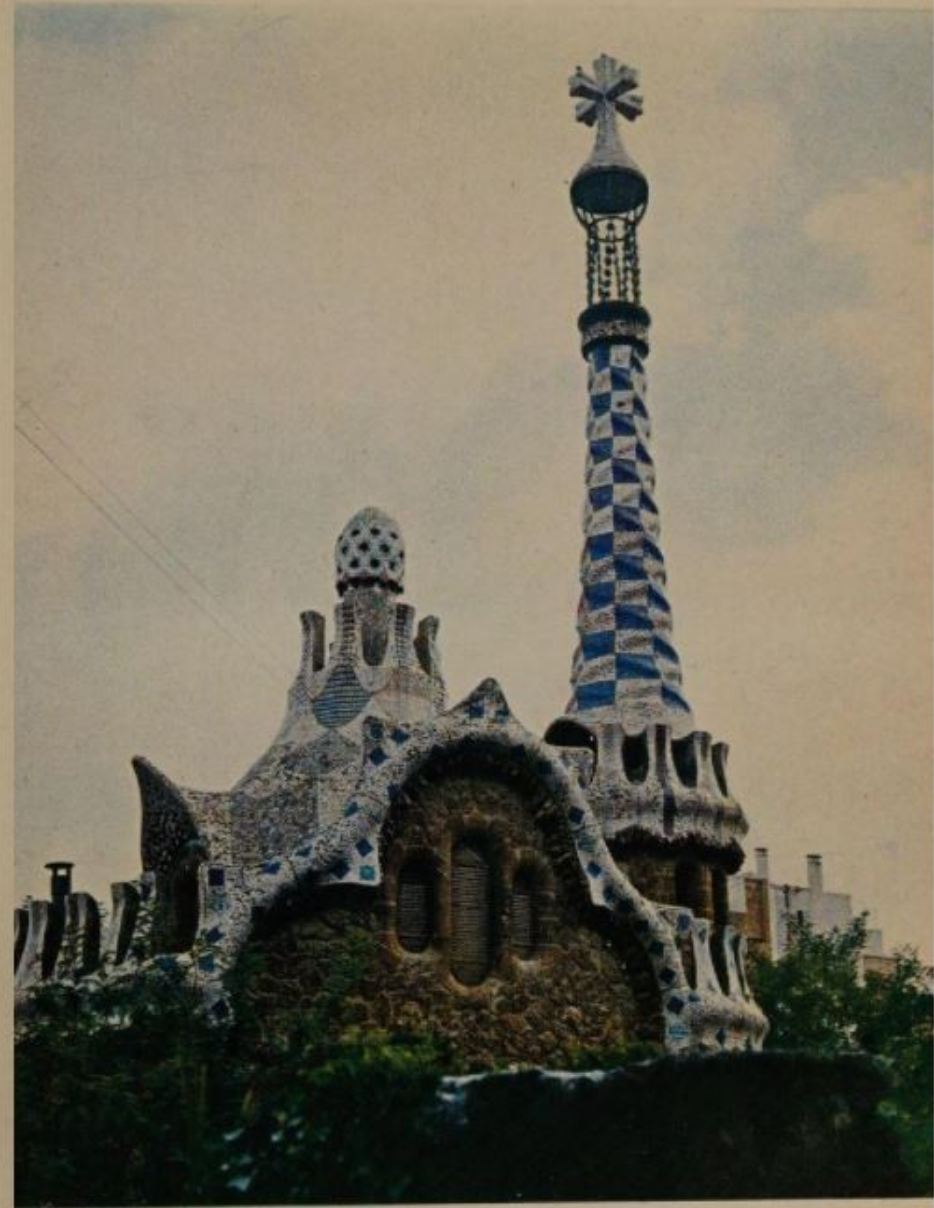


What is more, a series of decorative panels by Mackintosh, designed with his wife for the Währdorfer salon, and based on a Maeterlinck poem, had a far reaching effect on the decorative murals of Gustav Klimt, whose style became more geometric and schematic after their installation. Klimt's broken up cubist patterning in the mosaic murals for the Palais Stoclet in Brussels (1905-11) owed an indirect debt to Mackintosh, just as his murals themselves had some bearing on the cubist abstractions of the next decade. Matisse, who visited the Palais Stoclet, might have had these murals in mind, as well as Cézanne's pictures, when he spoke of Picasso's work as being made up of *petits cubes*.

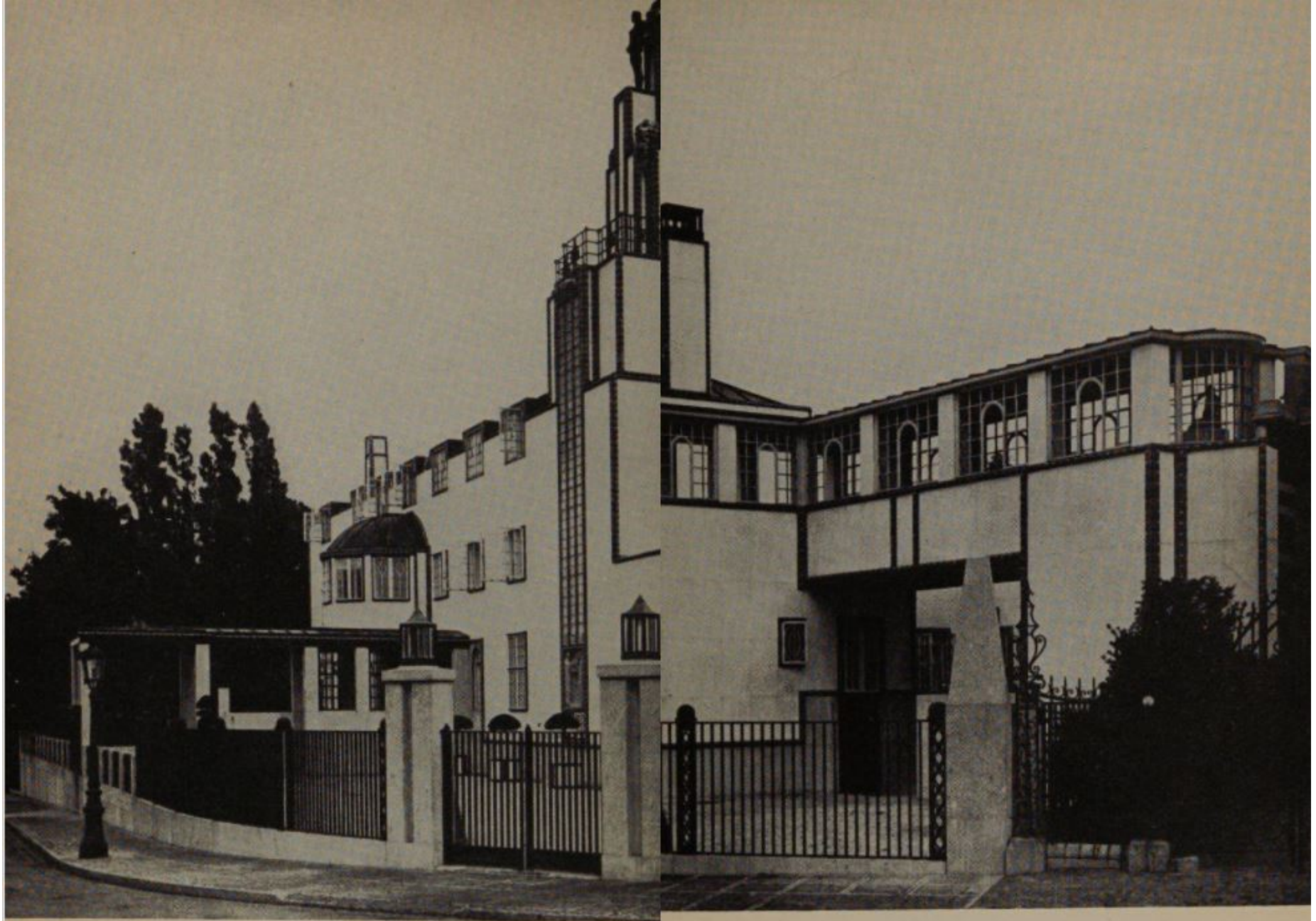
Considering his enormous influence, it is curious that Mackintosh lost the competition for a *Haus eines Kunstfreundes* in 1901 to Baillie Scott. This may have been in part due to the Grand Duke of Hesse's patronage of Baillie Scott, for the winning design was full of flowery crewel-work motifs and beam ceilings inside, and covered with Tudory turrets outside. Compared with it, Mackintosh's design was truly mid-twentieth century, with bare, spatial arrangements of furniture, strong vertical emphasis on wall decoration, complemented by tall backed chairs, and of course the inevitable square, used both as light relief and as a unit of measure.

That Mackintosh should have been the inspiration on the Continent in the important transition from curvilinear Art Nouveau to rectilinear Art Nouveau, while he went virtually ignored in England, is one of the many ironies of his mercurial career as an architect, which ended in total eclipse. Strangely, it may have been because he was accepted so completely in Germany and Austria that he was ignored at home during the anti-German campaign of the First World War. A nation at war might easily have forgotten that it was Mackintosh and the Scottish school that inspired the 'Huns', rather than the other way round. The Germans for their part, with their love of methodical arrangement, mathematical precision, tidy living and orderliness, found in Mackintosh what they could not find in Van de Velde or in the French.

In Mackintosh's work, one can discern today one of the major elements of Art Nouveau. For it was more than just a momentary stop-gap phase in decorative design, wallowing in its own whip-lash motifs; rather, it was a genuine search for the new which resulted not only in a new style of curvilinear, organic invention, but in a whole new vocabulary of rectilinear functional form, which made possible the language of the Bauhaus and contemporary design. In fact, like so many of its own motifs, Art Nouveau did not magically start and mysteriously stop, but grew rapidly with the technical changes of its age and converted itself by trial and error into the forms that were right for its time, discarding whatever outlived its usefulness. To say that Art Nouveau was finished after the First World War is to misunderstand its most important aspect. Certainly Erich Mendelsohn did not disdain curvilinear, organic



Spanish **Antonio Gaudí**, c. 1905
Western gate-house of Park Güell
Photo courtesy Fello Atkinson

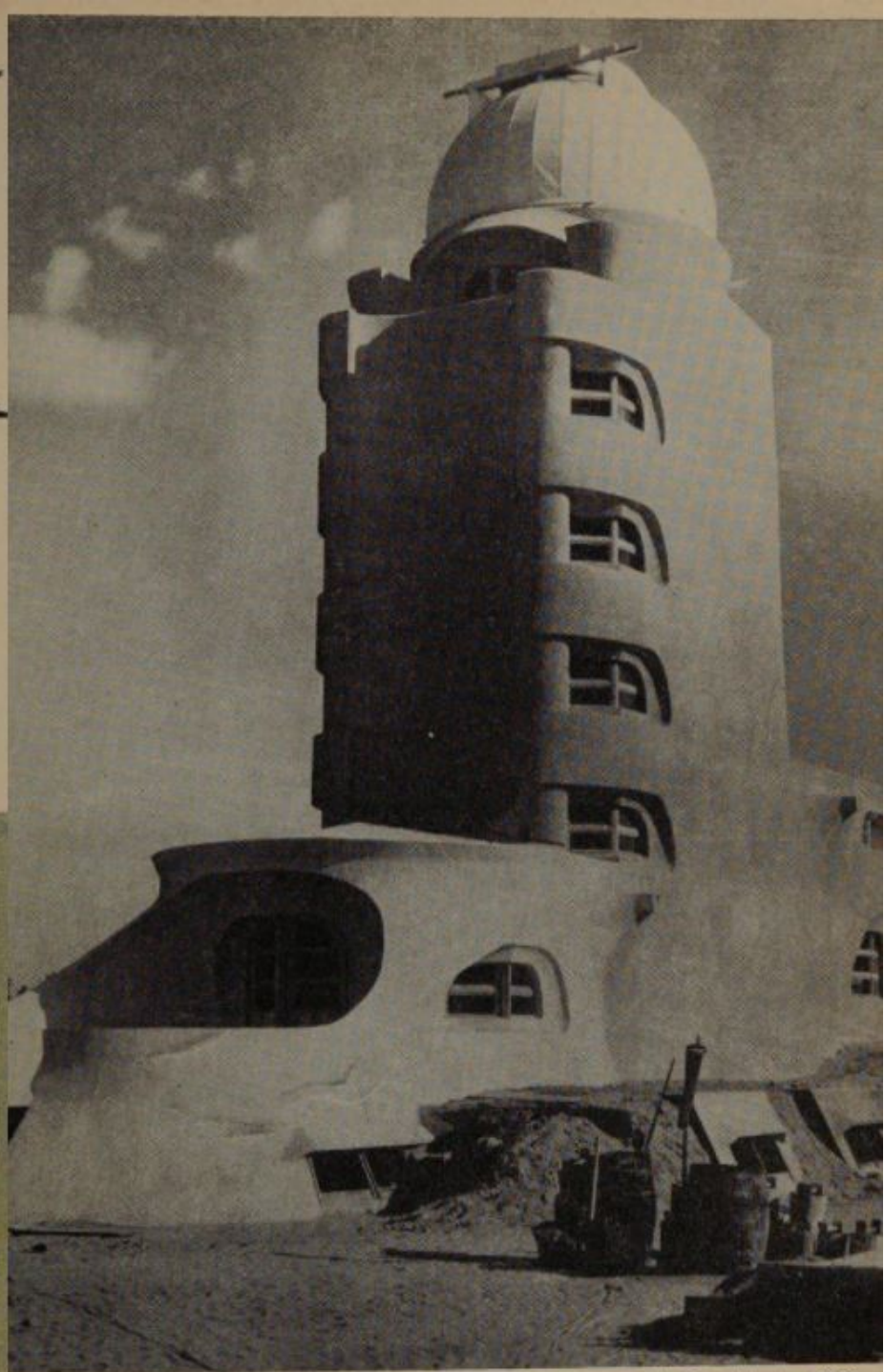


Austrian Josef Hoffmann 1905-11
Palais Stoclet, Brussels
Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner



French René Lalique 1903
Double brooch, gold and glass

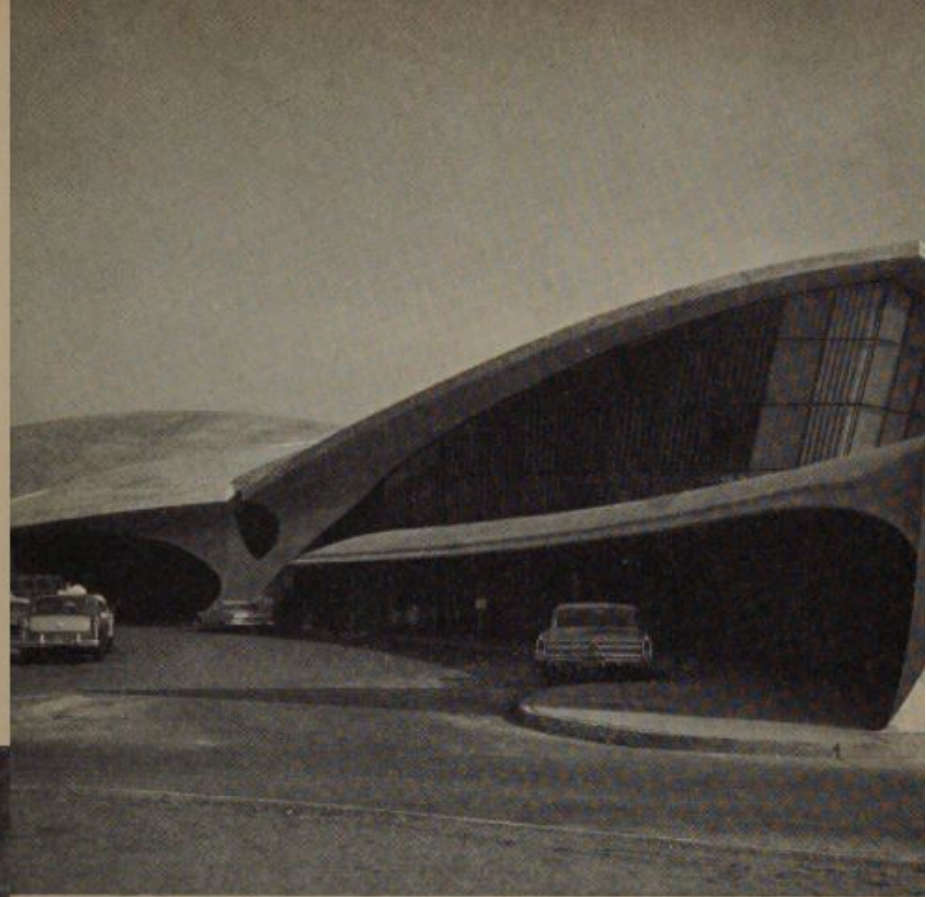
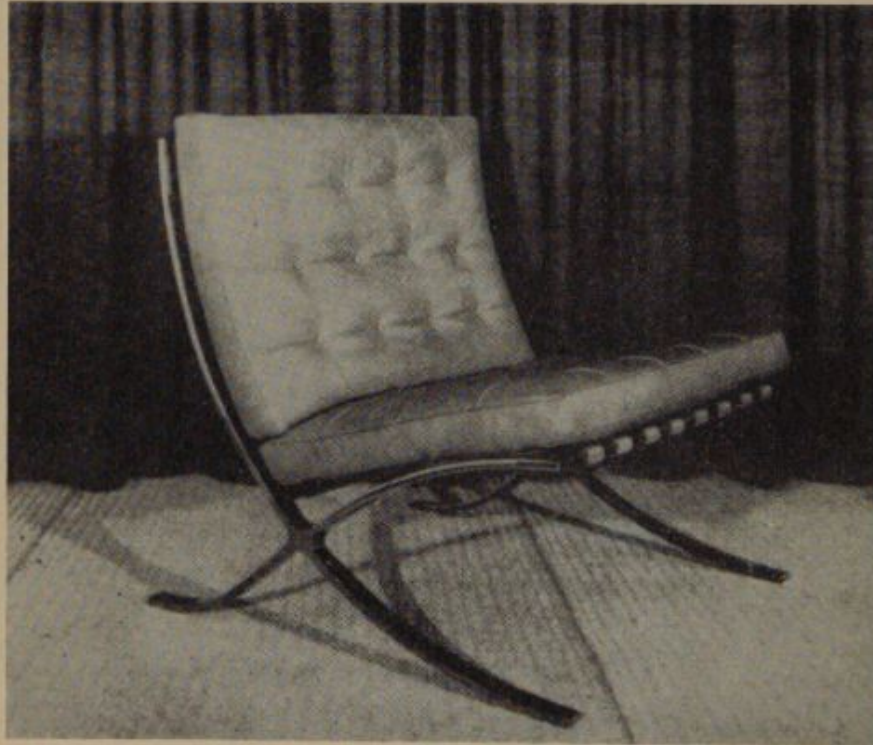
French Eugène Grasset 1900
Brooch in cabochon, sapphires, topaz and enamel
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris



German Erich Mendelsohn 1920
Einstein Tower, Potsdam. Photo courtesy Dr Franz Stoedtner

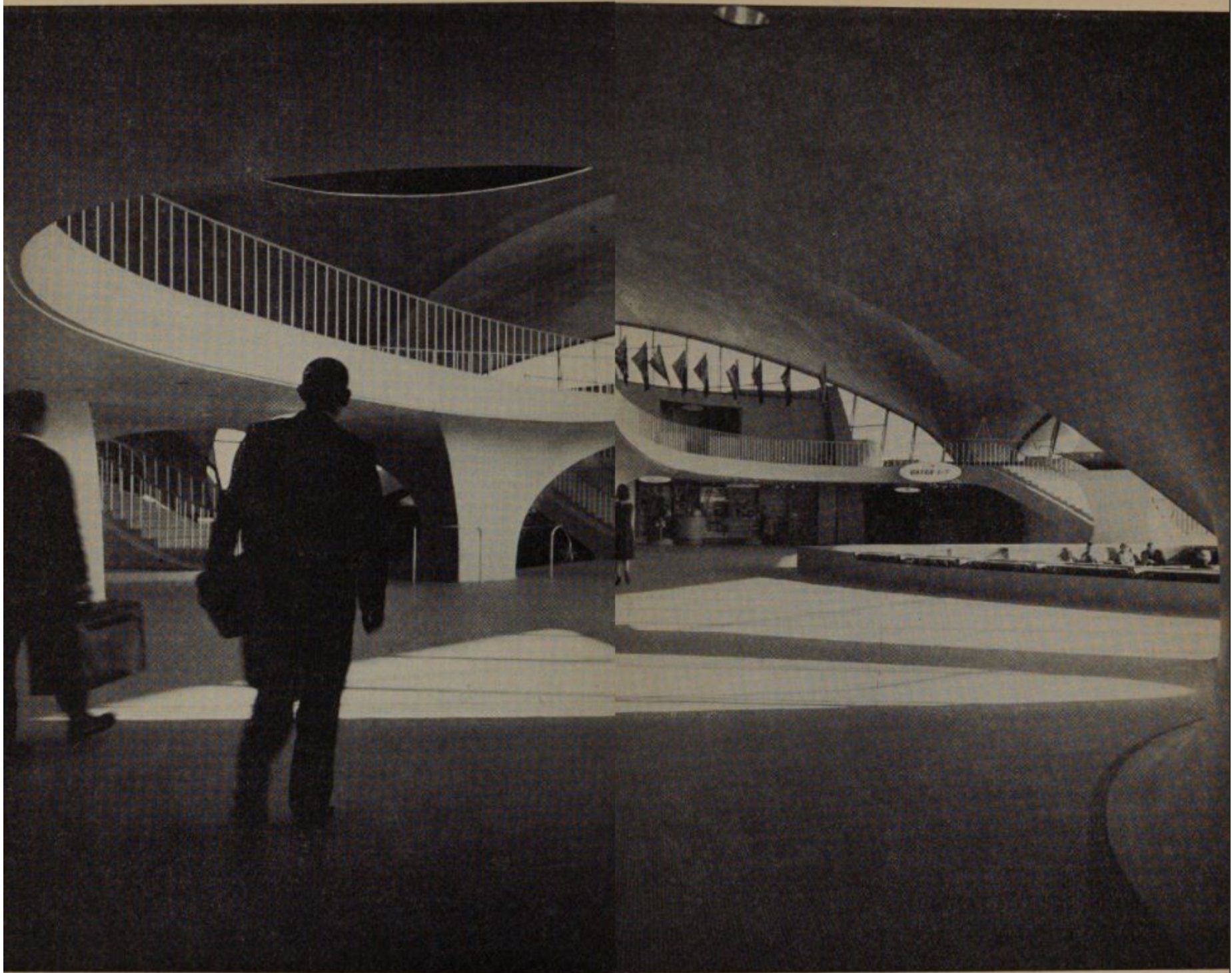
shapes when he designed his Potsdam Tower for Albert Einstein in 1920; and even Mies Van der Rohe must have had the swinging curves of Art Nouveau in mind when he designed his Barcelona chair in 1929—the most famous and most ‘contemporary’ chair of the twentieth century. A further throwback to Art Nouveau is apparent when we remember that this ‘functional’ chair is still hand-made, despite its machine-finished appearance. Le Corbusier’s reversion to romantic plasticity in his church at Ronchamps is another case in point. Today, modern Swedish and Danish designers continue to re-investigate some of the unexplored paths of plasticity first hinted at in Art Nouveau. Georg Jensen for one is still playing with Art Nouveau shapes, Alvar Aalto has used the flowing, undulating line in his pressed wood furniture; Arne Jacobsen has employed the wayward, free-flowing curve in his architecture. Perhaps the best compliments to Art

German **Mies van der Rohe** 1929
‘Barcelona’ chair, in polished steel and leather



American **Eero Saarinen** 1961. TWA terminal, Kennedy Airport, New York
On pages 164/165 Interior. Photos Ezra Stoller Associates

Nouveau in recent times have been paid by Nervi’s exercises in poured concrete and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim Museum, finished in 1959. American romantic architects as a whole have shown an interest in Art Nouveau motifs—particularly Edward Stone with his Huntington Hartford museum, and Paul Rudolph with his stunning multi-storey car-park in New Haven, built between 1961 and 1963. But the most gratifying use of the style is the TWA terminal at Kennedy Airport by Eero Saarinen, where the organic shapes of the Potsdam tower (themselves a reflection of Hoffmann’s drawings) are mingled with Gaudi’s sense of counter-rhythm and interval. This remarkable building alone appears to sum up the whole history of a style whose possibilities have yet to be explored to the fullest.



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