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GLASS WORK

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METAL WORK

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1896
Réouverture

DU
CABARET

DU
CHAT
NOIR

le 3 Octobre 1896
et
de l'illustre Théâtre du

CHAT NOIR

le 6 Octobre 1896
Rue Victor-Massé

PARIS

ART NOUVEAU

50 WORKS OF ART YOU SHOULD KNOW

Susie Hodge

PRESTEL

Munich · London · New York

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INTRODUCTION



The Hunterston Brooch, silver, gold and amber, ca. 700, National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh

Art Nouveau was an influential but relatively short-lived art and design movement and philosophy that emerged in the final decades of the nineteenth century (often called the *fin de siècle*) and ended with the start of World War One. It developed almost simultaneously across Europe and America, in provincial towns as well as in capital cities, including Glasgow, Chicago, Barcelona, Paris, Bucharest, Nancy, Brussels and St Louis. A conscious attempt to create a unique and modern form of expression that evoked the spirit of the age, it was a versatile movement with huge scope and influence that manifested itself in painting, illustration, sculpture, jewellery, metalwork, glass, ceramics, textiles, graphic design, furniture, architecture, costume and fashion. Applying organic, flowing lines, Art Nouveau designers determined to escape the excessively ornamental

styles and historical replications that were popular during the Victorian era, and aimed to produce original designs that reached a broader public, transcending class boundaries, reconciling mass production with craftsmanship and democratising tastes.

Sources of inspiration

The nineteenth century saw the industrialisation and urbanisation of much of Europe. There was a great rise in the wealth of the middle and upper classes, but this co-existed with extreme poverty and huge economic booms and slumps, leading to periodic mass unemployment. The large increase in the availability of material goods and commercial opportunities was accompanied by persistent anxieties about the social and moral effects of such consumerism, initiating a rise in socialist and anarchist movements. In this respect, Art Nouveau evolved directly from the Arts and Crafts movement that was led by the English designer and socialist William Morris (1834–96). The Arts and Crafts movement was a reaction against the predominance of cluttered, ornate styles, poorly made mass-produced objects and the division of labour, all of which were a direct consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Morris and his followers had sought to revitalise design and revive medieval crafts, producing handmade items in small workshops, ultimately aiming to enhance people's quality of life. Like the Arts and Crafts movement, Art Nouveau artists and designers drew on diverse influences, including Celtic art and design, the Gothic Revival,



Sudden Rainstorm at Shono, No. 46 from the series "53 Stations of the Tokaido," Ando or Utagawa Hiroshige, woodblock print, 1833, Victoria & Albert Museum, London

the Rococo, the Aesthetic movement, Symbolist art, and aspects of Japanese design. Unlike the Arts and Crafts movement, however, Art Nouveau artists and designers did not shun mass production, but embraced many modern technologies, including machines. The movement was a genuine attempt to create something completely new that did not imitate the past, and that was truly international.

Art Nouveau was also a rejection of the traditional hierarchy of the arts established by the academic system that had dominated art education since the seventeenth century, and which maintained that fine art, such as painting and sculpture,

was superior to craft-based decorative arts. In addressing this attempt to raise the status of crafts and the decorative arts, Art Nouveau was applied to all forms of art and design, with practitioners endeavouring to produce "total works of art" or *Gesamtkunstwerke*, in which every aspect of art and design was coordinated. Artists, designers and architects also aimed to harmonise with the natural environment, and determined that art and design should be an integral part of life.

The first Art Nouveau designs are believed to have been made by the English architect and designer Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851–1942) early in the 1880s.