

I think every Era has its own attractiveness and beauty but one of them had captured my attention more than others. The charming **ART NOUVEAU** style of Art. In French it means a New Art, and this was certainly true at its nineteenth century inception.

Art Nouveau is an ornamental style of art characterised by its organic, long, asymmetrical, twisted, graceful lines bent in on themselves. Colours were rather muted and sombre, for example mustard, sage green, olive green, carnation pink sometimes brown mixed with lilac, violet and peacock blue.



1897 Alphonse Mucha- Dreaming (Reverie)

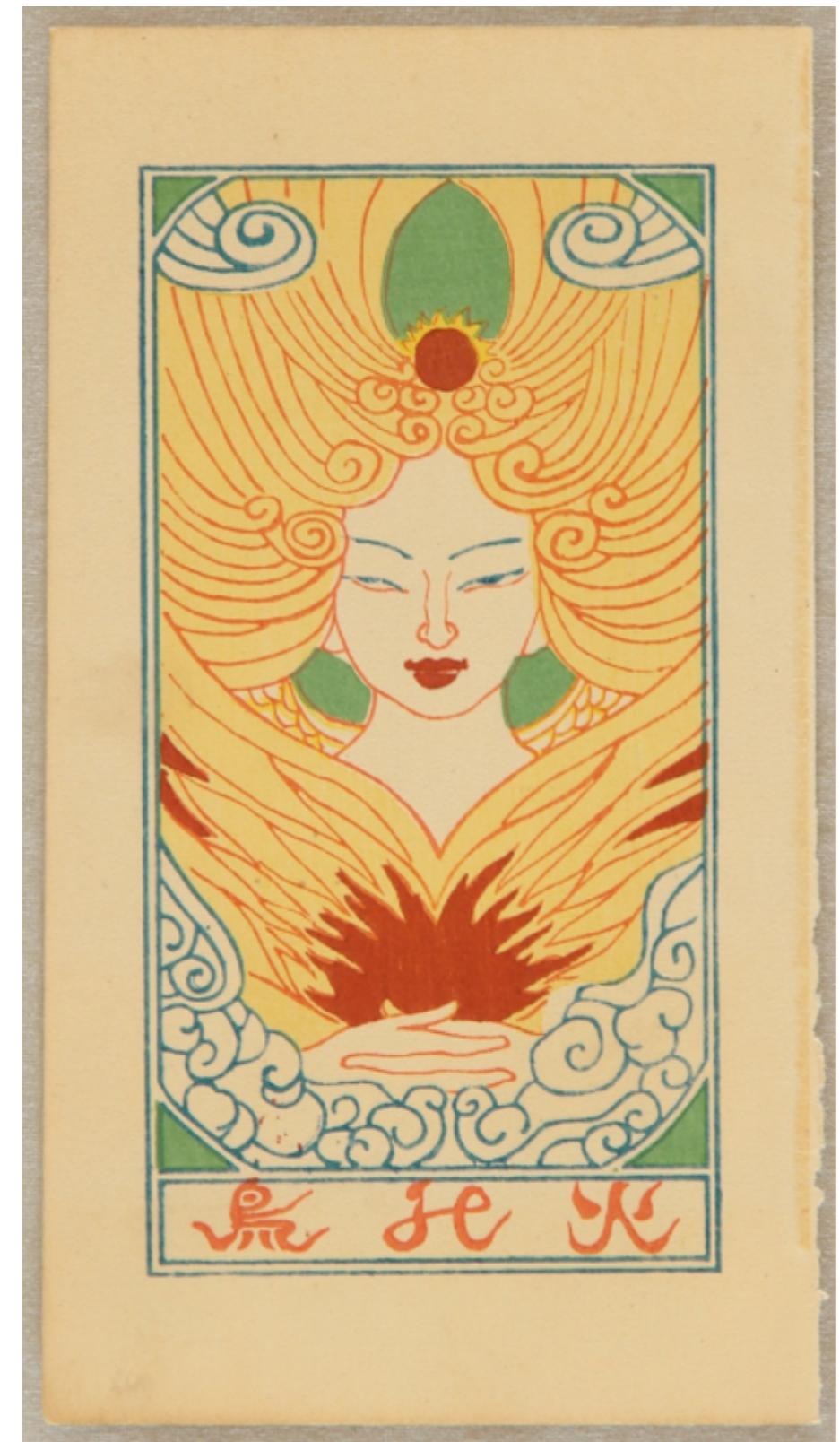
Even though Art Nouveau was established 30 years later, it has roots in Britain around 1860, mainly with Art and Craft movement funded by William Morris. He was a textile designer, poet, novelist, and socialist activist and most of his arts and crafts were touched by characterization of this period. William Morris insisted that items, such as furniture or wallpaper must be unique and design by artists.

One of the most beautiful Morris's repeating designs for textile- "Strawberry Thief".



Strawberry Thief, 1883, William Morris (1834-1896)

Another originating influence was Japanese art and design after the reopening of trade with western Europe in 1858.



Hiromitsu Nakazawa 1874-1964 Title- Firebird - Hi no Tori



Paris metro entrance at Abbesses in Montmartre 1912

Art Nouveau spread through Europe, with notable examples in Brussels such as the interior and exterior of the Hôtel Tassel, the original Paris metro entrances, and the 1900 Paris International Exposition. In the Russian Empire, The Ryabushinsky House were most impressive and very different from the previous art era works. In some countries this art movement had a different name and was adjusted by local culture, but the main characteristic was the same.

Sex, immorality, and death are always popular themes with artists and poets, and found expression in Art Nouveau. Women played a central role in the Art Nouveau art. They were pictured as pure virgins, or evil creatures who lure men to a terrible fate, witches, vampires, or even The Medusa with the snakes for her hair. Even flowers in the illustrations and paintings were not plain and ordinary. They were all different, in a style never seen before in Europe or the United States.



Alphonse Mucha - The Precious Stones series, 1900

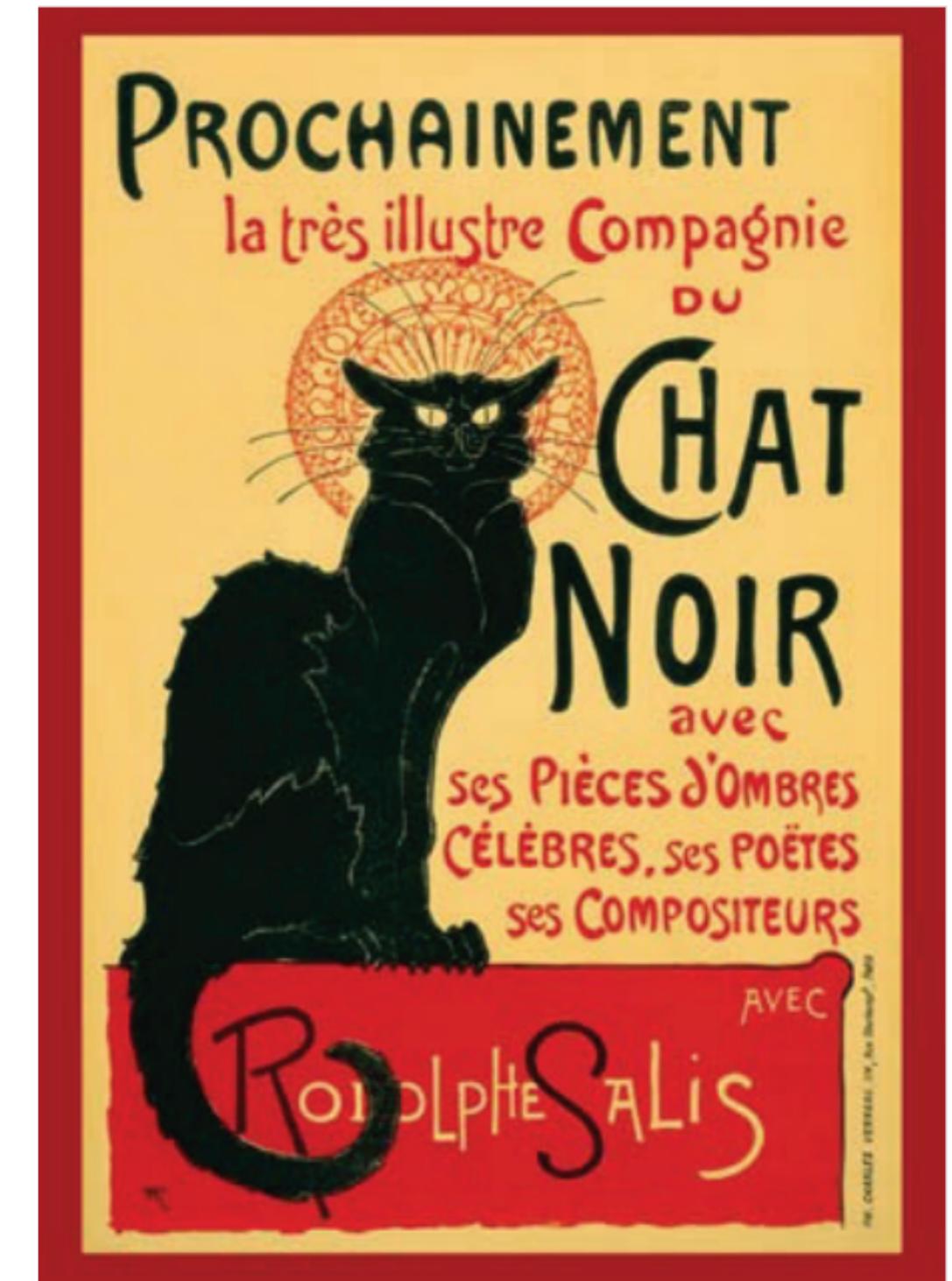
This style was in-part a reaction to industrial revolution and commercial innovation and thrived between 1890 and 1910 throughout Europe and the United States. Because of mass production, middle class consumers could afford to buy new and nice things for their home, such as furniture, decorations, clothing, or dishes. But the downside to all this mass production, was that the products lacked designer elegance. Things were very conservative and old style. Art Nouveau formed a transition between an old historical style and modernism. It was intended to be very different and new, something never seen before. Art Nouveau was widely used in many forms, such as jewellery, graphic arts, furniture, glass and ceramics arts, textiles, metal work and architecture and all designs were typically complicated. The artists again took up handicrafts as a career by decorating every available surface.

Art Nouveau was also part of the Fin De Siècle period – literally end of the century – an era of looking back at the past but also to the future. A time of despair and hope. I think Art Nouveau captures this transition wonderfully, part decorative and natural, and part geometric and modern. People who lived at this time must have been at once shocked by the break with traditions of art, but also pleasantly surprised at the beautiful lines, curves and filigree.

While perhaps not directly influencing the modernist movements of the twentieth century, Art Nouveau clearly had an eye to the technological advancements of the time, and by including abstract and geometric elements, would have laid some of the groundwork for Futurist movements to follow, and even Surrealist and “anti-art” movements, such as Dadaism.

Art Nouveau was the first artistic movement to give serious credibility to the graphic arts, especially the poster as an art form. Art was no longer trapped in the art galleries, but it could be seen in books, illustrated magazines or posters on the wall. They were highly stylized, and often filled with flowers and organic decoration. In the French “Belle Epoque”, Post-Impressionist painter Henri de Toulouse Lautrec was commissioned to paint a series of posters for the Paris cabaret Moulin Rouge.

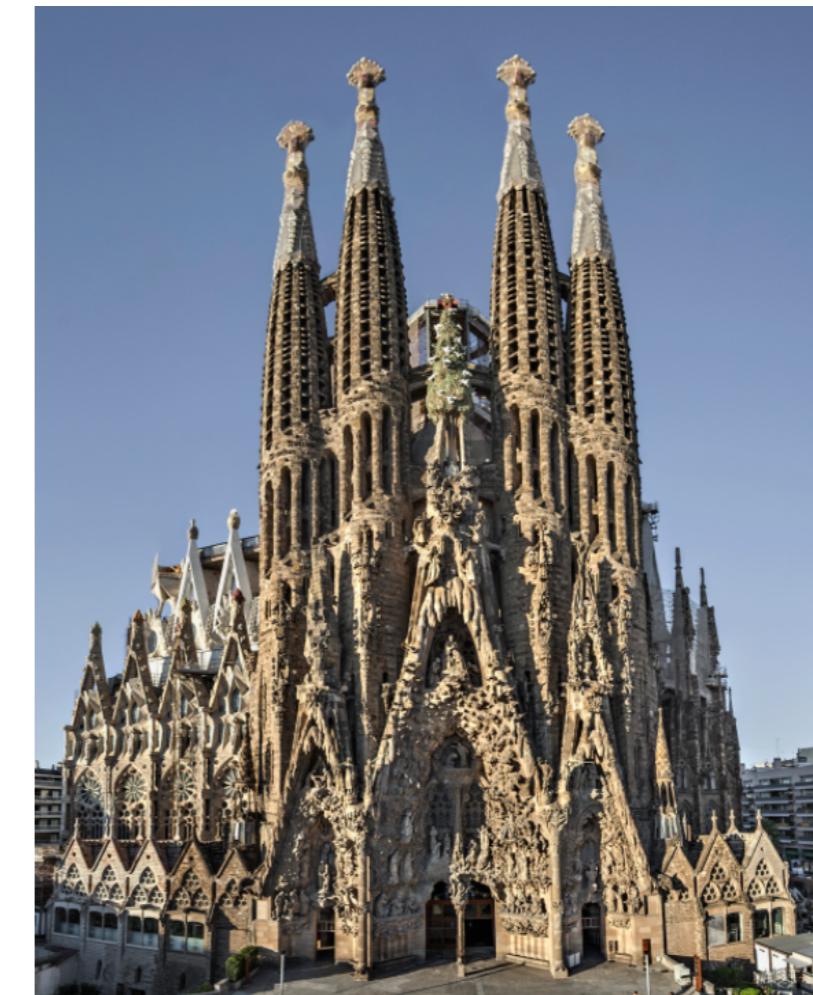
Typographically the Art Nouveau style used diagonal and triangular letters, widely differing character sizes – from very tall to very short in the same word , long ornate and embellished strokes, and variable waistlines



Le Chat Noir - Théophile Steinlen 1896

Art Nouveau movement went through Spain as well. It influenced Barcelona City's architecture so much that now Barcelona has nine building from that era which belongs to UNESCO. In Spain, the Art Nouveau is called the Modernism - Catalan art nouveau.

Few years ago, I visited Barcelona City and it really struck me with its architecture. One of the famous architects in Barcelona was Antoni Gaudi who was the pioneering figure of Art Nouveau and is held as a key figure in the modernist movement. . Gaudi from the early age was surrounded by natural world and because of his weak health, instead of playing with other kids, he spent time inspecting and studying nature. It possible, that was a big part of the forming of his architectural style.



Sagrada Família by Antoni Gaudi



1894- 1930 Nativity Facade of Sagrada Família by Antoni Gaudi

I guess Antony Gaudi was extraordinary person even in College, because famously the principal Elies Rogent said, “I do not know if we have awarded this degree to a madman or to a genius; only time will tell.”

Gaudi's career began in his young age. Straight after graduating, he designed a shop display case was shown in World's Fair in 1879. The great architect during his lifetime created one masterpiece after another: the Belles guard Tower, Park Guell, , the church on the Güell Estate, Casa Batlló, La Pedrera, and lastly, the Church of the Sagrada Familia. No other city has as many buildings on the UNESCO World Heritage List as Barcelona. The list for Barcelona contains nine entries, and all of them are works from the Modernisme.



Parc Güell 1900- 1914



Casa Milà by Antoni Gaudí 1906- 1912.

The Art Nouveau period was short, but left an indelible mark in history. I was in love with this type of art even before knowing about Art Nouveau history. I love it because it is very feminine, decorative and so close to the nature. I am excited to try out this style in my own work.