

Art Nouveau

Art Nouveau (from French for 'new art') is a movement in Western art and design which reached its peak during the 1890s. Hallmarks of the Art Nouveau style are flat, decorative patterns; intertwined organic forms such as stems or flowers; an emphasis on handcrafting as opposed to machine manufacturing; the use of new materials; and the rejection of earlier styles.

In general, sinuous, curving lines also characterise Art Nouveau, although right-angled forms are also typical, especially as the style was practiced in Scotland and in Austria.

Art Nouveau embraced all forms of art and design: architecture, furniture, glassware, graphic design, jewellery, painting, pottery, metalwork, and textiles. This was a sharp contrast to the traditional separation of art into the distinct categories of fine art (painting and sculpture) and applied arts (ceramics, furniture, and other practical objects).

The term Art Nouveau comes from an art gallery in Paris, France, called 'Maison de l'Art Nouveau' (house of new art), which was run by French dealer Siegfried Bing.

In his gallery, Bing displayed not only paintings and sculpture but also ceramics, furniture, metalwork, and Japanese art. Sections of the gallery were devoted to model rooms that artists and architects designed in the Art Nouveau style.

Art Nouveau flourished in a number of European countries, many of which developed their own names for the style. Art Nouveau was known in France as 'style Guimard', after French designer Hector Guimard; in Italy as the 'stile floreale' (floral style) or 'stile Liberty', after British Art Nouveau designer Arthur Lasenby Liberty; in Spain as 'modernisme'; in Austria as 'Sezessionstil' (secession style); and in Germany as 'Jugendstil' (youth style). These diverse names reflect the widespread adoption of the movement, which had centres in major cities all over Europe – Paris and Nancy in France; Darmstadt and Munich in Germany; Brussels, Belgium; Glasgow, Scotland; Barcelona, Spain; Vienna, Austria; Prague, Czech Republic; and Budapest, Hungary.

Britain

Art Nouveau in Britain evolved out of the already established arts and crafts movement. Founded in 1861 by English designer William Morris, the arts and crafts movement emphasised the importance of handcrafted work. Morris's devotion to handmade articles was a reaction against shoddy machine-made products that were flooding the English marketplace as the industrial revolution expanded.

The arts and crafts movement also promoted a totally designed environment in which everything from wallpaper to silverware was made according to a unified design.

British Art Nouveau designers of the 1890s shared Morris's dedication to hand-crafted work and integrated designs. To these principles they added new forms and materials, establishing the aesthetic of the Art Nouveau style.

In the graphic arts, Aubrey Beardsley drew illustrations for periodicals such as *The Yellow Book* (1894-1895), and for an edition of the play *Salomé* (1894) by Irish-born writer Oscar Wilde. Beardsley's vigorous use of line and distinctive double-curves known as 'whiplash lines' have become equated with British Art Nouveau in the popular imagination.

In Glasgow, Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh also developed a rectilinear version of Art Nouveau, which he employed in numerous buildings and their furnishings. In the Glasgow School of Art, completed in two phases (eastern section 1897-1899, western section 1906-1909), he used contemporary materials in an elegant, angular style.