

# The Japonism influences in Alphonse Mucha's *art nouveau* style posters

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## Abstract

The objective of this study is to elucidate the impact of Japan, which socially and culturally opened its doors to the world in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, on the *art nouveau* movement that emerged in Europe during that period. The aesthetic understanding of Japan during this era provided a source of inspiration for *art nouveau*, particularly evident in the organic lines and patterns of the movement. The effects of this movement seen in the works of Alphonse Mucha, a prominent representative of *art nouveau*. Hence, this study concentrates on the posters of Mucha, selected through purposive sampling. The selected posters underwent analysis from the perspective of graphic design principles, utilizing the qualitative research method of semiotic analysis. These analyses provide scientific examination of the indicators used in the design of selected posters. Furthermore, it sheds light on the impact of Japanese aesthetic on European art.

## Keywords

graphic design, alphonse mucha, art nouveau, poster design, japonism

## Highlights

- *Art nouveau* emphasizing not only functionality but also aesthetic refinement, challenging the notion that designs should merely convey information.
- Alphonse Mucha's poster designs in the *art nouveau* style not only represent a mere aesthetic revolution but also signify an important turning point in the graphic design world as products of cultural interactions and syntheses.
- The influence of Far Eastern culture on the emergence of *art nouveau* in Europe profoundly shaped the graphic design of the era, enriching aesthetic understanding.

# Alphonse Mucha'nın *art nouveau* tarzı afişlerinde Japonizm etkileri

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## Atıf

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## Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, 19. yüzyılın sonları ve 20. yüzyılın başlarında sosyal ve kültürel olarak dünyaya kapılarını açan Japonya'nın, o dönemde Avrupa'da ortaya çıkan *art nouveau*ya (yeni sanat) olan etkilerini ortaya koymaktır. Dönemin Japon estetik anlayışı, özellikle hareketin organik çizgileri ve desenlerinde belirgin bir ilham kaynağı olmuştur. Bu akımın etkileri, önde gelen *art nouveau* temsilcilerinden biri olan ünlü afiş tasarımcısı Alphonse Mucha'nın eserlerinde açıkça görülmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu araştırma Mucha'nın amaçlı örnekleme yoluyla seçilmiş afişlerini ele almaktadır. Belirlenen afişler, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden göstergebilimsel çözümleme tekniği kullanılarak grafik tasarım ilkeleri açısından analiz edilmiştir. Bu analizler, belirlenen afişlerin tasarımında kullanılan göstergelerin bilimsel bir perspektiften incelenmesini sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca, bu analizlerin Japon estetik anlayışının Avrupa sanatı ve tasarımı üzerindeki etkisini aydınlatması da hedeflenmektedir.

## Anahtar kelimeler

grafik tasarım, alphonse mucha, art nouveau, afiş tasarımı, japonizm

## Öne çıkanlar

- Art nouveau*, sadece bilgi iletmekle sınırlı olmaması gerektiğini öne sürerek, tasarımların işlevselliğine ek olarak estetik niteliğe de vurgu yapmaktadır.
- Alphonse Mucha'nın *art nouveau* tarzındaki afiş tasarımları, yalnızca bir estetik devrimi temsil etmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda kültürel etkileşimlerin ve sentezlerin ürünü olarak grafik tasarım dünyasında önemli bir dönüm noktasını simgelemektedir.
- Uzakdoğu kültürünün Avrupa'da *art nouveau*nun ortaya çıkmasındaki etkisi, dönemin grafik tasarımını derinden etkileyerek estetik anlayışını zenginleştirmiştir.

## Introduction

*Art nouveau*, which emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, aimed to eliminate the distinction between art and craft, influenced by the arts and crafts movement that became widespread in England during the period. Arts and crafts movement emerged in a world that rapidly industrialized subsequent to Industrial Revolution, leading to a decrease in handcraftsmanship and its replacement by machines. The loss of value in craftsmanship has led to mass-produced products being cheap and lacking aesthetics. At that rate, the arts and crafts movement initiated by William Morris and John Ruskin aimed to restore the lost value of craftsmanship by combining art and craft.

*Art nouveau*, also known by new art globally, was influenced by the arts and crafts movement and the philosophy of Morris and Ruskin, which led to the birth of *art nouveau*. This movement emerged as a reaction to mass-produced products lacking aesthetics due to industrialization and emphasized craftsmanship. Advocating the necessity of combining art and craft to create functional products, the pioneers of this movement aimed to aesthetically improve each field from architecture to graphic design. Poster designs, which are an important element of graphic design, have also gained the status of works of art owing to this movement. The poster designs of the era have started to be perceived not only as a means of conveying a message, but also as works of art. During the *art nouveau* movement, artists actively engaged in poster design, with some becoming prominent leaders in the field (Li, 2018, p. 170). Alphonse Mucha could be a fulfilling sample in this matter. Because, he became globally recognized with his poster designs inspired by this emerging art movement.

The current researches on Mucha's *art nouveau* posters are mostly giving historical information about the movement. Taking as an example of the current study, *Movement in France as an Example* by Nan Li analyzes the historical environment for artists who had participated in poster design (Li, 2018, p.167). In this context, the problem research focuses on is; there is not much research specifically addressing Mucha's poster design from an *art nouveau* perspective, through graphic design principles and semiotics. Considering this information, the research questions aim to answer the following questions:

- Based on the findings obtained through graphic design principles and semiotic analysis, what specific elements of Japonism are identified in Mucha's works?
- How does the study define and contextualize Japonism, and why is it relevant to investigate its influence on Mucha's *art nouveau* style posters?

In this context, the research aims to fulfill the answers of the questions above. The main purpose of this article is to examine the influences of Japonism in Mucha's *art nouveau* style posters. The research aims to understand how Mucha was influenced by Japanese art and culture and how these influences are reflected in his poster designs. In this context, the study seeks to identify specific elements of Japonism in Mucha's works through the application of graphic design principles and semiotic analysis.

Analyzing the graphic language and structure of Mucha's posters influenced by Japanese

art in the context of *art nouveau*, one of the most well-known representatives of the movement, is an important sample in graphic design and art history literature. His posters also represent a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures in terms of design. Furthermore, the influence of Far Eastern culture and art on the emergence of the *art nouveau* movement in Europe and its contribution to the graphic design field of the period hold a significant place in the literature. Because the aesthetic of the poster designs of the period was devoid of aesthetics and carried only a functional understanding, this trend was broken owing to the movement and artistic qualities were attributed to the posters. This situation represents a milestone for the field of graphic design. The research will also help to better understand how indicator function, their meanings and cultural values, especially through *art nouveau* poster examples examined from a semiotic perspective.

## Methodology

Within the framework of the research method, the sample of the study consists of two posters designed by Mucha for the renowned theater actress of the time, Sarah Bernhardt. These posters are advertisements for the theater plays *Gismonda* (Sardou, 1894) and *Medée* (Corneille, 1635/2016). The selected works were analyzed using the qualitative research method of semiotic analysis. These analyses enable a scientific examination of the signs used in the design of the posters comprising the sample of the study. Roland Barthes advertising poster analysis can be cited as an example of the research method. In this paper, Barthes analysis the signs in the poster individually by skimming of what they refer. In his works titled *Photographic Message and the Rhetoric of the Image*, Barthes argues that the connotative meaning in photography can be distinguished from the denotative meaning (Barthes, 1977, p. 30-33). In this context, This research paper aims to analyze the signs in the design of the identified posters through semiotics, employing Barthes' framework -including the utilization of colors, typography, and page layout- and also to evaluate them by comparing them with contemporary graphic design principles. This approach will also offer profound insights into the cultural and symbolic meanings embedded within visual communication.

## The Japonism influences in Mucha's *art nouveau* style posters

### **Arts and crafts movement and *art nouveau***

In the 1880s, the rapid industrialization in England and the widespread adoption of machine-based mass production instead of handcraftsmanship reduced the importance of the concept of craftsmanship. The increasing shift towards mass production-based, cheap, and aesthetically lacking products has caused confusion in society. The arts and crafts movement first spread in Europe and later reached to Japan. At the same time, it also laid the groundwork for *art nouveau*. Semra Gür Üstüner explained the impacts of the arts and crafts movement as follows (2017, p. 308):

One of the founders of the movement aiming to return to the handicrafts of the middle ages, William Morris, focused on traditional block printing and hand weaving, transferring all kinds of plants grown in the gardens of the Victorian era to upholstery fabrics, tapestries, and wallpapers with the elevated aesthetics of handicrafts. The predominant feature of the *art nouveau* movement, which embraced the views of arts and crafts but developed a new expressive language, is the distinctive, flowing curves evident in both the form and surface decoration of the object.

As Gür Üstüner points out, arts and crafts was influenced by medieval botanical motifs and, in this regard, served as a source of inspiration for *art nouveau*. Arts and crafts advocated for the production of aesthetically strong products and proposed the integration of art and craft as a means to achieve this (Kılınçaslan, 2010, p. 27). Thus, arts and crafts, which laid the groundwork for the *art nouveau* movement has emerged.



Image 1. Trellis wallpaper (Morris, 1862)

*Art nouveau*, which lasted approximately between 1895 and 1905, is an art movement characterized by a stylized vegetal-curvilinear ornamentation approach, rooted in the arts and crafts movement (Balkan, 2017, p. 1487). Widely known in English as the "ornamental style", this art movement can be translated into Turkish as "süs sanat tarzı" (decorative art style). The movement emerged as a result of a new and original quest for art towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similar to arts and crafts, it arose in reaction to the aesthetic detachment and repetitiveness of mass-produced products resulting from industrialization. Influencing various fields of art including architecture, interior design, glass design, and graphic design, it aimed to amalgamate art and craft concepts while drawing inspiration from nature. Artists of this movement incorporated floral and plant motifs into their works, developing a decorative attitude.

The pioneers of *art nouveau* aimed to transform art from merely decorating the walls of the wealthy to becoming an accessible medium that unites people. In pursuit of this goal, art could reach every segment of society. *Art nouveau* advocated for almost all produced items to be transformed into works of art through decorative techniques (Becer, 1999, p. 100). It even argued for the use of the decorative elements of art in mass-produced items when craftsmanship was insufficient. According to *art nouveau* philosophy, all objects of everyday life, from sewer grates to toilet seat covers, should encompass both

functionality and aesthetic concerns (Balkan, 2017, p. 1487). According to this movement, art is expected to spread every aspect of life, and furthermore, it carries the endeavor to beautify every touched object. Ernst Gombrich expressed his views on the subject as follows (1999, p. 535):

Particularly in England, critics and artists were deeply saddened by the decline seen in the handicrafts as a result of the industrial revolution, and they loathed the cheap and vulgar imitations made by machines of what once had a certain meaning and distinctive nobility.

During this period, all fields of art and design, from architecture to graphic design, moved away from mass production, drawing inspiration from medieval mosaics and motifs, and pursued a decorative and ornamental style. On the other hand, capturing original styles by observing nature was also crucial for *art nouveau* artists (Ayaydın, 2015, p. 67). Therefore, the pioneers of *art nouveau* aimed to combine their longing for the past with new styles to create a new and original style. Emphasizing aesthetics as the primary concern in every aspect of art and design, they aimed to transform industrial products into works of art. One of the areas influenced by this idea was graphic design. According to this philosophy, poster designs of the period, which were solely concerned with conveying messages, also transformed into powerful works of art aesthetically. As a result of this movement, posters were liberated from being evaluated merely on a functional level and were transformed into aesthetically pleasing entities.

A poster is a graphic design element utilized for advertising and announcing a product or message. Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, poster designs were primarily concerned with effectively conveying the message to the audience. However, with the emergence of *art nouveau*, a more aesthetic approach began to be embraced across all areas of design. Poster designs, as part of this transformation, became emancipated and evolved into a concept that carried greater aesthetic concerns. As a result of this transformation, graphic designers of the period also began to be recognized as artists.

During that era, Japan, which was newly opening its doors to the world, underwent a process of modernization internally. With this process, Japan, specializing in woodblock printing and painting at the time, influenced Europe in this field. Graphic designers working in the *art nouveau* style of the period also began to produce woodblock prints inspired by Japanese woodblock print art. Thus, Japanese art and lifestyle influenced European artists, leading to the emergence of *art nouveau* poster designs. *Art nouveau* also advocates for the unifying power of art in response to the individuality born out of industrialization. Bringing together the arts and artists of different cultures is highly significant for this movement. Therefore, although rooted in the arts and crafts movement, *art nouveau* was influenced by the decorative elements adopted by Japanese painting art with the opening of Japan to the world during that period.

### ***Ukiyo-e, Japonism and common features with art nouveau***

Japan's closing of its doors to the world in the 16<sup>th</sup> century delayed the country's



modernization process. However, reopening its doors to the world in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Japan began to be influenced by the cultural and artistic movements around it and entered a process of modernization (Azılıoğlu & Yılmaz, 2020, p. 581). Ukiyo-e, a widespread printmaking art resulting from technical developments, is referred to as Japan's period of artistic modernization. The Ukiyo-e period rapidly brought about modernization in all areas of art. Japanese woodblock print art began to develop with colored woodblock printing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and gained worldwide recognition by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Japanese woodblock prints also influenced European artists such as Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh, as well as serving as inspiration for *art nouveau*-style poster designs. Mucha, a painter from Prague, is also among the artists influenced by Japanese woodblock print art. Hasan Kıran expressed his views on the subject in his article as follows (2008, p. 150): "European art lovers saw Ukiyo-e, which had become almost an art movement, as a kind of Japonism."

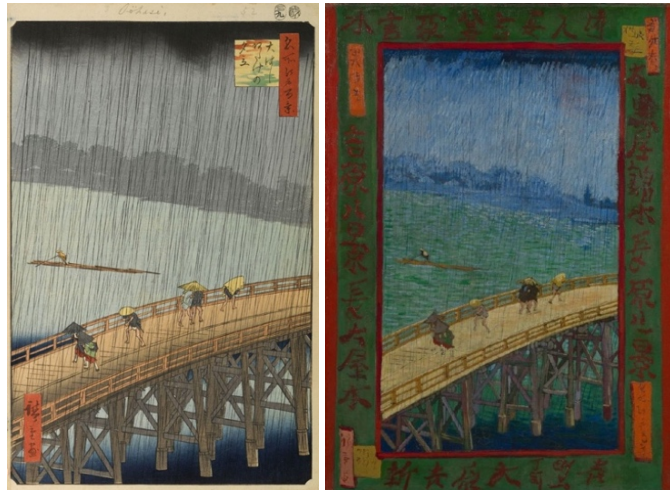


Image 2 and 3. *Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi bridge and Atake painting* (Hiroshige, 1857) and *Bridge in the rain: After Hiroshige painting* (van Gogh, 1887)

The term Japonism is used to describe the influence of Japanese woodcut print art on Europe. In Japanese art, decorative elements, which *art nouveau* also favored, are frequently utilized. Japanese woodblock print art employs these decorative elements in the form of intricate motifs. Similarly, *art nouveau*, inspired by it, incorporates floral patterns and organic curves into its works, drawing from nature. Because, *art nouveau* was geographically widespread around the world, the movement received influences from also east, especially from Japan. The flat perspective and strong colors of Japanese woodcuts had influences on *art nouveau*. The clear designs with contrast colors, organic forms and natural motifs have leapt across Europe (Harmsen, 2012, 5<sup>th</sup> September). Consequently, it is believed that *art nouveau*, influenced by the approach of Japanese art, similarly draws inspiration from nature. Moreover, the pioneers of these two artistic movements keenly observe their surroundings and incorporate motifs inspired by nature into their works.

### **Alphonse Mucha's art nouveau style posters with japonism influences and analysis of Gismonda and Medée theatre posters**

With the impact of the industrial revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the concepts of art and design were commercialized, deviating from aesthetic concerns. Rooted in the necessity of not commercializing art, the arts and crafts movement advocated for the artist also being a craftsman and emphasized that works of art should not undergo a mass production process (Özaltun, 2022, p. 586). However, the *art nouveau* movement embraced concepts of observation, interpretation, and understanding. *Art nouveau* poster designs represent a pivotal point in this regard. This is because it introduced the perspective that posters should not only serve a functional purpose but should also be aesthetically sophisticated within the fields of graphic design. Mucha's distinctive style gained fame for his *art nouveau*-inspired ornaments and poster designs, which were created with both decorative elements inspired message.

Prague-based artist Mucha, influenced by the *art nouveau* movement, transformed art from an elitist concept accessible only to the wealthy to one that could be accessed by everyone. This movement, influenced by arts and crafts, also advocated for preserving craftsmanship against industrialization. Renowned for its embellishments, the movement succeeded in breaking away from the classical framework of art and introduced asymmetric, stylized decorative motifs. *Art nouveau* is an art movement that incorporates organic forms inspired by nature, floral motifs, and decorative embellishments. Embracing the essence of this movement, Mucha focused on detailed and aesthetic elements in his designs. Therefore, Mucha's inclusion of decorative elements in his poster designs can be considered a fitting choice in line with his artistic vision and the aesthetic expectations of his time. The artist has embraced the principle of simplicity advocated by the *art nouveau* movement while combining soft figures with minimal lines using motifs inspired by nature, similar to Japanese woodblock prints (Ayaydın, 2015, p. 67).

*Art nouveau*, influenced by the arts and crafts movement, kept poster designs away from commercial concerns and particularly liberated advertising posters in this regard. Mucha's poster designs also differed significantly from the advertising techniques of the time. Created with an artistic approach devoid of commercial concerns, these posters were designed to leave lasting impressions on visual memory. The milestone for Mucha lies in the poster designs he created for the actress Bernhardt during that period in Paris the year of 1894 (Johnston, 2014, p. 7). Bernhardt was one of the most famous actress of her time (Duckett, 2015). The posters he made for Bernhardt's plays include a total of seven works for the plays *Gismonda*, *Medée*, *Lorenzaccio* (Musset, 1834/2015), *La Dame Aux Camelias* (Dumas Fils, 1856), *La Samaritaine* (Rostand, 1910), *La Tosca* (Sardou, 1910), and *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 1603/1886). Mucha played a significant role in popularizing *art nouveau* with these posters. Actually, the first play called *Gismonda* had already a poster design before but Bernhardt was not satisfied with the final result. Therefore, she wanted a redesigning for the poster. The play was written specially for Bernhardt by Victorien Sardou. It was about a saving the queen's son who fell into a well. The queen promises to



marry the one who saves the son. Meanwhile, Mucha was volunteered to design the poster for the play *Gismonda*. He designed the poster (image 4) within two weeks and Bernhardt was amazed by the result. So she signed a contract with Mucha for six years. Hence, Mucha's Japan art inspired decorative approach had been introduced to *Parisiens* in 1894. He had brought a new approach to the poster on Paris streets (Henderson, 1980, p. 10). His unique style and artistic approach in these posters demonstrated that advertising posters could also be considered works of art.

When examined within the context of graphic design principles, Mucha's posters in the *art nouveau* style bear specific indicators in the *Gismonda* poster (image 4). Mucha created a different style poster of his time in both design and colouring. In contrast to other poster designer of his time, he chose truly elongated shape and used pale colours such whites, beiges, mauves, dull purples, reds and greens, with decorative touches of gold and silver (Dvorak, 1980, p. 134). In contrast, the artist used stroke lines around the elements made the image visible. It captures Bernhardt's theatrical persona with a touch of *art nouveau* elegance. The way Mucha portrayed her as a Byzantine noble woman adds a layer of exoticism and mystique to her image, which was characteristic of Mucha's style. The inclusion of the palm leaf, orchid headdress, and the dress adds to the sense of drama and richness, suited to Bernhardt's theatrical presence (Balkan, 2016, p. 51).



Image 4. *Gismonda* theatre poster (Mucha, 1894)

It's a one of the unique examples of the fusion of art and advertising that characterized Mucha's work. One of the other indicator's observed in the poster that the motifs used in this poster resemble Byzantine mosaics. The reason for this choice may reflect the artist's intention to combine different aesthetic elements while using the *art nouveau* style in his works and drawing inspiration from medieval mosaics to give his design a unique

character. The resemblance of the motifs in Mucha's poster (image 4) to Byzantine mosaics may indicate that the artist drew inspiration from past art movements and various cultures. Geometric patterns, frequently seen in mosaics, also find a place in Mucha's poster (image 4). These patterns, combined with the organic forms of *art nouveau*, embody the characteristic features of the era. Additionally, the curved shape of the artist's name in the center of the poster resembles Byzantine columns from the middle ages. These details not only reflect the *art nouveau* style but also echo the influences of mosaic art. This choice emphasizes Mucha's efforts to combine classical and contemporary elements in his designs, enriching artworks with richness and depth. Ultimately, the *Gismonda* poster (image 4) represents a synthesis of various periods in art history, bringing together different aesthetic concepts.



Image 5 and 6. Photograph of Mosaic of *Theodora* at Basilica of San Vitale (Milošević, 2015)

The typography used in the poster consists of a font style resembling Greek letters. This font style has been applied consistently in both the title, the artist's name, and the text indicating the location of the theater where the play is staged. These texts have been handwritten by Mucha. Seda Balkan expressed her views on the subject as follows (2017, p. 64):

The dimensions of the poster printed using the lithography technique are 216x74.2 cm. The elongated format of the poster printed using the lithography technique is the result of Mucha being influenced by a type of Japanese print that emerged followed by the long, slender paintings in China.

# GISMONDA

Image 7. "Gismonda FG" typeface (Niholson, 1971)

There are also exists a typeface named "Gismonda FG" ( image 7). This font style was possibly designed by Geoff Nicholson for a typeface studio called Face Photosetting, located in London, in the year 1971 for the first time (Nicholson, 2013). Later on, revised versions of the typeface was published. The name of this typeface originates from the play *Gismonda*, starring the French actress Bernhardt. During the development of the

font, Bernhardt's graceful posture and captivating performance served as sources of inspiration.

Another famous poster by Mucha is the one he designed for the play *Medée* in 1898. The play which inspired from Antique Greek mythology is a tragedy explores the dark depths of the human psyche and remains a powerful and enduring tragedy in the canon of Greek literature. The background of this poster (image 8) bears traces of Japanese art, also known as Ukiyo-e. Similar to the *Gismonda* poster, Mucha's work on this poster was prepared using the lithography technique developed in the 1700s to reduce the production costs of theater posters.



Image 8. *Medée* theatre poster (Mucha, 1898)

Many of the motifs used in Mucha's posters share similarities with *art nouveau* and are designed with inspiration drawn from nature. The artist frequently incorporates natural elements such as leaves, sun, and tree branches in his works. He also depicts female figures in the same organic manner. These natural motifs are synonymous with the curvilinear and organic lines of *art nouveau*. When analyzed in terms of its literal meaning, this poster displays the title of the play *Medée* created using forms resembling Byzantine mosaics, at the top. The composition follows a vertical arrangement, with the main character of the play, *Medée* positioned in the center to correspond with this vertical structure. Bernhardt's name is situated parallel to the main character. Additionally, two figures placed at the bottom of the composition are arranged horizontally, intersecting the other elements of the vertically oriented poster. The character's head is positioned in front of yellow, orange, and green circles. These colored circles create focal points against the white background, adding depth to the composition. Similar tones are used in the

title to maintain visual continuity within the composition.

When the poster is considered in terms of its implied meaning, it becomes evident that this arrangement aims to highlight the *Medée* figure, distinguishing her from the other elements and placing her in the foreground. In comparison to the poster (image 4) for the play *Gismonda*, it is observed that warmer colors are employed more prominently in the *Medée* poster (image 8). In this poster, the artist adds warmth and emotion to the overall atmosphere by using pastel tones such as orange, green, and brown. In conclusion, Mucha's *Medée* poster embodies both the key features of the *art nouveau* style and successful graphic design principles. Natural motifs, graceful lines, harmonious colors, and decorative details combine to create an aesthetic and visually captivating experiences.

The integration of Japonism into Mucha's *art nouveau* style posters represents a convergence of artistic traditions from different cultural contexts. By infusing Japanese aesthetic elements into his designs, Mucha transcended the boundaries of European art and embraced a global perspective. This cultural exchange facilitated a cross-pollination of ideas and techniques, resulting in the emergence of innovative artistic expressions. By embracing cultural diversity and integrating elements from different cultural contexts, Mucha's posters exemplify the dynamic evolution of graphic design in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ketenci & Bilgili, 2020, p. 20). These findings highlight the importance of cultural exchange in shaping artistic movements and underscore the enduring legacy of Japonism in the history of graphic design.

## Conclusion

The poster designs of *art nouveau* play a pivotal role in the evolution of graphic design. At the heart of this significant transformation lies the notion that designs should not only focus on functionality but also be aesthetically refined. This approach has introduced the understanding within the realm of graphic design that poster designs should not merely convey information but also provide a visual spectacle. The influence of Japanese culture and art on the emergence of the *art nouveau* movement in Europe has significantly contributed to graphic design of the era. This influence has allowed for a deepening of aesthetic understanding in designs and facilitated the acquisition of artistic value in works. Particularly, the impressive poster designs of Mucha stand out as exemplars highlighting this aesthetic revolution.

The elongated slender figures and decorative elements in the *art nouveau* style by Mucha have not only influenced his contemporaries but also served as inspiration for Japanese Manga designs. This clearly demonstrates the traces of cultural interaction and synthesis in the evolution of graphic design. Whether the use of decorative elements in Mucha's theater poster designs is appropriate in the context of graphic design can vary depending on the language used and the purpose of the design. If the design aims to attract attention, create an aesthetic atmosphere, or evoke an emotional impact, Mucha's focus on decorative elements can be considered a successful choice. However, if the purpose of

the design is information dissemination or clarity, excessive use of decorative elements may overshadow the functionality of the design. Therefore, Mucha's emphasis on decorative elements should be evaluated based on the objectives and context of the design.

Compared to contemporary posters, the *Gismonda* and *Medée* play posters contain a greater number of decorative elements. These posters are influenced by the *art nouveau* style, which typically features natural motifs, graceful lines, and visually rich details. The *Gismonda* and *Medée* posters are examples of this style, abundant with organic motifs such as twisting branches, flowers, and other natural elements surrounding the central female figures. Additionally, ornamental patterns and designs used in the clothing and hair of the female figures contribute to the decorative touch of the posters. These decorative elements not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of the posters but also can reflect the theme and emotional tone of the plays. For instance, Mucha's *Gismonda* poster portrays Bernhardt as a queen, using rich decorative details to create a luxurious atmosphere and a romantic aura.

While contemporary posters may adopt a minimalist approach with fewer decorative elements, traditional theater posters like *Gismonda* and *Medée* provide more visual complexity and detail. These posters serve as a form of artistic expression to capture the viewer's attention and set the atmosphere of the play. Societies tend to influence and be influenced by other arts and cultures, opening themselves to the world socially and culturally. In this context, Mucha's poster designs in the *art nouveau* style not only represent a mere aesthetic revolution but also signify an important turning point in the graphic design world as products of cultural interactions and syntheses. These designs have laid the groundwork for a rich and diverse design language by bringing together different cultural heritages.



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