

Large print labels

Alphonse Mucha: Spirit of Art Nouveau

Alphonse Mucha
Spirit of Art Nouveau
15 June – 22 September 2024

Guided tours

Daily 12pm, 2pm

Wed 6.30pm

Children's trail

Pick up a free children's drawing trail that provides young visitors with a fun way to experience the exhibition.

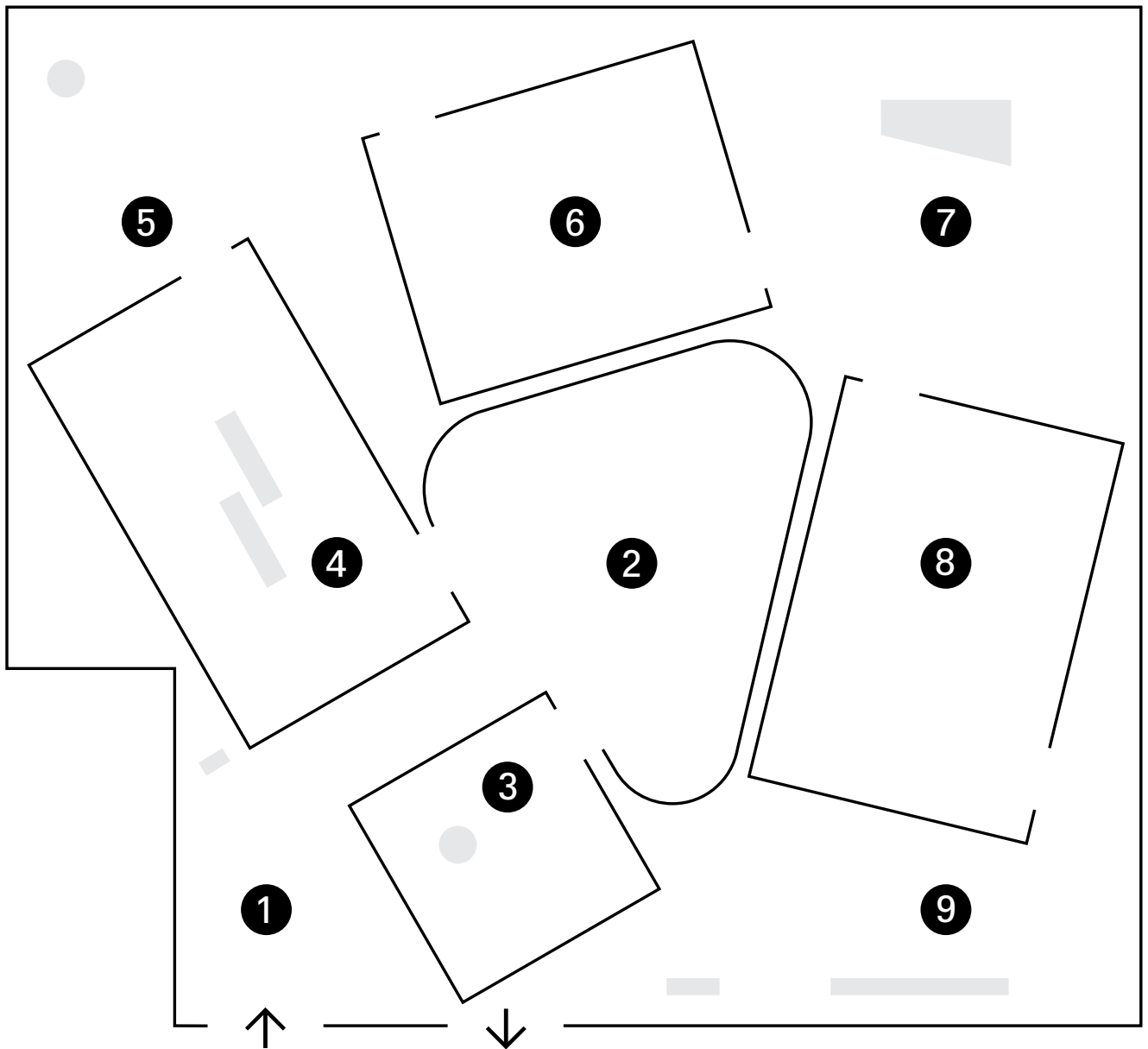
Free audio experience

English / Français / 简体中文 / 日本語

Listen to a curator-led tour.

Join AGNSW wifi and go to agnsw.art/mucha-audio





- 1 A Bohemian in Paris (pp 7–19)
- 2 The image maker (pp 20–33)
- 3 The mystic (pp 34–45)
- 4 The Mucha style (pp 46–72)
- 5 The cosmopolitan (pp 73–82)
American sojourn (pp 83–90)
A photographic theatre (pp 91–96)
- 6 The artist-philosopher (pp 97–111)
- 7 The patriot (pp 112–130)
- 8 The Slav Epic (pp 131–132)
- 9 Influence and legacy (pp 133–165)

Director's message

Welcome to *Alphonse Mucha: Spirit of Art Nouveau*, the most comprehensive exhibition of Mucha's art ever seen in Australia. Drawn from the significant Mucha Family Collection administered by the Mucha Foundation in Prague, this major exhibition showcases the work of one of the most distinctive and fascinating artists of modern European art.

An exceptional project like this international collaboration is only possible thanks to the extraordinary efforts and dedication of many people in Prague, Sydney, and beyond. I express my gratitude to all those at the Mucha Foundation for their cooperation and generosity in lending such a substantial number of outstanding works to us. Critical has been the close involvement of Mucha Foundation curator Tomoko Sato, working with the Art Gallery's senior curator of exhibitions, Jackie Dunn.

My renewed thanks go to the NSW Government and Destination NSW for their support for this very special event in our exhibition program and for continuing to be such a loyal partner in bringing extraordinary works of art to Australia. I extend my gratitude to all my Art Gallery colleagues for their dedicated efforts, and to all our esteemed visitors for joining us in the exhibition to experience the art of Alphonse Mucha.

Michael Brand

Director

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Minister's message

On behalf of the NSW Government, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the major exhibition *Alphonse Mucha: Spirit of Art Nouveau*. The Czech painter, illustrator and pioneering graphic artist Alphonse Mucha arrived in Paris in 1887 and in less than a decade had revolutionised poster design to become a pioneer of French art nouveau.

Remarkably, this is the most significant solo exhibition of the artist's works ever to be seen in Australia. Showcasing key works from the important collection established by Mucha's own family through the Mucha Foundation, the exhibition reveals the evolution of Mucha's thinking, from the early advertising posters which made his name, to the late patriotic painting cycles.

With a career spanning over five decades, Mucha was celebrated as one of the greatest graphic artists of his time and his life's work reflected powerfully on the turbulent history of twentieth-century Europe. Exclusive to Sydney, this exhibition takes visitors on a journey into the art and life of one of the world's most influential artists. I am sure you will be surprised, moved and uplifted by these works and stories. Similarly, I invite you to take some time to explore our beautiful state including its cultural and natural wonders.

The Hon John Graham MLC

Minister for Jobs and Tourism

Minister for the Arts

Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy

At the turn of the 20th century, Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939) was one of the most famous artists in the world. Though Czech, he is inextricably linked to our image of *fin de siècle* Paris. His era-defining posters exemplify the very spirit of art nouveau: *new art*, a dynamic, self-consciously modern style that broke free from convention to unite art and design and revolutionise decorative form.

Mucha's fame as a poster artist has often overshadowed his artistic versatility and his political and spiritual complexity. A painter, sculptor, photographer and designer, Mucha was also an inspiring teacher and theorist who advocated through art for political freedom.

Born Alfons Maria Mucha in the small Moravian town of Ivančice in today's Czech Republic, then a Slavic province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Mucha's life path would be defined by colonial resistance as much as by his prodigious skill. His quest for beauty, as visual and moral harmony, was a message of liberation and cultural revival.

Through more than 200 works generously lent by the Mucha Foundation in Prague, the exhibition helps uncover the multifaceted and visionary artist behind the famous images. From struggling Bohemian illustrator to feted international star, and as mystic philosopher, committed patriot and champion of Slav culture, Mucha is revealed as a consistent advocate for the inspirational power of art and a figure of continuing relevance today.

All works by Alphonse Mucha unless otherwise stated.
All works courtesy of Mucha Trust unless otherwise stated.

1

A Bohemian in Paris

After beginning his career as a scenery painter in Vienna, Mucha attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich before arriving in Paris in 1887. The city's economy and arts were flourishing, with artists coming from every corner of the globe and Mucha became a leading figure in the Czech and Slav communities.

Continuing financial support from his long-term patron, Count Eduard Khuen-Belasi, enabled further art training, first at the Académie Julian, then the Académie Colarossi. But in early 1889, the Count stopped his allowance and Mucha was forced to work as a commercial artist, supplying illustrations for books and magazines to publishing houses in Paris and Prague.

As a Czech 'bohemian', Mucha was an outsider of the French establishment, and these were difficult years. But he had befriended a wide circle of artists that included the symbolist Nabis (Prophets) at Madame Charlotte Caron's Crèmerie – a restaurant and hostel at rue de la Grande Chaumière that was a meeting place for struggling artists, writers and composers.

Ω1

Self-portrait 1899

oil on board

The self-portrait is a recurring theme in Mucha's paintings and photographs. In many, he wears with pride the embroidered Slavic folk shirt that would become his trademark. Born at the height of the Czech National Revival movement, Mucha grew up to be a passionate believer in pan-Slavism and an independent Czech nation, a sentiment heightened in 1899, the year this self-portrait was painted, following a research trip to the Balkans.

Portrait of Maruška 1908–17

oil on canvas

Twenty-two years his junior, the beautiful and highly educated Maruška (Marie) Chytilová was an art student from Prague when she met Mucha in Paris in 1903, initially taking drawing lessons from him. Married in Prague in 1906, their daughter Jaroslava was born in 1909 and their son Jiří in 1915. Mucha photographed, drew and painted his beloved wife Maruška, and their two children, innumerable times; she was his inspiration and constant supporter throughout his life.

Portrait of Jaroslava 1930

oil on canvas

Portrait of Jiří 1930

oil on canvas

Mrs Mucha's necklace 1906

gold, enamel and semi-precious stones

Necklace with matching earrings 1918

gold, diamonds, rubies and sapphires

Mucha designed the necklace here, made by the Prague jeweller Jan Rechner, as a wedding present for his new bride. Three doves, symbols of love and marriage, their feathers made of opal, form the centrepiece of the necklace, which is also hung with clusters of baton-shaped gemstones.

Mucha's jewellery – including the necklace with matching earrings here that features a portrait medallion of Jiří as a three-year-old – was considered exotically original in its fusion of elements from Slavic, Celtic, Egyptian and other decorative traditions.

Study for 'Memory of Ivančice' c1903

charcoal and pastel on grey paper

Memory of Ivančice: postcard 1909

colour lithograph on paper

Although Mucha spent over 25 years of his life abroad – first in Vienna and Munich, then Paris and the United States – he never stopped thinking of his hometown of Ivančice with affection and nostalgia. While in Paris in 1903, Mucha expressed his longing for home in the painting *Memory of Ivančice*. Here in a sketch and in a postcard of the finished painting, Mucha's sentiment is embodied by a dreamy girl and the town by the tower of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, where the young Mucha was a choirboy. The swallows encircling the church tower allude to his desire for a homecoming.

'Krokodíl': heading for magazine cover c1885

pen and ink on cardboard

'Krokodíl' magazine cover 1888

ink, pencil and watercolour on paper

Mucha began contributing drawings to Czech papers and magazines during the early 1880s. He made many illustrations for satirical magazines such as *Krokodíl*, which was published by his old friend and brother-in-law Filip Kubr. Mucha's design for the magazine's masthead demonstrates his innovative lettering style, an element that was to be fully developed with his graphic work in Paris.

Study for illustration for 'Světobor' magazine: 'Na pousti' (In the desert) 1889

pencil, ink, watercolour and gouache on paper

Page's costume: study for an illustration for 'Le Costume au Théâtre' 1890

pencil, ink and watercolour on cardboard

Costumes for Alexandre Dumas's play 'Ascanio': illustration for 'Le Costume au Théâtre' 1890

colour lithograph on paper

French publisher Lemercier gave Mucha a semi-permanent job making illustrations for *Le Costume au Théâtre*, a magazine devoted to the reproduction of stage sets and costumes from new opera and theatre productions. His work with the magazine provided him with free theatre tickets and it was in 1890 while watching *Cleopatra*, with Sarah Bernhardt in the title role, that Mucha first drew the actor who would change his fortunes.

Study for illustration for 'Grandmother's tales' ('Contes des grand-mères: Le beau palais') 1891

pencil, gouache and watercolour on paper

Mucha produced 45 text illustrations and ten full-page illustrations for Xavier Marmier's book of fairy tales, *Contes des grand-mères*. The publisher, Librairie Furne Jouvett, was so impressed they decided to submit them for exhibition at the Paris Salon. To Mucha's surprise and delight, they received an honourable mention.

The devil and Mr Twardowsky: study for an illustration for 'The tale of Pan Twardowsky' (a variation of 'Faust') 1888

charcoal and chalk on paper

Not many works are known from Mucha's student days in Paris, but this charcoal drawing survives from his time at the Académie Julian. Whether made as part of his classwork or as an independent project, it anticipates some of the characteristics of Mucha's later illustration style: a fluent and academic approach to figure drawing, a stage-like setting, and a hint of another dimension beyond the visible realm – here a 'vision' seen by the protagonist. Depicted is a scene from the Polish legend of Pan Twardowsky, a sorcerer who entered into a pact with the devil.

**Mucha and his friends at his studio
in rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris
(left to right) Paul Gauguin, Mucha,
Luděk Marold and Gauguin's mistress
Annah 'la Javanaise' c1893–94**

**Paul Gauguin posing for Mucha's
illustration for 'Mémoires d'un éléphant
blanc' by Judith Gautier 1893**

exhibition prints from original glass plate negatives

Judith Gautier

France 1845–1917

The memoirs of a white elephant (*Mémoires d'un éléphant blanc*) 1894

Published by Armand Colin, Paris

In late August 1893, soon after his return from Tahiti, a penniless Paul Gauguin joined the artistic circle at Madame Charlotte's Crèmerie. As Gauguin was preparing for an exhibition of his Tahitian work, Mucha invited him to share his own studio opposite the Crèmerie, which he did until early 1894. Their friendship is captured in Mucha's photographs here, with Gauguin seen both fooling around and posing more formally.

Mucha illustrated Judith Gautier's now classic children's novel, *The memoirs of a white elephant*, first serialised in a magazine then published as a book in 1894. One of the illustrations depicts two men in conversation, one seated and the other standing, the poses directly corresponding to Mucha's photographs of his friend Gauguin.

2

The image maker

By the 1890s, posters had taken centre stage in the visual culture of Paris. The development of colour lithography and the emergent consumer culture of the belle époque gave artists plenty of opportunities to explore the new art form, and the city's roadside hoardings became dynamic outdoor galleries.

The rise of the poster coincided with the emergence in France of the 'new woman', chiefly urban, educated women who became the focus of intense public scrutiny and social debate. One of the most prominent was the great actor Sarah Bernhardt. Mucha's career took a dramatic turn when given the opportunity to design a poster for Bernhardt's latest play *Gismonda*. His revolutionary design with its unusual format, subtle pastel colours and exotic motifs, went up in the early hours of New Year's Day 1895. It electrified Paris, with posters ripped from the streets as soon as they were pasted up. Bernhardt subsequently offered Mucha a six-year contract to produce not only posters, but also stage and costume designs.

Known as 'The Divine Sarah', Bernhardt was perhaps the world's first global celebrity (her world tour of 1891–92 included Sydney), and her endorsement rocketed Mucha to fame.

02

above left:

Sarah Bernhardt: 'La Plume' **art edition poster 1897 1896**

colour lithograph on paper

above right:

Alphonse Mucha **Adolphe Truffier**

France active 1890–1930

'Princesse Lointaine' wall lamp early 1900s

bronze, gold patina; cabochons of malachite, amethyst
and lapis lazuli

This image of Sarah Bernhardt shows her in costume as Mélisande from act three of the play *The faraway princess* (*La princesse lointaine*), written for her by Edmond Rostand. Mucha created it for a banquet held in her honour and to be reproduced in *La Plume* magazine.

As the designer of Bernhardt's costumes and sets, Mucha fashioned her diadem of lilies – a flower that suggests the character's chaste yet sensual nature – as a pearl-encrusted headdress, executed by the great jeweller and glass artist René Lalique.

Bernhardt as *La princesse lointaine* can be seen in the related objects here, including the ornate light fitting inspired by Mucha's iconic image. The success of the play led to the publication of a novelised version, *Ilse, princess of Tripoli* by Robert de Flers, which Mucha designed and illustrated.

Léopold-Émile Reutlinger

Peru/France 1863–1937

Sarah Bernhardt c1895

facsimile photographic album card

'Le Gaulois': special 'Gismonda' issue (Christmas) 1894

printed magazine

Robert de Flers

France 1872–1927

Ilseé, princesse de Tripoli 1897

Published by L'Edition d'Art and H Piazza & Cie, Paris

Gismonda 1894

colour lithograph on paper

On 26 December 1894, with all other artists on Christmas holiday, Mucha picked up a rush job for the printer Lemercier to design a poster for Sarah Bernhardt's latest play, *Gismonda*.

His design proved radical. Its narrow scroll-like format features a life-sized Bernhardt as a Byzantine noblewoman, standing tall in a richly embellished costume, 'crowned' by orchids. With the play's title rendered in mosaic and Bernhardt's name flanked by griffins, Mucha amplified the exotic mood. A nimbus and alcove frame Bernhardt like a saint, catching all the beauty and dignity of the actor's onstage personality.

The pose depicts *Gismonda's* Palm Sunday procession – the climax of the play, a drama set in mediaeval Greece. It was the first of Victorien Sardou's plays that Bernhardt produced, directed and starred in herself.

Bernhardt loved it. She exclaimed: 'Monsieur Mucha, you have made me immortal.'

Lorenzaccio 1896

colour lithograph on paper

This poster advertised the play *Lorenzaccio*, a romantic tragedy by Alfred de Musset. Bernhardt performed the role of the male hero Lorenzaccio (or Lorenzo) de' Medici whose family ruled the city-state of Florence during the Renaissance. Lorenzaccio assassinated his cousin Alessandro de' Medici, the tyrant duke of Florence.

In Mucha's poster the evil duke is symbolically represented as a snarling dragon menacing the Medici coat of arms, while Lorenzaccio is presented as a dashing young man, whose elegantly S-curved figure is silhouetted against an arched window. Against a background reminiscent of Florentine brocade, Mucha brings attention to Bernhardt's face and its contemplation of murder. The death itself is suggested by the tyrant pierced by a dagger, seen in the panel under Lorenzaccio's feet.

The lady of the camellias (La dame aux camélias) 1896

colour lithograph on paper

Sarah Bernhardt considered *The lady of the camellias* by Alexandre Dumas to be the key drama in her repertoire. She played – more than 3000 times – the title role of Camille, the courtesan dying of consumption who releases her lover from his promise to marry her.

Mucha captures the tragedy of the tale with a shocking impact. The grief-stricken heroine leans wearily against a balustrade. In her hair is a white camelia – another held up by a hand at the bottom of the poster – as an emblem of love's ultimate sacrifice.

Mucha presented the tragic heroine as a modern Parisian woman in a chic dress he designed himself, not only revitalising the old-fashioned image of the play but influencing contemporary fashion. The poster would become one of Bernhardt's favourites.

Medea

(Médée) 1898

colour lithograph on paper

Medea was based on a Greek myth and classical play that Catulle Mendès adapted expressly for Sarah Bernhardt. In a decidedly modern twist, it allowed Bernhardt to portray the tragic heroine, Medea – who killed her two children – as a sympathetic figure driven to desperation by a man's betrayal.

Mucha's poster captures the essence of the tragedy in the frozen, staring, figure of the heroine, stiffly holding a bloodstained dagger above her lifeless children. Her dark cascading costume and the stylised landscape show the influence of Japanese art on popular culture, and heighten the atmosphere of the drama.

For the poster, Mucha conceived the idea of a snake bracelet adorning Medea's forearm; Bernhardt liked the design so much that she commissioned the jeweller Georges Fouquet to create a real snake bracelet and ring based on the design to wear with her costume.

Hamlet 1899

colour lithograph on paper

Bernhardt played several male roles in the course of her career. One of the most notable was Hamlet. The adaptation that premiered on 20 May 1899 was specially translated for her into contemporary French; it saw Bernhardt confidently swapping genders and relishing the role of the young hero that she took on at the age of 55.

In this poster, Mucha stresses Hamlet's relationship with the ghost of his murdered father, whose shadowy figure looms in the background, stalking the ramparts of Elsinore. The drowned Ophelia, lying decorated with flowers in a coffin-like panel at Hamlet's feet, emphasises Hamlet's obsession with death. *Hamlet* was the last theatrical poster Mucha created for Bernhardt.

JOB (cigarette papers) 1898

colour lithograph on paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased 1976

Following on from the JOB poster seen to the left, produced in a variety of colours and formats for international markets, this was the second advertisement Mucha designed for the cigarette paper manufacturer Joseph Bardou Company. Their trademark was the initials 'JB' separated by a large diamond often mistaken for a capital 'O' by consumers. In a clever reinforcement of brand identity, the JOB monogram appears throughout the background and in the clasp of the woman's dress.

Here, Mucha's stylised depiction of hair, affectionately mocked at the time as 'macaroni' or 'vermicelli', is both decorative and sensual, and draws heavily on the depiction of the ample and sometimes erotically unruly hair seen in Japanese prints. With her curled-up toes also a symbol of arousal, Mucha delivers another gently sexually charged poster.

JOB (cigarette papers) 1896

colour lithograph on paper

One of Mucha's best-known advertising commissions, this poster established the iconic image of the 'Mucha woman', with her swirls of luxuriant hair and lightly erotic tone. With lit cigarette in hand, Mucha's central character clearly signalled a glamorous, liberated woman bucking accepted gender roles. Head back, eyes half closed and lips parted in pleasure, the smoke that rises from her cigarette forms an arabesque, intertwining with both her hair and the company monogram, 'JOB'. In an example of confident branding, Mucha incorporates the letters decoratively but gives no details of the product at all.

Salon des Cent 20th exhibition 1896

colour lithograph on paper

This poster announced the 20th exhibition of the Salon des Cent, held at the premises of the influential avant-garde journal *La Plume*. Exhibiting artists included Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Pierre Bonnard and Eugène Grasset.

This poster, which secured Mucha's place in the group, introduced his typical style based on curved lines, muted, flattened colours, and strong outlines. The next year, 1897, Mucha held a solo exhibition, showing nearly 450 works, at the Salon des Cent where he was regarded as a cutting-edge artist representing the newest trend.

Imprimerie Cassan Fils 1896

colour lithograph on paper

In this visually complex poster for the Cassan Fils printing works, then one of the largest in France, Mucha contrasts a real – if sensuously languid – semi-naked model with the allegorical, faun-like printer who represents his flourishing industry.

The eyes in the inner border – a mystic motif Mucha would employ often – could be seen to represent the readers of the now ubiquitous printed material circulating at the end of the century.

In a clever self-referential detail, a by-now typical Mucha woman with profusely flowing locks pulls prints off the press that feature yet more young women in her own image.

La Trappistine 1897

colour lithograph on paper

Mucha applied the style he developed for Sarah Bernhardt's theatre posters to this image, an advertisement for a liqueur. Here the graceful figure feels vaguely virginal – entirely suited to advertising a drink made by Benedictine monks. She dominates the composition against a nimbus decorated with circular motifs that would become characteristic of Mucha's style.

In this and the other posters here, Mucha used a centrally placed and idealised woman to communicate – and *sell*. Capturing attention first through her looks, only then does she send an alluring and indirect message about the product being advertised. Unlike the 'macaroni hair' of his JOB posters, the hair here is exaggerated but contained; a single sharp strand acting to lead the eye all the way down via outstretched hand to the bottle.

Moët & Chandon:
Champagne White Star 1899

Moët & Chandon:
Grand Crémant Impérial 1899

colour lithographs on paper

3

The mystic

Art is the expression of innermost feelings ... a spiritual need.

Even while enjoying his greatest career success in Paris, Mucha always sought a higher purpose for his art. The works in this room reveal the impact of Mucha's spiritualist and masonic philosophies on his attitudes to art, and the distinctly symbolist sentiment that underpinned his entire oeuvre.

Mucha met August Strindberg at Madame Charlotte's bohemian colony in 1894, and enjoyed regular philosophical discussions with the writer and mystic. Strindberg was deeply involved in occultism and the pursuit of truth beyond the visible world, and Mucha became persuaded by his notion of the 'mysterious forces' guiding a life's journey.

While pursuing spiritualism, Mucha was increasingly drawn to the theosophical doctrine promoted by Helena Blavatsky and especially the tenet of the 'universal brotherhood of humanity'. The Theosophical Society advocated spiritual enlightenment, studying the 'ancient wisdom' (religion, philosophy and science) of the East and the West. During Mucha's time in Paris, its publications were widely read and discussed at salons and gatherings of artistic and intellectual circles.

Ω3

Self-portrait in Mucha's apartment, New York – photographic experiment with double exposure c1905

Self-portrait: Mucha asleep on his couch in his apartment in rue du Val de Grâce, Paris – paranormal experiment c1897

exhibition prints from original glass plate negatives

In the late 1890s, Mucha befriended two eminent scientists: the parapsychologist Albert de Rochas and the astronomer Camille Flammarion. They explored the scientific basis for occult phenomena, especially extrasensory perception. Studying hypnotism and the role of the medium, they investigated 'mystic psychic forces' – the working of the subconscious mind and the impact of art and music on the emotions.

Mucha regularly participated in their meetings and psychic experiments using a medium (including the famous Madame Lina de Ferkel, whose photographic portrait can be seen later in the exhibition) and occasionally hosted them in his studio. He has caught two of those experiments on camera in the self-portraits here.

Self-portrait in formal masonic regalia as Sovereign Grand Commander of the Czech Supreme Council of Freemasons 1923

exhibition print from original glass plate negative

Jewel for the Pravda Vítězí Lodge, Prague 1928

metal and enamel

Czechoslovakian Freemasons diploma 1925

printing ink on paper

Mucha came to Freemasonry through his interest in spiritualism, drawn to its esoteric aspects; he was initiated to a Masonic Lodge in Paris in 1898. The influence of masonic symbolism is evident throughout his work, especially in his book *Le Pater*, seen in this room.

After the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, Mucha was instrumental in establishing the first Czech-speaking Lodge and soon took high office, eventually as Sovereign Grand Commander. This self-portrait captures him in ceremonial regalia, surrounded by the sacred triangle. Standing in front of an art nouveau wallpaper, Mucha deliberately framed himself against an aureole of stars, a signature motif of the 'Mucha style'.

Vision (study in blue) c1900

pastel on paper

Vision (daybreak) c1900

pastel on paper

Military camp in winter near a city on fire c1900

pastel on grey paper

Male nude sitting on a rock late 1890s

pastel on paper

Dead couple: abandoned early 1900s

charcoal and pastel on blue paper

Weeping girl c1900

black chalk and pastel on blue/grey paper

Mucha's large body of powerfully symbolist expressionistic drawings were produced privately and never exhibited in his lifetime. They contrast with his well-known boldly outlined poster style, rendered with quick strokes in pastel or charcoal. Capturing his visions, doubts and fleeting emotions, Mucha experimented with free, expressive treatments in both pastel and sculpture, attempting in both disciplines to capture a body or a moment's spirit or essence, not its outward appearance.

Holy night c1900

pastel on paper

Study for 'The Moon and the Stars: Evening Star' 1902

Study for 'The Moon and the Stars: The Moon' 1902

Study for 'The Moon and the Stars: Morning Star' 1902

Study for 'The Moon and the Stars: Pole Star' 1902

pen and ink, watercolour on paper

The studies here are for *The Moon and the Stars*, the last series of the decorative panels for which Mucha is so famous. This dramatic series with its shadowy forms and subdued colours, demonstrates how, by 1902, Mucha had developed the concept of the decorative panel from mere embellishment to a higher level of art appropriate to his spiritualist objectives.

Here, the allegorical figures of moon and stars are personified as spiritual beings, illuminating the infinite universe with their mysterious powers. While Mucha again chose to personify the moon and stars as female figures, here he no longer confines the women to ornate crescents and alcoves, but instead allows them to float in space, illuminated by a light from within.

Le Pater 1899

Published by H Piazza & Cie, Paris

Le Pater (The Lord's Prayer) is Mucha's personal interpretation of the central Christian prayer. Mucha offered it as a message to future generations on the way to reach what he termed the 'Divine Ideal', the highest state in the spiritual world.

Mucha analysed each of the prayer's seven verses and reconstructed it in sets of three pages. The first colour page of each set is the relevant verse in French (or Czech) and Latin, framed in a border decorated with flowers and a symbolic female figure. The second colour page is Mucha's own interpretive text. The third monochromatic page, printed in photogravure, contains an allegorical drawing illustrating Mucha's philosophical response.

**'Le Pater': Third heading page:
'Thy kingdom come' 1899**

page from illustrated book; colour lithograph

**'Le Pater': Third text page:
'Thy kingdom come' 1899**

page from illustrated book; colour lithograph

**'Le Pater': Printer's proof for the third
allegorical scene: 'Thy kingdom come'
1899**

page from illustrated book; photogravure

**'Le Pater': Study for the third allegorical
scene: 'Thy kingdom come' 1899**

charcoal and ink wash on paper

'Le Pater': Study for the sixth allegorical scene: 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors' 1899

charcoal and ink wash on paper

'Le Pater': Printer's proof for the sixth allegorical scene: 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors' 1899

page from illustrated book; photogravure

*I felt my attention should be somewhere else, higher ...
I was looking round for a means to spread light ...
I did not have to search for long. The Lord's prayer!
'Our Father' – an invocation which illuminates both
the father and the child. Why not give its words
pictorial expression?*

Mucha's designs for *Le Pater* feature masonic and kabbalistic symbols. These esoteric symbols were noted by critics including *The Century Magazine*, which observed that Mucha's God was 'no longer the benign or wrathful Father, but a mysterious Being whose shadow fills the earth'.

Le Pater was Mucha's first manifest as an artist-philosopher and he regarded it as his finest work. In 1900, he exhibited the book and the preparatory drawings at the Paris Exposition to great acclaim, not least from Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria.

Nude on a rock c1899

bronze

Inspired by his friend Auguste Rodin, whose works are adjacent, Mucha produced this rare sculpture, which captures the figure of a girl gazing reflectively. Cast from a hand-built mass of clay, the expressive rendering of the forms shows the influence of Rodin, who encouraged Mucha's sculptural practice. Sharing a similar spiritualist philosophy and artistic ideals, Mucha and Rodin formed a long-lasting friendship.

In 1902, Mucha accompanied Rodin on his visit to Bohemia and Moravia on the occasion of the first exhibition of the great French sculptor's work in Prague.

Auguste Rodin

France 1840–1917

Damned women c1885–90

bronze

Courtesy of Mucha Trust

Invocation 1886, cast 1985

bronze

Art Gallery of New South Wales,
gift of David Jones Ltd 2001

In 1911, when Mucha visited Rodin in Paris, the French sculptor dedicated the small bronze cast of *Damned women* to his old friend. The two female figures Rodin combined here as a standalone sculpture first appeared separately among hundreds of figures accumulated for his sculptural set of doors, *The gates of hell* 1880–1917.

Like so many other fragments in his monumental but ultimately incomplete project, Rodin pits momentary ecstasy against eternal damnation. *Damned women* – which Rodin inscribed to Mucha – is shown alongside *Invocation*, from the Art Gallery's collection.

4

The Mucha style

My art, if I may call it that, crystallised. It was en vogue. It spread to factories and workshops under the name of 'le style Mucha'.

Success brought a flood of commissions for projects reflecting the new consumer products of modern Paris life. At the heart of Mucha's designs for posters and product packaging for biscuits, perfume or chocolate – even bicycles, railroads and book illustrations – was the idealised female figure, seducing consumers with an alluring message.

In 1896, Mucha accepted an exclusive contract with the publisher F Champenois that finally afforded him financial security. Mucha's greatly expanded output included innovating decorative panels (*panneaux décoratifs*) – posters without text, designed purely for artistic appreciation. While Champenois saw the commercial potential of this wildly popular new product, Mucha viewed it as an opportunity to disseminate art among ordinary people as a democratic art form.

By 1902, Mucha had created a 'design handbook' for manufacturers to bring 'aesthetic values into the arts and crafts', and his advertising designs had developed to become coherent visual messages, increasing brand visibility in a strategy shared by today's marketers.

Ω4

Reverie 1897

colour lithograph on paper

A dreamy-eyed young woman in a beautifully embroidered Slavic gown leafs through a book of decorative designs, possibly printers' samples. The prominent disc behind her is wreathed with flowers, their stems forming a filigree that acts to perfectly tie her in to a unified ornamental field.

Reverie was one of Mucha's most popular designs. Like *Zodiac*, it was first produced as a company calendar for Champenois, but the magazine *La Plume* swiftly ran it in large numbers as a standalone panel without texts. With no discernible product for sale, *Reverie* and the other 'decorative panels' in this room were themselves a new kind of product: lithographic prints that were purely decorative.

Zodiac 1896

colour lithograph on paper

Featuring the striking profile of a majestic woman against a prominent halo, this design was originally made as the company calendar for Champenois for the year 1897, before being sold as the decorative panel seen here. The theme – the harmonious working of the universe – is reflected in the 12 signs of the zodiac integrated into the circular band together with motifs featuring hexagrams, mystic symbols frequently appearing in Mucha's designs.

In the process of developing his decorative style, Mucha drew inspiration from a variety of cultural motifs – Japanese, Celtic, Islamic, Greek, Gothic and Rococo – many of which are incorporated here. But chiefly, Mucha's style evolved organically from his national roots and from 1896 he consciously integrated traditional Slavic elements into his designs.

The Flowers: Carnation 1898

The Flowers: Iris 1898

The Flowers: Lily 1898

The Flowers: Rose 1898

colour lithographs on paper

Mucha believed beautiful artworks, as 'symbols of goodness', were capable of elevating morale and improving quality of life. He believed passionately that the mission of the artist was to bring beauty into people's lives – and decorative panels seemed an ideal means by which to realise this. He later wrote:

I was happy to be involved in an art for the people and not for private drawing rooms. It was inexpensive, accessible to the general public, and it found a home in poor families as well as in more affluent circles.

Sarah Bernhardt: La princesse lointaine – Lefèvre-Utile 1903

colour lithograph on paper

Several celebrities participated in publicity campaigns for the Nantes-based Lefèvre-Utile biscuit brand, a household name in France. Here the actor Sarah Bernhardt is seen in character as *La princesse lointaine*, met in the last room. The advertisement for biscuits represents one of the first instances of celebrity endorsement in history.

Using the biscuit company's well-known moniker 'LU', Bernhardt's handwritten testimonial reads, 'I haven't found anything better than a little LU – oh yes, two little LU.'

Biscuits Lefèvre-Utile: calendar for 1897 1896

colour lithograph on paper

Mucha first began to work for French biscuit company Lefèvre-Utile in 1896. As their regular artist, he contributed a number of designs for promotional materials and packaging; this one was originally produced for the 1897 company calendar. A girl wearing a wreath of wheat and garlanded with red poppies, offers a plate of wafers. Motifs of sickle and wheat emblems decorating her dress emphasise the point.

Mucha made the company's initials 'LU' into a highly stylised decorative motif that forms a typically art nouveau whiplash curve, extending from the decorative border to encircle the girl's hand. This first decorative use of 'LU' led to the company taking up the moniker by which they are known today, in place of their full name.

Lance Parfum Rodo 1896

colour lithograph on paper

Lance Parfum 'Rodo' was a new perfume just appearing on the market in 1896. In his advertisement, Mucha depicts a woman squirting the perfume onto her handkerchief from a spray bottle, a novel feature of the product, which can be seen in the case adjacent.

Women were at the core of Mucha's style. Sensual yet innocent, contemporary yet timeless, Mucha's glamorous figures were particularly successful in appealing to female consumers in the buoyant belle époque. As a result, his commercial work was in great demand from companies in the burgeoning cosmetics industry.

Hommage respectueux de Nestlé 1897

colour lithograph on paper

This, the second-largest poster ever created by Mucha, was commissioned by the Nestlé company as a 'respectful tribute' to Queen Victoria on her diamond jubilee. In a somewhat atypical poster design, Mucha shows the English queen in three rondels at three ages during her 60-year reign, flanked by the symbols of the United Kingdom, the lion and the unicorn. The poster also incorporates symbols of industrial might that could perhaps represent Britain, or indeed the multinational corporation Nestlé had already become.

Box for Lefèvre-Utile biscuits: Boudoir c1900

tin box covered with lithographed label

Box for Lefèvre-Utile biscuits: Gaufrettes pralinées c1900

printing ink on paper box

Box for Lefèvre-Utile biscuits: Champagne c1900

tin box covered with lithographed label

Box for Lefèvre-Utile biscuits 1899

tin box, printed

Lance Parfum Rodo bottle and case 1896

glass bottles with metal lids and printed labels;
lithographed card case/box

Decorative plate with the emblem of the Paris Exposition Universelle 1897

ceramic plate

La Plume 1897

printed magazine

Launched in 1889, *La Plume* was a monthly publication featuring poems, short stories, exhibition reviews and illustrations by avant-garde artists. In 1897, six editions of the magazine were dedicated solely to Mucha's work. On the cover of this, the August edition, a red-haired woman holding a large feather reaches beyond the frame of the composition. The feather belongs to Pegasus who fully inhabits the background with his stylised blue wings.

Anatole France

France 1844–1924

Clio 1900

Published by Calmann Lévy, Paris

Mucha illustrated books for a number of leading authors. Among the finest is Anatole France's *Clio*, a collection of historical tales. As Mucha recounted in 1904:

The first piece of work I did to attract wide attention was not ... my poster work. No, it was an illustration for a poem. Since then, my best work, my most celebrated and the work I love best, has been along the same lines.

**A flight over the Czech world:
views from Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia
and Slovakia (Letem Českým cvětem:
Půl tisíce fotograf pohledů z Čech,
Moravy, Slezska a Slovenska) 1898**

Published by Josef Richard Vilímek, Prague

Émile Gebhart

France 1839–1908

**Christmas and Easter bells
(Cloches de Noël et de Pâques) 1900**

Published by H Piazza & Cie, Paris

Paul Redonnel

France 1860–1935

The eternal songs

(Les chansons éternelles) 1898

Published by Bibliothèque Artistique et Littéraire, Paris

**Chocolat Masson calendar,
January – March 1898: childhood 1897**

**Chocolat Masson calendar,
April – June 1898: adolescence 1897**

**Chocolat Masson calendar,
July – September 1898: adulthood 1897**

**Chocolat Masson calendar,
October – December 1898: old age 1897**

colour lithographs on paper

For this calendar created for Chocolat Masson, Mucha employed a classic theme: the four stages of life. Within each ornate frame containing a quarterly calendar, he featured allegorical images of the four stages of life – from childhood, adolescence and adulthood to old age – each within a seasonal landscape. At each stage, the protagonist is accompanied by a female figure, representing a protective spiritual being. This was so popular that Champenois sold the series with no text under the title, *Calendar of the stages of life*.

Savon Mucha screen: lilac, violet, sandalwood, heliotrope 1906

colour lithograph on card

In 1906, during his third stay in the United States, Mucha was commissioned to design soap boxes for Armour & Co in Chicago. The soap was named 'Savon Mucha', making him the first 'celebrity artist' to become the brand name of a household product. The folding-screen-shaped panel was used in shops as a point-of-sale display and features the four fragrances of the soap – violet, lilac, heliotrope and sandalwood – brought together in an exemplary melding of Mucha's two favourite themes: the flower and woman.

Woman with daisy 1900

textile: printed velour

**Study for
'Decorative documents' c1900**

pencil on paper

**Decorative documents:
study for plate 34 1902**

pencil with white on paper

**Decorative documents:
study for plate 67 c1901**

pencil and white on paper

**Decorative documents:
study for plate 72 1902**

pencil, ink and white gouache on paper

Decorative documents: plate 29 1902

colour lithograph on paper

Decorative documents: plate 33 1902

colour lithograph on paper

Decorative documents: plate 41 1902

colour lithograph on paper

Decorative documents (Documents décoratifs) is a portfolio of 72 plates presenting Mucha's decorative work, published in Paris in 1902 by the Librairie centrale des Beaux-Arts.

The volume of ornamental designs was devised as a handbook for artisans and manufacturers containing samples of drawings, demonstrating Mucha's exceptional draughtsmanship, as well as 'ready-to-use' designs. It also illustrated the process of stylisation: how to transform a drawing, taken from nature, into a pattern that could be applied for practical use.

From designs intended for wallpapers or textiles, to jewellery and silverware, it suggested, in the true spirit of art nouveau, that beauty might permeate all facets of daily life.

Decorative documents proved to be invaluable textbook, widely used by art schools in France and other European countries including Russia.

Decorative figures: study for plate 14 1904

pencil with white on paper

Decorative figures: study for plate 28 1905

pencil, gouache, ink and wash on paper

These drawings were prepared for *Decorative figures* (*Figures décoratives*), which followed on from and complemented Mucha's *Decorative documents*. Focusing on the use of the human, specifically female, body as a source of decorative motifs, the folio of 40 plates explored the figures of women, girls and children in a variety of poses integrated with circles, triangles, rectangles and many other geometric and organic forms.

In further theories and lectures published posthumously, Mucha stated his belief that the role of the artist is to arouse the interest of the viewer in the artist's (moral) message. If 'exterior form' is the language for this communication, then the artist must endeavour to create as effective a visual language of form as possible.

Study for 'Spring' 1896

Study for 'Summer' 1896

Study for 'Autumn' 1896

pastel on paper

The Seasons: Spring 1896

The Seasons: Summer 1896

The Seasons: Autumn 1896

The Seasons: Winter 1896

colour lithographs on paper

The Seasons was Mucha's first set of decorative panels and it became one of his most popular; so popular that Mucha was asked by the Champenois company to produce at least two more sets based on the same theme in 1897 and 1900.

The idea of personifying the seasons was nothing new – examples could be found in the art of Japan circulating through Paris, and in centuries of European art. However, Mucha's nymph-like women set against seasonal views of the countryside breathed new life into the classic theme.

In a conflation of women and nature typical of Mucha and his contemporaries, the moods of the seasons are captured as women – innocent Spring, sultry Summer, fruitful Autumn and frosty Winter – and together represent the endless and harmonious cycle of nature.

Byzantine heads: Blonde 1897

Byzantine heads: Brunette 1897

colour lithographs on paper

Mucha regarded the Byzantine civilization as the spiritual home of Slavic culture. He combined a variety of decorative motifs inspired by Byzantine art, such as mosaic, icons, lavish costumes and accessories.

This pair of decorative panels was so popular that it was reproduced in a number of different formats and variations, including as decorative plates. Both women are seen in profile against an ornate background of vegetal arabesques. Strands of hair fall beyond the circular frames, bridging the gap between women and viewer, and lending a sense of depth to the otherwise flattened compositions.

It was on the basis of the eclectic and highly original jewellery designs here that the jeweller Fouquet enlisted Mucha to work on his collection for the 1900 Paris Exposition.

centre plinth:

The Arts: Dance 1898

The Arts: Painting 1898

The Arts: Poetry 1898

The Arts: Music 1898

colour lithographs on paper

In this series celebrating the four Arts, Mucha eschewed their conventional attributes (such as musical instruments and paintbrushes), instead tying them to nature through motifs associated with the times of day. For Dance, falling leaves blown by a morning breeze; for Painting, a red flower beneath rainbows in full sunshine; for Poetry, the evening star shining in the sky at dusk; and for Music, the song of birds at moonrise.

The series, created at the height of Mucha's fame, is an exemplar of his harmonious style of composition to be later called the 'Q formula'. This formula evolved from previous compositions featuring prominent halos, discs or horseshoe shapes, with Mucha incorporating a seated figure into a circular motif with a tail of drapery hanging down to form a 'Q'.

centre plinth:

Design for 'The Arts: Dance' 1898

Design for 'The Arts: Music' 1898

Design for 'The Arts: Painting' 1898

Design for 'The Arts: Poetry' 1898

pencil and watercolour on paper

5

The cosmopolitan

In the late 1890s, Mucha's artistic fame grew in parallel with the development of art nouveau, which swept through all the major cities in Europe. By 1900 he had become a master of poster art and the most sought-after and copied designer in Paris. Reflecting his prominent standing, Mucha was involved in a wide range of projects at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle.

Held in the final year of the 19th century, the world fair celebrated the past century's achievements and the arrival of the 20th century. Fifty-eight nations participated and over 50 million people visited. To this, the 'greatest event of the century', Mucha contributed a wide range of projects.

As a Czech artist, his works were exhibited in the Austrian section of the Grand Palais, while as a commercial artist he did work for French companies. As an official artist of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Mucha designed ephemera for the Austrian Pavilion, and was commissioned to decorate the central hall of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion.

Ω5

Woman masked in white headscarf 1900

pencil and wash heightened with white on paper

Mucha's studies for the decoration of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion included posed studio photographs like the one here, as well as countless drawings. This watercolour study featured in the monthly supplement *Le Figaro Illustré*, published by prominent French newspaper *Le Figaro*, on 1 March 1900.

Model posing for the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion decoration c1899

exhibition print from original glass plate negative

Bosnian legends: Murcia the plague woman 1899

charcoal on paper

Bosnian legends: Death of Hasanaga's bride 1899

charcoal on paper

Mucha made these expressive drawings of Bosnian legends and folktales during his research trip through various Balkan countries in 1899, when he became acutely aware of the difficult political position of the Slavic nations. It was a turning point in his life, and he resolved to refocus on an ambitious project worthy of his skills and ideals:

As I drew the epic moments in the life of the Bosnians, I felt in my heart the joys and sorrows of my own nation and those of all the other Slavic peoples ... I had made up my mind about my future grand work ... I saw it as a great and glorious light shining into the souls of all people with its clear ideals and burning warnings.

Modern decoration in the Paris Universal Exhibition (Die moderne Dekoration auf der Pariser Weltausstellung) c1900

facsimiles of journal plates 34 and 35

Published by Julius Hoffmann Stuttgart

Bosnia and Herzegovina had been annexed to Austro-Hungary since 1878 and its pavilion had special political significance to the Empire. Designing the decoration for the central hall, Mucha agonised over the irony of working for the Empire while Slavs – including those of his own subjugated homeland – suffered under Austrian rule. He resolved this by making the pavilion a celebration of the history and cultural diversity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, basing his designs on the extensive research material he amassed on a trip to the Balkans in 1899. He was later awarded the Order of Franz Josef I for his contribution.

Seen here are Mucha's wall paintings, *Diorama of Sarajevo* and *Bosnia offers her products to the World Exhibition 1900*.

Design for the menu of the official banquet of the Paris Exposition Universelle 1900

pencil, gouache and wash on paper

Paris 1900: Austria at the World's Fair 1899

colour lithograph on paper

Design for the menu of the restaurant in Bosnia Herzegovina Pavilion 1899–1900

pencil, ink and watercolour on paper

Decorative documents: final drawing for plate 49 c1902

pencil and white on paper

Ornamental chain with pendants 1900

gold, enamel, freshwater pearls, mother of pearl and semi-precious stones

Peacock ring 1900

opal and gold

At the Paris Exposition, Mucha designed the exhibition stands for the perfumier Houbigant as well as the jeweller Georges Fouquet. Mucha's jewellery was also displayed, including this ornamental chain and peacock ring. The chain demonstrates Mucha's innovative approach to jewellery design, synthesising decorative motifs from Islamic, Egyptian, Byzantine and European art with an informal use of irregular pearls and gems. For the ring, Mucha designed the bezel to be reminiscent of a peacock feather, wrapped around an opal.

During his three-year collaboration with Fouquet, which began around 1898, Mucha produced several other designs, including the extravagant snake bracelet for Sarah Bernhardt seen in his poster *Médée*. Their partnership culminated in the new Fouquet boutique, which opened in 1901 in the rue Royale, Paris.

Interior of the Boutique Fouquet: design for wall-mounted display cabinet with statuette and mirror c1900

pencil on paper

When the Parisian jeweller Georges Fouquet took over his father's shop in 1895, he was determined to revitalise the artistic style of the house by collaborating with new talent. Fouquet admired the jewellery featured in Mucha's posters and in 1899, invited him to design an entire collection of earrings, necklaces, rings and brooches for his stand at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

Fouquet also commissioned Mucha to design the new Boutique Fouquet. Mucha conjured the space as a 'magical backdrop' to enhance the beauty and spirit of the jewellery. He designed the facade, the interior, the furniture, fixtures and a wide range of ornamental objects, all – including the two bronze peacocks and a fountain complete with bronze seahorses – as a harmonious unity epitomising the spirit of art nouveau. Today the reconstructed interior of the boutique is in the Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

**Interior of Boutique Fouquet:
sketches for the shop's signboard
and decorative details c1900**

pencil, ink and watercolour on paper

**Early sketches of interior design,
Boutique Fouquet c1900**

pencil on lined paper from notebook

La Nature c1900

patinated bronze and malachite

Mucha's remarkable sculpture *La Nature* was once described as the archetypal *fin-de-siècle* woman, 'with her enigmatic expression and her closed eyes, focusing on an inner world of reverie'. He is likely to have drawn inspiration from the head of the woman who figured in his poster *Zodiac*, produced in 1896.

Mucha first exhibited the sculpture in the Austrian Section of the Paris Exposition in 1900. Since then, another six versions have been unearthed. They exhibit subtle differences in the decorative details of the earrings and patina, or finish. Most notable are the differences in the tiara and the egg-shaped ornament that crowns it. The original sculpture featured an electric light bulb, with electricity perceived as a new art form and celebrated as such throughout the Exposition.

American sojourn

Mucha made his first trip to America in 1904, helped by one of his friends, Baroness Adèle von Rothschild. By then very much the celebrity artist, Mucha sought a decisive break from his career demands in Paris and hoped to raise funds for his magnum opus, the *Slav Epic*.

Mucha's arrival made front-page news in America, where he was declared 'the greatest decorative artist in the world'. He was astounded to see his own life-sized image on New York billboards announcing his visit and advertising his decorative panel *Friendship*, which celebrated the bond between France and America.

Over five years, Mucha visited the United States several times in the hope of raising the support he needed. He tried his hand as a society painter and taught popular classes at the New York School of Applied Design for Women and the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1909, Mucha finally secured a patron when the Chicago industrialist and Slavophile Charles Richard Crane agreed to sponsor his project.

The New York Daily News, Sunday art supplement 3 April 1904

newspaper, double-page spread

Leslie Carter: *Kassa* 1908

colour lithograph on paper

In the United States, Mucha took commissions for portraits, illustrations and posters, and became increasingly well connected, including a friendship with President Theodore Roosevelt. As in Paris, Mucha again built a close association with the theatre world, including this collaboration with Leslie Carter, 'The American Sarah Bernhardt'.

This poster for Carter's play *Kassa* sees Mucha using the tall format and style of his Bernhardt posters, surrounding the title character – a virgin seduced then abandoned – with symbols of her purity, passion and suffering. The play was a flop and, with Carter declared bankrupt, Mucha was never paid.

Maude Adams as Joan of Arc 1908

lithograph, hand-coloured in watercolour and gouache

Like 'The First Lady of the American Theatre' Ethel Barrymore, seen adjacent, Maude Adams was a star of New York's Broadway and one of the most highly-paid performers of her day.

Mucha created a painting to promote a one-night gala performance of Friedrich Schiller's *The Maid of Orleans* starring Adams as Joan of Arc. He also created the production's costumes and sets. The original painting, from which this poster derived, is held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Portrait of Ethel Barrymore 1909

pencil and gouache on paper

Portrait of Maude Adams 1908

pencil with white on paper

Study for German Theatre mural: 'The quest for beauty' 1908

pastel on paper

In 1908, Mucha was commissioned to design the interior of the German Theatre in New York. The building was a renovation of the former Lennox Lyceum, and Mucha was responsible for five large decorative panels for the proscenium, the design of the stage curtain and various other decorative features throughout the building. This early sketch is for the central proscenium panel. It was flanked by two vertical panels either side of the stage, *Tragedy* and *Comedy*. The German Theatre – considered Mucha's most extensive American work in the art nouveau style – opened to the public on 1 October, but sadly the theatre became insolvent after one season and closed the following year.

Stage design for 'Twelfth night' c1909

pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper

Study for a mural c1900

pastel

Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased 1994

Though little is known of the subject or plans for this mural study, symbols such as the fiery eagle indicate it possibly relates to the Finnish epic tale, the *Kalevala*. There may have been a connection between Mucha and the great Finnish modern artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela. Certainly Mucha's friend the Swedish playwright August Strindberg knew a wide circle of Finnish artists, and Gallen-Kallela designed the Finnish pavilion for the 1900 Paris Exposition filled with frescoes based upon the *Kalevala* and displaying the sort of vernacular exoticism that interested Mucha.

Study for 'Quo vadis', head of Petronius c1903

blue pencil on paper

Study for 'Quo vadis' c1903

pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper

Polish novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz, winner of the 1905 Nobel Prize for Literature, commissioned Mucha to produce a painting based on a scene from his international best-selling novel *Quo vadis* (1896).

First addressing the scene through the title *Petronius and Eunice*, Mucha approached the painting as a whimsical love story, depicting the Greek slave girl Eunice in love with her master, Gaius Petronius.

First commissioned in 1902, Mucha completed the large oil in Chicago in 1906 but continued to rework it over many years, changing its title to *Quo vadis* ('Where are you going?'). With the outbreak of the First World War, Mucha lost contact with Sienkiewicz. The painting was never delivered and Mucha was never paid.

A photographic theatre

Mucha began taking photographs in the early 1880s with a borrowed camera. He had his own by the time he moved to his new studio in the rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, in 1896. The light from its large windows and glass ceiling inspired him to take countless photographs of his studio models on an almost daily basis.

Rarely were these taken for a specific project – Mucha preferred to improvise, or direct, poses in front of the camera, building a library of images for future creative use. His later experiments with theatrical poses and gestures saw photography play an important part in the making of the *Slav Epic* (the whole village of Zbiroh was said to have modelled for him in its making).

During his many research trips, Mucha recorded insightful images with a social documentary bent. From these and from his staged photographs, he created complex mises en scène, layering events on canvas in an approach that has much in common with filmmaking, or with the leaps in time and space made in comic art.

Ω6

Model posing in Mucha's studio, rue du val de Grâce, Paris 1890s, printed 1970s

gelatin silver photograph

Art Gallery of New South Wales, gift of Noel Tovey AM 2015

This photograph shows one of many studio models Mucha worked with regularly. Mucha's studio was both a place of hard work and a salon for entertaining countless artists, writers and musicians. It was the setting for one of the earliest cinematic projections given by the Lumière brothers, and for psychic experiments with scientists Camille Flammarion and Albert de Rochas. Mucha's own work can be seen in between an eclectic collection of *objets d'art*, costumes, props and furniture, in the background of many of the images here. The vast incense-soaked studio was once described as having the 'air of a profane chapel'.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10	11		12	13	
14		15	16	17	18	19	21	23	25	26	27	28	29	30	
						20	22	24							
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	40	41	42	43	44	45		
							39								

Top row, from left:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 Self-portrait wearing a Slavic shirt at rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, early 1890s</p> <p>2 Self-portrait in the studio, rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, 1892</p> <p>3 Paul Gauguin playing the harmonium at Mucha's studio, rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris, c1893</p> <p>4 Model posing with flowers in Mucha's studio, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, c1899</p> <p>5 Model posing for the allegory 'September' from the cycle of the 12 months for the journal <i>Cocorico</i>, c1899</p> <p>6 Mucha's studio with his collection of <i>objets d'art</i>, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, c1897</p> | <p>7 Models posing for Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion decoration, 1899–1900</p> <p>8 Girl posing for <i>Madonna of the Lilies</i> (1905), 1904</p> <p>9 Mucha working on murals for the Lord Mayor's Hall, Municipal House (Obecní dům), Prague, 1910–11</p> <p>10 Models posing as dancing maidens at a harvest festival for <i>Slav Epic II: The celebration of Svantovít</i> (1912), c1911/12</p> <p>11 Mucha directing costumed models for <i>Slav Epic XX: Apotheosis: Slavs for humanity</i> (1926), 1926</p> <p>12 Mucha's daughter, Jaroslava, posing as the young girl playing the lyre in <i>Slav Epic XVIII: Oath of the 'Youth' under the Slav linden tree</i> (1926), c1925/26</p> |
|---|--|

- 13 Model posing as the goddess Slavia on the branches of the 'Slav linden tree' for *Slav Epic XVIII: Oath of the 'Youth' under the Slav linden tree* (1926), c1925/26
- Middle row, from left:**
- 14 Mucha's studio, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, late 1890s
- 15 Model posing in Mucha's studio, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, c1900
- 16 Model in a Bohemian folk costume at Mucha's studio, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, c1900
- 17 Model posing with a Japanese vase in Mucha's studio, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, c1898
- 18 Mucha working on *Comedy*, German Theatre, New York, 1908
- 19 Bosnian people in ceremonial costume during Mucha's research trip to the Balkans, 1899
- 20 Chilandari Monastery, Mount Athos, Greece, during Mucha's research trip to the Balkans, 1924
- 21 Mucha's wife, Maruška, posing as Russian countrywoman for *Woman in the wilderness* (1923), c1922/23
- 22 Models posing for *Slav Epic II: The celebration of Svantovít* (1912), 1911–12
- 23 Models posing as Bohemian King Přemysl Otakar II (centre), Hungarian Prince Béla (left) and wedding guests for *Slav Epic V: The Bohemian King Přemysl Otakar II* (1924), c1923/24
- 24 Models in armour posing for *Slav Epic VIII: After the Battle of Grunwald* (1924), early 1920s
- 25 Model posing for the *Slav Epic* wearing a crown and holding a sword, c1910s
- 26 Model posing as an archpriest for *Slav Epic XVII: Holy Mount Athos* (1926), c1925
- 27 A group of models posing for *Slav Epic III: The introduction of the Slavonic liturgy* (1912), 1911–12

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10	11		12	13	
14		15	16	17	18	19	21	23	25	26	27	28	29	30	
						20	22	24							
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	40	41	42	43	44	45		
							39								

28 Two models posing as warriors for *Slav Epic III: The introduction of the Slavonic liturgy* (1912), 1911–12

29 Compositional studies with drawing from Mucha's study trip to Russia for *The abolition of serfdom in Russia* (1914), 1913

30 Gridded character and compositional studies for the *Slav Epic*, c1910s, including *Slav Epic VII: Jan Milič of Kroměříž* (1916)

Bottom row, from left:

31 Psychic medium Madame Lina de Ferkel in an experiment conducted by Albert de Rochas at Mucha's studio, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, c1898

32 Psychic medium Madame Lina de Ferkel in an experiment conducted by Albert de Rochas at Mucha's studio, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, c1898

33 Self-portrait with posters for Sarah Bernhardt, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, c1901

34 Model for the masthead of the journal *Le Chroniqueur de Paris*, c1903

35 Berthe de Lalande, Mucha's mistress, posing in Mucha's studio in front of a Chinese folding screen, rue du Val de Grâce, Paris, c1897

36 Self-portrait on stepladder, working on the cartoon of the poster *Imprimerie Cassan Fils* (1896), 1896

37 Model posing as Joan of Arc for unrealised poster for play *The maid of Orleans* featuring Maude Adams, New York, 1909

38 Woman in headdress, Moscow, from Mucha's research trip to Russia, 1913

39 Old stone buildings, Brittany, c1902

- 40 Mother and child, Prague; a study for the poster *Russia must recover* (1922), c1921/22
- 41 Mucha posing as Jan Hus for *Slav Epic IX: Master Jan Hus preaching at the Bethlehem Chapel* (1916), c1915/16
- 42 Mucha and daughter Jaroslava in costume for the poster *De Forest Phonofilm*, Bio Adria cinema, Prague, 1927
- 43 Mucha and daughter Jaroslava in costume for the poster *De Forest Phonofilm*, Bio Adria cinema, Prague, 1927
- 44 Study for characters in the *Slav Epic*, c1910s
- 45 Self-portrait at the first exhibition of the *Slav Epic* at the Klementinum, Prague, 1919

6

The artist-philosopher

The progress of humankind proceeds by a winding, rising and falling path – like a temperature chart ... It rises and then falls again – very far. But in the long run it does, after all, rise ...

After his return from America, Mucha worked not only on the many patriotic projects featured in the next rooms, but also on those that expressed his deeply felt humanitarian concerns more broadly.

The powerful works in this room range across many years, but all show Mucha using art as an instrument for disseminating his philosophical ideas, especially those calling for peace. From the impact of the First World War and the terrible sufferings endured by the Russian people after the Bolshevik Revolution, to the threat of a Second World War, Mucha addressed the traumas of a rapidly changing world with great compassion.

Over decades, Mucha developed concepts for projects, some of which remained unfinished, that expressed his vision for humanity and his call for universal love. Surviving works from his final years reveal not only his profound sadness but also his hope for the future and his message to generations to come.

07

Study for 'The threat' 1912

watercolour, gouache and ink on paper

War 1917

pastel on paper

War 1916

pencil heightened with white

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 had a deep impact on Mucha's philosophical view of war, made manifest in his depiction of war not as heroic, but as tragic. The drawings shown here, produced in 1916–17, show Mucha's compelling vision of the ultimate meaning of war, expressed as graphically detailed scenes of cruelty, carnage and the destruction of civilisation.

Study for 'The light of hope' 1933

pencil, ink, gouache and watercolour heightened on paper

Study for 'Three Ages: Reason, Wisdom, Love' 1936–38

pencil, ink and gouache on paper

Study for 'The Age of Wisdom' 1936–38

Study for 'The Age of Reason' 1936–38

Study for 'The Age of Love' 1936–38

pencil and watercolour on paper

Study for 'The Age of Wisdom', version 2 1936–38

pencil, coloured pencil and gouache on paper

These small studies hint at Mucha's final ambitious yet unrealised project: a monumental triptych, *Three Ages: Reason, Wisdom, Love*. Begun in 1936, with the terrible reality of war approaching, Mucha wished to depict reason, wisdom and love as the key attributes of humanity. To him, only the harmonious working of all three allowed humanity to progress in peace.

In part for his many quietly dissident works championing freedom both spiritual and political, Mucha was one of the first Czechs to be arrested by the Gestapo when Germany invaded Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Released soon after his interrogation, his health rapidly declined and he died of pneumonia on 14 July 1939. His triptych, with its universal message of hope, remained unfinished.

Russia must recover (Russia restituenda) 1922

colour lithograph on paper

This poster, which served as a plea for help for starving Russian children, is one of Mucha's most moving.

After the collapse of its provisional government to the Soviets, Russia fell victim to civil war and a crippled economy. In addition to the casualties of war, millions died through widespread disease and a catastrophic famine, prompting international relief efforts.

Mucha's depiction of the sorrowful and exhausted figure of Mother Russia with a frail child in her arms draws upon the Christian iconography of the Virgin and Child. For the message at the bottom, 'Russia must recover', Mucha chose the cosmopolitan language of Latin to indicate the impartiality and internationalism of this humanitarian effort.

Woman in the wilderness 1923

oil on canvas

Study for 'Woman in the wilderness' 1923

oil on canvas mounted on board

This painting was Mucha's response to the terrible sufferings endured by the Russian and Ukrainian people after the Bolshevik Revolution, which culminated in the Great Famine of 1921. A Russian countrywoman, symbolising the suffering of the nation, sits with a gesture of acceptance of her inevitable fate – yet a star shining above her indicates hope and spiritual salvation.

The painting – also known as *Star*, or *Siberia* – and its four studies were modelled by Maruška, Mucha's wife.

Woman with a burning candle 1933

oil on canvas

Painted in the same year as *The light of hope* adjacent, here a woman portrayed as the embodiment of the Czechoslovak nation, with a brocade shawl and buckle incorporating the national coat of arms, anxiously tends a flame. As she perhaps contemplates her country's uncertain future, smoke rises behind her, forming a map of Europe in which Germany appears to swallow Czechoslovakia.

The light of hope 1933

oil on canvas

The year 1933 marked the 15th anniversary of Czechoslovakian independence. However, celebrations were overshadowed by news of Hitler's rise as Chancellor of Germany and the flock of refugees arriving at Czech borders.

Amidst this growing anxiety, Mucha planned a large oil painting featuring the motif of a girl guarding the light of hope taken from the last canvas of the *Slav Epic, Apotheosis: Slavs for humanity* 1926. The project was eventually abandoned but in this surviving oil study the girl's figure embodies Mucha's pacifist message, standing out from the darkness within which terrified individuals flee from the horrors of persecution.

Nativity (Mother and child with a green lizard) 1920s

oil on canvas

France embraces Bohemia c1919

oil on canvas

Painted at the tail end of the First World War, this painting celebrates the spiritual bond between France and Czechoslovakia formed through their shared aspirations to liberty. It is a version of the decorated honorary doctorate awarded to French president Raymond Poincaré by Prague University in 1919.

Mucha depicts the naked female figure at the cross as Bohemia; the end of the white headdress that hangs over her shoulder bears the crest of the double-tailed lion, symbol of Prague. The male figure bending over her is the Spirit of the French Revolution; he wears a red Phrygian cap, a revolutionary icon. He has just released the ropes binding Bohemia to the cross of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and now gives her a kiss of encouragement.

Portrait of a seated woman (Madonna)

early 1900s

pastel, pencil and colour wash on paper

Madonna of the lilies 1905

tempera on canvas

In 1902, Mucha was commissioned to decorate a church in Jerusalem dedicated to the Virgin Mary. *Madonna of the lilies* was created as one of the murals for the church, though the project was later cancelled. Mucha's design for the stained-glass window of the church, *Harmony*, can be seen in the next room.

Mucha created a heavenly vision of the Madonna as a spiritual being, radiant with mystical power, surrounded by a mass of lilies, symbol of purity. The young girl in Slavic folk costume carries a wreath of ivy, symbol of remembrance. Her serious expression and strong physical presence contrast with the ethereal figure of the Virgin, whose long veil gently touches her with a blessing.

Spring awakens the earth 1933

oil on canvas

7

The patriot

The mission of art is to express each nation's aesthetic values in accordance with the beauty of its soul. The mission of the artist is to teach people to love that beauty.

In 1910, Mucha finally returned to his homeland to fulfil his long-term ambition: to work, through art, for his country and his fellow Slavs.

Mucha believed that a nation developed successfully only through an organic growth from its own cultural roots, with knowledge and an understanding of history and traditions indispensable to its advancement.

Mucha created these works for Czechoslovakia before and after it gained independence in 1918. In them, his colours changed from the muted pastels for which he'd become famous in Paris, to more assertive primaries. The allegorical women of his Paris posters and decorative panels have here become metaphors for nationhood, garbed in folk costume which Mucha considered the 'soul of the nation'.

Major patriotic projects included the decoration of the Lord Mayor's Hall in the Municipal House (Obecní dům), and a stained-glass window for the north nave of the St Vitus Cathedral, both in Prague.

08

Final designs for St Vitus Cathedral stained-glass window 1931

ink and watercolour on paper

The Gothic reconstruction work for the St Vitus Cathedral in Prague was completed in 1929 to coincide with the Millennium Jubilee of the Czech patron saint, Saint Wenceslas (Duke of Bohemia). New stained-glass windows for this, the largest and most important church in the country, were designed by leading artists of the day. Mucha designed one for the north nave in the New Archbishop's Chapel, installed in 1931.

Funded by the Slavia Bank, his window portrays the boy Saint Wenceslas with his grandmother Saint Ludmila in the centre, surrounded by episodes from the lives of Saints Cyril and Methodius who spread Christianity among the Slavs. The allegorical figure of Slavia, also the emblem of the bank, is included below the figure of Christ.

**Design for St Vitus Cathedral window:
lower centre panels c1930–31**

ink with white on paper

**Slavia: design for St Vitus Cathedral
window (lower centre panel) c1930–31**

graphite, pastel and watercolour on paper

Lord Mayor's Hall, Municipal House (Obecní dům), Prague

Mucha's first work for his homeland on his return from America was the decoration of Prague's Municipal House, Obecní dům, built between 1905 and 1912 as a symbol of the Czech National Revival movement and an expression of civic pride. In 1918 the site of the proclamation of the Czechoslovak Republic, today it is one of Prague's most iconic art nouveau buildings.

Mucha's planned decoration of the building met with opposition from progressive local artists who saw him, after 20 years living abroad, as an anachronistic outsider. Ultimately, more than a hundred leading artists collaborated on the interiors, with Mucha decorating the circular salon of the Lord Mayor's Hall – including stained-glass windows, furniture, silver-gilt metalwork and richly embroidered curtains – as a harmonious art nouveau interior.

Study for Obecní dům ceiling: Slavonic concord 1910–11

oil on canvas

Mucha carried out the overall decoration of the Lord Mayor's Hall, which was situated within the domed facade of Prague's Municipal House, the Obecní dům. He conceived its circular space as a monument to inspire Slavic unity, through which he believed the restoration of the Czech nation would be realised. Expressing this ideal, the round ceiling painting *Slavonic concord* is carried by eight pendentives featuring Czech historical characters. Beneath these, the powerful figures of Czech youths featured in the triptych adjacent send out their patriotic messages.

Study for Obecní dům pendentive: Justice (Master Jan Hus) 1910–11

oil on canvas

Study for Obecní dům pendentive: Militancy (Jan Žižka) 1910–11

oil on canvas

**By force towards freedom, with love
towards unity!: study for the mural
'By own strength II', Lord Mayor's Hall,
Obecní Dům, Prague 1910**

**Though humiliated and tortured,
you will live again my country!: study
for the mural 'By own strength II', Lord
Mayor's Hall, Obecní Dům, Prague 1910**

**Accept love and enthusiasm from
your son, Mother of the holy nation!:
study for the mural 'By own strength III',
Lord Mayor's Hall, Obecní Dům,
Prague 1910**

pencil and charcoal on canvas

Mucha's decoration of the Lord Mayor's Hall included three wall panels *By own strength I, II* and *III*, the studies of which are seen here. The murals, incorporated into the architectural language of the space, portrayed allegorical and historical characters embodying civic virtues and, in the whole gloriously unified design, Mucha celebrated the heroic Czech past as he expressed his lifelong belief in the nation's glorious future.

**Prague subjugated: design for a panel
of the small reception room,
Lord Mayor's Hall, Obecní dům 1911**

ink, gouache and watercolour on paper

**Dreaming of freedom: design for a
panel of the small reception room,
Lord Mayor's Hall, Obecní dům 1911**

ink, gouache and watercolour on paper

Militancy: cartoon for the Lord Mayor's Hall, Obecní dům 1911

ink, gouache and silver on paper

left:

Portrait of Jaroslava c1927–35

oil on canvas

Jaroslava, Mucha's first child, born in 1909, appears in many pictures and designs including Czechoslovak banknotes. When Mucha was working on the *Slav Epic* cycle at Zbiroh Castle in western Bohemia, Jaroslava not only posed for the paintings, but also worked as her father's technical assistant. It is her image that graces the nearby poster advertising the first exhibition of the full cycle. It was held at the Trade Fair Palace in Prague in the autumn of 1928, coinciding with the tenth anniversary of Czechoslovakia, and in Brno in 1930.

right:

Slavia 1920

tempera on canvas

To mark the marriage of his daughter Josephine, Mucha's future patron Charles Richard Crane commissioned him to paint a portrait of Josephine as the Slav goddess, Slavia. That 1908 portrait now hangs in the National Gallery of Prague, but Josephine became the face of Slavia – personification of the Slavs – in several other Mucha projects, including this 1920 tempera painting.

Mucha was also commissioned in 1907 to design the nearby poster (in case) for the Slavia Mutual Insurance Bank. The company was founded in Prague in 1869 during the full swing of the Czech Revival movement, with the name of the company intended to inspire solidarity. There again Mucha used Josephine as model, seen holding a ring symbolising unity.

Selection of postage stamps 1918–20

Selection of banknotes 1927–29

Slavia Mutual Saving Bank, Prague 1907

colour lithograph on paper

The Republic of Czechoslovakia was proclaimed on 28 October 1918. Mucha was keen to do whatever he could to help the new state and readily agreed to design the first Czechoslovak stamps and banknotes. The first national stamp was completed within 24 hours of its commission and the first series, showing a panorama of Hradčany Castle, Prague, came out on 18 December 1918. The first banknote came out in 1919 and many others followed. Mucha gave his services for free to design all manner of paraphernalia for the state, from the national emblem to police uniforms.

Poster for the tenth anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Czechoslovakia 1918–28 1928

colour lithograph on paper

In this poster Mucha depicted Czechoslovakia as a young woman in a ceremonial robe with a headdress decorated with the emblems of the nation's ethnic regions: Bohemia (the lion), Moravia (the chequered eagle), Slovakia (the cross), Silesia (the eagle with the clover stalk) and Ruthenia (the bear). Here she is being crowned with a garland of flowers by a spiritual being representing the Allies in the First World War who supported the nation's independence.

The Moravian Teachers' Choir (Pěvecké sdružení moravských učitelů) 1911

colour lithograph on paper

The Moravian Teachers' Choir was a male-voice ensemble that gained global renown for their program of classical, folk and popular music. Some of the songs in their repertoire were composed by Leoš Janáček, a fellow choirboy at Mucha's school in Brno and a celebrated composer of modern Moravian folk music.

In his posters of hope for a national renewal, Mucha didn't only record folk culture, he also added to its symbolic construction. Echoing his image of *Music* from the 1898 series *The Arts*, a girl in traditional Moravian folk dress cups her hand to her ear, perhaps to listen to the songbird perched on a branch behind her, or as a subtle nod to the subversive songs of freedom for which the choir was known.

Poster for the Prague Spring Festival for Music and Singing 1914

colour lithograph on paper

Princess Hyacinth (Princezna Hyacinta) 1911

colour lithograph on paper

The fairytale ballet-pantomime *Princess Hyacinth* premiered at the National Theatre, Prague, in 1911. Once again it is an actor, here the popular Czech theatre and film star Andula Sedláčková, whose portrait graces the centre of a Mucha advertising poster. Sedláčková starred in the title role of a village blacksmith's daughter. In the story, the blacksmith dreams he becomes lord and his daughter the Princess Hyacinth, only for her to be abducted by a sorcerer. Mucha makes references to the dream by incorporating hearts, the blacksmith's tools and instruments of sorcery in the halo around the 'princess'. A hyacinth motif is also used throughout the decorative details, including in the form of the snowflake she holds in her hand.

**Slav Epic VII: Jan Milíč of Kroměříž:
the magic of the word, a brothel
converted into a convent (1372) 1916**

Cartoon, lower centre section

charcoal on paper

Cartoon, lower left section

pastel on paper

Study for 'Slav Epic XIX: The abolition of serfdom in Russia: to work in freedom is the foundation of a state (1861)' 1913–14

watercolour and gouache on paper

Study for 'Slav Epic XVIII: Oath of the "Youth" under the Slav linden tree: the Slav revival (19th century)' c1925–26

pencil and watercolour on paper

Study for 'Slav Epic XIV: The sacrifice at Szigetvár by Nikola Zrinski: the shield of Christendom (1566) 1914

watercolour, ink and gouache over collage of photographs of pencil drawing

Before working on each canvas of the *Slav Epic* (1912–26), Mucha made numerous preparatory works ranging from photographs, small-scale sketches and studies in pencil, ink, charcoal and watercolour, through to full-size cartoons.

Studies and cartoons such as these help to understand the techniques Mucha used to scale up his monumental images. These included gridding up paper, and pouncing (a technique involving puffing charcoal through tiny holes in the outlines of a drawing, to leave a trace).

Mucha also sought a new stylistic and technical approach that better suited his patriotic ambitions, combining realism and symbolism to create his visions: 'My work must be like sudden shouts without any bravado technique, honestly felt and honestly expressed, with no showing off, no acrobatics of the brush.'

Poster for 'Slav Epic' exhibition 1928, 1930

colour lithograph: 2 sheets

Harmony: design for stained-glass church window in Jerusalem (unrealised) c1904

ink, watercolour and crayon on paper

Though never realised, Mucha designed the 'Harmony window' to show 'the genius of harmony, which reigns over everything ... to show how the various forces and elements in our lives are balanced'. He went on to say of the project:

On the one hand we have strength, on the other weakness; wealth and poverty, birth and death; joy and pain – all are joined in harmony; and all these examples are reflected in the harmony of the colours of the sun's spectrum.

8

Scan the QR code for more information on each of the *Slav Epic* paintings or go to agnsw.art/slav-epic



The Slav Epic

The artist must remain faithful to himself and to his national roots.

Mucha conceived of the *Slav Epic* (1912–26) as a ‘light shining into the souls of all people with its clear ideals and burning warnings’. He hoped the Slavs of central and eastern Europe would learn from their history of ‘joys and sorrows’ to build a united and peaceful future.

A project of passion, ambition and commitment, Mucha painted 20 monumental canvases – the largest of which measure six by eight metres – drawing on his considerable communication skills and the traditions of history painting, to produce a message of hope.

Through pivotal episodes, Mucha traced the history of Slavic civilisation from ancient times to the aftermath of the First World War, which finally brought liberation from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Mucha took up several interwoven themes: the Slav peoples as peace-loving contributors to European artistic and cultural development; the horror and tragedy of war; the right to live free from oppression and prosper through the mutual respect of religious, ethnic and cultural difference.

First shown incomplete in Prague in 1919 and the United States in 1920–21, the entire *Slav Epic* was presented by Mucha and his patron Charles Richard Crane to the City of Prague in 1928, to mark the tenth anniversary of Czech independence. At the time, Mucha’s academic realist style and romantic pan-Slavism divided opinion, but today the *Slav Epic* is considered a national treasure. Unable to travel, it is currently held in the town of Moravský Krumlov and will move to a new permanent home in Prague in 2028.

Be drawn in to the theatrical worlds Mucha created in this spatially activated installation with its specially commissioned score.

9

Influence and legacy

By the time Mucha arrived in Paris in 1887, the Japanese artistic style known as *ukiyo-e* (or 'images of the floating world') was wildly popular and was a prodigious inspiration to art nouveau. The art dealer Siegfried Bing– whose Paris commercial gallery, *Maison de l'Art Nouveau*, gave its name to the style – imported woodblock prints by the thousands and ran a monthly journal, *Le Japon Artistique*.

In addition to a large Japanese cloisonné vase, a Chinese folding screen, and his eclectic collection of global textiles, Mucha soon had his own modest collection of such prints. With their elegant women, theatrical subjects or stylised references from nature, the prints' focus on beauty and harmony had a profound influence on him, as on other modern artists such as his friend Gauguin. Those shown here also reveal the sinuous forms, bold outlines and restrained use of colours that contributed richly to 'the Mucha style'.

09

Meiji export ware

Fukagawa Porcelain Manufacturing Co, Ltd
Japan c1872–c1910

Stork vase 1870s

stoneware, glaze, gilding

Art Gallery of New South Wales, gift of the Japanese
Commissioners at the Sydney International Exhibition 1879

Nishikawa school

Japan active early 1700s

Beauty with a cat (Parody of the Third Princess) 1750s

hanging scroll; ink, colour and mica on paper
Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased with
funds provided by the David George Wilson Bequest
for Asian Art 2009

Kaigetsudō Anchi

Japan active 1710s–30s

Standing beauty 1710s

hanging scroll; ink and colour on silk
Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased with
funds provided by the bequest of Kenneth Myer 1993

Ikeda Eisen

Japan 1790–1848

Woman in blue 1830s–40s

woodblock print; ink and colour on paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased with
funds provided by the bequest of Kenneth Myer 1993

Kikukawa Eizan

Japan 1787–1867

Woman holding a lamp 1800s

woodblock print; ink and colour on paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased with
funds provided by the bequest of Kenneth Myer 1993

top row:

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi

Japan 1839–92

Looking smoky – a housewife of the Kyōwa era 19 May 1888

Purchased 1991

Toyohara Kunichika

Japan 1835–1900

The actor Ichimura Kakitsu IV 1867

Gift of Dr James Hayes 2003

woodblock prints; ink and colour on paper
Art Gallery of New South Wales

top row continued:

Hiroshige Andō/Uttagawa

Japan 1797–1858

Uttagawa Kunisada/Toyokuni III

Japan 1786–1865

Seki: ancient barrier gate at Suzuka 1855

Gift of Michael Gleeson-White 1988

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi

Japan 1839–92

The Yūgao chapter from 'The tale of Genji' March 1886

Purchased 1994

woodblock prints; ink and colour on paper
Art Gallery of New South Wales

bottom row:

Utagawa Kunisada/Toyokuni III

Japan 1786–1865

Kesa Gozen, wife of Watanabe Wataru 1844–47

Purchased 1930

Utagawa Kuniyoshi

Japan 1797–1861

Plum blossoms in the evening snow 1847–52

Gift of Thea Waddell 2003

woodblock prints; ink and colour on paper
Art Gallery of New South Wales

bottom row continued:

Utagawa Kuniyoshi

Japan 1797–1861

Courtesan Motozugi of the Daimojiya in Shin-Yoshiwara, Kyomachi 1-chome c1831

Gift of Dr James Hayes 2010

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi

Japan 1839–92

Cooling off at Shijō Dec 1885

Purchased with funds provided by the
Yasuko Myer Bequest 2012

woodblock prints; ink and colour on paper
Art Gallery of New South Wales

Imao Keinen

Japan 1845–1924

Sunflower and yellow bunting 1891

**Susuki grass, Chinese bellflowers,
patrinia and waxwing 1891**

woodblock print; ink and colour on paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales, gifts of Clare Goodwin 2002

Suzuki Kiitsu

Japan 1796–1858

Birds and flowers c1855

hanging scroll; colour on silk

Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased 1983

As the Cold War divided the world, and with his late works languishing behind the Iron Curtain, the memory of Mucha had faded outside Czechoslovakia by the mid 20th century. In 1963, a Mucha retrospective, *Art Nouveau and Alphonse Mucha*, was held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, running concurrently with Mucha exhibitions at two London commercial galleries.

Art nouveau and the Mucha style were almost immediately revived, with the impact felt most among young graphic artists in the flourishing youth countercultures of London and San Francisco. At a time of crisis over the Vietnam War and the threat of nuclear conflict, Mucha's peace-loving sentiment and graceful images with their floral motifs and hints of the otherworldly, resonated with flower power sensibilities and the emerging psychedelic rock culture.

Mucha's resurrected style, transformed by developments in Japanese manga, would later become an influence on a new generation of comic artists in America.

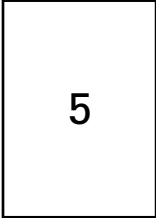
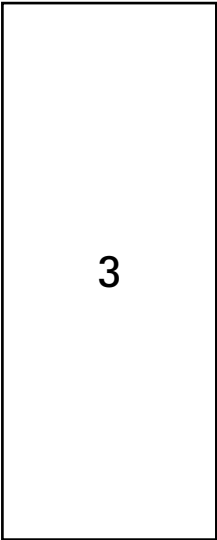
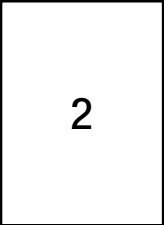
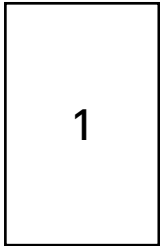
Brian Reade

England 1913–89

Art nouveau and Alphonse Mucha 1963

Published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office
and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London
National Art Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales

wall works



Wes Wilson

USA 1937–2020

- 1 **The Sound: Jefferson Airplane,
Butterfield Blues Band,
Muddy Waters, 1966 1966**

printing ink on paper

David Byrd

USA b1941

- 2 **The Rolling Stones in concert, 1969
1969**

printing ink on paper

- 3 **David Edward Byrd at
Triton Gallery 1971**

printing ink on paper

- 4 **Jesus Christ Superstar 1971**

printing ink on paper

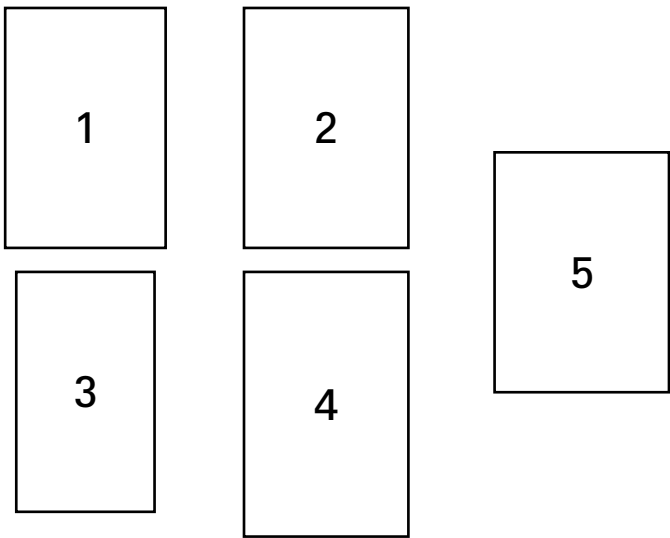
The Fool

Netherlands active late 1960s–1970s

- 5 **Love life 1966**

printing ink on paper

wall works



Alton Kelley

USA 1940–2008

Stanley Mouse

USA b1940

- 1 **Jefferson Airplane:**
Fillmore Auditorium, 6 Nov 1966 1966
printing ink on paper

- 2 **Jim Kweskin Jug Band:**
Avalon Ballroom, 7–8 Oct 1966 1966
printing ink on paper

Bob Masse

Canada b1945

- 3 **Grateful Dead 29 July 1966, PNE**
Garden Auditorium, Vancouver 1966
printing ink on paper

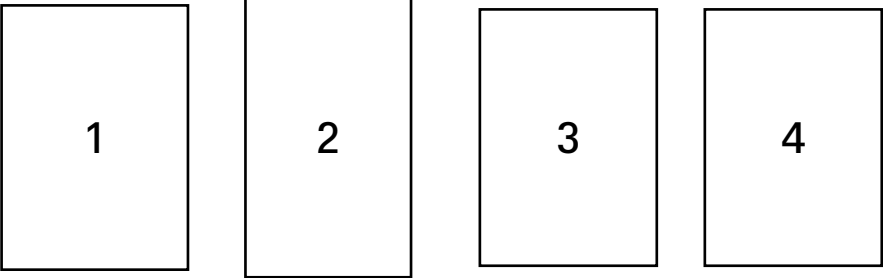
- 4 **The Collectors: Fisherwoman** 1967
printing ink on paper

John Lichtenwalner

USA 1921–2016

- 5 **Big Brother & the Holding Co;**
Jack & the Ripper, The Ark 1967
printing ink on paper

wall works



Hapshash and the Coloured Coat

England active 1967–69

- 1 **Jimi Hendrix Experience: Fillmore Auditorium, 20–26 June 1967** 1967

printing ink on paper

Barney Bubbles

England 1942–1983

- 2 **Hawkwind, 'Love & peace'** 1974

printing ink on paper

Hapshash and the Coloured Coat

England active 1967–69

- 3 **Pink Floyd at the CIA-UFO Club, 28 July 1967** 1967

printing ink on paper

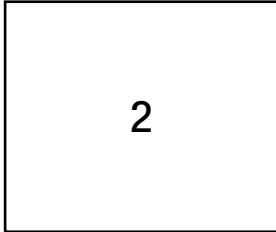
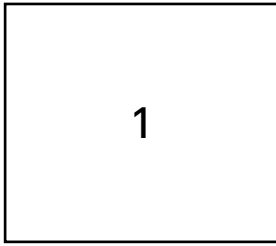
Martin Sharp

Australia 1942–2013

- 4 **Legalise cannabis: the putting together of the heads** 1967

screenprint from two stencils, on gold foil laminated paper
Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased with funds
provided by the Tony Gilbert Bequest 2014

wall works



Barry Windsor-Smith

England b1949

- 1 **Gaia: plate I**
from 'Sibyla' portfolio 1978
- 2 **Fire: plate III**
from 'Sibyla' portfolio 1978

colour lithographs on paper

Scan the QR code to listen to the playlist on Spotify or go to agnsw.art/mucha-playlist



cardboard LP sleeve covers

Bob Masse

Canada b1945

The Collectors 1968

Mati Klarwein

France 1932–2002

Howard Wales and Jerry Garcia, 'Hooteroll?' 1971

Alton Kelley Stanley Mouse

USA 1940–2008

USA b1940

Grateful Dead live, 'Skull and roses' 1971

The Fool

Netherlands active late 1960s–1970s

The Incredible String Band, 'The 5000 spirits or the layers of the onion' 1967

cardboard LP sleeve covers

Hapshash and the Coloured Coat

England active 1967–69

Art, 'Supernatural fairy tales' 1967

Motown

USA estab 1959

Diana Ross and the Supremes, 'Let the sun shine in' 1969

Philip Garris

USA 1919–2004

Grateful Dead, 'Blues for Allah'

Craig Braun

USA b1939

Gypsy 1970

cardboard LP sleeve covers

Gini Barris

England b1951

King Crimson, 'Lizard' 1970

Roger Dean

England b1944

Yes, 'Yessongs' 1973

Jim Fitzpatrick

Ireland b1944

Thin Lizzy, 'Johnny the Fox' 1976

Barney Bubbles

England 1942–1983

Hawkwind, 'Space ritual' 1973

For a brief period in the early 1900s, Japanese modernist literary magazines such as *Myōjō* ran covers that bore a clear resemblance to the work of Mucha. The strong stylistic resonances between Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints and the Mucha style saw a circular aesthetic exchange develop.

Also appearing was the Mucha-influenced cover of Akiko Yosano's 1901 feminist poetry collection *Midaregami (Tangled hair)*, which alluded to Japan's traditional symbolisation of long hair for beauty, grace and female sexuality. Such depictions of women emerged as the concept of the 'new woman' began to circulate in Japan. These became a primary source, decades later, for archetypal girl-images in *shōjo manga*, or 'girls' comics'.

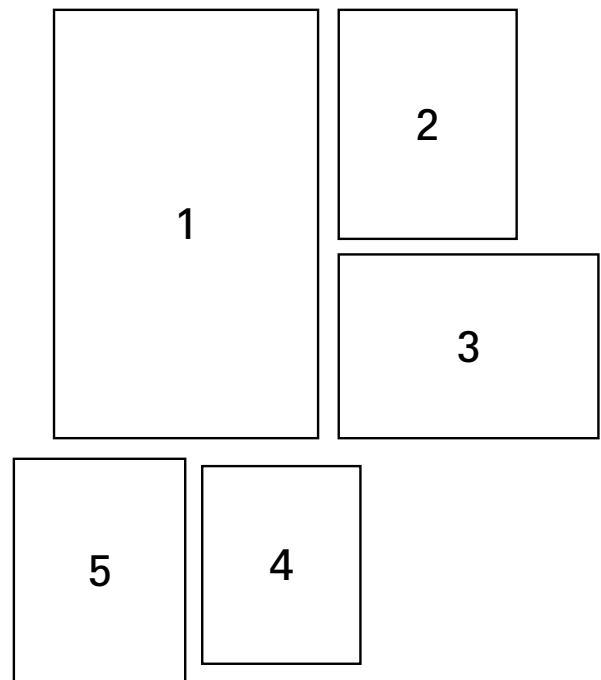
Hideko Mizuno was perhaps the first to rediscover Mucha's style through the American music scene, followed by other women from the Year 24 group, who incorporated it into manga, reclaiming the representation of women for themselves.

Ya-Sung Ko

Korea b1977

- 1 **The Lord of the Rings: Galadriel** 2013

digital print



Izubuchi Yutaka

Japan b1958

- 2 **Records of Lodoss War: Slacht** 1991

digital print from original drawing

Akumi Matsunae

Japan b1956

- 3 **Zodiac girl [Seiza no Shojo]: cover illustration for 'Bouquet' (September 1989, Shueisha, Tokyo) 1989, 2019**

giclée print from original drawing

Ryoko Yamagishi

Japan b1947

- 4 **Black Helene – illustration for
'Hana to Yume' (September 1979,
Hakusensha, Tokyo) 1979, 2019**

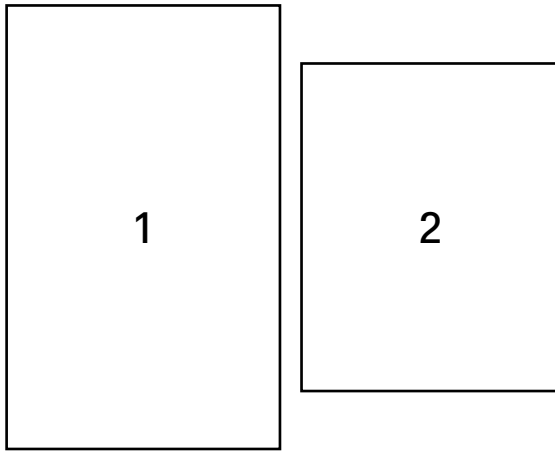
giclée print from original drawing

Hideo Mizuno

Japan b1939

- 5 **Tristan and Isolde: illustration for
'Seventeen' (January 1975, Shueisha,
Tokyo) 1975, 2019**

giclée print from original drawing



Yoshitaka Amano

Japan b1952

- 1 **Final Fantasy XIV: Adventurer and God of Storms** 2010, 2019
- 2 **Two princes: illustration for 'The heroic legend of Arslan' vol 2 by Yoshiki Tanaka (1987, Kadokawa Shoten, Tokyo) 1987, 2019**

giclée prints from original drawings

John Tyler Christopher

USA b1978

Nova #36B 2010

Brandon Peterson

USA b1969

**Dejah Thoris and the white apes
of Mars #1 2013**

Joe Quesada

USA b1962

Ninjak #3 1994

Michael Kaluta

Guatemala b1947

Hedge knight #1 2003

Terry Moore

USA b1954

Strangers in paradise volume 3 #52 1997

Joe Quesada

USA b1962

Vampirella #0 1994

printing ink on paper

teamLab

Japan founded 2001

Flowers and People – Gold 2015

eight-channel computer-generated interactive program,
colour, sound, motion sensors

Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased with funds
provided by the David George Wilson Bequest for
Asian Art and the Asian Collection Benefactors 2015

An interactive work by the creative interdisciplinary group teamLab, *Flowers and People – Gold* is a contemporary 'floating world', continuing themes and perspectives shared by Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints and contemporary manga. It takes up the theme of the seasons reflected for centuries in Japanese art and culture.

Flowers bud, blossom and grow before their petals fade and wither: an endlessly varying cycle here rendered in real time. Step close and your movement will be detected; the flowers may shed their petals all at once and die, or come to life and blossom once again in an eternal cycle of life. TeamLab aims to bring people together in a collective experience to expand, like Mucha, the idea of beauty as a catalyst for humanity to grow and thrive.