THE DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

Alphonse Mucha
Master of
Art Nouveau

Selections from the Dhawan Collection

September 16–December 31, 2017

{exhibit review: alphonse mucha at the dayton art institute}

by Katherine N. Crowley

Some friends and I paid a visit to Dayton, Ohio to see the Alphonse Mucha exhibit currently on view at the Dayton Art Institute (DAI). During college I became particularly interested in Art Nouveau, an international style of decorative art that was popular in Europe and the Americas during the turn of the 20th century. Also referred to as the Glasgow School in Scotland, the Secessionist Movement in Eastern Europe, and Jugendstil in Germany, the style marries fine art with decoration and is characterized by whiplash curves, repetitive forms, and flora and fauna motifs. Designers took influence from Japanese wood block prints that were being imported from the east, as well as Nordic and Celtic decoration. If you take a look at my unicorn logo, and even the way I have laid out this magazine over the years, you will note an Art Nouveau influence.

Art Nouveau became a total art style influencing both the fine and decorative arts, including: architecture, painting, graphic design, interior design, jewelry, furniture, textiles, ceramics, glass, and metal work. Notable artists who practiced the style include: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Charles Rennie McIntosh, Henry Van de Velde, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Antoni Gaudí, Gustav Klimt, and Aubrey Beardsley.

Step back into the sumptuous fin-de-siècle era with The Dayton Art Institute's eagerly anticipated fall exhibition, *Alphonse Mucha: Master of Art Nouveau—Selections from the Dhawan Collection,* on view from September 16 through December 31, 2017.

Influential in shaping the aesthetics of French Art Nouveau at the turn of the 20th century, Alphonse Mucha (Czechoslovakian, 1860–1939) created varied, expressive and seductive works that became synonymous with the period. Much of Mucha's illustrative work employed beautiful women to attract an audience—and to sell the products he was hired to promote. His images of these sexualized women challenged traditional codes during the rise of the "modern woman".

Additionally, this exhibition reveals Mucha's willingness to experiment with style and process, examining the broad range of Mucha's works, largely created during the 1890s, a time that emphasized creating a new art fit for the new century. The exhibition presents 75 works, including rare, original lithographs, proofs and drawings, as well as books, posters, portfolios and ephemera, all drawn from the Dhawan Collection, one of the finest private collections of Mucha's work in the United States.

Above: Alphonse Mucha (Czechoslovakian 1860-1939) *Monaco, Monte Carlo,* 1897 (detail), color lithograph on paper, 29.25 x 42.25 inches, Dhawan Collection.

When Alphonse Mucha moved from the Moravian region of Czechoslovakia to Paris, a law had been relaxed allowing posters to be displayed on public walls throughout the city. The streets of Paris quickly became an outdoor gallery of advertisements for traveling circuses, dance halls, liquor, and perfume. In order to stand out from the crowd, artists like Alphonse Mucha upped the ante by designing exquisite works of art that could not be ignored among the dearth of text and imagery. He was first approached by the extremely popular stage actress, Sarah Bernhardt, to create a poster promoting her performance in *Gismonda.* The response was so positive she signed a six-year contract with the artist to create posters, theater sets, and costumes that helped establish her image as an international icon.

Alphonse Mucha produced a variety of print media including advertisements, calendars, and art prints that consumers would purchase to decorate their homes. Magazines and journals featured his work and frequently offered art prints as part of a subscription. During the industrial age, the modern woman had more leisure time, and so bicycles, cigarettes, and travel opportunities were advertised displaying women as the subjects/consumers.
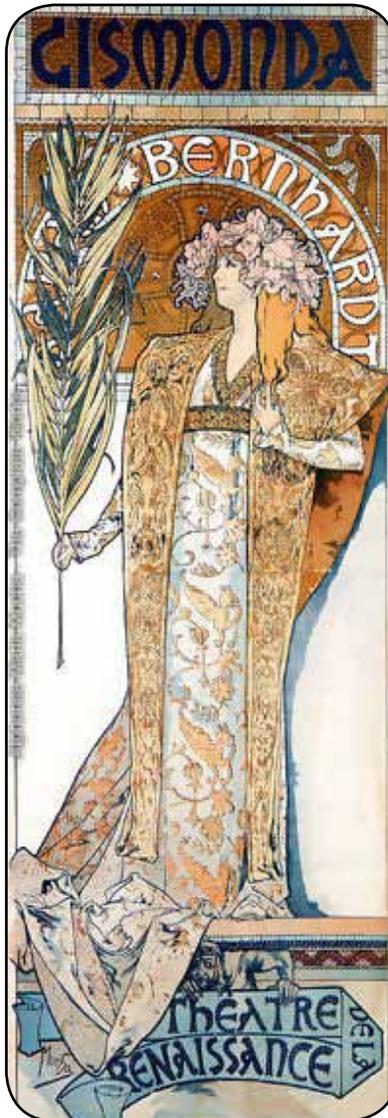
Mr. Mucha's style was given international exposure by the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris, where he decorated the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion and collaborated on decorating the Austrian Pavilion.

In 1899, Alphonse Mucha published Le Pater, a line-by-line illustrated reimagining of the Lord's Prayer. He considered the book to be his printed masterpiece.
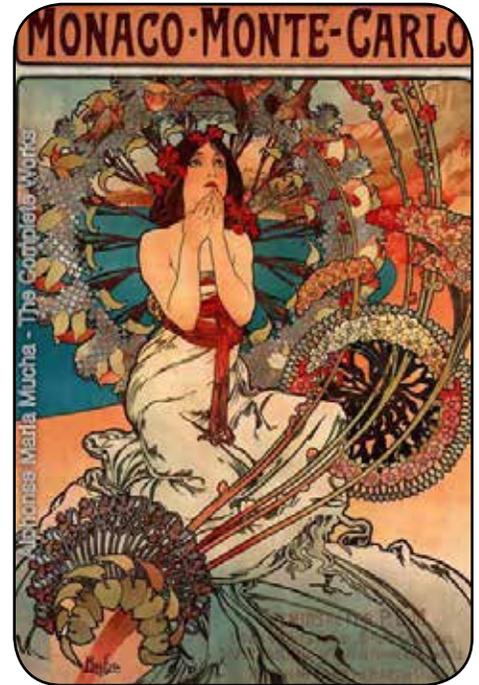
The artist later turned his attention toward fine art and began *The Slav Epic,* a series of 20 monumental paintings depicting the history of the Czech and the Slavic people. The body of work was bestowed to the city of Prague in 1928 and is currently on view in the National Gallery's Veletržní Palace in Prague.

The DAI exhibit hosts some excellent examples of Mucha's poster work, including a few pieces that demonstrate the stages of producing a color lithograph. A side room provides the opportunity to try your hand at creating your own design in the style, while an accompanying video describes the process of creating and printing a lithograph.

Curated by Gabriel Weisberg, Professor of Art History, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and organized by Landau Traveling Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, The Dayton Art Institute is the sole Midwest venue for this national tour. For more about the exhibition, visit http://www.daytonartinstitute.org/mucha and look for the hashtag #MuchaDAI on social media.

All of the work by Alphonse Mucha shown throughout these pages is on display as part of the DAI's exhibit.

{what is lithography?}

Lithography is a form of flat surface that using limestone. Artists have long been enamored with lithography because it is a painterly process that produces painting-like results.

Stone printing was introduced by Alois Senefelder in 1796. He experimented with an etching technique using an acid resistant ink on a piece of Bavarian limestone ground smooth. "The principle behind it is that water and grease don't mix. In an etching or woodcarving you cut away the surface, but in lithography it's a chemical reaction that produces the image," explains Bill Lagattuta, shop manager of the Tamarind Institute, a fine-art lithography center, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

An artist draws an image on a piece of limestone using different grease pencils. The stone is then prepared with French chalk powder—a mixture of rosin and talc—to protect it throughout the process. The stone is treated with nitric acid diluted in gum arabic. "This makes the image grease-receptive and makes the stone water-receptive," says Bill, who explains that the solution is buffed in with cheesecloth. Lithotine, a kind of turpentine, is then applied to the stone to "wash out" the drawing, leaving a ghost of the image in the stone to which the ink will adhere. A thin layer of oily ink is applied. Water is used to clean the stone and keep it moist to repel the printing ink from the non-printable areas. Printing ink is applied with a roller. Paper is laid on top of the stone and the piece it put through a rolling printing press under considerable pressure.

In the mid-1800s, Currier & Ives began selling commercial lithographs in the United States. At the end of the 19th century, the art form took a big leap forward with the development of color lithography. In color lithography, a different stone is created for each color, so colors can be layered on top of each other. In order to create vibrant yet subtly colored prints, artists would draw on 10 or more stones to create a single work. Accurate registration for multi-colored work is achieved by the use of a key outline image and registration bars which are applied to each stone or plate before drawing the solid or tone image. Ben-Day medium uses a raised gelatin stipple image to give tone gradation. An air-brush sprays ink to give soft edges. These are just two methods used to achieve gradations of tone. The use of twelve overprinted colors would not be considered unusual. Each sheet of paper will therefore pass through the printing press as many times as there are colors in the final print. In order that each color is placed in the right position, each stone or plate must be precisely "registered", or lined up, on the paper using a system of register marks.

A drawing is created on a limestone slab using grease pencil.

Nitric acid etches the stone where the grease is not present.

Ink is applied, paper is laid on top of the stone and put through a press.

A finished lithograph print.

Images courtesy of *Stayf Draws*

Sources: *Antiques Roadshow, Tips of the Trade, Lithography 101,* by Dennis Gaffney. Published September 10, 2001. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/tips/lithography.html.; S*tayf Draws: How Stone Lithography Works.* Published to YouTube on June 5, 2016. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3GcVtOCKx4; Chromolithography.* Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chromolithography

Works like the advertisement at left promoting the Austrian Pavilion at the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris were designed to be versatile. Alphonse Mucha designed the image of the human figures. Architectural drawings of Austrian landmarks were supplied by another artist. The space at the bottom of the poster was left vacant in order to accommodate varying text. Printed elements could be substituted depending on where the poster would appear. Such posters were displayed throughout Europe, promoting the exhibition in different regions and different languages.

{color lithography}

In addition to fine detail, the lithograph printing process offers the ability to reproduce rich vibrant colors, and turn of the 20th century artists like Alphonse Mucha took full advantage. Layering different ink colors became an art in itself and led to the development of the four color separation process which uses cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. This process is still in use today.

Below are a few examples of the different approaches that could be taken with lithography. On the left, a contour drawing with minimal shading acts as the outline to a final work. In the center, two colors are used to distinguish the foreground from the background. The vacant banner toward the bottom of the image could be used for typesetting. On the right, is an example of a full-color calendar that Alphonse Mucha produced using symbols from the zodiac. The text at the top of the composition and the flags toward the bottom could be customized by the printer.
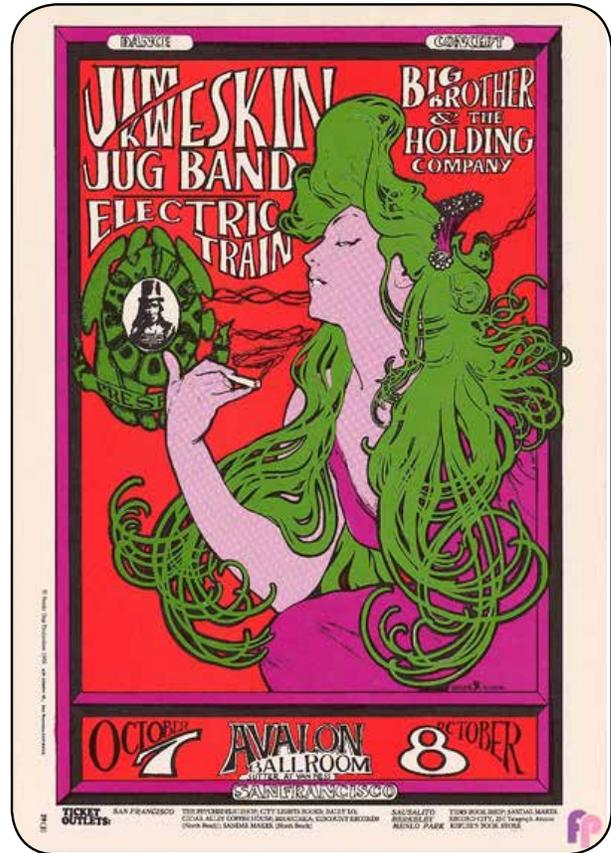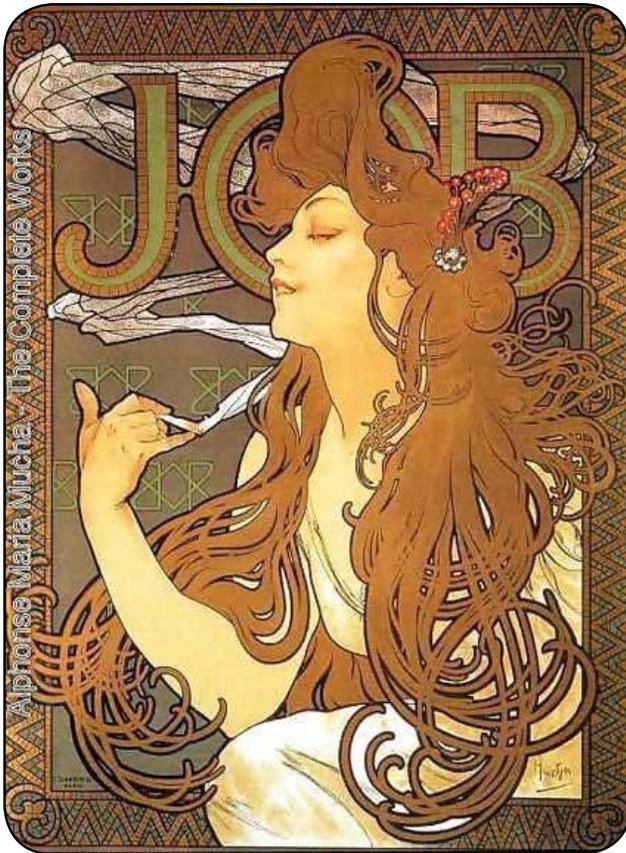
{look familiar?}

Though Art Nouveau fell out of favor by 1910, the style experienced a revival in the 1960s in the form of the psychedelic concert poster. Today, Alphonse Mucha's work continues to grace calendars, greeting cards, and book covers, and influences the work of contemporary artists like Shepard Fairey.
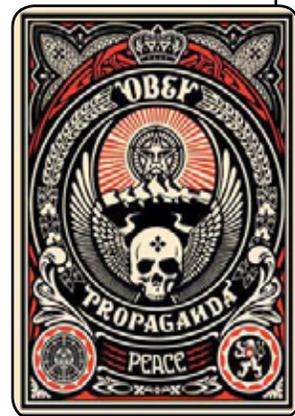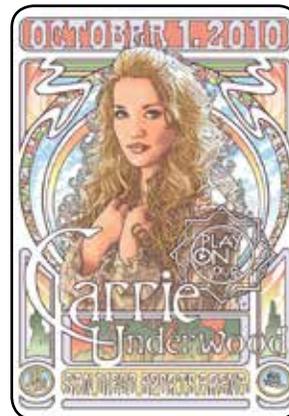
Top left: *JOB,* advertisement for cigarette rolling papers, by Alphonse Mucha. Top right: Concert poster for Jim Kweskin Jug Band Electric Train. Above left to right: Concert posters for The Byrds, The Miller Blues Band, Jefferson Airplane with The Grateful Dead, and Carrie Underwood. A peace propaganda poster by street artist Shepard Fairey.

{all around the town}

*The Columbus College of Art and Design, Beeler Gallery
(http://www.ccad.edu/events-calendar-news/exhibitions)*
　　"Alan Shields: A Different Kind of Painting", Through January 2, 2018
　　"Stitch", Through January 2, 2018

*The Columbus Cultural Arts Center
(http://www.culturalartscenteronline.org)*
　　" Rust to Dust: Frayed Opulence and Luxuriant Ruin", Through
　　December 30, 2017

The Columbus Museum of Art (http://www.columbusmuseum.org)
　　"Beyond Impressionism", Through January 21, 2018
　　"Laura Park: 2017 Columbus Comics Residency Exhibition",
　　Through February 11

Dublin Arts Council (http://www.dublinarts.org)
　　"Louise Captein: As Per Usual", November 14-December 15

The High Road Gallery and Studios (http://www.highroadgallery.com)
　　"Art from the Heart of Ohio", December 1-3, 2017

McConnell Arts Center (http://www.mcconnellarts.org)
　　"Todd Camp & Richard Duarte Brown" Through December 30
　　"Three Points in Time", January 4-February 18

OSU Urban Arts Space (http://www.uas.osu.edu)
　　"Department of Art BFA Thesis Exhibition", November 28-December 16

The Pizzuti Collection (http://www.pizzuticollection.org)
　　"Lines/Edges: Frank Stella on Paper", now open
　　"Pair: Glen Baldridge and Alex Dodge", now open

Ohio Historical Society (http://www.ohiohistory.org)
　　"Bhutanese-Nepali Neighbors: Photographs by Tariq Tarey",
　　May 5, 2017-January 7, 2018

The Riffe Gallery (http://www.oac.ohio.gov/Riffe-Gallery/Exhibitions)
　　"2017 Biennial Juried Exhibition", November 2, 2017-January 6, 2018

The Wexner Center (http://www.wexarts.org)
　　"Cindy Sherman: Imitation of Life", Through December 31

{performing arts}

BalletMet (http://www.balletmet.org)
　　"The Nutcracker", December 8-24, Ohio Theater

CAPA (http://www.capa.com)
　　"The Hip Hop Nutcracker", December 5, Palace Theater
　　"An Evening with George Winston", December 6, Lincoln Theater
　　"Dave Koz 20th Anniversary Christmas Tour", December 8,
　　Palace Theater
　　"Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer", December 16-17, Palace Theater
　　"Jim Brickman: A Joyful Christmas", December 17, Southern Theater
　　"Paw Patrol Live!", December 28-30, Ohio Theater

CATCO (http://www.catcoistheatre.org/)
　　"American Buffalo", November 30-December 9, Studio One, Riffe Center
　　"Madeline's Christmas", December 8-17, Shedd Theatre, CPAC

*Columbus Symphony Orchestra at the Ohio Theater (unless otherwise noted)
(http://www.columbussymphony.com)*
　　"Holiday Pops", December 1-3

{and beyond}

The Akron Art Museum (http://www.akronartmuseum.org)
　　"Alchemy: Transformations in Gold", Through January 21, 2018
　　"Heavy Metal", Through February 18, 2018

The Museum of Fine Arts Boston (http://www.mfa.org)
　　"Mark Rothko: Reflection", Through July 1, 2018

ICA Boston (http://www.icaboston.org)
　　"Mark Dion: Misadventures of a 21st-Century Naturalist",
　　Through December 31

The Cincinnati Art Museum (http://www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org)
　　"Albrecht Dürer: The Age of Reformation and Renaissance", Through
　　February 11, 2018

Contemporary Arts Center (http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org)
　　"Glenn Kaino: A Shout Within a Storm", Through April 22, 2018

The Cleveland Museum of Art (http://www.clevelandart.org)
　　"William Morris", Through November 11, 2018
　　"Rodin - 100 Years", Through May 13, 2018

The Art Institute of Chicago (http://www.artic.edu)
　　"Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil", Through
　　January 7, 2018

Dayton Art Institute (http://www.daytonartinstitute.org)
　　"Alphonse Mucha: Master of Art Nouveau" Through December 31

Detroit Institute of Art (http://www.dia.org)
　　"D-Cyphered: Portraits by Jenny Risher", Through February 18, 2018

Indianapolis Museum of Art (http://www.imamuseum.org)
　　"City as Canvas", Through January 28, 2018

Los Angeles County Museum of Art (http://www.lacma.org)
　　"Painted in Mexico, 1700–1790: Pinxit Mexici", Through March 18,
　　2018

Minneapolis Institute of Art (http://www.artsmia.org)
　　"Eyewitness Views: Making History in Eighteenth-Century Europe",
　　Through December 31

Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC (http://www.metmuseum.org)
　　"David Hockney," Through February 25, 2018

Museum of Modern Art, New York (http://www.moma.org)
　　"Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting", Through March 11

New Orleans Museum of Art (http://www.noma.org)
　　"Orientalism: Taking and Making", Through December 31

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (http://www.cmoa.org)
　　"20/20: The Studio Museum in Harlem and Carnegie Museum of Art",
　　Through December 31

The Warhol, Pittsburgh (http://www.warhol.org)
　　"Farhad Moshiri: Go West", Through January 14, 2018

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (http://www.sfmoma.org)
　　"Walker Evans", Through February 4

The Toledo Museum of Art (http://www.toledomuseum.org)
　　"Glorious Splendor: Treasures of Early Christian Art", Through February
　　18, 2018

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (http://www.nga.gov)
　　"Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting: Inspiration and Rivalry",
　　Through January 21, 2018

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