Women in art nouveau: artist and inspiration.

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WOMEN IN ART NOUVEAU: ARTIST AND INSPIRATION

By

Jo Anne Triplett
B.A., University of Louisville, 1981

A Thesis
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WOMEN IN ART NOUVEAU: ARTIST AND INSPIRATION

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A Thesis Approved on

April 27, 1984

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ABSTRACT

The role of women in the development of the turn-of-the-century movement known as Art Nouveau was important, but little has been written about it. This thesis serves as an introduction to attempt to explore their roles, primarily by identifying who they were and what they accomplished.

Art History, until our own century, has not fully documented the women artists of the past. The women who excelled in this field of handicrafts and applied arts should be more appreciated as interest grows in all aspects of Art Nouveau.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people who have guided, assisted and endured me: my thesis advisor, Professor William Schuyler, whose cure for procrastination was extremely bad jokes; Professors Dario Covi and Will Morgan, whose teaching and friendship made the years at the University of Louisville a great experience; and last but of course not least, my family and friends who put up with me through all this imbroglio.
Years ago, someone who was twenty-three in 1900 gave me an inkling of what Art Nouveau meant for his generation. I was speaking against it to my uncle... when he retorted: "We were suddenly discovering nature. It was spring, plants shooting everywhere... we felt a vitality; an enthusiasm. Ma petite, you cannot imagine what it was like!"

---Dominique de Menil

I very earnestly believe in the text which is that there should be no sex in Art... I am pointing, I know, to a millennium at least in the woman's view if I predict an hour when the term "Women in Art" will be as strange sounding a topic as the title "Men in Art" would be now.

---Cecilia Beaux, 1915

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INTRODUCTION TO ART NOUVEAU

Art Nouveau was a turn of the century movement in which women participated. During the 1890s, the movement almost became a way of life for a segment of the avant garde.

The title "Art Nouveau" first appeared as a sign shop of a gallery owned by Samuel Bing in Paris (Fig. 1). The year was 1895; the ideas of the "New Style" had been around for years. Bing had not intended the title to be the catch-phrase of the decade; instead, he wanted it to name the place where modern artists could show their wares and art patrons could come to shop. The name endured due to Bing's personal directions.

Art Nouveau takes a variety of forms. Theoretically, there were no set ideas as to what it really was, so there were no limitations put on creativity. Known as Jugendstil in Germany, Stile Liberty in Italy, Sezessionsstil in Austria and Art Nouveau in America and France, this style of art was hailed as the first truly modern style of its day.

Although Art Nouveau was not the same everywhere, there were features in common. The primary source of inspiration was nature, resulting in the widespread use

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of the stylized flower and whiplash motifs. The desired
effect was to create new patterns and designs based on
the undulating lines of plants. It had its origin in
common with the Arts and Crafts movement: anti-historicism,
anti-mechanism, Orientalism, beauty combined with utility,
and a desire to raise the standards of design in the
decorative arts. 4

Art Nouveau was not interested in social changes
and theories like the Arts and Crafts movement. 5 The
roots were there, but Art Nouveau stressed original
decorative aspects. As a decorative style used mainly
in architecture and interior design, it prided itself
on its new form of artistic protest.

Described as sinuous, fragile, decadent, feminine,
nature personified, sensuous, linear, and ethereal, Art
Nouveau was a product of the 1890s. Its reign ended
during the century's first decade; perhaps the height
of the movement came at the Exposition Universelle in
Paris in 1900. Although short-lived and a dead end,
it paved the way for cleaning out of past influences
and set the art world on the course for the stark and
revolutionary styles coming in the 20th century.

4 Laurence Buffet-Challie, Art Nouveau Style (New

5 J.M. Richards and Nikolaus Pevsner, eds., The Anti-Ra­
    tionalists (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press,
THE WOMEN'S ROLE

In the 1890s, the impact of the "girl student" was felt in the art schools and men may have wished for the days before they were overrun by women. Women received prizes and commissions; some even won in equal competitions with men. No area was completely closed off to them, though few gained wealth or reputation.6

Women were becoming emancipated and artistic. Art was one of the few respectable occupations available to women who needed to support themselves.7 Society gave them many contradictions; the rigid roles and the common view of femininity were highly restrictive.

The art of the time did not wish to show women in an emancipated role although women were the main subject of Art Nouveau pieces. They were portrayed in the extremes of angelic girl-woman to femme fatale. An attitude presented to women at the turn-of-the-century, labeled "La Belle Epoque", was perhaps the ideal women were meant to attain.8 It represented the attitudes of the nouveau

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7 Ibid.

riche upper-middle class of Europe and America; this "goal" expressed gaiety, pleasure, and perhaps frivolousness on the part of men and women. Art Nouveau has been accused of being one of the diversions of this society; in reality it was included but strived for advancement of the decorative arts.  

Women were a central subject in Art Nouveau, and many pieces portrayed dancers and actresses famous at this time. Two of the most frequently depicted were Sarah Bernhardt and Loie Fuller. 

Bernhardt was the most admired actress of this period; her sinuous body was said to be a basis for the Art Nouveau curved line (Fig. 2). Alphonse Mucha was her favorite graphic artist; he portrayed her many times and perhaps did his best work during the period he knew her (Fig. 3). Another graphic artist, Paul Berthon, has become best known for his 1901 lithograph of her portrayal of Melisande in _La Princesse Lointaine_ (Fig. 4). Rene Lalique and George Fouquet crafted jewelry for her; an outstanding example is the Mucha-designed piece Fouquet created for Bernhardt's role as Cleopatra (Fig. 5).

Berhardt was quite an eccentric but her acting talents were not disputed. She also knew the art world well; she was a talented sculptor and painter whose exhibitions

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9 Bairati, p. 154.
included the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900.

A Folies-Bergere dancer, Loie Fuller, has been called Art Nouveau personified. Dancing with yards of material about her, she seemed to float and whirl in standard Art Nouveau fashion. She has been credited as the first dancer to use lighting artistically. ¹¹

Many artists, especially sculptors, tried to render her sensual, illuminated dances. Two—Pierre Roche and Raoul Larche—show her in mid-dance with endless amounts of fabric highlighted with hidden lighting (Figs. 6 & 7). She so represented Art Nouveau that it has been said "...Fuller's movements sometimes seemed to create the impression that one of Gallé's vases had come alive."¹¹ Her crowning glory was the achievement of her own pavilion at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

Another dancer immortalized in Art Nouveau sculpture was Cléo de Mérode (Fig. 8). As a leading beauty of her day, she was inspiration for artists. She is not well remembered for her dancing; rather she seems to have reached immortality through the busts and statuettes that portrayed her.

Women, as an inspiration and as practitioners, were a focal point of Art Nouveau. Their roles in this turn-of-the-century movement should be examined for all their outstanding contributions.


SCULPTURE

An expressive medium, sculpture is one area in which Art Nouveau excelled. Sculptors looked to Auguste Rodin for leadership and artistic style; his sculpture expressed a restless sensuality that was influential on Art Nouveau.

Artists made Art Nouveau statuary and *objets d'art* in abundance; the preferred materials were marble, plaster, and terra-cotta, with patinated bronze the most popular. A favorite theme of Art Nouveau was woman, and it was used to the near exclusion of all other themes in sculpture.

Sculpture was a good medium for women. Although still considered a man's field (but not as strongly masculine as architecture), women were able to go to the best available teachers. Rodin had many female students who went on to design in their own various styles.

Perhaps one of the more unusual Art Nouveau women sculptors was Camille Claudel. She had once been a pupil of Rodin's who displayed her works, with others, at Samuel Bing's Galeries de l'Art Nouveau in 1895. One of the few women represented, she was definitely in distinguished company (jewelry by Lalique, glassware by Gallé and Tiffany, etc.).

She seemed to capture Rodin's energy in her own work; this combined with her choice of unusual materials, such as onyx with bronze, made her prominent.
in this field of Art Nouveau. The tactile quality of onyx brings out the sensuality of the subject, usually women (Fig. 9).

Claudel's brother was the poet Paul Claudel. He described the effect of her work:

"Just as a man sitting alone in the countryside makes use of some tree or rock on which his eyes have fastened as an accompaniment to his meditation, so a work by Camille Claudel in the middle of a room functions in the same way as the curious rocks collected by the Chinese; its very form makes it a monument of the inner life. It is a budding theme, an invitation to the private muse."13

Loie Fuller, the darling of Art Nouveau, can be seen dancing in the sculpture of Clara Pfeffer. One such work was exhibited at the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts in 1901 (Fig. 10). Pfeffer, showing the masses of fabric of Fuller's costume, expresses the curving sensuous lines characteristic of Art Nouveau.

Pfeffer also experimented with lighting fixtures. She designed a table lamp that was shown in the Société des Artistes Francais also held in 1901.

Additional women sculptors, of whom little is known, included Jeanne Itasse and Jeanne Jozan. Among Itasse's sculpture is included Naufrageé (Shipwrecked) in bronze (Fig. 11); Jozan executed a charming bronze pitcher (Curiosité) (Fig. 12) and a candlestick (Nu à l'iris.) (Fig. 13), both shown at the Salon des Beaux-Arts (date unknown).

Women sculptors' contribution to Art Nouveau was not overwhelming. Since it was considered a male domain, the male sculptors such as Raoul Larche had prominence.

Yet women did make advances in the field of sculpture. Camille Claudel's use of extraordinary media took her a step beyond most sculptors, male or female. This tactile and visual bonus to her work gives more meaning to the sensuality of Art Nouveau.

Men and women sculptors sometimes chose identical subjects; both Clara Pfeffer and Raoul Larche depicted Loie Fuller in mid-dance. Each concentrated on the whirl of fabric to represent Art Nouveau lines and curves illustrating the vitality of this style.
EMBROIDERY

One of the symbols of Art Nouveau is the stylized "whiplash"; this is due to the preoccupation with plant forms. Art Nouveau artists usually studied botany at some time in their careers to further emphasize the natural aspect. In a so-called art form for women, embroidery illustrated this symbol as well as other aspects of Art Nouveau.

Hermann Obrist, Swiss sculptor, embroider, and naturalist, composed an organic design to be put into embroidery (Fig. 14). The cyclamen plant was a possible basis for the design; another source seems to be Oriental calligraphy.¹⁴ & ¹⁵ The embroidery was produced by Berthe Ruchet, a former companion of his mother's, in 1895. Because of what the whiplash represents, this design belongs to the masterpieces of Art Nouveau.

The two first produced works together in their embroidery workshop, located in Florence, in 1892. Later, in 1894, the shop was moved to the Odeonsplatz in Munich.

Embroidery was not thought of as a serious art form until Jessie Rowat Newbery influenced students


at the Glasgow School of Art to consider it as such (Fig. 15). During the time that she was teaching, her students included the Macdonald sisters and Ann Macbeth.

Because of her persistence, the Scottish Education Department issued, in 1900, new regulations that stated embroidery was an important part of the curriculum. As a result, many sought classes; Ann Macbeth became Professor of Embroidery at the Glasgow School of Art some time later, with Margaret Swainson as her assistant (Fig. 16). Macbeth's teachings on embroidery were the foundations for our modern methods of needlework.16

Jessie Newbery had developed a personal creed which she applied to her art, to herself and to her students:

"I believe in education consisting of seeing the best that has been done. Then, having this high standard before us, in doing what we like to do: that for our fathers, this for us.

I believe that nothing is common or unclean; that the design and decoration of a pepper pot is as important, in its degree, as the conception of a cathedral.

I believe that material, space, and consequent use discover their own exigencies and as such have to be considered well... I like the opposition of straight lines to curved; of horizontal to vertical; of purple to green, of green to blue... I specially aim at beautifully shaped spaces and try to make them as important as the patterns.

I try to make most appearance with least effort, but insist that what work is ventured on is as perfect as may be."17


17 Callen, p. 124.
Embroidery was called an art form for women with important gains being made by the women. The significance of embroidery is illustrated by the Obrist-Ruchet whiplash as a symbol for Art Nouveau.

Another example of the importance of women to embroidery is in the teachings of Jessie Newbery and Ann Macbeth. As the teachers of the groundwork for all future forms of needlework, their importance cannot be diminished. The combination of women, embroidery, and Art Nouveau produced significant results in all three areas.
A heightened taste in decoration was another characteristic feature of Art Nouveau. It was preferred to have functional items decorative and vice versa; this "total art" concept goes back to the Art and Crafts ideal of carefully designed items corresponding with everything else.\(^\text{18}\)

Two women who practiced this total art concept were the Macdonald sisters. Margaret (1865-1933) and Frances (1874-1921) helped to establish Glasgow, Scotland as a great center for Art Nouveau. As part of the group called "The Four" (with Charles Rennie Mackintosh, who married Margaret in 1900, and J. Herbert MacNair, who married Frances in 1899), they were famous for their complete home design and decorating. The sisters worked individually and together on projects ranging from watercolors, murals, metalwork, embroidered panels and furniture. Both excelled in the flat-pattern graphic arts with the swirling linear forms being repeated in Mackintosh's architecture detailing.

All of "The Four" were educated at the Glasgow School of Art. The headmaster, Francis H. Newbery, introduced

the architecture students and the sisters in 1893. He had detected a similar style and felt their work complemented each other. The Macdonalds were taking the Applied Art course of study; this involved learning metalwork, embroidery, drawing, etc.

The sisters (and MacNair, who abandoned his architecture career for the decorative arts) were involved in the decorative aspects of designing from the beginning of their careers. The group's designs took on a linear, graphic line; a possible source of inspiration was early Celtic Art found in manuscript pages and metalwork. All preferred to do their own craftwork or, at the very least, supervise it closely.

Nicknamed "The Spook School" because of their thin, ghostly configurations, the sisters produced ornamentation directly related to the elongated Pre-Raphaelite figures. This style was evident in all media they used.

Surrounding "The Four" were many other Glasgow artists who shared their ideals. Eventually all were called the Glasgow Group and their style the Glasgow Style or School. Other artists included Jessie and Francis Newbery, Talwin Morris, Jessie King and Annie French. This style was dramatically different from Art Nouveau

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produced elsewhere in Europe and American; until the late 1890s, the other European countries had not heard of the Glasgow Style. In 1898 "The Four" attracted international attention with an article published in Dekorative Kunst.

Perhaps the highlight of the Macdonalds' career (because of the glorious interiors) is the series of tearooms done for Miss Cranston (Figs. 17-20). Tearooms were supposed to be the refined ladies' answer to bars and heavy drinking. The Willow Tearoom of 1904 has perhaps the most spectacular interior, with soft colors (greys, greens, pinks, and blues), elongated figure murals, sculptured gesso and brushed metals resulting in an eerie fairy-land feeling. The buildings were executed by Mackintosh with the Macdonald sisters helping him to design the interiors.

Another Mackintosh design commission was submitted in a competition for a house of an art patron (Haus eines Kunstfreundes) in 1901 (Figs. 21 and 22). Margaret designed the decorations for the walls; she placed panels between windows and at the end of the rooms to break up the space and to give interest. Her soft and elegant style beautifully sums up the presence the Macdonalds had through their interiors.

Art Nouveau was a style that was very adaptable to interior design and concentrated on the total appearance of a room. The concept the Macdonald sisters stressed
produced elsewhere in Europe and American; until the late 1890s, the other European countries had not heard of the Glasgow Style. In 1898 "The Four" attracted international attention with an article published in Dekorative Kunst.

Perhaps the highlight of the Macdonalds' career (because of the glorious interiors) is the series of tearooms done for Miss Cranston (Figs. 17-20). Tearooms were supposed to be the refined ladies' answer to bars and heavy drinking. The Willow Tearoom of 1904 has perhaps the most spectacular interior, with soft colors (greys, greens, pinks, and blues), elongated figure murals, sculptured gesso and brushed metals resulting in an eerie fairy-land feeling. The buildings were executed by Mackintosh with the Macdonald sisters helping him to design the interiors.

Another Mackintosh design commission was submitted in a competition for a house of an art patron (Haus eines Kunstfreundes) in 1901 (Figs. 21 and 22). Margaret designed the decorations for the walls; she placed panels between windows and at the end of the rooms to break up the space and to give interest. Her soft and elegant style beautifully sums up the presence the Macdonalds had through their interiors.

Art Nouveau was a style that was very adaptable to interior design and concentrated on the total appearance of a room. The concept the Macdonald sisters stressed
was functional design that was well-made and artistically attractive. 21 When applying this concept to a decorative object or to a room scheme, Margaret and Frances developed what has been called a "feminine interior decorative" style (so called because of the delicate lines and colors used). 22 J. Meier-Graefe stated in 1904 or 1905 that "...in Glasgow, English Art was no longer hermaphrodite but passed into the hands of woman." 23

Margaret and Frances may always be in the shadow of the most famous member of "The Four", Charles Rennie Mackintosh, but their contribution to interior decoration and Art Nouveau is important. Many Art Nouveau artists were accomplished in several areas; the Macdonald sisters turned their multi-talented skills toward working in an united scheme and achieving some of the most spectacular and unique interiors of the Art Nouveau years and architectural history.

21 Buffet-Challie, p. 82.


23 Masden, p. 292.
GRAPHIC ARTS

Graphic art, especially posters, was a good medium for Art Nouveau. An Art Nouveau poster is different from most others; instead of the emphasis on product description, as it is with most advertisements, the emphasis is on art. The fascination with line and flat areas of color gave a new importance to the graphic arts. Collecting books and posters became a popular pastime in the 1890s; prior to that, it had been regarded as a privilege only for the rich.

The Industrial Revolution furthered the idea of cheap duplication. At the same time the poster designers had come upon Art Nouveau when commercialism had started to capture the market.

The popular advertising medium was seized upon by many of the late 19th century-early 20th century masters, including Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec. Among the women illustrators was Scottish Jessie Marion King, whose husband was the painter E.A. Taylor. King (1876-1949) was an excellent metalworker, but showed promise as a graphic artist while at the Glasgow School of Art (1894-1900).

While at the school she designed an illuminated illustration of the school's history on vellum.²⁴

The occasion was the new school to be built by Mackintosh; the history was placed in the memorial cornerstone on May 25, 1890. Additional honors came to her when she won a traveling scholarship to study in Germany and Italy.

One of her specialities (others included etchings and lithography), was book illustration and she was involved with over one hundred books. Titles include works by Kipling, Chaucer, Milton, and Wilde. In 1902 she did a series of graphics for Jephtha, a biblical drama by George Buchanan. Her next project was The High History of the Holy Graal (translated from Old French by Sebastian Evans) in 1903, for which she did twenty-five illustrations and was paid the lowly sum of fifteen guineas (Fig. 23). Her finest book is The Defence of Guenevere by William Morris; she did all the illustrations, decorations, and binding (Figs. 24 and 25). Later she started her association with publishers Gowan & Grey and T.N. Foulis; her speciality with them was illustrating pocket and gift books.

In 1902 she helped in the design and decoration of C.R. Mackintosh's Scottish Pavilion at the Exposizione Nazionale in Turin. There she won a gold metal (as did fellow Scotsmen Frances Newbery, Margaret Macdonald and Mackintosh) for her binding of L' Evangile de l' Enfance. Co-students at the Glasgow School of Art were

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26 Taylor, p. 131.
the Macdonald sisters, Margaret (later Mackintosh) and Frances (later MacNair). As an extension of their interior design work, they did etchings, illustrations and produced designs for books and posters (Fig. 26).

The sisters were well represented by appearing at the first Salon de l'Art Nouveau in 1895. Samuel Bing brought together the best of all Art Nouveau artists; the Macdonalds were included in the poster section along with Aubrey Beardsley. Later working as two of "The Four", the sisters collaborated with J. Herbert MacNair to design the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts poster of 1896 (Fig. 27).

In addition to the illustrators previously discussed, there were more in the Glasgow Group. This group was composed of various artists who worked at the Glasgow School of Art or with the Glasgow Four. One member was the embroiderer Ann Macbeth who also tried her hand at the graphic arts. Others included Katherine Cameron (1874-1965), wife of art patron Arthur Kay and sister of etcher D.Y. Cameron; Annie French (1872-1965), who studied at the Glasgow School of Art from 1896 to 1902 and later succeeded Jessie M. King as a teacher there from 1909 to 1912; Cecile Walton; Meg Wright; Annie Mackie; Helen Hay; and Mary Golay.

American women graphic artists of this time were still working in the Art and Crafts tradition or in a realist mode. One American male, Will Bradley, had
achieved some recognition with Art Nouveau posters, but it seems American graphic arts was not fully exploring Art Nouveau at that time.

The majority of women graphic artists who worked in the style of Art Nouveau did book illustrations; the most recognized woman of this group is Jessie King. Outside of King and the Mackintosh sisters, women did not seem to gain prominence in the field of graphic arts. The most famous graphic artists were men, such as Alphonse Mucha, whose posters were greatly representative of Art Nouveau.
Glass was a good medium for artists to use for Art Nouveau designs. It was also a good field for women glassworkers although they were usually delegated to certain departments. None obtained the well-known status that American master Louis Comfort Tiffany achieved.

Tiffany's studios employed a large number of women; this was unusual in itself since it was still a traditionally male profession. Cecilia Waern, in 1897, stated the following reason:

When Mr. Tiffany first started his workshops, he soon found out, as the starter of Merton Abbey had done, that the only way to get his ideas carried out was by training boys to work from the beginning. So he employed such workmen as were to be had, putting boys under them as apprentices. After a while the men struck on the score of too many apprentices. Mr. Tiffany let them all go, replaced them with young women from the art schools where they had at least learned to use their eyes and their fingers in certain ways, and trained them himself. At present there are from forty to fifty young women employed in the glass workshop, working at either mosaic or windows, generally ornamental.27

The window department was Tiffany's main interest; lamps became a by-product to use the small bits of glass otherwise wasted. The window themes consisted of floral, landscapes, abstract, religious figures, mythological

and portraits.

The design department had a few women designers; one was Agnes Northrop. She joined the company in 1884 at the age of twenty-seven and stayed until 1924. When she first arrived she worked in the glass department which was headed by Anne Vanderlip. After moving to the design department, she was able to design various types of stained-glass windows. She did numerous memorial windows and a few outstanding landscapes such as the one done in 1910 for the New York home of Helen Gould (Figs. 28 and 29).

There were a few other women window designers in the company but little mention is made of them. Some names included in the Studio's booklets were Lydia Emmet and Lydia Carr. Emmet designed an Autumn window in 1893 (Fig. 30) while Carr produced Christ and the Four Evangelists for the Howland Memorial in the Church of Heavenly Rest in New York.

Tiffany had complete control over his designs and designers; a client was not shown anything without his approval. Aside from this, many of his designers stayed with him for years.

One of the women in Tiffany's lamp design department was Clara Walcott Driscoll who designed the dragonfly lamp (Fig. 31). Consisting of stylized series of dragonflies on a shade of colored glass, it won a prize when first exhibited at the Paris Exposition of 1900.

Driscoll first came to work for Tiffany in 1887.
Working as a designer until 1900, she then organized a women's glass-cutting department. She supervised the production of many patterns, including the Geometric leaf, Butterfly, the Rose and the Ivy, most of which were designed by employees. Four years later she had become one of the highest paid women workers in the United States. 28

Another popular lamp style was the Wisteria lamp of 1901, designed by Mrs. E. Curtis Freschel. This lamp form, with its richly colorful and steep sides, represents a wisteria tree (Fig. 32).

Mrs. Freschel was not an artist with Tiffany's company. She had commissioned him to decorate her home at Chestnut Hill (near Boston) in 1900 and had plans designed by her for the interior decorations. These decorations were to be made at the Tiffany workshop; included was the now famous Wisteria lamp design. She had copied the wisteria shrub, which was in abundance on the estate grounds, and wanted it made into a leaded-glass lampshade. Tiffany was very impressed with the design; Mrs. Freschel sold him the artistic rights in exchange for the lowering of his fee. Tiffany then designed a metal base in the form of a tree trunk to compliment the shade.

Other companies had women in their various department although they were more limited than the Tiffany

Studios. The Honesdale Decoration Company, established in 1901 in White Hills, Pennsylvania with the decoration shop in Honesdale, hired women in the gold burnishing department of their glassware firm (Figs. 33 and 34). They were Mabel Spy, Elsie Kretschmer, Mae Dennis, Anna Ordnung, Mae Lewis, Mary and Helen Williams, Rose Hawn, Mabel and Florence Secor, Amelia Linke, Mary Bell, Ethel Hawker, Helen Pragnel, Mabel Reinhard, Mary Van Driesen, Miss Smith, Miss Bonham, and Mrs. Yarnis. 29

Additional women were hired to paint varnish-resisting designs on the glassware; they were Amelia Bartheimers, Carrie Hill, Laura and Lillian Holey, and Millie Moules. 30 Carrie Novinemacher, Laura Pragnel, Emily Holland and Anne Rippel were the glass washers. 31

The Handel Company, Inc. of Meriden, Connecticut was founded in 1885. It manufactured opal wares, decorated china and metalwares (Fig. 35). The specialities were lamps with internally painted shades and it hired sixteen women to work in the design department. Their job, among other things, was to hand-color illustrations drawn by others; the actual lamp designing was done by a male designer (Fig. 36).

30 Ibid.
One of the china decorators was Katherine Cassey Welch who was also a watercolorist. A few part-time decorators, in various areas, were Edith Clark Owens, Elsie Jordon Freemantle and Rowena Cheney.\(^\text{32}\)

Another Art Nouveau glass company that hired women was the A.J. Hall Company; Hall once worked for Handel and Company. He started his own glassware firm in 1899 and his specialities were lamp globes and shades, vases, and tableware.

The company had a woman in the printing department, Mabel Alexander, who did transfer printing.\(^\text{33}\) Approximately sixty percent of the projects were done in this manner; the procedure involved using tissue paper designs as transfers on assorted objects.\(^\text{34}\) The rest of the company's projects were handpainted.

His decorators consisted of a few women: Maude Drexler, Elizabeth Bauer, Miss Jimmy Ryerson and Kate Walsh.\(^\text{35}\) They worked only on designs to be painted in ("filling in") of a transfer print.\(^\text{36}\)

Louis C. Tiffany's accomplishments in Art Nouveau glasswork have been well documented. Without the women

\(^{32}\) Revi, p. 276.

\(^{33}\) Revi, p. 283.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Revi, p. 282.

\(^{36}\) Revi, pp. 282-283.
in his employment, it is possible that he would not have been as well known. With the popular dragonfly lamp created by Clara Walcott Driscoll and the Wisteria lamp by Mrs. E. Curtis Freschel, Tiffany's reputation as a popular Art Nouveau glassworker increased.

Although the other glass companies were not as open in hiring women in positions other than the traditional ones, it can be seen that women made important contributions to glasswork and Art Nouveau. It ranged from the minor (such as glass-washing) to designing. With the most outstanding contributions being made by the designers at the Tiffany firm, women Art Nouveau glassworkers made advances that warrants artistic merits.
METALWORK

Metalwork, be it jewelry or housewares, was almost a closed field for women near the end of the century. The Goldsmith and Silversmith Guilds were very exclusive and women were rarely admitted as apprentices. As a result, women were employed at large workshops, were taught the trade, but usually remained anonymous under the designer's name.

It was not impossible, though, to obtain training. As the turn of the century approached, it was almost fashionable to be an amateur metalworker and a number of women achieved some fame.

Great Britain produced many fine women metalworkers; two worked in husband-and-wife teams. Georgina and Arthur Gaskin, both of whom once worked for Arthur L. Liberty, made their main concern the upgrading of their neighborhood Birmingham jewelry production; they achieved this by making the designer and craftsman the same person, improving materials, and giving a sense of pride to production. The resulting pieces were lighter and more graceful (Fig. 37).

Edith and Nelson Dawson opened a workshop to produce their own silver and jewelry designs. Edith had begun to learn enameling; she was an accomplished watercolorist and found similarities in the media. By 1897 she was supervising several workmen in the
enameling department while Nelson designed the pieces to be made (Fig. 38).

Additional British artists were Dorothy Hart and Ethel Hodgkinson, whose specialities were designing and executing hatpins; Kate Fisher and Edith Pickett became known for their enameling; E. Larcombe and Winifred Hodgkinson excelled in their use of human figures as decoration; and Annie McLeish achieved some advancement with the piercing of joined pieces of metal (the effect is similar to the decorations on Japanese sword handles). 37

Glasgow, Scotland, as a center for Art Nouveau, produced a number of fine women metalworkers. Jessie M. King, an excellent graphic artist, was equally as skilled in metalwork. At one point she designed jewelry to be made by the Glasgow School of Art student-craftsmen. She also worked for Arthur L. Liberty and Company designing jewelry and silverwork in the early 1900s. She helped to design the Cymric style of silver and Tudricware in pewter (Figs. 39 and 40).

Liberty preferred that his designers be anonymous. One way in which names surfaced was when a piece was exhibited; the rules of competition state the company and designer must be named. This anonymity helped to achieve the

the unified and recognizable Liberty Style.38

Another designer, who worked indirectly for Liberty and Company, was Kate Harris. In 1901 she worked for William Hutton and Son, who were suppliers to Liberty. Two examples of her work are a glass, enamel, and silver scent bottle and a silver and enamel belt buckle (Fig. 41).

Probably the most famous of the Glasgow artists were the Macdonald sisters who designed metal pieces for their interiors. They preferred to work with inexpensive, common metals and achieved beautiful results with sconces, metal plaques, repoussé panels, and mirrors in tin (Figs. 42 and 43).

The sisters worked together on jewelry and exhibited a few pieces (along with two silver repoussé panels) at the 1902 Art and Crafts Exhibition in Turin. At a later date Frances taught goldsmithing, silversmithing, and enamelling at the Glasgow School of Art; one student who gained minor recognition was jeweller Agnes B. Harvey.

America also produced some fine women metalworkers. Perhaps the best known is Julia Munson Sherman, who worked for Louis Comfort Tiffany in the enameling department and also made the jewelry settings for the enamels.

Her most famous piece is the Peacock Necklace which was designed by Tiffany but constructed by her (Fig. 44). The necklace, designed in 1902, was made of enamel, pearls, gold, and semi-precious stones; a peacock plaque on either side connects a center medallion. Much too heavy to be wearable, this necklace was designed for exhibition only. It was his favorite show piece; it was first shown at the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition at St. Louis in 1904 and again at the 1906 Paris Salon.

Tiffany began to experiment with enamels in the late 1890s; he wished to make them as deep and luminous as precious stones. He chose Sherman and Patty Gay to work with him; they later became the core of his enamelware department (Fig. 45). Gay was the sister of a fellow Tiffany employee Duncan Gay and the daughter of the painter Edward Gay.

In Boston, Elizabeth E. Copeland was active in both silver and enamel. She returned to Boston after studying in London; upon her arrival she began her association with the Handicraft Shop. In 1916, she was awarded a medal for excellence by the Society of the Arts and Crafts in Boston (Fig. 46).

Chicago produced many metalworkers; one woman, Clara Barch Welles, founded the Kalo Shop in 1900 after graduation from the decorative design department at the School of Art Institute. By 1905 she was producing

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jewelry, bowls, candlesticks, etc.; she did not make the pieces herself but had craftsmen make the silver items from her drawings (Fig. 47).

"Kalos" is the word for beautiful in Greek; her assistants were thereafter known as the Kalo girls. 40 As an advocate for women, she was strongly on favor of women playing an active role in the arts.

Women working in the field of metalwork had to fight the guilds, since it was usually considered a man's field. Nevertheless the women were able to get the training they needed to learn their trade.

Although the contributions of women metalworkers to Art Nouveau may be slight, some of the artists produced outstanding pieces. The women who achieved the most worked under the name of a company; Jessie King's designs for Liberty and Julia Munson Sherman's jewelry for Tiffany are some of the finest metalwork available.

Since it was fashionable for the rich to be involved with the arts and crafts at the turn of the century, it was inevitable that a few would turn to metalworking. These amateur craftswomen produced some good quality pieces and became well-known in their towns.

Art pottery flourished from approximately 1875 to the end of World War I and especially during the years of Art Nouveau. In America, an important development was the role (and advancement) of the amateur ceramicist. Women originally started working in the "parlor pleasure" of china painting, then moved to professional ceramic work combined with a growing interest in Art Nouveau.

The large pottery companies also took an interest in Art Nouveau. Most of them made ceramics in that style when the movement was popular; many included the organic flowing lines, influenced by Japanese sources in their wares.

Because of the art pottery companies, especially Rookwood and Newcomb College, there was an art pottery movement in America. 41 Without them, there may not have been a strong women's art movement. Ceramics, being essentially thought of as a women's field, was an international outlet for Art Nouveau women artists.

Cincinnati had the distinction of being the birthplace of the art pottery movement in America, with the Rookwood Pottery Company representing the bridge between the amateur potter and the professional company. 42 An


excerpt from the Bulletin of the American Ceramic Society of 1891 stated "Connoisseurs at home and abroad consider that in the Rookwood Pottery America has achieved its first and only distinctive artistic creation." Throughout its history (1880-1967), the artists practiced many styles; during the Art Nouveau years some of the firm's production was in that style.

Rookwood was founded by Maria Longworth Nichols (later Storer), a young socialite in Cincinnati who found artistic inspiration in the works of Emile Gallé and in Japanese art books (Fig. 48). In 1900, Rookwood was awarded the Gold Medal at the Universal Exposition in Paris, placing the company in the lead over the world's potteries. It also received the highest awards at the Cincinnati Room of the Women's Building at the World's Columbian Expo in Chicago in 1893.

Nichols married in 1889 to Bellany Storer and retired; William Watts Taylor, the manager since 1883, became the president. He remained till 1913.

Taylor had made changes throughout the company; perhaps the most major change was the hiring of men. Nichols had agreed to this because of her dissatisfaction with the women amateurs; she could not locate women "...who combined the proper artistic ability and sufficient energy

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44 Tanenhaus, p. 79.
to come day after day and do a day's work." 45 The hiring of more artistic talent, including Artus Van Briggle and the Japanese artist Kataro Shirayamadani, let Rookwood become a more professional and profitable company.

Several Rookwood decorators went to France to study in the late 1890s, including Van Briggle and Albert R. Valentien, Rookwood's first full-time decorator. Their purpose was to investigate and learn about the new style called Art Nouveau. 46 Valentien, at this time, stated:

"The tendency in the Art world (has) for some time been leaning toward Art Nouveau, conventional forms of decoration and the like. Rookwood's artists (have) also caught the fever, in fact had already had it for several years previous to general movement in that direction." 47

Art Nouveau Rookwood shows the wares covered in floral motifs and plant elements; patterns consisted of irises, lilies, wisteria, roses, and ivy. The decorators in the late 1880s also copied some of Emile Gallé's shapes and decorating styles. 48

Various glazes were popular at this time. They include Vellum, a transparent matt glaze that resembles

45 Brinkler, p. 102.
46 Tanenhaus, p. 80.
48 Interview with Mr. Kenneth Trapp, Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts and Rookwood Pottery Expert, Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati, Ohio, 23 March 1984.
old parchment and developed in 1904; Iris, a pastel background glaze usually decorated with the Iris flower; Sea Green, a glossy green translucent glaze over a green background of varying intensities and developed in 1894; Aerial Blue, a grayish-white background with blue decoration under a transparent gloss developed in 1894; and Wax Matt, a waxy surface with a matt glaze developed in 1904. 49

Rookwood had many outstanding artists; two women who worked in the Art Nouveau style were Anne Marie Bookprinter Valentien, whose husband was Albert R. Valentien and Anne Gregory, who married Artus Van Briggle. Both women accompanied their husbands when they went to Europe to study Art Nouveau.

Anne Marie Valentien (1862-1950) was an artist in the decorating department who had once studied under Rodin. When the Valentiens opened their own shop in 1905, Anne Marie began to bring sculptured forms into their pottery. All molded work was done by her (Fig. 49 and 50). 50

Anne Gregory worked with her husband on the modeling of his pieces. Their work is a mixture of ceramics and sculpture; some experts consider the Van Briggles' work to be the high point of Art Nouveau art pottery (Fig. 51). Their Art Nouveau pieces include Lady of the

49 Tanenhaus, p. 81.
50 Valentien, p. 12.
Lily vase (female nude on a calla lily), Siren of the Seas flower bowl (mermaid), Lorelei vase and Despondency vase (female nude with flowing hair) (Fig. 52). 52

An artist of importance who was excluded from Rookwood (due to error or otherwise) was Mary Louise McLaughlin (1847-1937). She wrote on the techniques and styles of underglaze painting; when she returned to ceramics, in 1895, she found a renewed interest in high-fired white porcelain. This became known as Losanti ware (named after the original name of Cincinnati, Losantiville); and were her main exhibition pieces between 1901 and 1904. 53

McLaughlin was influenced by European Art Nouveau, but chose to use it with restraint (Fig. 53). She once wrote: "The movement known as 'L' Art Nouveau' will and must have influence, but it cannot be followed without reason or moderation, except to the detriment and degradation of the Beautiful." 54

An important woman during this time was artist Adelaide Alsop Robineau. She founded the magazine Keramik Studio with her husband Samuel in 1899 and it became the most influential ceramics journal of its day. The latest techniques and background on artists, developments and exhibitions were discussed.

52 Evans, p. 298.
53 Evans, p. 148.
54 Clark, p. 165.
She also had a line of her own earthenware and exhibited it after 1901; her work of this period was strongly influenced by Art Nouveau (Fig. 54). In 1911 she was awarded the Grand Prize at the International Exposition of Decorative Arts in Turin.

The Boston firm of Grueby Pottery, headed by William Grueby, preferred to have female graduates from the local art schools as potters and decorators. Grueby Pottery was famous for its glazes (the most famous was Grueby Green) which were widely imitated. The styles were influenced by French ceramics and were displayed by Samuel Bing at the Maison Bing l'Art Nouveau.

Some of Grueby's wares were based on the water lily, the daffodil, and the narcissus. A few of his women designers were Wilhelmina Post, Ruth Erickson, and Annie V. Lingley (Figs. 55 and 56).

Another American potter was Mary Chase Perry of Pewabic Pottery, which was founded in 1903. She was influenced by European Art Nouveau ceramics and the work of Grueby Pottery (Fig. 57). Her prime area of interest was in glaze techniques; as time went on her pottery became simpler to show off the glazes.

Newcomb College Pottery of New Orleans developed out of need in 1895. It was part of Sophie Newcomb Memorial

57 Clark, p. 174.
College for Women (today a division of Tulane University) and it was operated in connection with the advanced art classes as their outlet. Popular motifs were the various trees around the bayou countryside—wisteria, magnolia and palm; the college chose these designs to give their pottery an unique local characteristic.\(^{58}\)

Important potters at Newcomb included Mary G. Sheerer, a graduate of the Cincinnati Art Academy, who taught underglazing and china painting (Fig. 58); Sadie Agnes Estelle Irvine (1887-1970), who presented a gift to Sarah Bernhardt when she was traveling on tour and stopped at Newcomb College (Fig. 59); Anne Frances (Fannie) Simpson (Fig. 60); and Mazie T. Ryan (Fig. 61).

Europe was not left out in the art pottery Art Nouveau movement. English ceramics companies, such as Wedgwood and Doulton, experimented with the new style of the 1890s. Wedgwood, however, was late in actually producing Art Nouveau designs and good production levels were not reached until the 1920s. Susannah Margaretta (Daisy) Makeig-Jones, who joined the staff in 1908, developed a lustre glaze and it was added to shapes inspired by motifs typical of Art Nouveau. Called Dragon Lustre or Fairyland Lustre (depending on the subject matter), it was actually made too late to be "real" Art Nouveau but does have the style and feeling for it (Fig. 62 and 63).\(^{59}\)


Doulton's ceramic wares were well underway by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The company hired a large number of women artists; one in particular, Eliza Simmance, practiced a variety of styles. While at Doulton (1873-1928), she practiced Art Nouveau; with the influence of the Glasgow School, it became her most exciting style. She knew most of Doulton's decorating techniques and took to combining several on one piece (Fig. 64).

The multi-talented Jessie King also did art pottery. Although not actually Art Nouveau, since she did not take up pottery until after World War I and it lacks the style's characteristics, it deserves mention because of King's outstanding contributions to the Glasgow School and Art Nouveau.

Ceramics had the distinction of being an excellent field for Art Nouveau and women artists. Since it had been considered a woman's field, the women were free to experiment and design how they wished.

There would probably have been an art pottery movement without the women potters, but the companies founded by women like Rookwood and Newcomb College, helped to further the advances made by all potters, male or female. It is important to note how fundamental these companies were to the art pottery movement at the turn of the century.

60 Callen, p. 66.
ARCHITECTURE

Since Art Nouveau is mainly a decorative style, architecture in this mode has been said to be merely surface work; perhaps this is best illustrated by the work of Belgian architect Victor Horta. Using plants as his inspiration, his buildings take on a whole new meaning of movement and presence.

The opposite of Horta's curved sensuality is C.R. Mackintosh's linear view of Art Nouveau. His style shows a different source that parallels the sources of the one architect to be discussed.

Mary Watts was an architect who designed and constructed her own building. Her style was composed of many elements (Rococo, Art and Crafts, and Celtic) in a combination representative of Art Nouveau. 61

Married to G.F. Watts, the British painter, they lived in Compton, England. The chapel was built by Mrs. Watts in 1896; she also taught the people of Compton how to throw pots and do terra-cotta decorations; their work glorifies the walls and the exterior. 62

Mrs. Watts wrote a book describing the work on the building entitled The World in Pattern; that seems to be all

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61 Richards and Pevsner, pp. 170, 175, & 180.
62 Richards and Pevsner, pp. 170 & 172.
that is written about the chapel. Because the book lists all the workers and there is no architect or designer mentioned, it has been assumed Mrs. Watts was the architect.63

The interior decorations, done in gesso and fiber (to make the raised relief), is the building's outstanding feature. Described as "glorified wall paper" by Mrs. Watts, the once brilliantly painted interior must have been overwhelming (Figs. 65 and 66).64

The exterior does not pale by comparison (Fig. 67). Also covered in designs (which are based on Celtic patterns and said to be symbolic), it again shows Mrs. Watts' expert love of details.65 With a few areas left uncovered for the sake of sanity, the overall unity of the exterior and the interior shows the amount of planning that had to go into this small building (Figs. 68 and 69).

The chapel is the only building she built and is not wellknown. Nevertheless Mrs. Watts' chapel expresses the Art and Crafts mentality and the Art Nouveau decorative scheme put to its individual test.

Women, unfortunately, did not make any great advances in Art Nouveau architecture; the style was avant garde for early architects. While Art Nouveau is highly adaptable to architecture, it would have to be the men who would use it.

63 Richards and Pevsner, p. 172.
64 Ibid.
CONCLUSION

This introduction shows the important contributions women made in Art Nouveau. More study is needed on these artists who, because they were women, have been largely ignored.

The women's contributions varied from field to field. In the areas of architecture and sculpture, women achieved little. Considered feminine; they were dominated by men.

In glasswork and metalwork, women were, for the most part, only able to work for large companies and in certain areas. Yet this enabled them to achieve some impressive results. For example, women employees for Liberty and Tiffany produced some of those firms' finest pieces.

The fields of interior design and graphic art were more open to women. Book illustration was a field where women were very productive. However, in interior design, fundamental to Art Nouveau, only a few women gained fame.

Women's contributions to ceramic decoration and design and embroidery were very important. Neither field would have advanced as far without women artists. Since they were fields suitable for women, they were able to concentrate on the advancement of their products with relatively little male interference. Women laid the groundwork for future forms of needlework, while the art pottery movement was advanced by the companies founded by women.

All artists mentioned contributed to Art Nouveau. By studying them, we gain a clearer understanding of Art Nouveau.
APPENDIX:

ILLUSTRATIONS
Figure 1. Georges de Feure, Shop sign for Bing's gallery, l'Art Nouveau, 1895.

l'ART NOUVEAU
PARIS
22, RUE DE PROVENCE

Installations Modernes
MEUBLES, TENTURES, TAPIS, OBJETS D'ART

A l'Exposition Universelle de 1900, modèles de Meubles vendus à tous les Musées d'Europe et hors d'Europe : Londres, Berlin, Crefeld, Hambourg, Kaiserslautern, Leipzig, Mulhouse, Nuremberg, Budapest, Graz, Lemberg, Vienne, Copenhague, Naples, St-Pétersbourg, Helsingfors, Aarau, Berne, Drontheim, Tokio, Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris, etc., etc.

HORS CONCOURS, MEMBRE DU JURY.
Figure 2. Léandre, caricature of Sarah Bernhardt, 1889.
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Interview with Mr. & Mrs. Bill Ellinger, Rookwood Pottery Collectors. Louisville, Kentucky, 26 February 1984.


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CURRICULUM VITAE

Jo Anne Triplett was an Army child who was born in Heidelberg, Germany. After living in various states, her family settled in her father's hometown of Louisville, Kentucky.

She attended Jefferson Community College before coming to the University of Louisville to receive her undergraduate degree in Art History in 1981. As a graduate student in Humanities with an emphasis on Art History, she won a museum internship at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C.

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