

Art Nouveau Jewellery



T
485

Judy Higgins

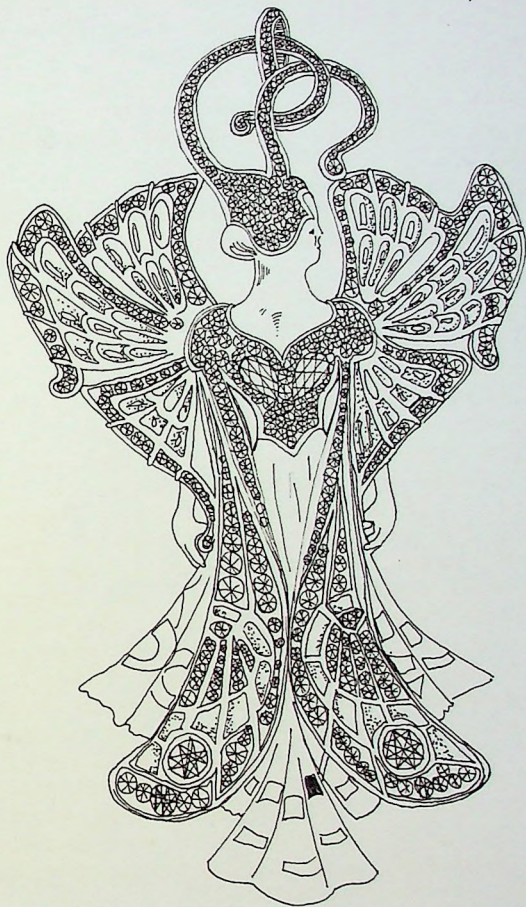


The term Art Nouveau is applied to a style in architecture and the figurative and applied arts that flourished in the last decade of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century. It was a remarkable and unusual occurrence that happened simultaneously throughout Western Europe and like other movements, i.e. Gothic, Baroque and Rococco, demonstrated the fundamental unity that occurred in Western Europe's culture.

The general characteristics of the jewellery of this period must be discussed in relation to women's fashion of the time and to their doings during the years before and directly after the turn of the century.

It was the end of the Victorian period when the women became more emancipated and the younger generation revolted. For the first time in history women of good families began to value their own identities, and became aware of their roles in life. They pursued better education and wanted careers of their own. New habits and awareness created new opportunities. Their fashion became more emancipated. Punctuality meant accurate wrist watches, smoking meant cigarette boxes, lighters and holders. Making up in public, meant lipstick holders and powder compacts. Their Victorian decorated dresses, which were heavily clad with jewellery and trinkets, were now not practical anymore for this new emancipated woman. She wanted new styles, less fussy and elaborate, to match her new way of life. As the century drew to a close, the old style of Victorian woman wanted less jewellery in the day time; the heavy dogcollars and chains went out of vogue and the need for jewellery designed on a lighter scale was inevitable. The market changed from a few people buying large jewels to vast numbers of girls buying trinkets. This meant the rise of mass production, with centre fugal casting of wax models, giving an unprecedented accuracy of awareness of finish.

Retail shops became dominant in the trade and advertising became general practise, and with it the birth of the mannequin who has helped to make fashion of general interest. In 1890 diamonds and platinum were produced for the first time on a large scale. With all these changes and people's new awareness, this meant a revolution both in quality and quantity. Whether jewellery is an imaginative art or a reflection of changing vogue, more eyes became directed on it now more than ever before.



Judy Higginbotham

SYLVIA PENDANT MADE BY PAUL AND HENRI
c. 1900. ENAMELLED GOLD CHALCEDONY
(THE HEAD AND HANDS), DIAMONDS AND RUBIES.

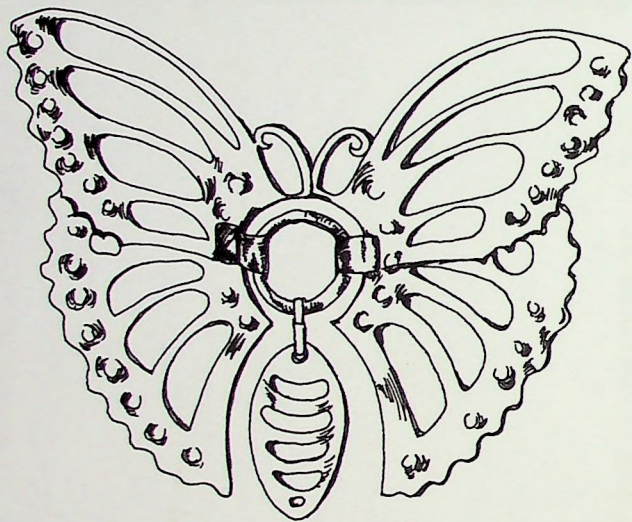
The designers began to replace precious stones with semi-precious stones. Before this the size of a brooch or jewellery piece and the precious stones it contained had constituted the importance of the piece, now, with the use of less valuable materials, it was the design and the adaption of that design to the materials that came to be more important.

In general, Art Nouveau jewellery differed from Victorian in combining less expensive materials with first class design.

With the more awareness of Japanese art, use was made of plant and nature motifs, i.e. peacock, tendril shapes, flowers and often human faces, and insects. The uses of enamels, as colourful decoration for silver and gold and uncut and asymmetrical shaped semi-precious stones, which often dictated the basic shape of the piece, became important. The common aim of these artists was to integrate the useful with the beautiful in the highest artistic manner. Line became the most important aspect of Art Nouveau design, and the importance of shape and texture of an object replaced the over decoration of the Victorian period, and marked the beginning of the emphasis in design of the functionalists who followed. Because of the new informality, sporting jewellery became popular and design depicting sport animals; i.e. hares, foxes, and hounds and horns. Braclets were made of thin wires, rather than heavy links. These new fashions became more economical and practical. Plant and natural floral motifs were used as cross over and intertwining on jewellery, mostly on braclets and rings. This intertwining style is very characteristic of this period. It was developed in all aspects of Art Nouveau, i.e. furniture, metal-work, and even carried out in architecture.

It was not usual in Victorian times using and combining precious with semi-precious metals. Now it became popular to set semi-precious stones in gold and diamonds could often be seen set in silver. Broaches and large pendants became important items of jewellery.

Art Nouveau, like many other artistic movements, is known by many names. The earliest Liberty style came from England, and was adopted by the Italians, only to become completely meaningless to other countries, where the style became known as Art Nouveau, the Modern Style, the Secession Style and the Jugendstil. It also was known in France as Le Style



July Higginbotham '75

IRON. 1909-12. JULIO GONZALES.

Metro, and Le Style Nouvelle, the Modernist Style, the Yachting Style, and the Floral Style. Many of these styles originated almost casually, and for obscure reasons. Liberty Style was derived from the famous London shops, which was founded by Arthur Lasenby Liberty in 1875. It sold many articles such as rings, broaches, neckpieces in the new style at the end of the century. Art Nouveau was the name given by the famous art dealer, Bing, to a shop specialising in the promotion of furniture, tapestries, and other objects in the new avant-garde style. But since one of the greatest achievements in this new modern style was the series of entrances by the architect Guimard, built for the Paris Metropolitan, it was also called the Style Metro. Yet in France, the Style Nouvelle, Noodle Style, was inspired by the sinuous interlacing lines that were one of its main features. It was also called the Yachting Style; a title which originated from Edmond de Goncourt, the elder of the two brothers who wrote the famous journals, when he visited Bing's shops and remarked on the suitability of the style for his decoration of a cruising yacht. Jugendstil was inspired by the title of the German review Jugend, first published in Munich in 1896, and Secession Style, by the Secession, an Art movement in Munich, Berlin and Vienna, which was in revolt against the official taste of the time, and held many exhibitions.

Art Nouveau represented a breakaway from the historical style that preceded it. This style embodies both a retrospective tendency, and an often eclectic but cold and academic repetition of the most famous styles of the past.

Art Nouveau artists proclaimed this intention of basing their art on present reality or even on futuristic visions. They were young and rich with new ideas, full of research and experiment. When Art Nouveau did incorporate elements from the past style, they were styles vastly removed in time or space, such as medieval and oriental, i.e. Chinese and Japanese influences, from the Renaissance classical tradition, that the result was far different, original and modern. Although Art Nouveau was intended to be both new and modern, its exponents were violently opposed to naturalism, opting instead for beauty, elegance and decorativeness - all the qualities that the naturalists had renounced in favour of adherence to the prosaic truth of everyday life.

Art Nouveau reproached the naturalists with long slavish



duchy Hicqurtoha² - 5

PEACOCK BROOCH BY RENÉ LALIQUE

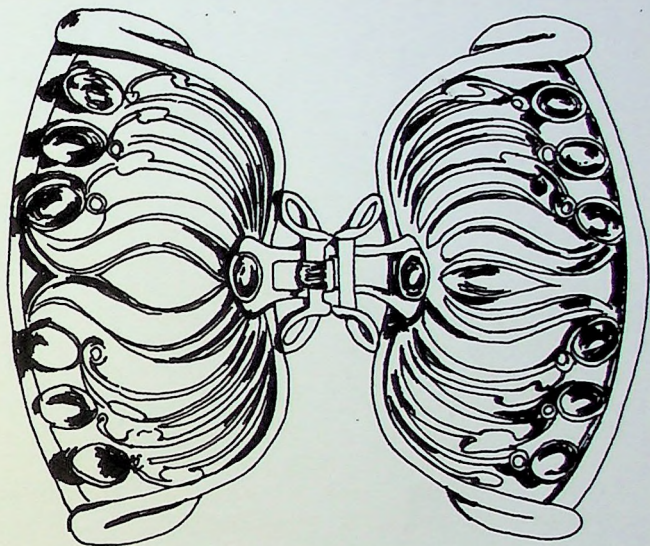
imitations of nature, and allowing themselves to be tied to factual data instead of making the effort to be more imaginative, by synethising and exploring forms. Their belief was not that they should make replicas of everyday life to the public but that they should create an image of a world full of beauty and universal happiness. In reality Art Nouveau was enjoyed by only a very restricted and overwhelming upper middle class public.

Art Nouveau artists were concerned greatly with the best and purest part of nature, its fundamental and synthetic structures underlying the varied forms of animal and plant life. This is why the most obvious stylistic trails of Art Nouveau are fluid forms and twisting interlacing lines, which were intended to represent the endless process of natural creativity. This theme of organic, biomorphic and phyhomorphic forms is immediately striking in Art Nouveau works, and can be seen whether in architecture, jewellery, ceramics or poster advertising.

But it is necessary to understand that this imitation of nature in its essence consisted of more than an emphasis on undulating lines. Many Art Nouveau works are composed of a multitude of small, intensely vibrant parts that either compliment linear rhythms or in effect substitute a similar feeling. In architecture, for example, Victor Horta and Guimard concentrated mostly on a kind of whip-lash linearism, whereas other major figures, such as Viennesse Olbrich and Hoffmann substituted a decorative feast of chess board and lozenge motifs. Painters like Redon and Seurat on the otherhand, demonstrated that intense vibrant parts, one might say, particles - could coexist with linear undulation.

The result of this new Art Nouveau style was too often in less successful cases superficial decoration, which easily degenerated into a suffocation art for art's sake.

This lanky intertwining line of the Art Nouveau stylised sculpture and its ruthless mixture of precious and semi-precious and worthless materials suddenly became fashionable in jewellery about 1895, and died equally suddenly some fifteen or so years later. It was a fascinating craze, obsessed with endless intertwining creepers and leaves, compelling stream sodden faces, soft irregular low relief patterns, dusky colours, which were to be found in all the arts, from furniture, textiles to wallpaper and jewellery.



Henry Van de Velde

BUCKLE, OXIDISED, SILVER, MOONSTONES,
ROSE DIAMONDS, C. 1898 - 1900.
HENRI VAN DE VELDE.

Imagination ran riot; a violent reaction both to the real period imitation of the mid-nineteenth century, where people were unafraid to show wealth and luxury by adorning themselves with masses of jewels from bracelets, neckpieces, pearls, broches, even to including tiara for front and flower spray for back of head, and to the plain structural work of English Architects, like Philip Webb and Voysey, which was already showing the way to the functional modern style of the 1930's. Louis Sullivan, the famous Chicago architect, pioneer of the skyscraper, is not so well known as a brilliant draughtsman of profuse and exotic ornament. He was at the Paris Beaux Arts in 1874 and the Chicago auditorium, his first building, shows his personal Art Nouveau style as early as 1887. Sullivan may reasonably be claimed as an originator of Art Nouveau, his large scale architectural metalwork decoration revelation colossal virtuoso jewels. The architect, Gaudi of Barcelona, lavished coloured glasses on his building, and they too have a jewel-like quality, because of this creators devotion to handmade detail. It is said that no actual jewels survive by either Gaudi or Sullivan, two of the most creative spirits in this age of dazzling organic originality.

France has always understood women and fashion better than any other nation, and has continually set the styles in clothing and its accessories for the rest of the world. In jewellery design, perhaps more than in any other area, French Art Nouveau expressed itself in its purest and most original style. The materials and themes used in France were similar to those used by British designers. Baroque pearls and caochon stones were used frequently as well as high quality colourful enamelling.

As with British Art Nouveau jewellery, France was influenced by the Eastern Japanese works and the design of the whole was of primary importance, and we see intricate designs in combs, broches, buckles and pendants.

The most important name in French Art Nouveau jewellery design was that of Rene Lalique. He was the first of French designers to emphasise the importance of the design and artistic interest rather than the value of the materials used. Rene Lalique, 1860-1945, was one of the leaders of the Art Nouveau movement and he exercised more influence than any other designer on Art Nouveau jewellery. Lalique was the son

contd...

f a merchant, who became an apprentice to the jeweller
 uis Aucoc in 1876. He studies at the Ecole des Arts
 coratifs in Paris, and from 1878 at an Art School in
 ndon. Returning to Paris to work as a free-lance designer
 f jewellery, fabrics and other materials. In 1890 he
 egan to study the art of glass. He executed several works for
 firms like Boucheron and Cartier and for Sarah Bernhart.

lique's work first became widely known in 1895, when he
 xhibited at the Salon du Champ de Mars and won third prize.
 lso in this year he introduced 'one of the more famous inno-
 ions' the use of the female nude figure in jewellery.
 the great Paris Exhibition of 1900, he designed and built
 is own shop in the Place Vendôme. By this time, however,
 was becoming seriously concerned about the widespread
 itation of his work by inferior craftsmen. On one occasion
 e refused to allow the correspondent of an English Journal
 o reproduce or even to photograph his work. He was turning
 o new materials. He had for many years had an interest in glass
 nd had used it in experiments. He had bought a glass
 actory. Not long after this he returned to jewellery and
 oncentrated in the making of glass, producing some
 xtremely beautiful pieces.

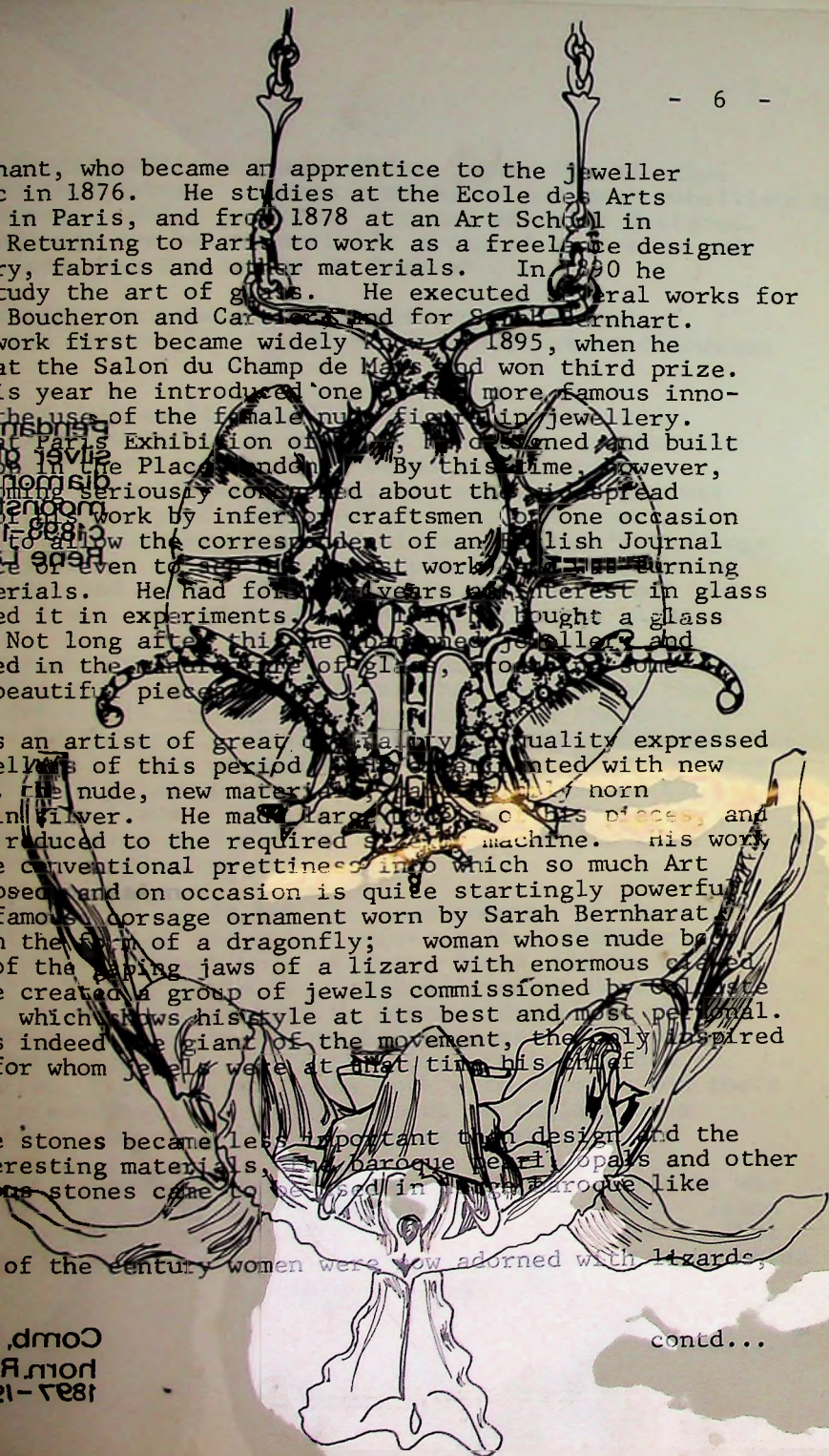
lique was an artist of great originality. The quality expressed
 y few jewellers of this period. He experimented with new
 orms, i.e. the nude, new materials, and a generally horn
 ncrusted in silver. He made large pieces of his pieces, and
 hese were reduced to the required size by a machine. His work
 voided the conventional prettiness into which so much Art
 ouveau lapsed, and on occasion is quite startlingly powerful,
 as in the famous corsage ornament worn by Sarah Bernhart,
 hich is in the form of a dragonfly; a woman whose nude body
 rises out of the gaping jaws of a lizard with enormous clawed
 feet. He created a group of jewels commissioned by Gustave
 ulbenkian, which shows his style at its best and most personal.
 Laliue was indeed the giant of the movement, the only inspired
 designer, for whom jewels were at that time his chief
 enthusiasm.

As valuable stones became less important than design and the
 use of interesting materials, the baroque pearls, opals and other
 semi-precious stones came to be used in more baroque like
 pieces.

At the turn of the century women were now adorned with lizards,

Comp. Orchid, Ivo
 from Rene Lalique
 1897-1900

contd...



of a merchant, who became an apprentice to the jeweller Louis Aucoc in 1876. He studies at the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs in Paris, and from 1878 at an Art School in London. Returning to Paris to work as a freelance designer of jewellery, fabrics and other materials. In 1890 he began to study the art of glass. He executed several works for firms like Boucheron and Cartier, and for Sarah Bernhart. Lalique's work first became widely know in 1895, when he exhibited at the Salon du Champ de Mars and won third prize. Also in this year he introduced one of his more famous innovations - the use of the female nude figure in jewellery. At the great Paris Exhibition of 1900, he designed and built his own shop in the Place Vendome. By this time, however, he was becoming seriously concerned about the widespread imitation of his work by inferior craftsmen (on one occasion he refused to allow the correspondent of an English Journal to reproduce or even to see his latest work) and was turning to new materials. He had for many years an interest in glass and had used it in experiments. In 1910 he bought a glass factory. Not long after this he abandoned jewellery and concentrated in the manufacture of glass, producing some extremely beautiful pieces.

Lalique was an artist of great originality, a quality expressed by few jewellers of this period. He experimented with new forms, i.e. the nude, new materials, particularly horn encrusted in silver. He made large models of his pieces, and these were reduced to the required size by machine. His work avoided the conventional prettiness into which so much Art Nouveau lapsed, and on occasion is quite startlingly powerful, as in the famous corsage ornament worn by Sarah Bernharat, which is in the form of a dragonfly; woman whose nude body rises out of the gaping jaws of a lizard with enormous clawed feet. He created a group of jewels commissioned by Calouste Gulbenkian, which shows his style at its best and most personal. Lalique was indeed the giant of the movement, the only inspired designer, for whom jewels were at that time his chief enthusiasm.

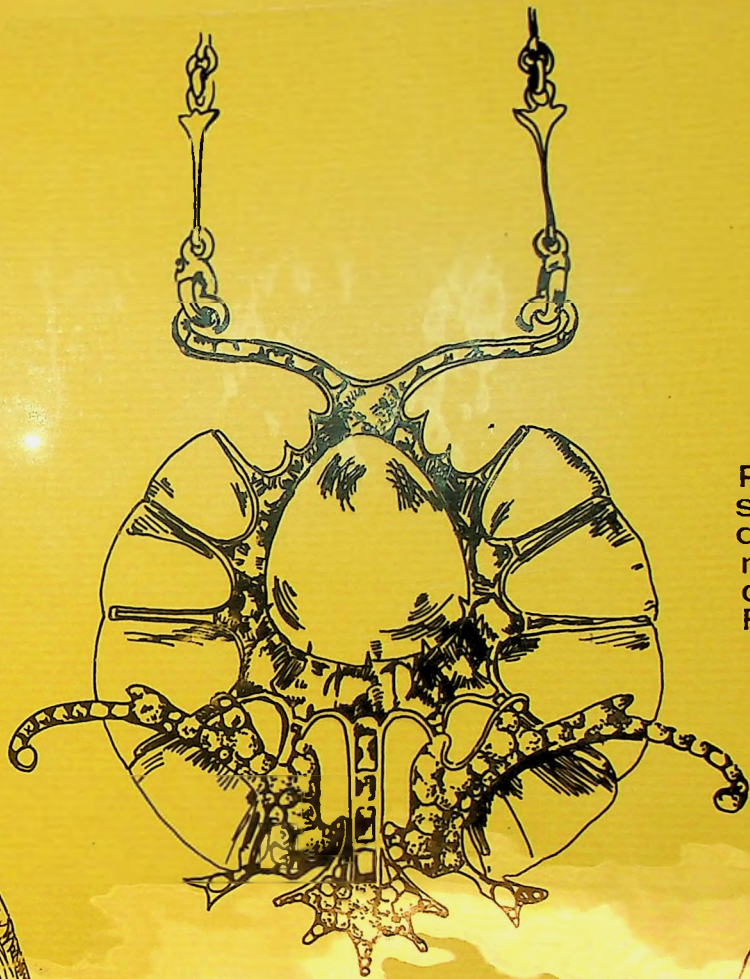
As valuable stones became less important than design and the use of interesting materials, the baroque pearl, opals and other semi-precious stones came to be used in large baroque like pieces.

At the turn of the century women were now adorned with lizards,

contd...

nt, glass, s
gilt, sapph
nds, and a
stone. Len
-1900
Lalique

chid, ivor
e Lalique



Pendant, glass, silver gilt, sapphires, diamonds, and a moonstone. Length 1893-1900
Rene Lalique



Comb, orchid, ivory, horn, Rene Lalique
1897-1900

twisting floral motifs, dragon flies, insects and other prototypes from nature, always created in movement embellishing their bosoms. While jewellery for men was also designed. Homosexuals had now become socially accepted in France and they required also the latest in fashion.

It is necessary to understand the important historical, artistic and philosophical influences behind the Art Nouveau style.

The style of William Blake, 1757-1827, poet and artist exemplifies the notality of art that the later Art Nouveau artists and writers achieved. Blake was strongly influenced by John Flaxman, a sculptor and artist who was responsible for many of Wedgewood's classic designs in jasperware. Although he was a classicist, Flaxman's drawings are closely linked to Blake's art style. Flaxman's use of bold outlines and curved lines, and his lack of detail were adopted by Blake, who admired Flaxman greatly.

Blake was successful at both writing and illustration. He was a mystic given to hallucinations that influenced the group of artists in England that were known as the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) was the leader of this group and he interested other members of the brotherhood among whom was Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) in the style of Blake. The emphasis on the line, as the most important aspect of a work of art is strongly apparent in Burne-Jones's earlier work.

Thus it is possible to follow the development of the Art Nouveau style through the entire nineteenth century in the aesthetic curved, linear work of Burne-Jones, Walter Crane (1875-1915), Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) George Heywood Sumner (1853-1940) and Herbert P. Horne (1864-1916) and all of whom are considered to be pre-Raphaelites. Rhythmic lines, flowing patterns, abstract floral designs and a preoccupation, i.e. Burne-Jones work with fabrics and their patterns foreshadowed the establishment in England of a distinct style embracing all decorative objects.

An important happening which influenced many at this time was the forming of a new trade Treaty with Japan in 1849. Japan became an exhibitor in the World Exhibition in London in 1862. Goods from China that had been imported for almost two centuries

contd....



Judy Heringham '75

1905. GEORG JENSEN. COPENHAGEN

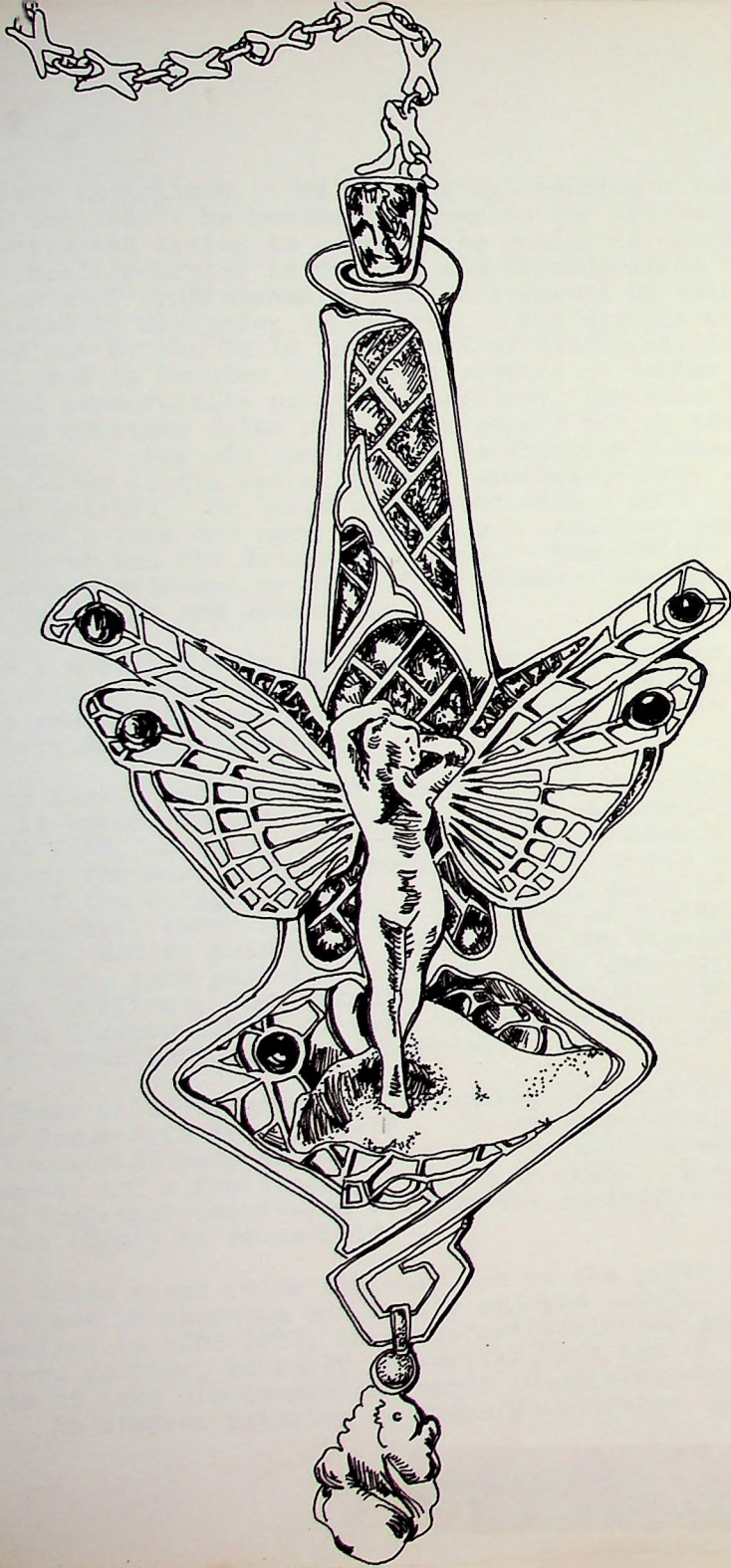
had long had their influence on the decorative arts in England. Shapes of plates and motifs in decoration are still today being adapted by English potters from early Chinese porcelain. This Chinese and new Japanese influence became so strong that complete rooms were designed in oriental manner. Another influence was the French Rococco style and the Gothic style which can be seen in William Morris's work. William Morris (1834-96), a writer, painter, designer, jeweller & decorator, felt strongly that Victorian middle-class taste could be improved. His philosophy of grouping artists together to design and make things of simple beauty for the name became widespread. A striving for excellence in structure and design stemmed from his arts and crafts movements. It was important to Morris that the workshop he founded should be dedicated to changing and improving middle-class taste, but he was unsuccessful in that his handmade artist designed articles were too expensive for the class they were intended for. However, his grouping of designers and talented people together to work for the purpose of designing wallpaper, furniture, textiles, dishes and other articles together for the name in a common style, with particular emphasis on excellence of structure and design, was of far reaching importance.

In 1882, the Century Guild was founded in England by men who had been associated with William Morris and his arts and crafts movement. The time was ripe for a new style and for the acceptance of original work in the decorative arts. The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the establishment of many schools for handicraft, and the interest of the manufacture of carefully made goods for the home was as strong as the search for original design. Arthur Mackmurdo (1851-1942), Walter Crane (1845-1915), Lewis Day (1845-1910) were active in the beginning of the establishment of the Century Guild, and their designs mark the beginning of the style we now call Art Nouveau.

Walter Crane's designs for wallpaper and his book illustrations reveal the asymmetrical patterns and flat planes. Stylised flowers and foliage, asymmetrical and two dimensional were first used by Crane. This adaption by Walter Crane from nature used in this stylised and symmetrical manner was an extremely important contribution to the new style.

An important early Art Nouveau style designer was Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942). He was the pioneer of Art Nouveau

contd...



Judy Huppenbaker '75

PENDANT, CORNELIAN-OPALS, DIAMONDS,
RUBIES, BAROQUE PEARLS. 1898-9.
PHILIPPE WOLFARS

jewellery in England. He was not by training a jeweller, but in the 1880's he became involved in the Arts and Crafts Movement which was trying to educate the public to appreciate Pre-Raphaelite styles in design, and to understand the importance of craftsmanship, and as a result he became interested in designing jewellery. His designs were carried out by the Guild and School of Handicraft in London, and at Campden in Gloucestershire. Ashbee detested commercially produced jewellery, and believed that the monetary value of a jewel should not be thought important. For his own designs he frequently used materials of little value, such as amethyst, amber and blister pearls. He liked silver but with a dull polish that gave a rich and aged appearance. Amethyst combined with silver was his favourite medium. Many of his designs were either abstract or taken from flowers, especially the rose, carnation and heartsease.

Ashbee's work had considerable influence in England, and other artists and craftsmen were influenced and encouraged by his example to produce their own designs in this 'modern' jewellery Art Nouveau style.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh of Glasgow, from whom just one jewel is known, went to France in 1890. Mackintosh, born in Glasgow 1868, and died in London in 1928, architect and designer, the most original British artist of his day, and leader of the Glasgow School, a pioneering group of architects and designers, exercised great influence in England, on the Continent, and in America. Studied at the Glasgow School of Art in 1885, then part-time student, while apprenticed to Glasgow architect, John Hutchinson. Apart from designing and building Glasgow School of Art, he made the most distinguished British contribution to Art Nouveau.

Sir Albert Gilbert, another outstanding original artist, was at the Beaux Arts from 1876-78. He designed amongst others, many ceremonial badges, modelled some notable ceremonial tableware, and a few domestic jewels in iron. Gilbert's most famous sculptural commission was for the Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain (Eros) in Piccadilly.

Van de Velde seems to be the only one of the great architects to have concentrated on and really enjoyed jewels. Born in Switzerland in 1863-1957, an architect, interior decorator, designer, painter, lecturer and writer, and one of the great figures of late nineteenth and early twentieth century applied art. He studied painting in Antwerp and Paris, giving it up

contd...

c.1893 for the decorative arts, designing furniture, wall-papers, fabrics, silver and jewellery.

Art Nouveau was indeed an international urge, but it began as an eccentricity and did not develop. It was independent, an individual genius, and could not be mass produced. Its own exaggeration killed it. The idea of eternal undulation conceived Mackmurdo in 1883, gave way to the straight line.

The most stylish manifestation of this strange phase in the history of design was, in fact in jewellery. Art Nouveau was ornament, not structure, and, therefore, ideally suited to this ornamental of the arts.

Art Nouveau was more than a style, it was a philosophy. From this new philosophy, which was created towards the end of the nineteenth century, came a Renaissance of carefully made and thoughtfully designed articles. Because of Art Nouveau's emphasis on line and the adaptation of natural forms to design, it is easily distinguishable from any other period in the decorative arts.

Much of the Art Nouveau jewellery that remains owes its survival to the fact that it was not made from precious stones. Usually, when diamonds or other precious stones are used in pieces of jewellery of a particular style, these pieces are broken up and the stones reset as the style changes.

The present revival of interest in Art Nouveau carries the danger of degenerating into mere collecting or sterile imitation. Art Nouveau ultimately declined as a result of its own extravagances, and because, being dependent on individual talent, it could not be mass produced. It gradually gave way, around 1910, to a more sober and geometric type of design - modern jewellery.



SH monogram pendant, gold and silver 1908-1910 Henri Van de Velde

buckle, silver orange horn 1912 K. Bauer



Doorway, No. 24, Place Félix Faure, Paris



Pendant, silver, 'perte de coq', precious and semi-precious stones - c 1906 Curt Herrmann

Hair comb with enamel, gold and pearl, Vever (c. 1900)