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## DIM111.1 Scholarly Perspectives on Design: Essay Example

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## DIM111.1 Design History essay

NOTE: This is an exemplar only, using an Art Nouveau piece to show possible ways of writing. Art Nouveau is covered in DDX170 and cannot be used as a movement here.

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Submission date: March 13, 2025

### DIM111.1—Mucha's Art Nouveau White Star Poster



Moët and Chandon White Star by Alphonse Mucha, 1899.

Mucha, A. (1899). Moët and Chandon White Star [Lithography]. In *Alfons Maria Mucha The Complete Works*. <https://www.alfonsmucha.org/Moët-And-Chandon-White-Star.html>

The Art Nouveau movement embraced change and included memorable works from all facets of design. This essay will argue that Mucha's Moët and Chandon White Star (1899) fits within the Art Nouveau movement in terms of the poster's overall style, various visual characteristics and the social context in which it was created. It will also show its influence on modern design and my own illustration.

Flourishing approximately 1890–1920 (Meggs & Purvis, 2016, p.694), Art Nouveau incorporated different styles and media, breaking the barrier between fine art and applied arts (Potter, 2006, para. 2), as “art should affect the lives of all people” (Henry van de Velde, as cited in Potter, 2006, para. 6). The dominance of asymmetrical, flowing and organic lines favoured by Art Nouveau can be seen in the drapery which intertwines with the lines of the plants and vines, as is the use of floral forms and the dominance of the curved female form (Meggs & Purvis, 2016, pp. 695-696). The typically flat, decorative aspects of the technique (Barnwell, 2021, p. 69) are shown in large areas of similar tone and prominent linework.

The “New Art” was one of the first movements to reject older styles and defiantly celebrate new styles and technologies. With its ethos of art in and beauty in everyday life, Art Nouveau embraced the new printing technology (Meggs & Purvis, 2016, pp. 696-697), featuring prominently in print magazines and advertising (Barnwell, 2021, p. 69). Many of Mucha's best-known works were commercial designs, such as theatre posters, book illustrations, wallpaper designs and poster advertisements such as this. Typically, it utilises the reproductive technology of the time, lithography (Potter, 2006, para. 5).

While increased trade between Europe and Asian countries increased an interest in Asian artforms and inspired and appropriated “Orientalism” (Meagher, 2004, para. 1), Art Nouveau was greatly inspired by the visual styles of India, China, the Middle East and especially Japan (Barnwell, 2021, p. 69). Japanese Ukiyo-e woodblocks inspired the flat colours and idealised female forms that you can see in this piece (Meggs & Purvis, 2016, p. 689), with its defined outlines and forms. This poster shows the idealised “femme nouvelle” of the Belle Epoque era, a “new woman” who rejected traditional subservient roles (Barnwell, 2021, p.69).

Though the roles of women and the technologies used in advertising have changed since this poster was created, its beauty is timeless. The moving lines and stylised depiction of the female form are echoed in contemporary illustration styles, and especially in modern watercolour practitioners such as John Dyer Baisley. One aspect

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that is not as obvious is the way that the unified palette keeps disparate elements together, and I plan to keep some of these Mucha works as benchmarks for future illustrations for colour palette. The use of “white” space in Art Nouveau works is not often commented on, but the balance of ornate aspects with the “blank” areas is a useful guide for balance without symmetry.

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