



Photo of Kambriel by Kyle Cassidy

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# Art Nouveau by Moonlight

*Text and photography  
by Kambriel*

As the dawn of a new century approached and cityscapes became grayer, smokier, and increasingly mechanized, a group of artists found themselves yearning for something more organic, compelled to bring a sense of romance and mystique back into the world. They focused their creativities on a celebration of nature's beauty—of the whiplash undulations of flowered vines growing forth unencumbered, of the way the wild winds blew through long flowing hair, transforming it into untamed silken tendrils that danced upon the air like the serpents of Medusa, of diaphanous gowns and impossibly intricate byzantine jewels that brought out the enchantress inside every woman. For each sunflower that opens its golden petals to an azure sky, awaiting its favorite bird or butterfly, there is a moonflower longing for the chill breeze of the night, carrying upon it the silent wings of its beloved owl, moth, or fluttering bat in a kind of starlit ballet. In this same way, for every work of art this extraordinary movement has created in celebration of the golden glories of the day, there are those that equally revel in the denizens and decadence of the velvet-clad night.



*Crepuscule (French for "dusk"): a grand French figural button carved by Armand Bargas with the romantic twilight-themed scene of a chignonned woman surrounded by a trio of bats flying through the starlit sky—resting atop a rare antique Sterling silver buckle carved in the form of an open-winged bat by Ferdinand Erhart, circa 1908.*



*Bat Woman heart-shaped photo locket made by Unger Brothers, paired with a handmade antique silver French Art Nouveau sautoir chain with floral filigree design, circa 1900.*



*Serpents and Sorceresses—a decadent assortment of antique Art Nouveau brooches and buttons, including interlaced serpents accented with shimmering garnet, amethyst, and marcasite, a fluttering of bats, plus the witchy women who are perfectly content to share their time with either (and perhaps be convinced to tell your fortune while doing so).*



*Self-portrait “Sphinx” inkwell sculpted by legendary actress Sarah Bernhardt, circa 1880. The inkwell portion is topped with a horned skull, and she has comedy-tragedy-mask shoulder epaulettes in tribute to her passion for theater, the body of a transformative griffin with scaled tail, fierce claws, and dramatic batwings ready to take flight—all topped off with a high ruffled collar and impeccably tied ribbon bow around her neck.*



*French Vampiress letter opener by Victorin Sabatier—cast bronze, circa 1900.*

*Pieces shown are from Kambriel’s personal collection of Art Nouveau antiques—select treasures available via [kambriel.com](http://kambriel.com).*