



Le Mystère des Dames du Vent

by Kambriel

JEWELRY OF THE ART NOUVEAU



Like privileged glimpses of an enchantress in all her charmed beauty, making a fleeting appearance, beckoning you to follow beyond her veil of flowers and leaves into another, ever more magical world. Sometimes wicked and tempestuous, sometimes serenely beautiful, and always enchanting, these muses of the art nouveau cause the very air around them to cascade and swirl.

"At the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900, throngs of curious visitors lined up to see an unprecedented and eccentric display of extraordinary jewels. With its decorative grille of bronze "butterfly women" and its canopy of hovering black velvet bats, the showcase and its inspired array of strange and innovative jewelry created an immediate sensation. A corsage ornament took the form of a tangle of writhing, green-enamel serpents; a wide choker depicted a forest in winter, complete with diamond snow and a mother-of-pearl lake. The exhibit and its daring designs were the work of artist-jeweler René Lalique."

~ Diane M. Bolz/ Smithsonian Magazine 1998

Not concerned with re-creating mere historic revivals, the artists of the Art Nouveau, notably including illustrator Alphonse Mucha, and jewelry designer René Lalique, wished to create something fantastical which had never been seen before. Their designs shared a common affection for undulating, asymmetrical lines, whiplash curves, and of course the women - those mythological heroines, crowned with their wildly flowing, unnaturally long hair, bedecked in jeweled headdresses and overgrown garlands of flowers.

Although its roots can certainly be seen in some of the art of the earlier Pre-Raphaelites, and its legacy continues on today, the height of the Art Nouveau artistic movement fell within the fin de siècle years of the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, from approximately 1890-1914. The movement began in Europe and North America at a time when the general rules of society were changing at a feverish pace. Art Nouveau could be viewed as a rebellion against the Age of Industrialism with all of its ugly smokestacks, dirty and loud machinery, trying to bring about a new aesthetic of exquisite grace, beauty, and naturalistic themes.



intrinsic monetary value. Some of the favoured materials

used in the cre-

ation of these pieces included organically shaped art glass imbued with iridescent finishes to cast a mysterious, inner glow from within, and transparent enamels applied with the "plique à jour" technique, which created a stained glass effect when lit from behind in delicate filigree designs.

Perhaps most revered and beloved of all the jewelry in the Art Nouveau era though, are the intensely poetic and sensual renderings of the feminine form, transformed into exotic, romantic woodland and water goddesses with long, curvilinear hair, in sweeping, unleashed tendrils. Often featured in an atmosphere without time or place, these women of repouséed, dimensionally-sculpted metal, seem to constantly maintain their air of supreme inward serenity whilst the wild winds rush all around them.

The Art Nouveau aesthetic was brought to a personal level as jewelry commissions began to be designed in this new and fascinating style. The jewelry, conceived as miniature works of art, was often reminiscent of the exotic beauties drawn by Alphonse Mucha. It quickly became all the rage as the upscale, avant-garde jewelry of the day. This was somewhat ironic, since the jewelry itself emphasized the use of unique, often innovative, non-precious materials, and placed the focus on the form and silhouette of the piece, as opposed to its

"...bedecked in jeweled headdresses and overgrown garlands of flowers."

An enduring beauty which continues on today...

A stunning Mucha inspired velvet choker adorned with a bewitching woman with long, wildly flowing hair, accented with glistening, faceted hematite offered by Atrocities (www.atrocities.com).

Judith's new "Play of Light" CD artwork incorporates the opulent Lalique dragonfly woman.

