



# ITINERARIO LIBERTY



## Europe

To define this movement, which interested the whole of Europe and the United States between the Eight and Nine-hundreds, beside the most widespread "Art Nuoveau" various expressions are to be found in the different countries: Jugendstil in Germany, Stile Floreale or Liberty in Italy, Sezessionstil in Austria, Paling Stijl in Belgium, only to remember the most relevant. Beyond the national variations which did exist, they do, however, describe the same style.

The area of production of Art Nouveau regarded all fields of artistic activity as the realization of a theoretical request which supported the abolition of every distinction between "major" arts and "minor" arts. Besides architecture, sculpture and, even though only to a small extent, to painting, Art Nouveau was dedicated, with relevant and innovative results, to graphics, furnishing, jewellery, to the production of glass and ceramics and to the decoration of fabrics. Art Nouveau reached its apogee at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900.

The preambles of Art Nouveau may be traced in England, on one hand in the pre-Raphael movement, which began to elaborate, above all in painting, an art theory which foresaw a social and moral function through the reference to nature no longer linked exclusively to realism, but laden with symbolic and mystical significance, and on the other hand, in the Arts and Crafts, a movement founded by William Morris, who laid the foundations for the re-evaluation of the relationship between art and handicraft, through the appeal to the Medieval spirit and the categorical refusal of a positive confrontation with the dawning industry.

As we have seen, while Art Nouveau welcomed the question of equality between the arts and the suggestions of some motives linked to the Gothic Revival, refusal regarding industry was never part of its principals, on the contrary it appreciated the potentiality of mass production not, however, ever being able to actually use it because of the complexity and refinement of its projects, resulting so usable only by a very restricted public of high middle-class extraction. Without forgetting the influence for orientalism, Art Nouveau was able to accept all these different suggestions and re-elaborate them in a well-defined and original style.

It is mainly characterized as an ornamental style, in which the ornament does not juxtapose to the structure of the object, but is fused with it in an organic totality. Its primary source of inspiration is still nature, but not the analytical and mimetic one of the previous naturalism, but an abstract and stylized nature, from which there was an attempt to catch the vitalistic essence and the generative force and, from here the symbolic and persistent female portrayal too. The means through which this pursuit was expressed was the line, curved and sinuous, which remains one of the fundamental criteria for recognizing the Art Nouveau style, "ornament is made real in the encircling line, dynamical, serpentinous or else the line doubles, it multiplies, it spreads into bands of lines like the echo of a wave", creating asymmetrical, phytomorphic or zoomorphic motifs.