



# ITINERARIO LIBERTY



## England

In England the renewal of the decorative arts began markedly earlier with respect to the rest of the continent. In fact, it was really the discussions held in the years between 1870 and 1880 in England which gave an impulse to the artistic revolution which struck the whole of Europe. The continental development then followed totally original decorative schemes and also very different from the English ones. Art Nouveau in England did not represent, as on the continent, a break with the past but rather an evolution of the motifs of the previous Arts and Crafts. In the Arts and Crafts environment, in fact, the artists who were promoters or, however, participants of the new requests are to be found. In some, the mixture between old and new motifs is such that an univocal classification proves difficult. This phase is referred to as the first or proto - Art Nouveau. It is also necessary to consider the fact that in England there was never a complete abandon of Arts and Crafts in favour of Art Nouveau. This latter did not gain that consent, in its land of origin, which was practically undisputed in the rest of Europe.

A peculiar characteristic of the first English Art Nouveau is the bi-dimensionality and the decorative value of the line which, in more or less stylized forms, represents birds and plants. Not by chance is it that, among the artists who dedicate themselves to illustration, to designs for fabrics and wallpaper that the promoters can be traced. Among these we would mention Walter Crane, Arthur Mackmurdo and, above all, Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (1872-1898), whose sinuous lines of unceasing and asymmetrical flow design some emblematic motifs of Art Nouveau like the peacock and its feathers. In furniture design, the contribution of Charles Annesley Voysey (1847-1941) and the representatives of the Cotswold School (1893-1935), a free association of ebony artists directed by Ernest Gimson and the brothers Sidney e Ernest Barnsley, was important . Their style is characterized by maximum simplicity. The forms are geometrical with vertical elements and the decoration is entrusted to the characteristic grain of the wood, to metal applications or inlays. The silverware of Charles R. Ashbee (1863-1942), too, characterized by light and graceful linear play, not only prelude, but in some way belong to Art Nouveau.

The diffusion and production of Art Nouveau objects in England is mainly due to the Company "Liberty & Co.", founded in 1874 by Arthur Lasenby Liberty, firstly to sell products of Oriental art, then, above all between 1890 and 1905, for the production of fabrics, silverware and pewter. Among the Liberty production, one can refer to the silverware of the Cymric range and the Tudric pewter, realized in collaboration with the firm W.H. Haseler of Birmingham. In these objects the influence of the Celtic linear motifs, beautified by blue and green enamel, is characteristic.