

Decorative Arts and Art Nouveau

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial covers Art Nouveau in the decorative arts. By the end of this lesson, you'll be able to identify and define today's key terms and identify examples of the Art Nouveau style in the decorative arts. This will be accomplished through the exploration of:



BIG IDEA

Art Nouveau was an international style that can be found in art, architecture, and the **decorative arts**.



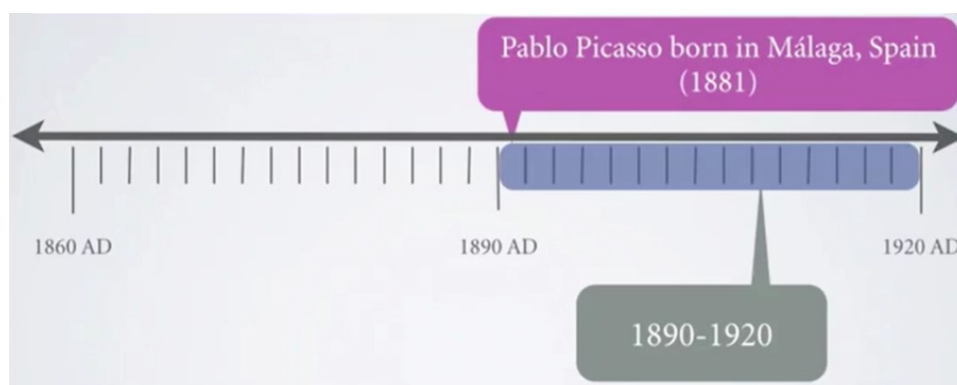
TERM TO KNOW

Decorative Arts

The design of objects that are both beautiful and useful; could include furniture, jewelry, and pottery, among other things.

1. Period and Location: Art Nouveau in the Decorative Arts

The artwork that you will be looking at today dates from between 1890 and 1920 and focuses geographically on New York, New York and Paris, France.



2. Louis Comfort Tiffany: Examples of Art Nouveau in the Decorative Arts

Art Nouveau designers thought of their work as contributing to the idea of a total work of art; that is, the idea that the architecture, as well as the furniture, lamps, and textiles—basically everything in a room—would work together to create a pleasing and harmonious space.

One of the most important designers from this period is Louis Comfort Tiffany. You are likely somewhat familiar with him, and may even have some of his inspired work in your home. His interest in glass production led to the development of new types of stained glass and **iridescent** glass, which he called **Favrile glass**, both of which he patented and incorporated into his colored glass designs, from windows, mosaics, jewelry, and enamels, to the world-famous lamps that still bear his name. Here is an example of a **Tiffany glass** lamp:



Tiffany Lamp by Louis Comfort Tiffany

1910-1920

Stained glass and metal

Tiffany's designs were very important in promoting the Art Nouveau aesthetic worldwide and, as you can see, included the curving lines, the curling tendrils, and other organic forms that define Art Nouveau.

Favrile glass was one of Tiffany's most important inventions. He, like other artists of the Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts movements, looked to the past for artistic inspiration, not just in stained glass, but in the lusterware techniques seen in Roman glass, as shown in the examples below. Inspired by these techniques, Tiffany developed two of the most innovative aspects of his glass production, impregnating the glass itself with color versus applying it on the surface, and leaving in the impurities that other glass makers were removing.



Favrite Glass examples patented by Louis Comfort Tiffany

1896-1902 (these examples)

Iridescent glass



TERMS TO KNOW

Iridescent

Displaying multiple colors that change when viewed at different angles.

Favrite

An iridescent art glass originally designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany for use in lamps and stained glass windows.

Tiffany Glass

A style of glass designed by the Tiffany Studios characterized by uneven glass thickness and rich colors.

3. René Lalique: Examples of Art Nouveau in the Decorative Arts

Like Louis Tiffany, the designs of René Jules Lalique were incredibly popular in their time and have remained an iconic form of artistry to this day. Whereas Tiffany's emphasis was on glass, Lalique focused on decorative and wearable accessories that were handcrafted and meticulously constructed, recalling the type of metal and enamel work you may have seen before from medieval times, called cloisonné. Like Tiffany, Lalique was taking inspiration from the past and applying it to the Art Nouveau aesthetic.

The example that you're looking at below is a bangle (or bracelet), an accessory that would be placed on your arm.



Bangle (bracelet) by René Lalique

1890s

Metal and enamel

This next example, the dragonfly brooch, aptly embodies Lalique's style as well as the design aspects of Art Nouveau that you've come to know and appreciate. Curvilinear lines, the curly tendrils, and the organic forms of the female figure/insect hybrid are beautifully rendered in gold and enamel. It's a level of attention to detail that can only be created by hand in an intentional departure from the same ideals as those artists and architects working in other fields associated with the Art Nouveau movement.



Dragonfly Lady Brooch by René Lalique

1897-1898

Gold, enamel, chrysoprase, moonstones, and diamonds



DID YOU KNOW

Art Nouveau was very influential on the art movements of the 20th century that followed it. With the underlying ideal of improving the aesthetic facets of humankind, it's somewhat ironic that Art Nouveau's emphasis on handicraft and beautiful materials also meant that this style was very expensive and unaffordable for most people.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about **Art Nouveau in the decorative arts**. You learned how to identify and define today's key terms. You also learned how to identify **examples of the Art Nouveau style in the decorative arts**, through the exploration of artwork by **Louis Comfort Tiffany** and **René Lalique**.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Ian McConnell.



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