

Overview of Art Nouveau furniture decorating methods

Alevtina Grishina *

Object designer, IE Grishina, Moscow, Russia.

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2024, 23(03), 2320–2323

Publication history: Received on 01 June 2024; revised on 25 July 2024; accepted on 27 July 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.3.2241>

Abstract

This article provides a detailed overview of the methods of decorating furniture in the Art Nouveau style, which was popular in the late XIX – early XX century. This style is known for its elegance and unique aesthetic qualities, based on natural motifs, smooth lines, and asymmetry. The article explores the key decorating techniques used in the creation of Art Nouveau furniture, including wood carving, inlay, the use of glass and metal, art paintings, and mosaics. Each of these techniques is described, with an emphasis on its impact on the visual perception and functionality of furniture. Examples of works made in the Art Nouveau style are also given. The ways of integrating Art Nouveau elements into modern furniture projects are described, which emphasizes the relevance of the style and its value.

Keywords: Art Nouveau; Furniture Decoration; Wood Carving; Inlay; Art Paintings; Natural Motifs; Asymmetry; Furniture Design; Decorative Techniques.

1 Introduction

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, architecture and construction reflected the spirit and dynamism of the industrial era. Traditional materials such as stone and wood were replaced with modern ones, including reinforced concrete, steel, lightweight and durable metals, and glass, allowing for the creation of massive facades and spatial frameworks of buildings. During this time, improvisation became a key principle in architecture.

Architects turned to nature in their creative pursuits, leading to the emergence of a naturalistic movement later called Art Nouveau [2]. In the early stages of this style, plant motifs such as lilies, reeds, cyclamens, and irises predominated, with an emphasis on their movement and growth. Later, other elements of nature, including seashells, fish scales, and water streams, were added.

Art Nouveau architecture was characterized by expressive "flowing" lines and rhythms, manifested in the curves of walls and intricate curvilinear details. Building facades included plant ornaments, stained glass, ceramic panels, and decorative sculptures, as well as wrought bent iron. The color schemes were diverse and expressive, and the building silhouettes were harmonious [3].

An important concept of Art Nouveau was the harmonious integration of architecture with the surrounding environment. One of the pioneers of this style is considered to be Belgian architect Victor Horta (1861-1947).

The name of this style literally means "new art." It originated in the early 1880s and remained popular until World War I. Interestingly, some experts do not consider Art Nouveau an independent style, referring to it as a variety of modernism, known in some countries as "Liberty."

* Corresponding author: Alevtina Grishina

In the modern era, where minimalism dominates interior design, there is a risk of one-sided development in the art of residential space decoration. In this regard, the preservation and adaptation of Art Nouveau elements in modern interiors can be seen as a way to maintain a balance between functionality and aesthetics, technology and art.

The beauty of Art Nouveau is undeniable even today, and it is still appreciated by many designers and homeowners. The main features of this style include graceful lines and curves, spacious and bright interiors, muted natural shades, romantic motifs, compositional completeness, the value of craftsmanship, the use of natural materials, and soft lighting.

Console tables in the Art Nouveau style are a striking example of how traditional elements can be integrated into modern interiors. These pieces of furniture not only serve a functional role but also act as a link between generations, preserving cultural heritage and the individuality of the owner. For older generations, acquiring such items becomes a way to maintain a connection with the past while simultaneously updating their living space.

Art Nouveau, like any other style, has its advantages and disadvantages. The pros include sophistication, uniqueness, the creation of a cozy atmosphere, eco-friendliness, and compatibility with other styles. However, potential cons should also be considered: extravagance against modern trends, difficulty in balancing elements, potentially high cost, and the need for spacious rooms to fully reveal the style.

This study aims to analyze the methods of furniture decoration in the Art Nouveau style, with a particular focus on console tables as a representative element of this style. Examining these methods will not only deepen the understanding of the historical context of Art Nouveau but also assess its potential for adaptation in modern interior design, contributing to a more diverse and rich cultural environment.

2 Materials and Methods

This work utilized methods such as analysis and synthesis. Analysis was used to identify Art Nouveau furniture decoration methods from various articles. Synthesis was applied to consolidate disparate information on decoration methods from different sources into a cohesive article.

3 Results and Discussion



Figure 1 Toilet by Marsh and Clark Design [1]

Artists and designers creating works in the Art Nouveau style use a variety of methods. Studying these methods is necessary, as many of the techniques presented can also be applied to furniture decoration in this style.

Wood carving played a significant role in the work of many artists and designers of the past. This textured technique can be successfully used today to create a cozy and stylish interior. An example is a decorative fireplace with exquisite walnut framing in the Art Nouveau style. Carving elements can also be incorporated into ordinary furniture items using special moldings to give them a refined and sophisticated look.

Metal constructions in the Art Nouveau style have become popular and relevant again, with their elegant and asymmetrical forms emphasizing the originality of the interior. Stylish metal elements such as brackets, railings, or fences can be used to adorn the facade of a house.

Stained glass art also holds an important place in interior design. The great artist Louis Comfort Tiffany first used stained glass to decorate windows and lighting fixtures. Well-chosen stained glass adds charm to the interior.

Another interesting decorative element can be the use of antique gates as a headboard for a bed or as an artistic element on the wall.

Draperies made of exquisite textiles with plant patterns, colorful carpets, and furniture upholstery are indispensable parts of decorating a house in the Art Nouveau style. When choosing textiles, it is recommended to stick to a muted color palette with curving lines to create a harmonious image that corresponds to the Art Nouveau style.

In lighting, the use of chandeliers with stained glass shades, iron lamps, and lanterns is characteristic. Even ordinary modern lamps can be transformed to stylistically match Art Nouveau.



Figure 2 Living room in Art Nouveau style [1]

Wallpaper with exquisite ornaments, as well as artworks in the form of graphics, posters, and reproductions, also add uniqueness and elegance to the interior.

The main features of the Art Nouveau style were presented above, and many of them can be used to some extent in furniture decoration. Below are examples of applying some of these methods to furniture. Decorating furniture in this style includes many unique methods that allow for the creation of elegant and sophisticated interior items.

Inlay is the decoration of furniture by embedding various materials such as wood, metal, mother-of-pearl, or ivory into its surface. Art Nouveau often uses natural motifs such as flowers, leaves, and animals. Inlay gives the furniture an exquisite and luxurious look, emphasizing the uniqueness of each item.

Wood carving is one of the most characteristic methods of decorating furniture in the Art Nouveau style. Graceful, flowing lines and organic shapes carved by hand create a sense of movement and liveliness. Carved elements often depict plant and animal motifs, adding artistic value and uniqueness to the furniture.

Lacquering and polishing the furniture surface are important methods that give it a glossy and finished look. Smooth, shiny surfaces create a sense of luxury and highlight the natural beauty of the materials. In Art Nouveau, multiple layers of lacquer are often used to achieve a deep and rich shine.

4 Conclusion

The Art Nouveau style draws inspiration from nature, leading to the emergence of naturalistic motifs in decorative elements. Plant patterns such as lilies, reeds, cyclamens, and irises became the foundation of this style. Later, other natural elements such as seashells and fish scales were added. Modern architecture was distinguished by expressive "flowing" lines and rhythms, which manifested in the curves of walls and intricate curvilinear details. Building facades were adorned with plant ornaments, stained glass, ceramic panels, and decorative sculptures, giving them a unique and harmonious appearance.

Decorating furniture in the Art Nouveau style includes many unique methods that allow for the creation of elegant and refined interior pieces. Inlay, wood carving, stained glass, metal decorations, lacquering, and painting—all these methods give the furniture an exquisite look and emphasize its uniqueness. The use of natural materials such as wood, stone, glass, and metal, along with attention to detail and craftsmanship, makes each piece of Art Nouveau furniture a true work of art. Art Nouveau furniture can become a striking accent in the interior, creating an atmosphere of coziness and harmony. This style, combining the beauty of nature and the sophistication of forms, remains popular and sought after among those who value uniqueness and elegance in design.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

References

- [1] 8 great ways to design an Art Nouveau interior // Design Museum : website. – URL: <https://museum-design.ru/8-ways-to-interior-decoration-in-art-nouveau-style/> (date of access: 06/26/2024)
- [2] Ivanov, M.A. Historical and artistic in Soviet monumental mosaic art / M.A. Ivanov // Journal of the Institute of Heritage : electronic journal. – URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/istoriko-hudozhestvennye-predposylki-v-sovetskom-monumentalnom-mozaichnom-iskusstve>. – Date of publication: 2021.
- [3] Polyakov, E.N. The architectural heritage of Viktor Pierre Horta / E.N. Polyakov, T.V. Donchuk // Bulletin of the Tomsk State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering: an electronic journal. – URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/arhitekturnoe-nasledie-viktora-orta>. – Date of publication: 2019.
- [4] Saifullina, I.Z. On the question of the history of interior decoration / I.Z. Saifullina // Proceedings of the Kazan State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering: an electronic journal. – URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/k-voprosu-ob-istorii-dekorirovaniya-v-interiere>. – Date of publication: 2021.