

Visiting Taipei ----- Art Nouveau @ Huashan 1914 Creative Park

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Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山 1914 文化創意產業園區) is one of my favourite places in Taipei. In its previous life , the place was an old winery that was first built in 1914 , but has since been converted to become a centre of art and culture where theatre groups , painters, sculptors , and writers can showcase their creative talents. At any one time, there is always something interesting going on . Currently (from 30/12/2024 to 6/4/2025) , there is this very well curated exhibition featuring **Art Nouveau** (新藝術運動---光影藝術展).



Art Nouveau

Art Nouveau is an art movement that flourished in Europe in the late 19th century to the early 20th century . The French term **Art Nouveau** (“ New Art ”) first came to be used in Belgium and France , and soon spread to the rest of Europe where it was known by various names such as **Jugendstil** (Youth Style) in Germany , or **Secessionsstil** ('Secession style') in Austria . The **Art Nouveau** artists in this era strived to break away from traditional fine art and to explore new ways of expression while using new materials. One of the characteristics of this new style is the free use of innovative sinuous curves and flowing lines inspired by natural forms like plants and flowers. This new art style not only found its way into traditional art forms like paintings and sculptures , but were also expressed in other areas of applied art like building architecture , decorative arts in ceramics , glass , stain-glass windows , furniture , interior designs for elegant homes , jewellery designs , and even commercial posters, While the reign of this movement is relatively short (it was largely replaced from the 1920s by **Art Deco** and then **Modernism**) , it has lasting influence in the world of art and design and many of the art legacy from this era are still being treasured. Those who have visited Europe would no doubt have encountered many **Art Nouveau** objects. The exhibition in Huashan 1914 Creative Park show-cased some of the most important artists involved in the **Art Nouveau** movement.

The Art Nouveau artists

One of the highlights of visiting Paris is to marvel at the wonderful entrances to many of the metro stations. These entrances were designed by **Hector Guimard** (1867-1942) who used cast iron and glass to produce entrances that more befit ones that lead to floral gardens instead of metro stations. At the time, many Parisians did not take kindly to such departure from traditional art forms. But now, of the 141 subway



entrances originally built , 86 have survived to this date and they are all preserved as historical monuments.

Most visitors to Barcelona (Spain) would not fail to be mesmerised by the **Basilica de la Sagrada Familia** and various works by **Antoni Gaudi** (1852 -1926) who represented the pinnacle of monumental 3-dimensional **Art Nouveau** marrying **Gothic** style in Spain and forever changed the skyline of Barcelona.



Anyone who has visited Vienna would not have missed the chance to go to the **Österreichische Galerie Belvedere** there to admire the famous **Kiss** by Austrian painter **Gustav Klimt** (1862 – 1918)----- an oil on canvas painting with added gold leaf, silver and platinum. With its theme of love, intimacy, and sexuality (almost scandalous in his times) , it created quite a sensation in the art world when it was first exhibited in 1908 in Vienna. This painting was reported to have been purchased by the Austrian Emperor at the time for a hefty sum even before it was finished. This piece is also very popular these days on many merchandise like cups , scarves , place mats, etc.



Alphonse Mucha was a Czech painter, illustrator, and graphic artist who lived and worked in Paris during the Art Nouveau period. He became a house-hold name in Paris for his distinctly stylized and decorative theatrical posters, particularly those of **Sarah Bernhardt** , one of the most talented and popular stage actress at the time . **Mucha** was also the creator of advertising posters for many champagne houses and luxury food items and he was one of the stars in the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900 .



The Exhibition

Granted that all **Art Nouveau** artwork exhibits are only reproductions at the Huashan exhibition, but it does showcase a very comprehensive overall view of the works by various **Art Nouveau** artists in a very interesting way . Apart from the standard description of the various artists and showing their best works in reproduction prints, there was this decorative tunnel themed around stained glass with colourful motifs that provide a vibrant interplay of light and colour and an enchanting experience of walking through a dynamic art space for the viewers . Finally , there is this Golden Room using lightings, projections and sound effects to “deconstruct and re-imagine” the works of different Art



Nouveau masters, providing the viewers an intense and immersive experience of the senses.

All in all , it is a worthwhile experience and a "must-go" if you should be in Taipei over the next 2 months.