

Media release



Installation view of the *Alphonse Mucha: Spirit of Art Nouveau* exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, photo © Art Gallery of New South Wales, Diana Panuccio

Alphonse Mucha's art nouveau masterpieces now on display in exclusive Sydney exhibition

Opening tomorrow and exclusive to Sydney, the Art Gallery of New South Wales presents [Alphonse Mucha: Spirit of Art Nouveau](#). This exhibition traces the remarkable life and work of one of the great pioneers of the 19th century art world, Czech art nouveau master **Alphonse Mucha**, and will be the largest exhibition ever seen in Australia of this visionary artist's work.

In seductive, sinuous compositions, Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939) developed a new stylistic language that defined the look of late 19th-century Paris to be the very spirit of art nouveau, creating some of the most instantly recognisable and best-loved works in modern European art.

This exhibition, exclusive to the Art Gallery, is realised in close cooperation with the Mucha Foundation, Prague, and is drawn from the Mucha Family Collection. The exhibition features more than 200 works including paintings, illustrations, posters, jewellery, photographs, sculpture and more. It is co-curated by **Tomoko Sato**, curator of the Mucha Foundation, and **Jackie Dunn**, senior curator of exhibitions at the Art Gallery.

Declared during his lifetime as 'the greatest decorative artist in the world', Mucha rocketed to fame with the posters he created for legendary actor and international superstar Sarah Bernhardt, before going on to receive global recognition through his advertising and product design – and the 'decorative panels' that were his first steps towards the democratisation of art that he so desired.

This exhibition will explore his full oeuvre from the early years before he moved to Paris in 1887, to his famed poster art and the development of the 'Mucha style'. His late great painting cycle the *Slav Epic* (1912–26), comprising 20 grand canvases, is brought to life in Sydney as an immersive digital experience.

Art Gallery director **Michael Brand** said: 'Alphonse Mucha was one of art's great stylistic innovators and whilst best known for his iconic posters and decorative designs that contributed to the development of art nouveau, we hope this truly comprehensive exhibition will offer audiences the chance to take a deeper look at the remarkable life of this fascinating artist and his humanistic ideals.'

'We are grateful to the Mucha Foundation for their generosity in lending these treasures to allow audiences here in Sydney the chance to discover an exhibition not only rich in art but also in history, human achievement and political commitment,' said Brand.

Minister for the Arts, Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism John Graham said: 'Lovers of art nouveau will be treated to a spectacular exhibition of the life and work of this visionary artist. Between this and the annually anticipated Archibald Prize exhibition, visitors to the Art Gallery of New South Wales are in for a visual feast this winter.'

Alongside Mucha's own work, the exhibition will also feature a selection of Japanese prints from the Art Gallery's exceptional *ukiyo-e* collection, the likes of which circulated during Mucha's time in Paris in the late 19th century and profoundly influenced the art nouveau style. Also on display will be an exciting selection of 1960s and 1970s band posters and LP record covers, as well as more recent Japanese *manga*, that followed the countercultural rediscovery of Mucha's art, showcasing his recent and ongoing influence on modern culture.

The exhibition is accompanied by a [richly illustrated catalogue](#), written by Tomoko Sato, a leading Mucha expert and curator at the Mucha Foundation. The publication features over 200 stunning images depicting Mucha's art and life, including rarely seen archival photographs.

Art Gallery visitors are invited to deepen their exploration of the world of art nouveau over the course of the exhibition through a range of Mucha-inspired [public programs](#), including tours, talks, workshops and performances. Join a [daily guided tour](#) of the exhibition at 12pm or 2pm, and on Wednesdays also at 6.30pm. Tours also available in Mandarin, Japanese and Korean.

Sydney-based artist **Noni Cragg** will paint a work titled [Velvet daydream](#) in the Art Gallery's welcome plaza from 10am to 4pm on Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 June, to coincide with the opening weekend for the Mucha exhibition. Drawing inspiration from Mucha's floral motifs and his political and mural work, Cragg will paint a portrait of her friend, Velvet Trip frontman **Zeppelin Hamilton**.

Also on the opening weekend, a double bill of talks will be held in the Meers Hall in Naala Badu, including a [conversation between exhibition curators](#) Jackie Dunn and Tomoko Sato on the fascinating life and career of Mucha at 12pm on Saturday 15 June. Designer **Andrew Yip** will [discuss the technologies](#) of play, immersion and enchantment he used to bring Mucha's *Slav Epic* to life in the interactive digital installation he created for the exhibition at 1pm on Saturday 15 June. Free, no bookings required.

Later in June, the Art Gallery will present [Moving portraits](#), a series of empowering dance performances co-created by three choreographer and dancer duos: **Sue Healey and Anca Frankenhaeuser**, **Eliam Royalness and Neda Taha**, and **Sarah-Vyne Vassallo and Em Yali**. Playing with notions of representation and narrative ownership, these new works will reflect unique 'artist' and 'subject' relationships. *Moving portraits* will be performed on Wednesday 26 June at 6pm in Naala Badu and 8pm in Naala Nura.

On Wednesday 11 September and Wednesday 18 September, as part of a Mucha-themed [Art After Hours](#), visitors can channel their creativity in a series of free drop-in workshops, join a tour with exhibition curator Jackie Dunn, and listen to insightful artist talks while enjoying late-night exhibition access.

[Alphonse Mucha: Spirit of Art Nouveau](#) is proudly supported by the NSW Government through its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW. The exhibition is on display at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Naala Badu, our north building, from 15 June to 22 September 2024 and tickets are available now, alongside the concurrent [Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes 2024](#) exhibition. A Gallery Pass providing discounted entry into both exhibitions is available, as well as a 2-for-1 ticket offer on Wednesday evenings throughout the exhibition's display.

For more information and to purchase tickets, please [visit the Art Gallery website](#).

Note for editors: Mucha is pronounced 'Mook-huh'

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About the Art Gallery of New South Wales

On Gadigal Country

The Art Gallery of New South Wales acknowledges the traditional custodians of the Country on which it is located, the Gadigal of the Eora nation, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. From its magnificent site in Sydney, the Art Gallery is one of Australia's pre-eminent art museums and the state's leading visual arts institution. Its mission is to serve the widest possible audience as a centre of excellence for the collection, preservation, documentation, interpretation and display of Australian and international art, and a forum for scholarship, art education and the exchange of ideas. The transformation of the Art Gallery – now with two buildings, Naala Badu and Naala Nura – brings together art, architecture and landscape in spectacular new ways with dynamic galleries and seamless connections between indoor and outdoor spaces. It is the most significant cultural development to open in Sydney in half a century and is a prominent new destination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture. artgallery.nsw.gov.au

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