

Ellie Ball

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Illustration- Ways of Thinking

Gwenllian Beynon

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Vastly different movements inspired psychedelic art.

In this essay I will be discussing how vastly different movements added to the inspiration of the rebellious, vibrant, drug culture infused psychedelic art. As an illustrator I am heavily inspired from the art and culture of this period. A lot of my work has taken influence from this time. Throughout this essay I will be researching how psychedelic art was inspired by different movements previously, and how they all compare to each other. I will be looking at three different artists and their art, as examples of each time and discussing their visual and values towards each other.

Psychedelic art was a major art style in the late 1960s. It was an American counterculture fuelled by hallucinogenic drugs, acid rock, and a hippie lifestyle. (Heller, S. and Chwast, S. (2008) Pg 117)

Psychedelic art is easy to identify through its vibrant colours, rebellious nature, and eye-catching designs. Researching into the art style, I discovered that it was inspired from hugely different movements. "Psychedelic typefaces were hand-drawn based on Victorian, Art Nouveau" (Heller, S. and Chwast, S. (2008) Pg 117). After finding out this information, I could not help but notice the influence from each movement, and how one era has help inspire the next, even though they are so visually different.

Throughout I will be demonstrating the similarities and influence of the Pre-Raphaelite

Brotherhoods work, made in the Victorian era, and Alphonse Mucha's work, from the art Nouveau

period, and identify how both artists and movements have influenced Psychedelic poster artist Victor Moscoso.

The Pre-Raphaelites

The Pre-Raphaelites was a secret society of male artists, formed in London 1848. Their ideas and objectives as a group were to oppose and to “reform the standards of English painting” (Adams, S. (1997)Pg 6).

Looking at their work it appears very whimsical and heavily inspired by nature and the natural beauty that surrounds us. As a group they were all interested in poetry and proverbs, you can see that their work is very illustrative, each image tells a different story.



(Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Garlanded Lady* (1873))

Above, you can see that the dominating colour is green. You see this in figure two's dress, playing the stringed instrument, and the surrounding leaves and foliage around her. The green gives a semiotic that their environment is clean and happy, that their habitat is natural and healthy. Boldly, the green is contrasted by the striking red hair of the three figures in the image. The similarity in hair colour suggesting that they may all be related.

The secret society were profoundly known for “depicting unconventional subjects culled from the Bible and Medieval poetry” (Adams, S. (1997) Pg7). Knowing this I can take a guess that the key focal point in the image, which is the woman playing the stringed instrument, is a harp. An object that has frequently been symbolised throughout religious artworks and text.

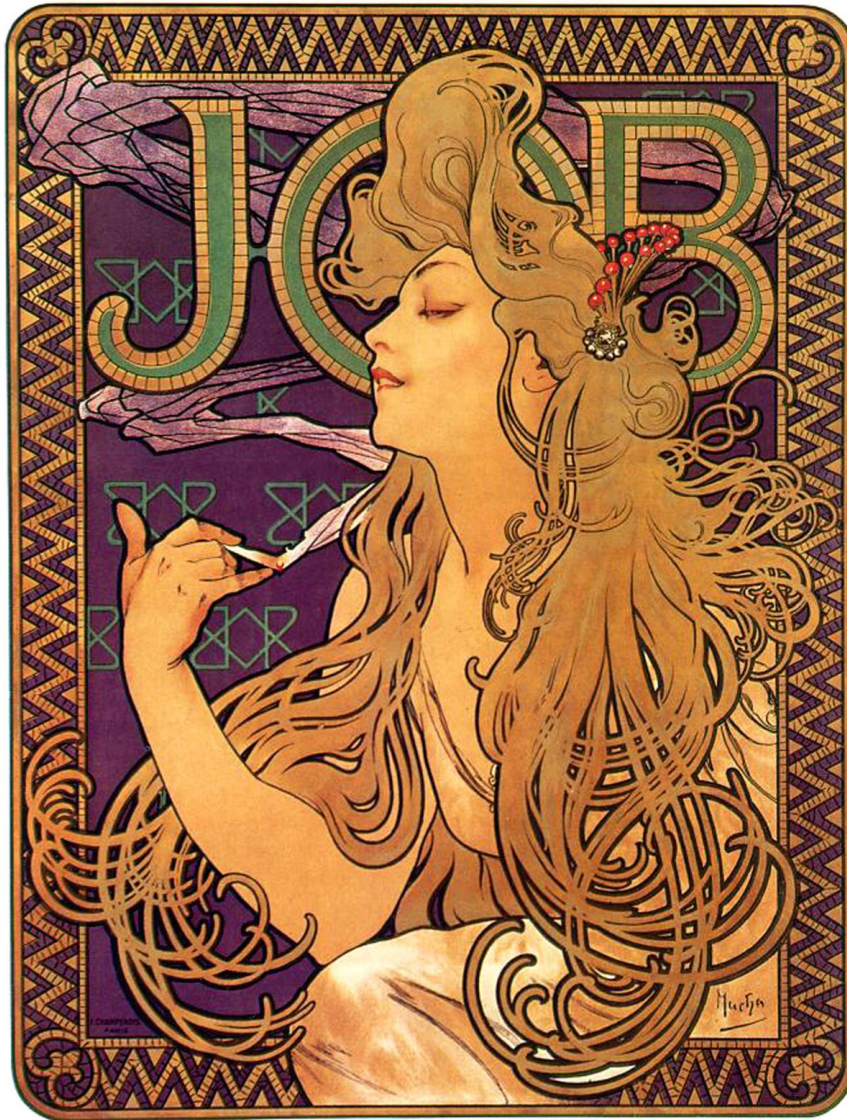
Looking at the two figures above her, the one to her right, figure three has white feather wings, illustrating she is a holy figure. Possibly an angel listening down to the woman's prayers, as she calls out on the harp.

The flowers throughout the whole image represent beauty and resilience. One thing that catches my eye is the two wooden carved birds on the harp. These birds give semiotics of freedom. They could also resemble the two angels above listening down from above.

Floral patterns have been used in this image. You can see the leaves and flowers cradling themselves around the woman and her harp, almost protecting her, like the two angels above her.

Alphonse Mucha

Art Nouveau was the progression of modern illustration as we know it. Alphonse Mucha is a recognisable artist that had greatly impacted the art Nouveau period. Their work is known for being ornamental, enticing and bringing florid free movement. The period was described “tightly knit progressive aesthetic that transformed fashion, furniture, architecture, graphics, and all manner of decorative arts.” And the “revolution of poster design” (Heller, S. and Chwast, S. (2008) Pg30.)



(Alphonse Mucha, *Job* (1896))

This image is an advertisement poster for cigarettes. The image is very sinuous, and seductive, drawing you into this incredibly attractive lady with bouncy flowing hair. The poster makes smoking appear to be very sexy. Through the eyes of this advertisement, you can picture yourself looking very glamorous and sexy smoking a cigarette, when ironically now is depicted as a very filthy habit. Cigarette posters now do the exact opposite now, illustrating the bad health implications, deterring you from purchasing.

The long flowing lines of the blond hair correlate well with the illustrated smoke, snaking its way to the top of the image. The use of line and pattern in this poster is very beautiful. Your eyes travel with

the lines weaving their way around the entire image. The border itself is incredibly decadent, exposing shapes and patterns this works organically with the central seductive figure. The gesture of this figure is very confident, gleaming in their own glamour and satisfaction. The head tilted back giving signs of power, pride and wealth.

The semiotics of the purple used, represents wealth. Purple is an extraordinarily rich, sophisticated colour, that is associated with wealth and glamour. The advertisement is trying to capture that feeling. The purple is contrasted with complementary colour, yellow, making the advertisement pop. There is also a gold clip in her hair that looks like berries, that could resemble health and prosperity.

What's most interesting is that it was one of the first advertisement to draw people in by their decoration. "Art Nouveau was the first decidedly commercial style that was applied to- and enhanced the appeal of- industrial products." (Heller, S. and Chwast, S. (2008) Pg34) This completely changed advertisement and poster design and made it what it is today.

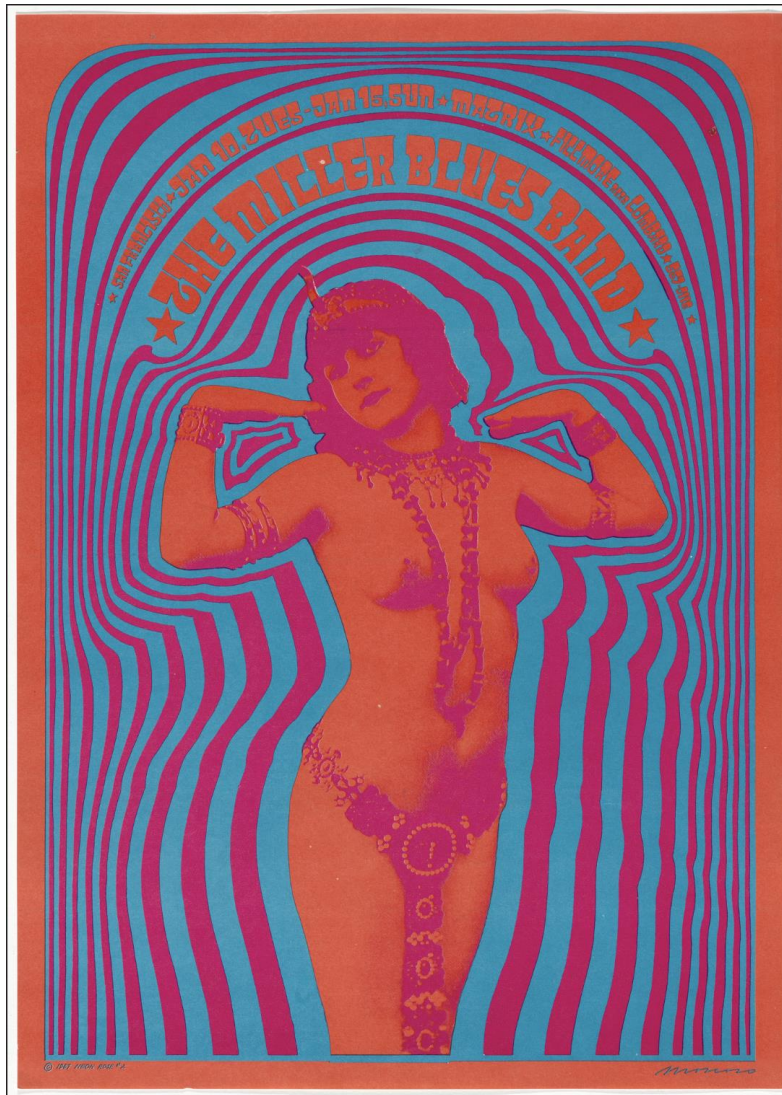
You can see that the Pre-Raphaelites have influenced this painting, and the art Nouveau movement. "Art Nouveau drew inspiration from Byzantine art and Pre-Raphaelite art." (Heller, S. and Chwast, S. (2008)Pg 51.) Both are sensual and ornamental and captures a woman's beauty with fluidity. The decorative poster is rhythmic and captures a lady living her best life, whilst using a very lucrative product of that time.

Victor Moscoso

Victor Moscoso's work is most famous for his vibrating colours and hallucinogenic poster designs in the late 1960s. His work is iconic and is a great well-known example for producing psychedelic art.

He was most famous in San Francisco for creating "posters for concerts in the city's clubs and dance halls". (Zeegen, L. and Roberts, C. (2014) Pg48)

The image pulls you in using curvy lines lacing themselves around the figure in the middle. There's a vibrant use of contrasting and complementary colours along with the bold typography.



(Victor Moscoso, *The Miller Blues Band* (1973))

Moscoso created his work by collecting bright electric colours and composting them carefully to produce movement and hallucinogenic effect he desired. Throughout he enjoys playing with the eye using different shapes and colours. He was known as a rule breaker paring and constructing things differently to how he was taught in art school. He liked making his designs not as easily read as other posters, however still confident that it would keep the viewers' attention from the winding shapes and strange direction that your eyes follow. (www.bahrgallery.com. (n.d.). *Victor Moscoso - Artist - Master - Bahr Gallery*)

Moscoso's taken inspiration from the Pre-Raphaelites using striking feminine beauty. From the style of jewellery to her stance in the image, this poster is extremely empowering. The way her head is

slightly tilted to the left side, appears to be quite graceful and an element of vulnerability. The way that her arms are positioned gives you the feeling that she is free and confident, with whimsically flare, just like how the Pre-Raphaelite women are illustrated throughout a lot of their paintings.

The art Nouveau movement has had an influence, from the strong use of lines circling their way around the figures body. This is like how the smoke weaves its way around the illustration, accentuating curves, fusing the posters composition. The art Nouveau movement is renowned for its organic curves, and flowing lines, that has also been seen throughout this image and other psychedelic illustrations of that time. The unclothed figure and the confidence in her stance are also very sinuous, freeing and seductive. Flourished with beautiful jewellery and head-dresses, she looks very sophisticated. The decorative style of the previous movement has been influenced here.

Summary

Concluding you can see how all these different art styles and movements have influenced each other, even though they are so vastly different. A reminder that these are only three examples, there are endless ways you can compare and see the links between each movement, with every different piece of artwork.

These images I find very influential towards my art style. Personally, I have always been drawn to the inspiration of psychedelic art, as well as more whimsical ornamental studies. Following this essay, I will keep in mind the techniques and semiotics these artists have used to produce, when constructing my own work. What I find most inspiring about all these pieces is how freeing they are, I hope to replicate that same feeling. I feel pulling these images apart and linking the one movement to the next will help me during my practise when I am trying to find sources of inspiration, and no matter how different in nature, how previous work will always inspire the next.

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