

***The Birth, The Death and The Resurrection:  
Summarising the Works of Alphonse Mucha***

Born in the Moravian town of Ivancice in 1860, Mucha, it is said, learned to draw before he could crawl. On Christmas Eve 1894 French actress, Sarah Bernhardt stormed into a Paris print shop demanding a replacement poster for her new play 'Gismonda' as the original was unsatisfactory, and that it must be ready by New Year's Day. Mucha, who happened to be in the shop correcting lithographic proofs, was offered the contract. His poster proved sensational and quickly became a collectors' item, gaining a contract for a further nine posters for Bernhardt and commissions with many other commercial companies. His lithographic designs were heralded as 'The Mucha Style'. This then became known as 'Art Nouveau, with Mucha as the founder. This was, however, hotly disputed by some.



*Portrait designed by M. Svabinsky, engraved by J. Schmidt.  
Issued 18/12/60, commemorating A. Mucha's birth centenary on Czech Stamp Day.*



*'Gismonda' poster 1894, reproduced in a Czech Republic booklet, 2010.  
'E' denoting for local use.*

The art nouveau posters gained considerable French favour and international acclaim.

For his decoration of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavillion at the World Exhibition, Paris in 1900, he was awarded the Order of the Legion of Honour of the Republic of France.

This booklet, referred to on page one, holds six stamps depicting the late 1894 poster promoting the theatrical production of 'Gismonde'. The covers show five further posters. Four of the productions ran at the Theatre De La Renaissance, one at the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt, Paris.



*From the top, left:-*

*La Dame Aux Camelias*

*La Samaritaine*

*Tracique Histoire D'Hamlet,  
Prince De Danemark*

*Medee*

*Lorenzaccio*



*'Zodiak', one of his most successful designs used by a dozen different companies.  
'Z' denoting for foreign usage.  
Reproduced in a booklet, cover poster design entitled 'Daydream', 2010.*



*'Woman and Art', issued 14/7/69, depicting paintings from the 'Four Arts' and the 'Precious Stones' series, the 'panneaux decoratifs' of 'Paintings', 'Music', 'Dance' and 'Ruby and Amethyst'.*

Sensual, sinuous women with long, auburn hair, swaying in the breeze and flowing, vaguely neoclassical robes. The figures are garlanded with lush flowers and surrounded with halos, all in pale pastel colours.





Spring Summer Autumn Winter  
 Paintings, 'The Four Seasons' 1896



The lithograph of eponymous heroine, Princess Hyacinth, believe to have been modelled by the Czech actress, Anna Sedlackova, was reproduced with steel engraving and issued 29/11/68 as part of Czechoslovakia's 3<sup>rd</sup> Art series.

Amid jealous opposition, Mucha gained commissions to design the Mayor of Prague's parlour and a stained glass window in St Vitus Cathedral.

In October 1918 Czechoslovakia gained independence from the Austro-Hungarian empire. Postage stamps were needed immediately. Mucha was invited to design the first postage stamps and bank notes for the new country. No government printing department existed so the Czech Graphics Union were utilised. Engraving was slow, although adopted in 1923. The Photogravure Department had a full work-load. Forced to use the Typographic Department, all but two small issues of pre-1923 stamps were from typographically-produced plates.



Postcard showing the first Czechoslovakia stamp proposal.

"Every nation has its palladium, a sacred symbolic abode. For me, there is no theme more solemn than our Hradcany Castle. Since my childhood I have cherished it. She would not allow me to choose anything else for our first stamps which represent the first steps of our nation after centuries of servitude". Mucha, 1918.



The first Czechoslovak postage stamps, designed by Alphonse Mucha, the 5 and 10 haller Hradcany type 1, issued 18/12/18.

There were five main types within the Hradcany series, each of these having their own variations and have been the subject of many studies. Type 1 used white lettering. The following are examples of types 2 – 5, identifying the main differences.



Type 2. Coloured lettering, imperforated, issued 29/1/19 and perforated 13.5 issued 1920.



Type 3. 'CESKO-SLOVENSKA' moved to a horizontal bar, larger 'POSTA' lettering and shaded linden leaves and doves, the national emblem and emblem of peace respectively, imperf, issued 14/3/19 and perf 13.5, issued 1920.



Type 4. The tree in the foreground is shaded and the sun, included in the earlier issues by the engraver and showed, by its position, to be 'setting' rather than 'rising'sun, is removed. Imperf, issued 10/4/19 and perf 11.5, issued 1920.



Type 5. The tree is removed. Imperf issued 7/6/19 and perf 11.5 issued 1920.

Variations continued;-

- 14 – 15. Hradcany imperf and perf 13.5 design with opt air surcharge, issued 11/8/20 and 14/8/20 respectively;
- 16. Hradcany perf 13.5 with a Red Cross Fund opt surcharge issued 15/12/20;
- 17. Hradcany perfin;



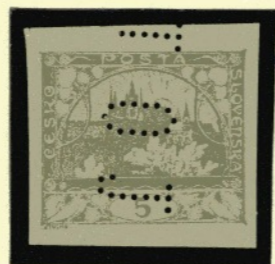
14.



15.



16.



17.

East Silesia imperf Hradcany with black 'SO 1920' (Silesie Orientale) opt issued 13/2/20;-

- 18 – 22. Types 1, 2 (red opt), 3 and 5;
- 23. Newspaper Express imperf opt 'SO 1920' issued 13/2/20;
- 24. Postage due imperf opt 'SO 1920' issued 13/2/20:



18.



19.



20.



21.



22.



23.



24.

Other Mucha designs and variations include

- 1. 'Windhover' newspaper imperf stamps issued from 18/12/18;
- 2. As above, with an overprinted surcharge, issued 18/5/25;
- 3. As above, perf with opt 'O.T.', (obchodni tiskovina) commercial printed matter issued 15/11/34;
- 4 – 8. Variations of postage due imperf stamps issued from 1/2/19;
- 9. Newspaper Express imperf stamps issued from 10/2/19;
- 10 – 11. Newspaper imperf variations opt 'NOVINY' (news) from 1/3/26;



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



11.



12.



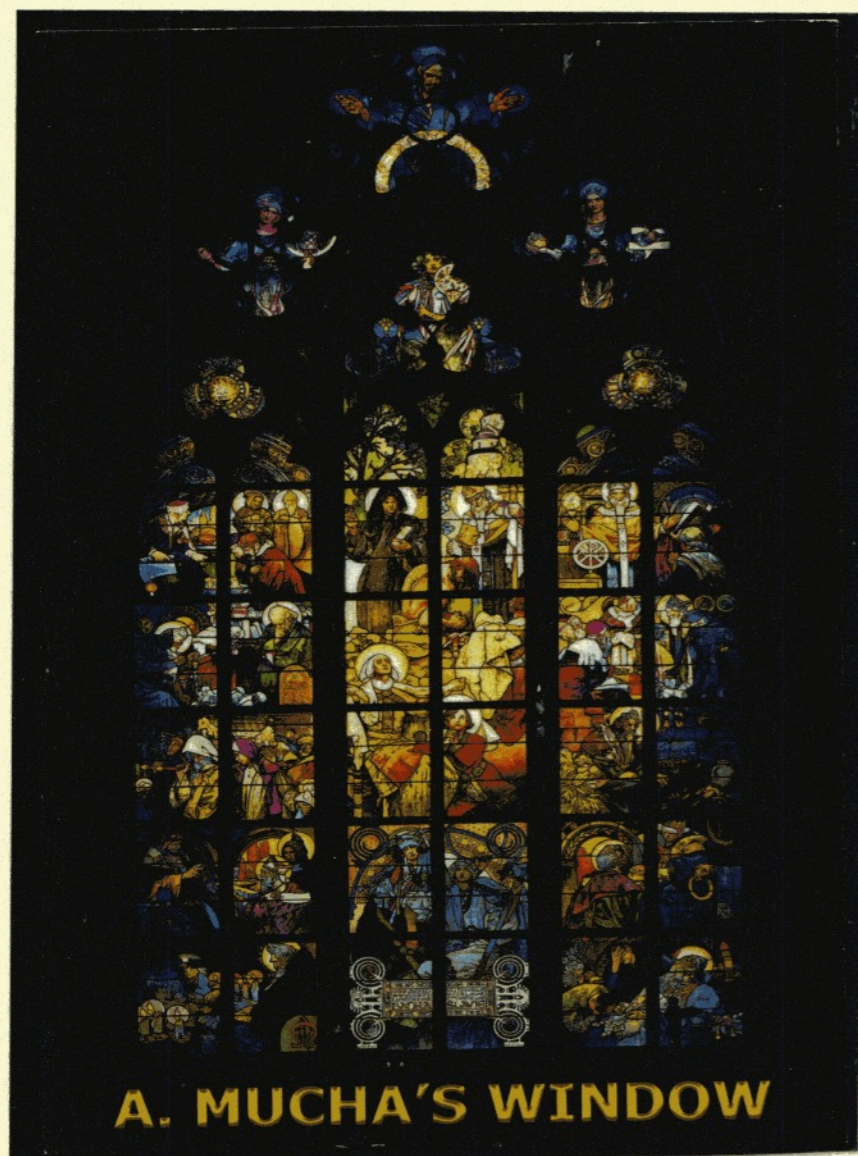
13.

12 – 13. Hussite Priest and Chalice postage stamps issued 1/6/20 and 10/6/20 respectively.

This issued caused considerable unrest from opponents to the teachings of the religious reformer, Jan Hus. Consequently, although Mucha designed a subsequent 'Girl with a Linden Tree' stamp, no further denominations were issued;

Honouring the Millennium Jubilee of the Czech patron saint, St. Wenceslas, Duke of Bohemia, (Good King Wenceslas was never a king) the Gothic reconstruction work for St Vitus Cathedral, Prague, was completed in 1929. The new stained-glass window, designed by Mucha, was installed in the north naïve in 1931.

The window portrays the boy St. Wenceslas, with his mother, St. Ludmila, in the centre, surrounded by episodes from the lives of Saints Cyril and Methodius who spread Christianity among the Slavs. The image of Slavia is also included below Christ, and as an emblem of Slavia Bank who sponsored the window.



The beautiful Svatovaclavsky (St. Wenceslas) stained-glass window, in St Vitus Cathedral, Prague

The cathedral can be seen rising from the centre of Prague Castle on the Hradcany stamps.



Mucha painted, on canvas, 'Hail, Blessed Spring of Health' in Nice, 1932, and was designed to fit the space above the dining room entrance of the Thermia Palace Hotel, Piestany, Slovakia. Stolen in 2000 and returned, damaged, in 2005.

Following extensive renovation, the Thermia Palace reopened in 2006 as Slovakia's first 5-star hotel.

The girl in the rocking chair is thought to be Mucha's daughter, Jaroslava.



FDC



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SLOVENSKO  
MALBA Z HOTELA THERMIA PALACE V PIESTANOCCH. 1932

1,20€



SUD POZDRAVENY POZEHNANY PRAMER ZDRAVIA  
ALFONS MUCHA (1860 - 1939)

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*Morning Star Evening Star Pole Star The Moon*  
*The Moon and Stars series of paintings, 1905*

*With Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Solomon Islands, this miniature she is the only item I can find honouring Mucha that has a direct link with Britain.*



*Ivy, 1901*

*Princess Hyacinth, 1911*

*Dance, 1898*

*Salome, scheming to secure the beheading of John the Baptist, 1897*



*Princezna Hyacinta*

The Czech Republic have issued two further commemoratives.



*The 'Flying Falcon', issued 20/1/95.*

*The most recent being 'Brunette', the 9<sup>th</sup> Art series issued 15/11/2000.*

