Art Nouveau through documentary material

Rosalba Cilione, Simona Pandolfi
Italy

Carlo Bugatti, chairs with flowers painted by Giovanni Segatini, 1887-88 ca., photograph held in the Archives of 20th Century Italian Applied Arts
The Archives were founded to valorise Italian decorative arts and hold documents of various types, including photographs, letters, magazines, and publications dedicated to artists and manufacturers active during the first half of the 20th century.

The Archives of 20th Century Italian Applied Arts are a documentation and research centre with a specialized library founded in 1987 by Irene de Guttry, Maria Paola Maino, and Mario Quesada (in 2002, Gabriella Tarquini succeeded Mario Quesada, who died in 1996). The Archives were founded to valorise Italian decorative arts and hold documents of various types, including photographs, letters, magazines, and publications dedicated to artists and manufacturers active during the first half of the 20th century. The focus is on works of applied art (furniture, ceramics, glassworks, wrought iron, tapestries, posters, book illustrations, etc.) with a particular emphasis on certain Roman artists, such as Duilio Cambellotti. In addition, the archives hold documentary material on artists including Ulisse Arata, Domenico Baccarini, Giacomo Balla, Alfredo Baruffi, Ernesto Basile, Alfredo Biagini, Umberto Bottazzi, Giovanni Buffa, Carlo Bugatti, Felice Casorati, Ezio Castellucci, Galileo Chiini, Camillo Innocenti, Giorgio Kienerk, Alberto Martini, Aleardo Terzi, Edoardo Rubino, Ettore Ximenes, Vittorio Zecchin, and Carlo Zen.

One of the newest publications of the Archives of 20th Century Italian Applied Arts is Antiquariato del '900, edited by Irene de Guttry and Maria Paola Maino with the collaboration of Gabriella Tarquini, published by Il Sole 24 Ore.
in 2013. This is a thirty-volume series on the applied arts that aims to provide a framework for learning about the main authors and artistic movements from Art Nouveau to the post-WWII era, and testifies to its authors’ interest and commitment to disseminating knowledge on the applied arts to the public at large. The Archives participate in the Partage Plus - Art Nouveau project by contributing magazines, books, paper documents and photographs.

Alessandro Mazzucotelli, cases for cigarettes, plate published in Modelli d’arte decorativa, 1907

The magazine Novissima, one of the most elegant expressions of Italian Art Nouveau, was founded in 1901 by Edoardo de Fonseca, an intellectual who shared the modernist ideas of the artists who collaborated with the magazine, including Alcando Terzi, Antonio Rizzi, Riccardo Galli, Giorgio Kienker, Alberto Micheli, Luigi Brunelli, Duilio Cambellotti, Marcello Dudovich, Luigi Bompard, and Alfredo Baruffi. With its innovative graphic design, Novissima published literary and journalistic essays, numerous plates of graphic art, columns, and an advertising section at the end, with ads ranging from Fernet-Branca to the ceramics maker Richard Ginori. After two years in Milan, the magazine was transferred to Rome in 1903, and the last issue was published in 1910.

Il Giovane Artista Moderno was a magazine founded in Turin in 1902, the year in which the influence of Art Nouveau in Italy was at its zenith. The first year’s issues are dedicated for the most part to the First International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art in Turin, on which occasion the leading examples of Art Nouveau architecture, furniture, and applied arts in Europe were exhibited.

The Archives of 20th Century Italian Applied Arts, while concentrating on studying the applied arts in Italy, also hold numerous issues of foreign magazines, such as “Art et Décoration: revue mensuelle d’art moderne”, “L’Art Décoratif: revue mensuelle d’art contemporain” and “The Studio: an illustrated magazine of fine and applied art”. These magazines are important for documenting the modern style in an international setting. In England, a key role in disseminating Art Nouveau was played by the magazine The Studio, founded in London in 1893, which organized applied art competitions. The Paris-based magazines Art et Décoration and L’Art Décoratif, the former founded in 1897 and the
latter in 1898, were vital for the development of Art Nouveau in France, especially with regard to the applied arts.

During the second phase of the project, other Italian magazines that played an important role in disseminating Art Nouveau in Italy were digitized. One of these is Emporium, an illustrated magazine founded in 1895 and inspired by The Studio and other international magazines. For this reason, it played a significant role in popularizing the main European artistic currents of the time, such as the Pre-Raphaelites and the Jugendstil movement, helping shape artistic tastes in Italy.

Some of the documents related to the project’s first phase are drawn from a second resource centre: the National Central Library of Rome, one of the two Italian state libraries whose main purpose is to collect and archive all national publications. With about 7,000,000 printed books, 2,000 incunables, 25,000 post-incunables, 8,000 manuscripts, 10,000 prints and drawings, 20,000 maps, and 1,342,154 brochures it is the largest library in Italy. The building that currently houses it was built between 1965 and 1975 by a group of architects - Massimo Castellazzi, Tullio Dell’Anese, and Annibale Vitellozzi - who adhered to the International Style current.

The National Central Library of Rome participates in the Partage Plus - Art Nouveau project with magazines such as Per l’arte: rivista bimestrale d’arte decorativa (seven volumes, from...
1909 to 1915) and *Modelli d’arte decorativa* (eight volumes from 1907 to 1915). These magazines contain illustrations of works and models of art by various artists including Adolfo De Carolis and Duilio Cambellotti. The cataloguing of these two magazines was completed during the second phase of the project. Additionally, documents held in four historical collections of the National Gallery of Modern Art were catalogued and digitized: the Adolfo De Carolis Collection, the Giulio Aristide Sartorio Collection, the Ugo Ojetti Collection, and the Umberto Prencipe Collection.

**Adolfo De Carolis Collection**

Adolfo De Carolis (De Karolis) was born in 1874. He studied at the Bologna Academy of Fine Arts and attended the School of Decorative Painting in Rome. In 1896, he joined the *In Arte Libertas* association and began to make paintings inspired by the Pre-Raphaelites. Starting in 1900 he was full professor of ornament at the Florence Academy of Fine Arts. His friendship and collaboration with Gabriele D’Annunzio, as evidenced by their frequent correspondence, led to the staging of some of his theatre pieces. Around 1905 De Carolis began to show interest in the unity of the arts, and in decorative and applied art. In 1915 he was given the chair of decorative arts at the Brera Academy and subsequently at the Rome Academy, where he taught scenography and decoration. In 1924 he published a treatise on xylography, an art that had been forgotten for centuries, and which he helped bring back to the fore thanks his passionate research and studies on ancient art. He died in 1928.

The De Carolis collection, purchased in 1986, augmented the National Gallery of Modern...
Art's extensive holdings of material about De Carolis. The archives, which were kept by De Carolis's daughter Adriana, together with her husband Diego Pettinelli, who was a pupil of his father-in-law, maintain their original alphabetical arrangement by correspondent. In 1997 the archive was augmented by a collection of 128 photographs and 8 small drawings. The De Carolis Collection includes various photographs, some taken by the artist himself, which testify to his interest for Renaissance art and photography in general, which often served as inspiration for his own works.

**Giulio Aristide Sartorio Collection**

Giulio Aristide Sartorio was born in 1860. He learned the art of drawing from his father Raffaele and his grandfather Girolamo, both of whom were sculptors. He sporadically attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, where he honed his skills especially by working on studies, copies, and imitations of the frescoes, mosaics, paintings, and statues of Rome's basilicas and museums. He made his debut under the wing of Mariano Fortuny and later, under the influence of Francesco Paolo Michetti, he turned to a humanitarian-accented realism. In 1884 he travelled to Paris. During these years he published some illustrations in Angelo Sommaruga's *Cronaca bizantina*, Adolfo de Bosis's *Convito*, and Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Isotta Guttadauro*, which marked a gradual shift towards a decorative style influenced by Art Nouveau. Having developed an interest in the research of Nino Costa, his first landscapes date to 1890, when he joined the *In Arte Libertas* association, which called for an aristocratic renewal of art through the reappraisal of the great Florentine artists of the 15th century, following the example of the Pre-Raphaelites. After a trip to England in 1893 in order to gain first-hand experience with Pre-Raphaelite art, he worked as a professor at the Weimar Academy from 1895 to 1899. During this sojourn, he completed his diptych *Diana of Ephesus and the slaves and Gorgon and the heroes*, which is held at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome. This monumental work of decorative art fairly bursts with dramatic emphasis and Pre-Raphaelite references.

The Giulio Aristide Sartorio Collection consists of an exchange of correspondence between the painter himself and his friend Pietro Giorgi (1850-1916), an artist and often patron of the arts not only for Sartorio but also for Ricci, Morani, Coleman, and Carlandi. The collection, purchased by the National Gallery of Modern Art in November 2000 on the suggestion of the Giorgi heirs, is particularly interesting both because it illustrates the young Sartorio’s discovery of Paris, where he worked and studied thanks to Giorgi’s financial support, and because it documents his first attempts at art. Indeed, the margins of 18 letters show graphic notes, watercolours, ink sketches, and small drawings.
Bencivenga expressed his wish to renew the Roman secession with a “new” and “vital” spirit.

Ugo Ojetti Collection

Ugo Ojetti (1871 – 1946) was a journalist and art critic. The collection, purchased by the National Gallery of Modern Art on 15 December 1973, consists of two series of correspondence, arranged alphabetically. The first consists of 78 folders with correspondence from 1,987 artists, collectors, and art writers; the second consists of 113 folders containing correspondence from 4,315 scholars, professionals, and entertainers. The documentary material contained in the collection comprises letters, postcards, telegrams, copies of typed letters, calling cards, notes, reports, printed documents, and photographs. Additionally, there is a series of antique letters by various artists addressed to Domenico Trentacoste and a Collection of autographs. As part of the Partage Plus - Art Nouveau project, some documentation concerns artists from that period, including Giovanni Buffa, Vittorio Ducrot, Arturo Noci, Plinio Nomellini, etc.

Umberto Prencipe Collection

Umberto Prencipe was born in 1879. He was a landscape painter and participated in the Roman secessions of 1913 and 1914. The archive was deposited at the National Gallery of Modern Art in July 2007. The documentation includes a section comprising correspondence with artists, critics, and institutions; another on his professional and artistic activities; and a third section containing notes, certificates, personal documents, and a postcard collection.

The Partage Plus project includes his correspondence with Pietro D’Achiardi and Tomaso Bencivenga, which is of particular interest to the project.

Results of the work

During the Partage Plus project, a total of 6,644 cards were compiled using the Museo&Web system: 1,953 magazine cards (articles, advertisements, cover pages, frontispieces), 1,488 iconographic cards (plates, illustrations, advertisements, photographs), 3,203 archival document cards (letters, postcards, telegrams, etc.).