

1.) Paul Berthon

In 1894, Léon Deschamps, the editor of *Le Salon des Cent* offered Grasset his first solo show. The exhibition was held at the magazine's new gallery, the Salon des Cent. That exhibition and the subsequent issue dedicated to the artist attracted considerable attention. Both furthered Grasset's reputation and increased the demand for his work.

Examples of Grasset's commercial posters include the color lithographs *Le Salon des Cent*, 1891 and *Le Salon des Cent*, c. 1900 (no. 15). The latter features a young woman with one hand on a basket and the other reaching to pick an apricot. The image, printed by Devambez, was a powerful advertisement for an apricot liqueur made by P. Garnier, a company located north of Paris. Grasset often combined earlier engravings of figures with decorative borders, patterns and text to create his commercial work.¹ In addition to lithographs, Grasset also designed magazine illustrations, textiles, furniture and dinner services based on stylized plant forms typical of Art Nouveau.

Paul Emile Berthon (1872-1909) was a student and disciple of Grasset. In 1893, he moved to Paris and began studying at the Ecole Normale d'Enseignement du Dessin where he met Grasset, the then Professor of Decorative Arts. Two years later, he participated in the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts in Paris. This led to commissions to create the cover design for magazines including *Le Salon des Cent* (July 1897) and *Le Salon des Cent* (May 1899).

Both Berthon and Grasset produced posters for the Salon des Cent, an annual exhibition begun in 1894. Each of these exhibitions had a special poster made by a leading graphic artist. Grasset produced the poster for the inaugural exhibition which featured his own work. Three years later, Berthon created the seventeenth annual exhibition poster, the

Le Salon des Cent (no. 1). In this poster, the artist confined lettering to the bottom of the print to concentrate the viewer's attention on the central image. The young woman, who is the subject of this poster, is provocative. With exposed shoulders, an amulet on her forehead and a snake arm band, she stares directly at the viewer with large intense eyes. In his depiction of women, Berthon was influenced by the French painter Luc Olivier Merson and the sensual and iconic figures created by Alphonse Mucha.

In addition to the *Le Salon des Cent*, 1897, Berthon created posters for other exhibitions and periodicals including the *Le Salon des Cent*. His 1899 poster *Le Salon des Cent* (The Society of the Friends of the Arts of Manche) (no. 7) was designed to publicize the group's fourth annual exhibition. Berthon next worked on a series of images of women with flowers and musical instruments as seen in *Le Salon des Cent*, 1899, (The Reedpipes), 1899 and *Le Salon des Cent* (Mystic Concert), 1901. Berthon's oeuvre also featured a pair of mythological scenes entitled *Le Salon des Cent* (no. 8) and *Le Salon des Cent* (The Dancing Nymph), 1899. The artist's interest in experimenting with chromolithography are evident here and to the overall development of the Art Nouveau poster.

Tragically, Berthon's career as an Art Nouveau artist and designer ended with his early death in 1909.

The Czech graphic artist and painter, Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939) is the best known and most celebrated of the three artists in this exhibition. Mucha studied in Prague and Munich before moving to Paris in 1887 where his early Art Nouveau work won him critical acclaim. He studied at the Académie Julian and the Académie Colarossi in Paris and received a medal of honor at the Salon des Artistes Français in 1894. That same year, he produced a lithograph of the French actress Sarah Bernhardt as Gismonda in a new play of the same name by Victorien Sardou. This poster for a production at the Théâtre de la Renaissance in Paris was Mucha's first of many images of Bernhardt.

Mucha's *Le Salon des Cent* poster (no. 16) was instrumental in establishing the artist's reputation as the preeminent poster designer in Paris. His design for this work was influenced by an earlier lithograph of Bernhardt by Eugène Grasset. According to Victor Arwas, "The *Le Salon des Cent* poster was created as the fusion of two posters created earlier for Sarah Bernhardt.