

PAN

AMSTERDAM

INTER-ANTIQUARIAAT MEFFERDT & DE JONGE



MONACO – MONTE-CARLO: ICONIC ART NOUVEAU POSTER BY ALPHONSE MUCHA, 1897

Colour lithograph designed by Alphonse Mucha, printed in Paris by F. Champenois and published by the Offices Artistiques de la Société La Plume in 1897. Signed in the stone lower left "Mucha 97". Size: approx. 108 × 75 cm. Backed with linen.

Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939), born in Moravia, now part of the Czech Republic, became one of the leading exponents of Art Nouveau in 1890s Paris. His breakthrough came at the end of 1894 with his poster for Sarah Bernhardt as Gismonda. The elongated female figures, graceful contour lines, soft pastel colours and exuberant floral ornamentation that followed became so characteristic that the new style was for a time even referred to as *le style Mucha*.

The poster *Monaco – Monte-Carlo* is among Mucha's most celebrated designs from this period. It was created in 1897 for the Compagnie des chemins de fer de Paris à Lyon et à la Méditerranée (PLM), which promoted rail travel to the fashionable resorts of the Mediterranean coast. The standard advertising version bears the additional inscription "*Chemins de Fer P.L.M.*"; the present example belongs to the separately issued variant without this wording, offered to collectors by the Paris art journal *La Plume*.

At the centre, a young woman kneels with her hands raised to her face in wonder as she gazes out over the blue Mediterranean and mountainous coastline. In the distance appear the distinctive towers of the Monte Carlo Casino. Around her unfolds an elaborate arrangement of curving flower stems, including lilac, hydrangeas, carnations and violets. Above her, birds, flowers and sweeping lines form an almost circular frame.

Particularly striking are the large concentric arcs surrounding the woman and the flowers. Since the poster was commissioned by a railway company, Mucha presumably intended these forms to evoke railway tracks and train wheels. Rather than showing a locomotive or a travel route, however, Mucha sells above all an atmosphere: tranquillity, beauty and the pleasures of a stay on the Côte d'Azur.

The result is both advertising and decorative art. With its dreamlike female figure, subtle colouring and luxuriant floral ornament, *Monaco – Monte-Carlo* is one of the icons of Mucha's Paris period and one of the most recognisable travel posters of the Belle Époque.

Literature: Rennert & Weill, Alphonse Mucha: The Complete Posters and Panels, no. 31-1.