



Self-portrait of
Alphonse Mucha, 1907.

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1860 Alfons Mucha was born on 24 July, the son of court usher Ondřej Mucha and his second wife Amalie, in Eibenschitz, now Ivančice, in southern Moravia.



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Winter, 1896. Panneau décoratif
from the *Four Seasons* series.

1887 Possibly the loveliest witness to his years in Munich is a commission from America: the small community of Pisek in North Dakota was now home to a few emigrants from Ivančice, who ordered an altarpiece featuring the so-called “Apostles to the Slavs”, Saints Cyril and Methodius. The structure of Mucha’s painting is successful – conventional yet exciting, to some extent it foreshadows his later *Slav Epic*. The picture in St Nepomuk’s Church is still the pride of its congregation of 150.

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Sarah Bernhardt
in *La Tosca*, 1899.



1895 To Sarah Bernhardt, Mucha represents yet another sensation surrounding herself and a welcome source of income. Thanks to the actress, Mucha now had it made as an artist – and not only from a financial point of view. Over six years, he created eight placards for Bernhardt's theatre, of which seven are among the most successful of his known works: *Gismonda* was followed by *La Dame aux camélias* (1896), *Lorenzaccio* (1896), *La Samaritaine* (1897), *Medée* (1898), as well as *Hamlet* and *Tosca* (both 1899).

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The truth and simplicity
of nature are always
the last elements of significant art.

Paul Ernst, *The Road to Form*

Detail from the first panel in *The Slav Epic* cycle:
*Between the Turanian Whip and the sword of the
Goths*, 1912.



1911 But many enemies go with much honour, according to an old saying, and even as he withdrew to work on the *Epic*, he became much in demand in the state. As a sideline, he designed some of the most beautiful of all his posters for Czech associations and institutions. They show Mucha in complete mastery of his style.



Alphonse Mucha:
Princess Hyacinth, 1911. **50**

EVEN before the last shot of the war was fired, Mucha had been commissioned to design some of the most important items in circulation in the new state. The first set of Czechoslovakian stamps and even a few early issues of banknotes were designed to his specifications. In the chaos left behind by the imperial and royal monarchy, which had disintegrated beneath its ministers' fingers, everything had to move fast, and so Mucha sought inspiration close at hand for these designs too.