

*Strand 5: Crafts in the Origins of Design*

John Sloan's "poster style": Art Nouveau and the Graphic Tradition in America

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*In my poster-style work I was studying areas, lines, tones, design, abstract geometrical problems. That experience, conscious awareness of formal structure, became part of my intuitive thinking when I began to see New York City subjects to etch and paint for myself.*"<sup>1</sup> - John Sloan

In 1908, the Macbeth Gallery in New York City hosted a groundbreaking and controversial exhibition of paintings which challenged notions of academic conservatism in representation and treated with skill and severity the realities of the modern city. Of these realist painters now referred to as the Ashcan School, John Sloan, William Glackens, George Luks, and Everett Shinn all worked as professional illustrators for newspapers and magazines. Sloan's graphic production was the most extensive and distinguished of the group, spanning three decades and evincing a truly modern and individual profile distinct from the realist visual idiom he was concurrently developing as a painter.

Sloan's "poster style," which evolved in concert with the principles of design reform and possibilities afforded by the technological innovations that characterized America's so-called "golden age" of illustration, also bore the influence of English Arts and Crafts antecedents, both philosophical and stylistic, and Japanese illustrative composition and technique, and owed much to the artistic and intellectual environment of the late nineteenth century, which fostered the poster revolution and the proliferation

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<sup>1</sup> John Sloan quoted in James KRAFT, *John Sloan, a printmaker*, Washington, D.C., International Exhibitions Foundation, 1984, n.p.

of illustrated newspapers and magazines.<sup>2</sup> By synthesizing various artistic tendencies, both historical and contemporary, and mastering new printmaking techniques, he produced an impressive body of illustrations, securing contracts from some of the foremost publications of the era, including *Century*, *Collier's*, *Harper's*, *McClure's*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, the short-lived though highly influential little magazines, the *Chap-Book*, *Moods*, and *The Echo*, and daily newspapers in both Philadelphia and New York. In considering the development of John Sloan's aesthetic, particularly over the course of his twelve-year newspaper career (1892-1904), one can begin to contextualize the revolutionary impact of the artistic poster and magazine journalism on artistic production, assess the hallmarks of the graphic manifestation of Art Nouveau in America, and reconsider the breadth of the artist's contribution to art and design in this country.<sup>3</sup>

#### John Sloan: a sketch of his early years

John French Sloan was born on August 2, 1871 in Lockhaven, Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup> His father, James Dixon Sloan was of Scotch decent and part of a family tradition in cabinetry, while his mother, Henrietta Ireland, had a more noble patrimony with literary and academic relations as well as many connections in paper manufacturing and stationary. Sloan's great uncle on his mother's side, Alexander Priestly, maintained an impressive library that included print folios and reproductions by William Hogarth, Thomas Rowlandson, George Cruikshank, and Gustave Doré. This collection served as an important indoctrination for Sloan into the graphic arts tradition, one which he

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<sup>2</sup> Sloan himself referred to his approach to newspaper illustration, characterized by an emphasis on clarity with a limited number of carefully arranged planes of contrasting textures, as his "poster style"; see John SLOAN, "Early Days: Unpublished Autobiographical Notes," in *American Art Nouveau: The Poster Period of John Sloan*, collected by Helen Farr Sloan, Lockhaven, Hammermill Paper Company, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> The term "artistic poster" is used here, and in many other art historical accounts, to distinguish the new poster that emerged in the 1890s, which privileged the decorative over the illustrative, designed by fine art practitioners rather than lithographers or commercial technicians. Other terms include "the Modern Poster" and the "picture poster."

<sup>4</sup> More extensive biographical details may be found in Lloyd GOODRICH, *John Sloan*, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art and the Macmillan Company, 1952 and Van Wyck BROOKS, *John Sloan, A Painter's Life*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1955.

valued and promoted well into his career as an artist and teacher.<sup>5</sup> In 1878, Sloan moved to Philadelphia when his father, himself an amateur painter, took a job as a traveling salesman of fine stationery with the British publisher Marcus Ward Company, its founder another relation of Sloan's mother. It was during this period that the artist first encountered illustrations by Kate Greenaway and Walter Crane through the books and greeting cards published by Ward.<sup>6</sup>

After attending public school and Central High School in Philadelphia, where he was a classmate of William Glackens, Sloan was forced to withdraw to help support the family, and he took a cashier position with Porter and Coates, a bookseller and print dealer. Through the retail magazine trade, Sloan was exposed to *Punch* and its artist-illustrators, John Leech and Charles Keene.<sup>7</sup> He also poured over engravings after Rubens and etchings by Rembrandt, of which he was permitted to make pen and ink copies for sale.

During this period, Sloan also taught himself to etch using Philip Gilbert Hamerton's *Etcher's Handbook* and began producing illustrated series, including portraits of English writers and the homes of American poets. He subsequently found work as a commercial artist with A. Edward Newton, making novelties and calendars before taking a studio at 703 Walnut Street in 1891 and launching himself as a freelance artist, offering his services in illustrating, lettering and advertising. His most significant account was the Bradley Coal Company of Philadelphia, with whom he began a ten-

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<sup>5</sup> In his reflections and principles assembled under the title, *The Gist of Art*, Sloan encouraged his students to get out of the studio and illustrate life and offered Hogarth, Leech, and Cruikshank as models. See John SLOAN, *The Gist of Art*, New York: American Artists Group, Inc., 1939, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> Kate Greenaway (1846-1901) was an English children's book illustrator and was associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement; Walter Crane (1845-1915) was an English painter, illustrator, and designer associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement. He was particularly concerned with the expressive power of "pure line"; see Stephan Tschudi MADSEN, *Sources of Art Nouveau*, New York, Da Capo Press, 1975, p. 148. John Sloan credited Crane as an important source of his design conception, and said that "[Crane] was a good model to have, because his feeling for classical forms was very healthy and not at all academic." SLOAN, *American Art Nouveau: The Poster Period of John Sloan*, n.p.

<sup>7</sup> According to E. John Bullard, the English realist illustrators of *Punch* were particularly influential on the development of Sloan's realist style; see E. John BULLARD, "John Sloan: His Graphics," in David W. Scott and E. John Bullard, *John Sloan, 1871-1951*, Ex. Cat., Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1971, p. 29.

year relationship in 1890, designing original monthly placards and accompanying verses at a rate of five-dollars each plus free coal for his studio.<sup>8</sup> Whereas many of the illustrators of the 1890s executed drawings to be subsequently supervised and reproduced by craftsmen, Sloan's early training in print media and knowledge of printmaking techniques allowed him to conceive of his images in print terms and to be more intimately involved with the process of translating his designs into the language of form of print.

The next year, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* gave him a regular job as a newspaper illustrator where he joined the other artists who would soon come under Robert Henri's influence: Luks, Glackens, and Shinn. While most newspaper artists were occupied with rendering drawings either from direct observation or based on photographs to then be reproduced by line cut, Sloan lacked the speed and accuracy of draftsmanship necessary for artist-reporting and was instead enlisted to do decorative work, headings, illustrations for stories, and drawings for the newspaper's feature pages, particularly the Sunday Supplement, the woman's page, and the summer resort features. This type of work afforded Sloan the arena and facility to develop an independent graphic style characterized, according to Lloyd Goodrich, by "romantic inventiveness, bold decoration, [and] exuberant graphic freedom."<sup>9</sup> Aside from an initial and temporary move to New York in 1898, Sloan remained in Philadelphia and continued to produce single illustrations, and eventually graphic cycles, in his poster style throughout the 1890s for the *Inquirer* and a number of magazines. Sloan's last official contract in Philadelphia was with the *Press*, for whom he produced highly detailed and decorative designs in a style much more akin to later manifestations of Art Nouveau for the Sunday Supplement. The *Press* pictures represent a full maturation of Sloan's poster style, which he then abandoned by 1903 as he developed a mode of book and magazine illustration much closer, both aesthetically and philosophically, to the qualities of rawness, spontaneity, and realism associated with his paintings.

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<sup>8</sup> As noted in John Sloan's records and cited in Peter MORSE *John Sloan's Prints: a catalogue raisonne of the etchings, lithographs, and posters*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969, p. 357.

<sup>9</sup> GOODRICH, *John Sloan*, p. 13.

### John Sloan's "Poster Style" Design in newspaper illustration

John Sloan's earliest work for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* evinced elements of poster style design: considerable areas of single tone or texture, shallow unmodeled forms, continuous contour lines, and an overall lack of spatial depth.<sup>10</sup> His first *Inquirer* illustration, *On the Court at Wissahickon Heights*, was published on February 12, 1892. Like many of Sloan's illustrations, *On the Court* features a young woman engaged in a leisure or sporting activity, possibly at a resort destination. The contemporary subject matter is combined with a highly decorative, though simplified style realized through solid and patterned planes in black and white and bold, continuous outlines. This aesthetic effect was principally due to Sloan's adept handling of the line cut technique, a photomechanical process for the reproduction of drawings, which relied on contrast between black and white to distinguish forms and spatial relationships.<sup>11</sup> *On the Court* also reveals the influence of Japanese ukiyo-e prints on Sloan, who had begun collecting examples in the early 1890s, and later commented, "It was mostly from a study of Japanese prints that I found fresh ideas about design, discovered in observing everyday life."<sup>12</sup> In 1893, Sloan's interest in Japanese technique was enriched through a meeting with Beisen Kobuta, a Japanese illustrator working as a correspondent for a Tokyo newspaper at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Kubota traveled to Philadelphia, where Sloan and Robert Henri took lessons in the sumie brush technique. Sloan, who had been working in pen and ink, subsequently incorporated the texture of the dry brush into his evolving poster style.<sup>13</sup>

Other apparent influences on Sloan's early newspaper illustrations include the Pre-Raphaelite female archetypes of Walter Crane and the linear silhouettes of Botticelli. Although Sloan's style developed from many of the same sources and

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<sup>10</sup> Edgar John BULLARD, "John Sloan as an Illustrator," *American Artist* 35, October 1971, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> As Bullard suggests, "It was in the process's limitations that Sloan found new creative possibilities." SCOTT and BULLARD, *John Sloan*, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> John Sloan quoted in MARGOLIN, *American Poster Renaissance*, p. 102.

<sup>13</sup> Frank WEITENKAMPF, *American Graphic Art*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924, p. 23.

conditions of his contemporaries, namely the prescriptions of line cut technology, the increased availability of Japanese prints, and encounters with earlier French manifestations of the picture poster, it is unclear to what degree he may have been influenced by contemporary poster designers. As previously cited, the fundamental characteristics of his design aesthetic were already established in the *Inquirer* illustrations of 1892, and at this time, Sloan would not have been familiar with the work of Will Bradley or Edward Penfield.<sup>14</sup> According to Lloyd Goodrich, the “remote resemblance to Beardsley’s illustrations was [also] coincidental,” as the *Yellow Book* did not appear until late 1894.<sup>15</sup> After 1893, however, Sloan was certainly better acquainted with other poster artists and illustrators, and these works may have subsequently influenced his later style.

Sloan was not the first American illustrator to develop an individual poster style, but he was perhaps the only artist to implement the style in daily newspaper illustrations.<sup>16</sup> By 1894, Sloan’s illustrations were regular fixtures in the Sunday Supplement of the *Inquirer* and he received national recognition for his mature poster style. *On the Pier* (Figure 1) appeared in the Philadelphia paper on two dates in 1894, accompanying an article on Atlantic City for the resort page. In the scene, two well-dressed young women sit on a wooden bench and lean against a balustrade. One appears in fashionable modern garb and the other in a kind of Japanesque costume with bias angles and drapery evocative of a kimono. A young man enters the picture plane only partially, and is oriented spatially by Sloan’s evocation of a border or double line along the man’s suit. Careful patterning is used not only in costume decoration, but in creating the texture of the wood along the pier and in distinguishing the sky from the buildings in the background. Many of the same devices are visible in *Night on the Boardwalk*, which served as an illustration for an *Inquirer* entry on seaside resorts in July 1894. In affecting the architectural environment, Sloan produced areas of great contrast with blocks of solid black or white, playing with the concept of negative space and pattern to produce a sense of depth that is unusual and dramatic, and creating a

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<sup>14</sup> BULLARD, *John Sloan*, p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> GOODRICH, *John Sloan*, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> BULLARD, *John Sloan*, p. 28.

sharp angle of vision that cuts across the entire image diagonally. The inclusion of paper lanterns suggests a nod to the popularity of oriental anecdotes. The overall vertical format, attention to surface detail, asymmetrical concentration of forms, and cut off perspective suggest the assimilation of a Japanese graphic aesthetic and mastery in the translation of the brush and pen technique to line cut reproduction. The decorative signature that appears in these images was used by Sloan until 1905, and was likely inspired by the graphic signatures of Japanese illustrators and adopted by James McNeill Whistler. The single elongated curve functions as the initial letter of the first and last name, which are stacked above one another to create a sort of block icon.

Both *On the Pier* and *Night of the Boardwalk* were reproduced in October of the same year to illustrate an article in the *Inland Printer*, a technical journal founded with an eye toward citing and promoting expertise and quality in the field of printmaking, highlighting Sloan's achievements as a newspaper artist, and the author remarked, "The work of Mr. John Sloan on the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of recent months has shown a cleanness and strength, and a perceptiveness that has earned from critics the prophecy of greater things from him."<sup>17</sup> *On the Pier* was also selected as one of four drawings by Sloan featured in the *Chicago Chap-Book*, the modern journal often cited as the progenitor of the little magazine tradition in America, and at the time, a valued record of the intellectual and artistic life of the country.<sup>18</sup> The review brought Sloan national recognition, and in 1895, a critic for the *New York Sun* counted him among the leading international artist-illustrators of the time, aligning him with the broader trend in interpreting a Japanese aesthetic: "Chéret, Hardey, Beardsley, Bradley, Sloan, Vallotton, and the whole school who have, by their Japanesque work in France, England, and this country, excited so much recent comment."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> F. PENN, "Newspaper Artists – John Sloan," *Inland Printer*, October 1894, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> The Chicago-based *Chap-Book* was published in one-hundred issues in 1894 and 1895. Printed in black and red ink in Jason type and on heavy, uncut paper, the journal served as an inspiration to numerous imitators and was hailed as a "inspiration for deviation from traditional literary conventions"; see Wendy Clauson SCHLERETH, *The Chap-Book: a journal of American intellectual life in the 1890s*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Research Press, 1982.

<sup>19</sup> A critic in the *New York Sun*, February 3, 1895 as quoted in David W. SCOTT, *John Sloan*, New York, Watson-Guptill, p. 24.

commercial illustration

While Sloan refined his graphic style in decorative headings and illustrations for the *Inquirer*, he continued to secure commissions for advertising work, including promotional placards for literary publications, such as novels and serials, and posters for Apollo Bicycles. His most consistent project was the production of monthly streetcar advertisements for the Philadelphia-based Bradley Coal Company. Sloan created original drawings and copy for the company, which were then reproduced in line cut. Composing the accompanying verses appealed to Sloan's sense of humor and love of puns, fostered by his reading of the English comic magazines in his youth. Writing to his mentor Robert Henri in 1900, Sloan quipped, "And my Bradley Coal verses – think of a poet who can stick without wavering to one small theme like 'coal' for ten consecutive years."<sup>20</sup>

*Stern Winter*, produced for the Bradley Coal campaign in 1894, depicts a kind of Symbolist mythological figure dressed in voluminous robes with highly stylized curling hair that both evokes and mimics the dynamic winds suggested by the patterned lines behind her. Although the drawing was reproduced as a relief line cut through photomechanical processes, it has many characteristics of a wood-block print, not unlike the illustrations Sloan would provide for *The Echo* just one year later. The accompanying verse reads:

Onward she comes chilling our homes  
Stern winter with frost and snow  
But she has no control  
Over those who buy coal  
From the Walter T. Bradley Co.

*Stern Winter* is the only extant example of Sloan's Bradley Coal posters, and just six of the one-hundred and twenty designs have survived as proofs or drawings. Even in their incipient forms, the Bradley drawings suggest that Sloan was committed to the poster style in his commercial as well as in his design and publishing work, and that the Art

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<sup>20</sup> From the John Sloan papers, as quoted in MORSE, *John Sloan's Prints*, p. 357.

Nouveau aesthetic was considered attractive and appealing enough to be enlisted for promotional purposes.

### the little magazines

In addition to the newspaper illustrations reproduced for the *Chap-Book*, Sloan's work also appeared in several other little magazines. He served as the art editor for the Philadelphia-based *Moods*, described on the masthead as "a journal *intime* wherein the artist and the author pleaseth himself." Journals like *Moods* were experimental venues for artists and writers, which attracted a very particular and narrow audience and were generally short-lived (*Moods* succeeded in publishing only two issues). Sloan described the journal as the "nearest attempt à la *Yellow Book* done in this country."<sup>21</sup> His poster for the second volume of *Moods* was executed using the chalk-plate method, in which a flat metal plate is prepared with soft chalk for the artist to carve his design, "like scratching your name in snow," Sloan recalled.<sup>22</sup> The lilting line and contrast of light and dark are similar to the approach used in the newspaper illustrations. The figures and landscape are derived from large contrasting areas of block color, in this instance, green and white, and the double or silhouetted line defines the forms in space. Sloan also designed a Symbolist inspired cover for the same edition of *Moods* (Figure 2). With *Woman and Butterfly*, done in shades of brown and green, Sloan achieved completely flat and even color through a hand stenciling process.<sup>23</sup> A Pre-Raphaelite female figure, with long elegant features, unfurling hair, and flowing costume is shown following a butterfly through a poetic landscape of sinuous trees. The shapes of the forms are at once organic and abstract.

John Sloan's artistic contributions to the pages of *Moods* demonstrate his application of the poster style to content illustration and highlight the collaborative nature of this sort of practice. *A Scrap and a Sketch* is comprised of a literary passage

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<sup>21</sup> John Sloan quoted in WEITENKAMPF, *American Graphic Art*, p. 276.

<sup>22</sup> MORSE, *John Sloan's Prints*, p. 360.

<sup>23</sup> Jacquelyn Days SERWER, "The American Artistic Poster of the 1890s," Ph.D. diss., The City University of New York, 1980, p. 148.

by Kate Chopin illuminated by decorative lettering and design by John Sloan.<sup>24</sup> The speaker of the incantation is shown as a Symbolist female figure ensconced in a natural, though highly stylized landscape. The image, while produced as a photomechanical line cut, suggests a woodcut aesthetic, perhaps as a nostalgic gesture consistent with the overarching Symbolist themes of the female archetype and idealized landscape.

In 1895, Sloan also produced a poster, cover design, and several illustrations for *The Echo*, published in Chicago by Percival Pollard, an avant-gardist and staunch critic of Puritanism in American art and literature. Aware of his inventive productions for other publications, Pollard extended an invitation to Sloan to prepare an *Echo* cover: “If you care to, I should be glad to have you design a cover for *The Echo*, in black and red, the colors we’ve had the most success with. I think yours works would show splendidly well in those media.”<sup>25</sup> The resulting image was used both as the cover for the February 15, 1896 issue of the magazine and a poster “on heavy buff paper, odd size, narrow and long,” first advertised for sale in the November issue (Figure 3).<sup>26</sup> Like the *Moods* illustration, *The Echo* cover/poster was done in ink to suggest a woodcut texture, and although related to Sloane’s newspaper drawings, it reveals a more definitive expression of his Art Nouveau style, both in form and design. A tall and sinuous female figure wearing a long and flowing gown with intricate pattern blows on an Alpine horn in the direction of a cliff, thereby evoking the echo of the magazine’s title. *The Echo* design exhibits a complex sense of patterning and wide variation in gradation through the juxtaposition of areas of texture with areas of solid black or white and employs a double contour line, a thin space of white to separate components of the design. Considered his “poster masterpiece,”<sup>27</sup> *The Echo* production earned Sloan praise from the *Philadelphia Ledger*, who claimed it as “one of the cleverest efforts in the poster line that we have seen for many a day.”<sup>28</sup>

By 1899, Sloan began experimenting with gouache and ink washes in his illustrations, which could then be adapted to print media using the halftone process, and

<sup>24</sup> *Moods, a journal in time*, vol. 2, 1895, n.p.

<sup>25</sup> As quoted in MORSE, *John Sloan’s Prints*, p. 360.

<sup>26</sup> MORSE, *John Sloan’s Prints*, p. 360.

<sup>27</sup> According to Jacquelyn Days SERWER, “The Artistic Poster of the 1890s,” p. 148.

<sup>28</sup> Reported in *The Echo* 3, April 1896, p. 298.

used the technique in a number of graphic cycles produced for *Ainslee's Magazine*, an illustrated all-fiction publication then edited by Everett Shinn.<sup>29</sup> The July 1899 issue offered an English translation of Adachi Kinnosuké's "Sakuma Sukenari: The Story of a Japanese Outlaw," for which Sloan created sixteen original illustrations. The short story, also written in 1899, narrates the flight of Sukama Sukenari, a known robber, through the southern provinces of Nihon. Sukenari encounters an infant child while breaking into a wealthy home and reconsiders his past and future, resolving, in the end, to return to his own wife. Sloan's ink wash drawings of varied dimensions, and include figural groups and landscapes to affect scenes from the story as well as narrow decorative borders in the tradition of the Japanese illustrated book.<sup>30</sup> Other commissions for graphic cycles included illustrations for a comic history of Greece written by Charles M. Snyder and published by J.B. Lippincott and headpieces and captions for A.T. Quiller-Couch's "The Talking Ships" published in *Ainslee's* in 1901.

#### the picture puzzles

After three years with the *Inquirer*, Sloan left the newspaper to join the staff of the *Philadelphia Press*. Beginning in 1898, Sloan was the *Press's* leading artist, designing a long series of covers for the Sunday Supplement, and over the next four years, he experimented with the new color press to produce nearly eighty full-page picture puzzles.<sup>31</sup> The original drawings were done in pen and ink and watercolor, then photographed for line cut, rescaled for insertion into the newspaper page, and colored using the Benday process. These pictorial puzzles were more complex and detailed, both aesthetically and conceptually, than any of Sloan's previous illustrations, incorporating hidden images or words, or components which required cutting, folding, or rearranging. The images themselves displayed a line work that was fluid and sensuous, and his subjects were often drawn from myth or folklore. The *Snake Charmer Puzzle* (Figure 4) is particularly evocative of a later Art Nouveau style with a

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<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth H. HAWKES, *John Sloan's Illustrations in Magazines and Books*, Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1993, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> *Ainslee's Magazine*, vol. 3, June 1899, p. 576-585.

<sup>31</sup> BULLARD, *John Sloan*, 28.

Symbolist figure contoured in an s-curve surrounded by other curvilinear forms and decorative passages approaching abstraction. And while Sloan was reaching what seemed like the ultimate expression of his poster style in his newspaper and commercial work, he was concurrently developing the realist style which would characterize his graphic production after 1903 and his signature paintings of New York City after 1904. It is indeed remarkable that Sloan, whose work in retrospect is associated principally with the new Realism of the early twentieth century, a movement predicated on the rejection of stylized abstractions in favor of raw, humanistic depictions of the urban condition, and later with technical and aesthetic investigations of plasticism, should have asserted himself first as an illustrator in the poster style.

#### John Sloan and American Art Nouveau

American illustration and printing reached a high level of aesthetic prestige and commercial utility in the 1880s as a result of technical innovations and the assimilation of foreign influences, and this achievement fostered a new apprehension and appreciation of the graphic arts tradition. While historians disagree as to what constitutes the first manifestations of an Art Nouveau in America, it seems that elements of a new style in the graphic arts were in currency by 1894 with the rise of the artistic poster and the proliferation of the illustrated magazine. The relationship between the American poster craze and Art Nouveau is evident philosophically, in that the poster style emphasized both novelty and a necessary union with the artistic properties of the medium, and aesthetically, whether derivative or parallel, in that the style synthesized Japanese influences and Arts and Crafts antecedents in much the same way as the new ornamental design practices in continental Europe. And yet the question remains as to the viability of a distinctly *American* Art Nouveau.

A unique poster style was apparent in John Sloan's earliest newspaper illustrations and commercial contracts: a design perspective evolved from complicity with the possibilities afforded by mechanical reproduction, an assimilation of Japanese ukiyo-e forms and compositions, and an appreciation for the English illustrative tradition, particularly in the work of Walter Crane. By 1894, one can begin to draw

parallels between Sloan's designs and those of his contemporaries, most notably Aubrey Beardseely and Will Bradley, although, again, it is unclear as to whether this is a result of imitation, cross-cultural influence, or merely a confluence of similar contexts. There is an individuality about Sloan's graphic aesthetic that persists however, and suggests that while he was cognizant of other contemporary poster styles, his innovations were above all an expression of his own artistic point of view, his interpretation of forms, and his mastery of the printmaking process. John Sloan's "poster style" might therefore serve as evidence of that dual aspect of Art Nouveau: that it was both a style, evocative of the individual perspective of the artist, his facility with new materials and technologies, and his ability to redeploy international and historical sources in a decidedly new manner, and a movement, suggestive of a wider international impulse toward an ideal of modernity predicated upon aesthetic and philosophical revolution.