

POSTER BOY

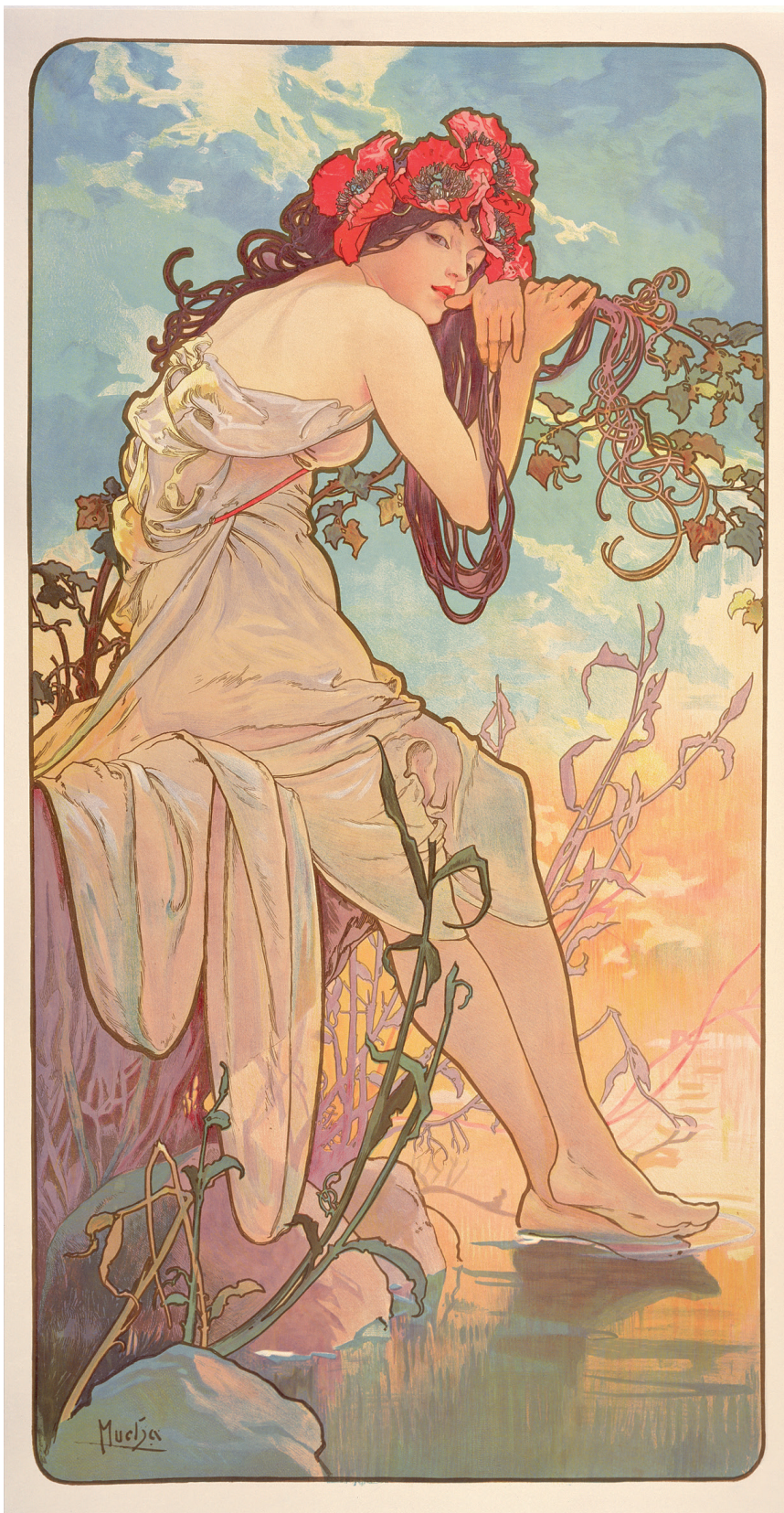
A rich exhibition showcases the work of Art Nouveau master, Alphonse Mucha.

Tiffany Parks takes a look.

For the first time in Rome, a major retrospective explores the creative output of one of the most celebrated artists of the turn of the last century, Czech painter and decorative artist **Alphonse Mucha**. Mucha's genius was to combine images of seductive women with innovative typographical layouts to create highly original posters. From this singular formula was born a new kind of visual art that flourished in the Paris of the Belle Époque. Mucha's repertoire later came to encompass a series of graphic works and decorative objects that furnished the homes of art lovers in Paris and around Europe, leading to his rise as an icon of the budding Art Nouveau style. In 1904, during a visit to the US, the media hailed Mucha as one of the greatest decorative artists in the world.

After early success with advertisements—images that are now iconic—for Job cigarette rolling papers and Chocolat Idéale for example, Mucha eventually became the poster-designer of choice for the great actors of the day. Most famously, he immortalized the legendary Sarah Bernhardt, whose *Gismonda* and *La Princesse Lointaine* are both showcased at the exhibit. His best known works, however, are perhaps the series of allegories, such as *The Seasons*, *The Times of Day*, or *The Zodiac*, each subject depicted as a beautiful and voluptuous woman. Later in his career, his works began to take on a more political color, as his passion for his Slavic roots and his dream of Czech independence culminated with his greatest masterpiece, *Slav Epic*.

The show consists of over 200 works including paintings, posters, drawings, decorative works, jewelry, and furnishings, which combine to trace the creative path of one of the greatest exponents of Art Nouveau. On all month at the Vittoriano Complex.



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