

*Object of the Month-June 2011
Sheila-Marie Untiedt*



Medium: Decorative Arts and Utilitarian Objects, Furniture | Mahogany, leather, brass

Size: 25 1/4 x 22 1/4 x 22 1/4 in. (64.14 x 56.52 x 56.52 cm) (closed)

Creation Place: Europe, Germany

Culture: Europe, Germany

Style: 20th century

Physical Description: square table with leaves that fold upward creating X shape; small triangular-shaped compartment on each side of table; legs curve inward toward base of compartments/ shelves, and curve outward toward feet; four supports pull out to support leaves; green leather playing surface; small brass cup at each corner when unfolded

Credit: Collection Minneapolis Institute of Arts; Gift of Mr. Roberto Polo

Accession Number: 2009.3

Artist: Henry van de Velde, Belgian, 1863-1957

Role: Designer

Gallery 378

Henry van de Velde was a leading avant garde designer in the Art Nouveau movement in France, and its German counterpart, Jugendstil. This game table, a rare example of the type, exhibits the strong curvilinear elements so important in botanically inspired Art Nouveau designs. Van de Velde's characteristically strong and confident lines animate

the form, while providing a sturdy and compact table for gaming. Other beautiful and practical solutions are the small shelves to contain counters or drinks, and the table top, whose four triangular sections fold out to a larger, leather-covered rectangular surface when in use.

Belgian-born Henry van de Velde was a leading avant-garde designer in the French art nouveau and German Jugendstil movements. His sinuously curving interiors and furniture demonstrate the harmony of Gesamtkunstwerk – a total work of art – in which architecture, furnishings, and fittings were conceived as a whole.



Henry Clemens Van de Velde (1863, Antwerp-1957, Zürich) was a Belgian Flemish painter, architect and interior designer. He could be considered one of the main founders and representatives of Art Nouveau in Belgium. Van de Velde spent the most important part of his career in Germany and had a decisive influence on German architecture and design at the beginning of the 20th century.

Van de Velde studied painting in Antwerp and in Paris. As a young painter he was thoroughly influenced by Paul Signac and Georges Seurat and soon adopted a neo-impressionist style. In 1889 he became a member of the Brussels-based artist group "Les XX". After Vincent Van Gogh exhibited some work on the yearly exhibition of Les XX van de Velde became one of the first artists to be influenced by the Dutch painter.

In 1892 he abandoned painting, devoting his time to arts of decoration and interior design. His own house, Bloemenwerf in Ukkel, was his first attempt at architecture, and was inspired by the British and American Arts and Crafts Movement. He also designed interiors and furniture for the influential art gallery "L'Art Nouveau" of Samuel Bing in Paris in 1895. This gave the movement its first designation as Art Nouveau.

The unruly Continental offspring, Art Nouveau (the new art) became the first popular 20th-century style, an effete successor to the more rustic Arts and Crafts. Inheriting the great traditions of French color and form, fed further by Europe's craze for Japonisme, this turn-of-the-century style replaced a dependency on historical design formulae with organic form derived largely from nature. Familiar motifs included curvilinear elements, sinuous contours of tendrils and floral arabesques, whiplash lines, and later, exaggerated embellishment. Art Nouveau responded well to inlaid wood veneers, wrought iron and glass. It reached its highpoint in the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. While it tried nobly to reconcile art and industry, it was essentially an artist's style and failed to satisfy the demands of mass production.

Art Nouveau architecture made use of many technological innovations of the late 19th century, especially the use of exposed iron and large, irregularly shaped pieces of glass for architecture. By the start of World War I, however, the stylised nature of Art Nouveau design – which was expensive to produce – began to be disused in favour of more streamlined, rectilinear modernism, which was cheaper and thought to be more faithful to the plainer industrial aesthetic that became Art Deco.

Frank Lloyd Wright

www.artsmia.org/modernism/videos/