



## Mucha - Women And Flowers, Circa 1903

12 000 EUR

Signature : Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939)

Period : 20th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Other

Width : 48,3 cm

Height : 31,5 cm



### Description

India ink on tracing paper, signed within the composition and bearing a validation stamp. First preparatory sketch before coloring, created for the decoration of the "Women and Flowers" biscuit bucket by the LU company. A second polychrome version exists, corresponding to the final design executed in watercolor. From 1897, Louis Lefèvre-Utile sought to launch a series of biscuit buckets, also known as bonbonnières, intended to support the development and high-end positioning of the LU company. The first models produced were lithographed tin buckets named "Mice and Ears of Wheat" and "Poppies and Ears of Wheat." These two designs, however, met with limited success. Their iconography quickly raised some concerns: mice could be associated with rats and hygiene issues,

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while poppies, likened to corn poppies, evoked connotations hardly compatible with the marketing of luxury biscuits at the end of the 19th century. These models were therefore withdrawn from the market quite quickly and were only produced in very small numbers. Nevertheless, convinced by the candy dish's shape, Louis Lefèvre-Utile decided to continue the experiment and commissioned a new series of designs from the artist Martial Simas. From 1898, two new, distinct models appeared on the brand's price lists, named "Cats and Biscuits" and "Cornflowers and Butterflies." This second series was more well received and confirmed the value of these decorated buckets as genuine communication and image-building tools for the brand. From 1902 onwards, Louis Lefèvre-Utile undertook the creation of new candy dish designs, intended to renew the image of the LU company by fully celebrating the aesthetics of Art Nouveau. This project, initiated in 1898, gave rise to a series of biscuit buckets that subsequently became major references in the brand's advertising iconography. Since 1896, Alphonse Mucha had collaborated with the Nantes-based company, creating numerous designs for them. His instantly recognizable style contributed to making him one of the most emblematic artists of LU's visual identity. It was therefore natural that the Parisian printer Ferdinand Champenois offered Mucha's services to Louis Lefèvre-Utile to continue this series. Around 1902-1903, Louis Lefèvre-Utile commissioned Alphonse Mucha to design a new biscuit bucket, entitled "Women and Flowers." The drawing presented here corresponds to the first original preparatory sketch, created before coloring, and constitutes a working document directly linked to the workshops of the Ferdinand Champenois printing house. Simultaneously, a second design was entrusted to the Parisian painter of Italian origin, Luigi Loir. This design, entitled "The Skaters in the Bois de Boulogne," completes the series and illustrates Louis Lefèvre-Utile's constant desire to

renew the image of his brand through varied and demanding graphic styles. In the "Women and Flowers" design, the full talent of Alphonse Mucha is expressed. The fluidity and rhythm of the line, characteristic of his graphic style, give rise to an elegant, sensual, and balanced composition depicting six female figures enjoying biscuits in a lush, floral, and verdant setting, emblematic of Art Nouveau aesthetics. This particularly rare document bears witness to the creative process behind the large LU candy boxes and constitutes essential evidence of the collaboration between Alphonse Mucha, the Ferdinand Champenois printing house, and the LU company at the beginning of the 20th century. Provenance Archives of Louis Lefèvre-Utile fils, acquired directly from him in 1979. Formerly in a Geneva collection. Exhibition LU, A Century of Innovation, 2020-2021.