How to design in the style of ART NOUVEAU

What is Art Nouveau?

- Art Nouveau is a style of art based around patterns that flow that are organic and have geometric line and contours.

- The movement generated interest throughout Europe and over its boarders, and began to take on alternative names such as "Glasgow Style," and within German speaking Cultures it was known to be called "Jugendtil".

• The purpose of Art Nouveau was to modernize the world of design, taking it from the reach of the traditional historical art into a modern new style that also depicted nature and historical values popular at the time, but giving them a more romantically defined feel.

• Artists gathered their inspiration for their designs from organic forms such as plant, flowers, trees, and looking at how the lines curved and how the patterning of the leaves, bark and surroundings intertwined and related.

• Art Nouveau Artists dissected nature taking in geometric forms both natural and manmade but extracting the ways that lines were curved, rounded or more angular in their contours.

• Colours were soft and appealing, natural in tone.

• The Art Nouveau Movement remained popular with artists till the 1920's when it gave way to the more popular Art Deco scene.

So how can today's Artist use Art Nouveau in design!

As the old saying goes, what was old is new again, and older styles of art can again become popular culture. With the meteoric rise of vintage goods, be it clothes, kitchen wears or art, everyone loves a rummage through the recycle stores looking for that eye catching something.

With vintage popularity on the rise, it was only going to be a short time till the masses rediscovered the Art Nouveau movement.

So how can Artists and Graphic Designers interpret yesterdays Art Nouveau culture in today's Society?

- Humour is one way – By creating similar depictions but with a delicate and modern humorous edge.

- Becoming bolder in colour choice – Art Nouveau was predominantly pastels and natural tones, by creating similar depictions but using bright and bolder colours can modernize the image.

- Using Art Nouveau in a juxtaposition design (By taking the floral old fashion styling and adding in Iron man for example, will have people looking twice).

- By using an Art Nouveau Style of art on a new product let's say as modern as a can of soft drink, could add an intensity to the beverage, because it is not an art form relevant or naturally seen on such modern day products.

  So let's have a look at how I was asked to portray Art Nouveau styling to produce Bar Coasters, Toilet doors, and menu's for 4 seasons, it is based around the more traditional styling, but with a more modern flair.

Let's have a look at bar placemat designing, as you can see l have taken you through the steps of my design from hand drawing through to digital colouring, you could also trace this image at the drawing stage to straighten out any wobbly lines to produce a more professional look in Adobe Illustrator, but at the time l didn't know much about Illustrator so it is what it is.

When designing placemats, central balance is key to an eye pleasing design, this is an interesting design, because the lady sits to the left side but that said your eye is drawn directly to the centre because of the jaggered lines coming at her from the right side, so even though she doesn't sit in the middle the designed is balanced.
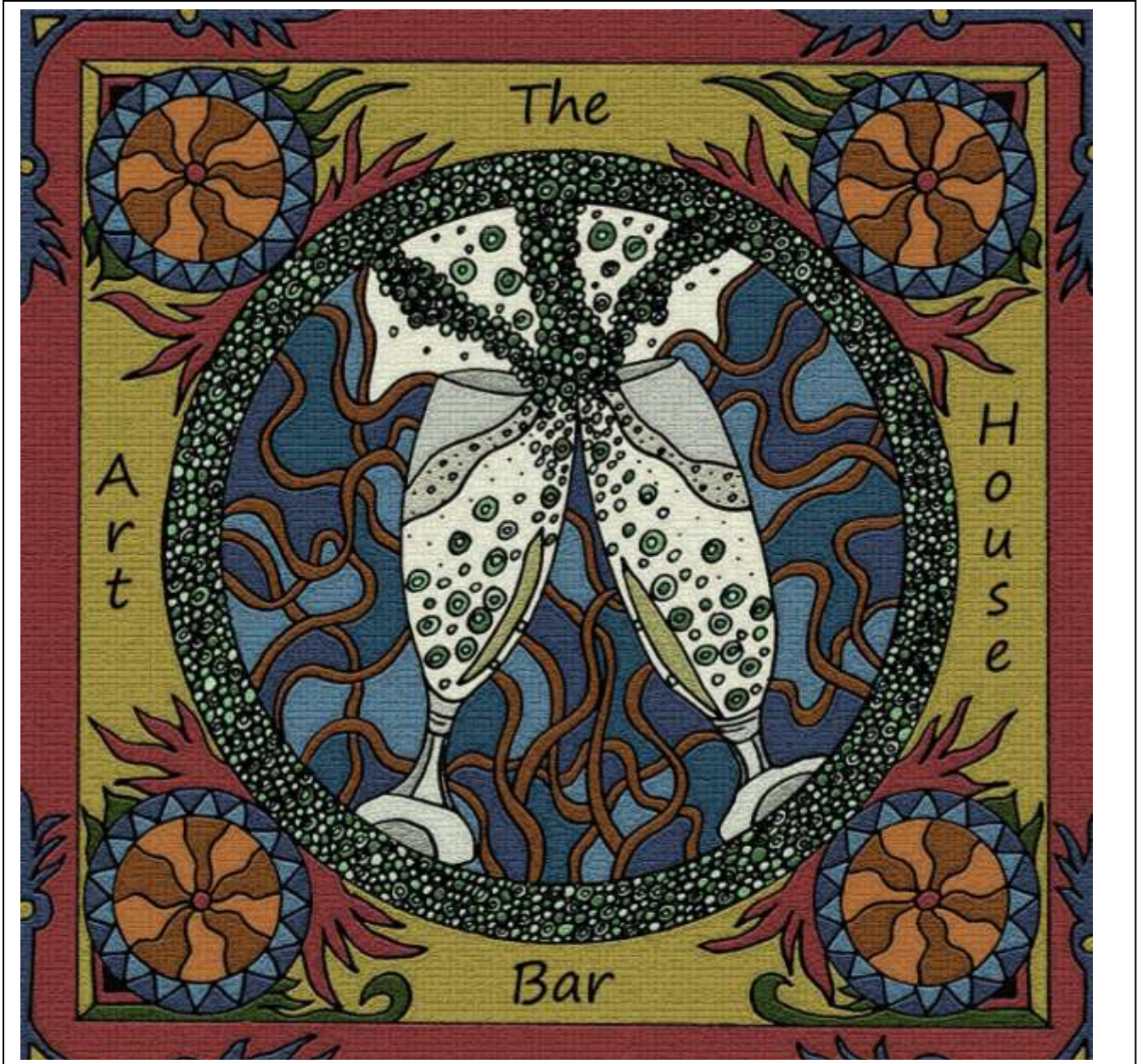
The Art House Bar

So in this design the Art Nouveau elements are all there, you have fluid curved lines, you have a leafy appearance, you have a more geometric design using the circles on 4 corners and its coloured using those real earthy tones.

Remember balance is key, this design is balanced by the fact that it is the same on both of the outside areas in both colour and pattern.

Designing
a Restaurant Menu
for 4 Seasons in
Art Nouveau Styling
-Using a limited colour pallet
By Karen Elzinga

One of the elements that can come into play when designing for a specific task that requires printing your design is the cost of having many different colours. More colours means more $$$ unless you're using subliminal printing, so keeping your swatch of colours limited is better for your hip pocket unless your utilizing digital printing methods. In this lesson we look at designing a menu cover for 4 seasons with just 8colour choices for all 4 menu covers.

When creating a menu for 4 different seasons you want a cohesive design that is the same but different for all 4.

This could be one substantial element within the design that does not change with each design but creates cohesion across all 4 menus, so when your menu is changed your regular customers notice the difference but still know they are in the same place owned by the same people.

People like familiarity, you can be different but at the same time still be the same, being innovative, unique and keeping up to date with fashionable changes doesn't have to mean confusing your business or your loyal customers.

I recommend doing this task in layers, so it saves you having to draw four of everything you do. We are going to head to Adobe Photoshop for this lesson, so make sure you have at least the basic free downloadable version.

So I started by manually drawing a background image, in my example it is a circular background which will used as a template for the 4 different seasons of menus. You can do whatever you wish.
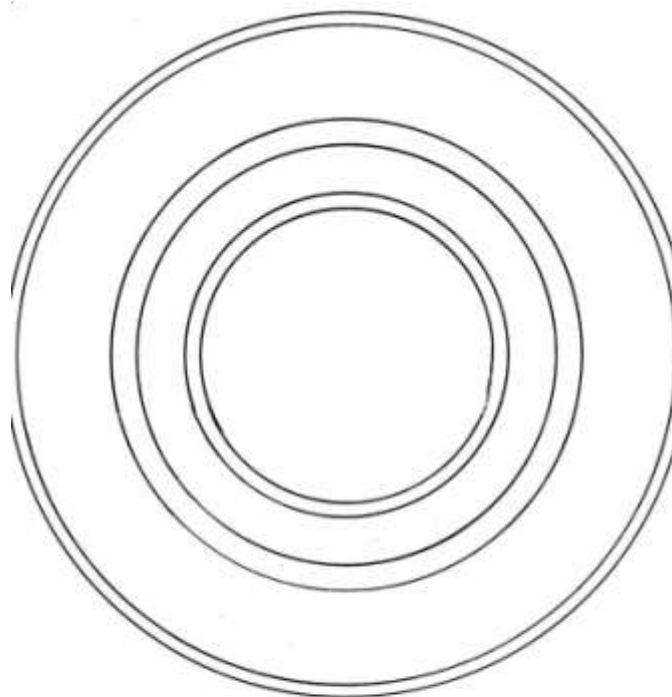
Design a simple background image that will cross over to all 4 seasons of menus.

The next step is to simply scan your image and print out five of them, if you don't have a scanner, visit a library and have them photocopied, or just draw five manually. One we will use for something else later on.

When it comes to portraying seasons it's really a no brainer to head to the internet and get some inspiration for how artists interrupt the varying seasons. Artists even at the highest level still do this, it's not copyright to use other peoples art as inspiration or idea development. Quite often you will end up with an idea totally removed from what you are looking at.

After you have your ideas add them to your first background image, in my example that would be my circles.

I have created 4 very different menu looks based on what each season presents weather wise. Now remember you have limited colours for all four designs, 8 in fact, so this makes it much harder to define the seasons using colour alone.
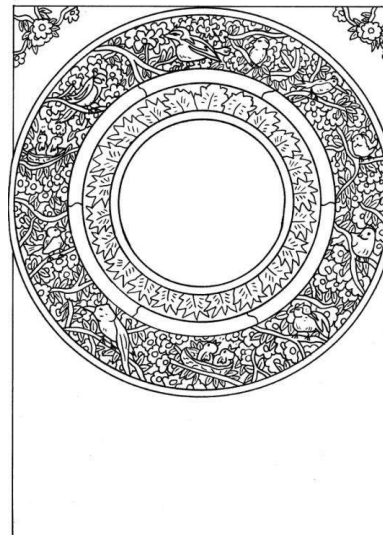
So ... Your designs have to scream whatever the season is so your viewers get it immediately.....Take a look at my examples.
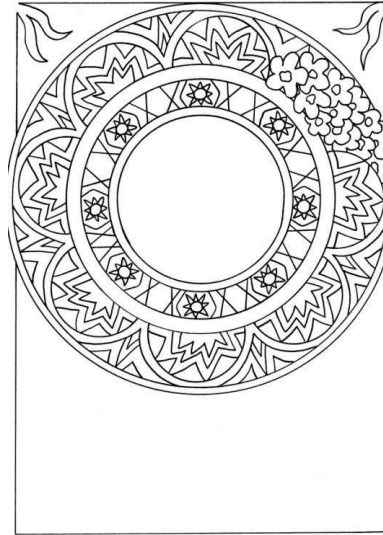
Summer menu
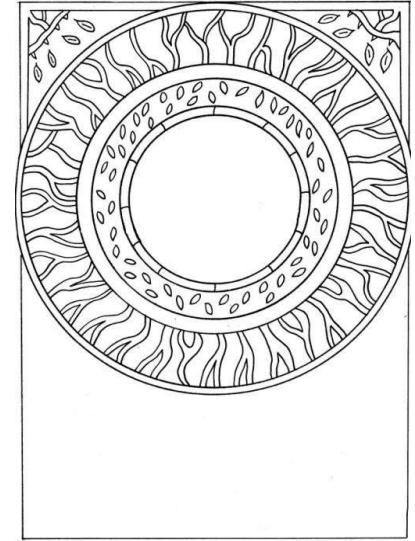
Autumn Menu

Spring Menu

Winter Menu

Let's take a closer look at the menus

Summer...it's hot, the sun shines, flowers are in bloom, so that is what I have incorporated for the summer menu.

I have sharp repeated shapes to produce a feeling of tension, heat, stress associated with a hot sun, yet encased by round windows in the shape of one large flower adding a softness to the harsh sun.

In the inner circle a repeated symbol to reflect the scoring of the sun at its core.

The outer circle has just one side giving a hit that it's a hotter month by flowers, however not too many so it is not giving the illusion that flowers are in abundance.

Let's look at autumn.......
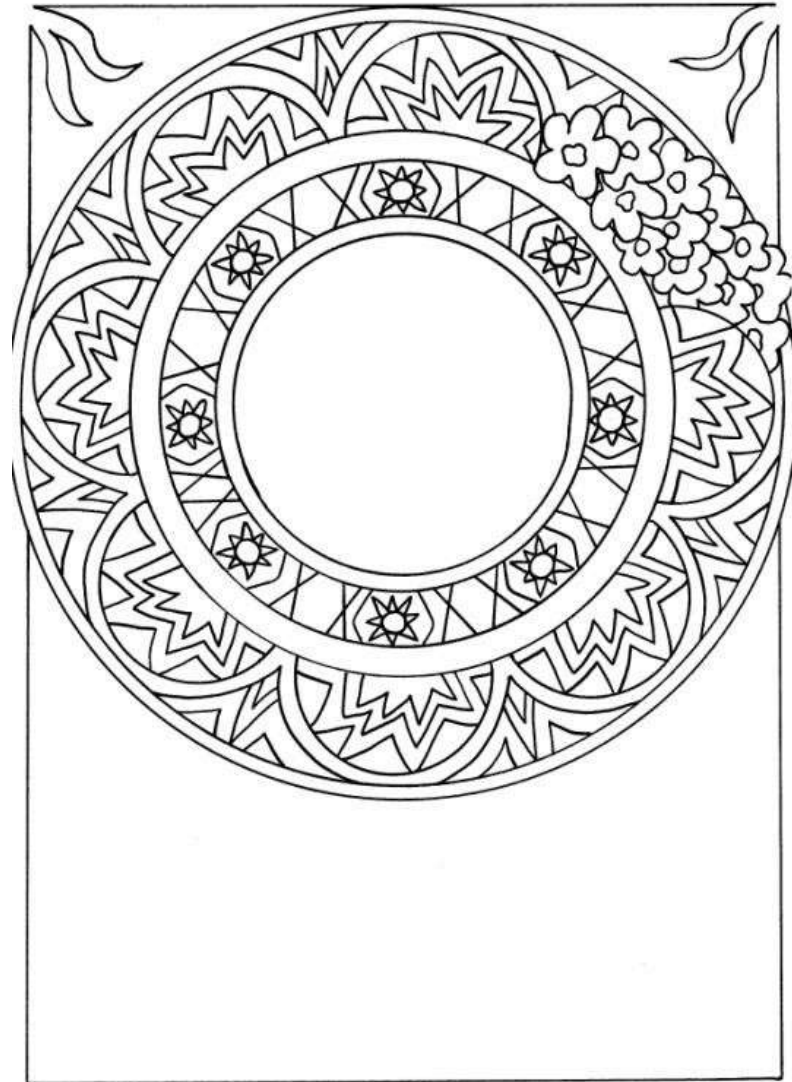
Summer menu

The Art work – Autumn Design

Autumn is probably the easiest month to portray, after all it's the month where the trees go bare.

So with that in mind the choice to go with bare branches was simple, however it still needs to have a feeling that the leaves used to be there, the inner circle reflects that well.

Your designs do not have to be intricate and complex with each menu, mix it up a bit and your customers will really notice your new menu changes even more.

Let's check out Winter.....
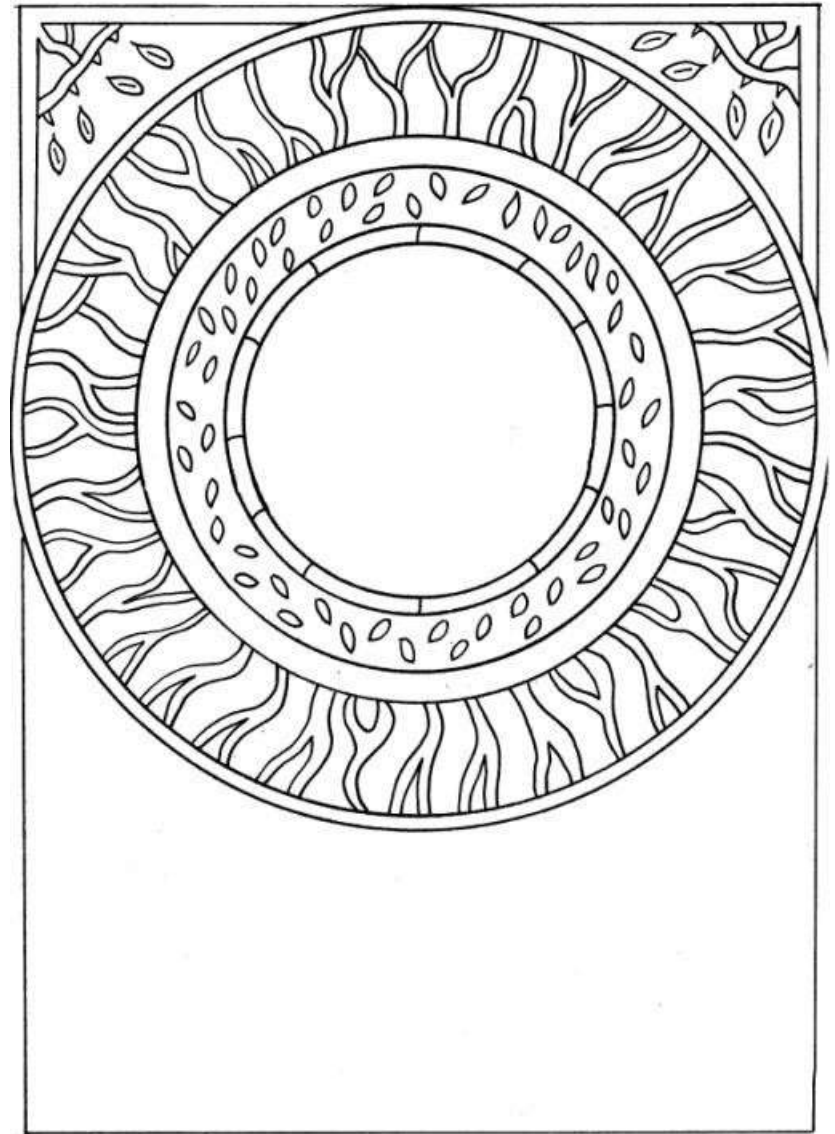
Autumn design

The Art work – Winter Design

Winter is by far the hardest to design, after all how do you go about drawing **cold?**

Well you need to reflect other more harsh elements that are in fact available in every other season, but when portrayed in art immediately people associate that extreme weather, wet and rainy, dreary, it has to be winter.

In this example the outer circle contain strong lines associated with lightening, following that rain drops falling, then larger droplets and the inner circle reflecting those droplets falling on jagged edged leaves, the pricklier the colder the feeling.

Winter will be the hardest to portray in colour also, because from your limited colour pallet of 8 colours you will need many warmer colours to portray summer and spring which require happier colours, so really think hard about depicting winter.

You may think 8 colours is heaps, but you will soon learn just how challenging it can be

Let's see like spring brings....

The Art work – Spring Design

Spring is such a great month to portray in art, there is so much going on in nature including the wild life. There's loads of new growth on trees, animals born, and the birds are singing loudly.

In this month's menu the outer circle looks at the abundance of flowers and bird life in the trees. The inner circle looks at the new foliage growth.

Spring should probably be your busiest artwork in terms of all the designs because you're portraying that over abundance of everything good.

Next building on your backgrounds
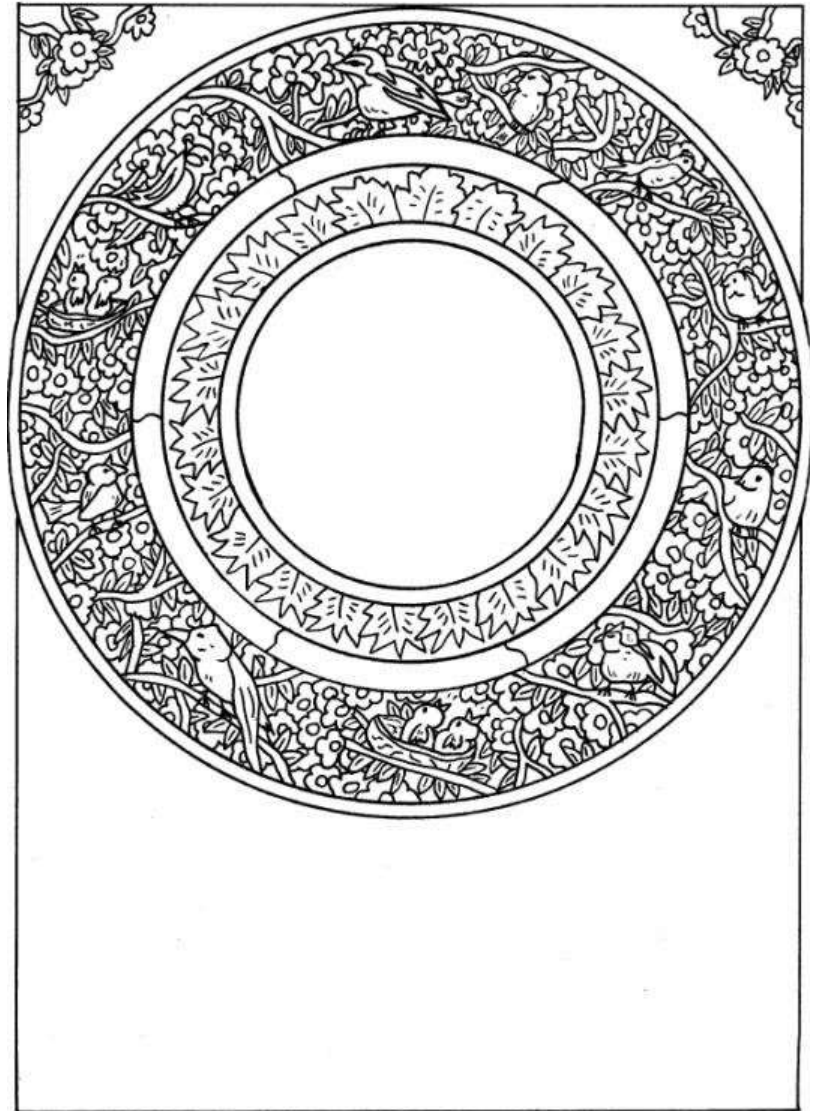
Building on your background

Next it's looking at what else we can add to our menus to make them look more cohesive.

Using your remaining circle print out as a guide, do a drawing that best fits your design. We will be headed to Adobe Photoshop for this next part so if you're planning to overlay something like I have done, then it's good to get the perfect circle edges.

For example when I overlay this image with my circles in each menu her waist will sit perfectly on the circle edge, making it look like it was always meant to be there.

If you're going with a person like I have, it's a great idea to have them holding a sign, you can then add words like your restaurant name or "Spring Menu" name for example when you are editing in photo shop.

A little background for my idea

This is the finished image that will be joined in photo shop and layered over the finished circle menus. The idea stemmed from the fairytale Rapunzel and her letting down her hair from the tower window, I figured to use her hair as the area where I will write the restaurant or bar name, the board she is holding is where 'menu' will be written. After researching the style of Art Nouveau, I thought it would be perfect in this theme; it also gave me a way in which I could establish the flowing curving lines of nature within the hair. Doing research is very important.

Meshing artworks together in Photoshop

Don't worry if you have never used Photoshop before, we will go through it together.

Step 1 – Download the FREE version of Adobe Photoshop (just place into Google free adobe Photoshop programs) and you'll get numerous websites to download from.

Step 2 - Scan your images and save them into jpeg file format, or save as pictures not as documents.

Step 3 – Open your Adobe Photoshop program - click on file – click on open – go to the file where your images are saved – click on the image- click open. This should open your image in Photoshop. Repeat till all of your images are open.

Step 4- Open your background picture, now left click and hold down the button on the mouse on the file that contains your image to be added to your background image and move the mouse to the side of your background image already opened and let go of the button on the mouse. You should now have two images on your screen, your background and your image to be added to your background.

Step 5 –In order to overlay your image to your background, you are going to have to make certain parts of your image transparent so you can still see your background image when you mesh the two together. Left click on the magic eraser tool (look like an eraser with a star on it) if you can't find it, it may be behind the normal looking eraser without a star- Simply right click and hold to see other options and select the eraser with the star like shape.

Step 6- Left click on anywhere in your top image that you want to be transparent or see through so that your background image can be seen when meshed together. See through parts will look like a checked pattern. Sometimes images maybe locked thus preventing the eraser tool from working, if so go to the layers panels on the right side and double click on the padlock , a pop up will come up click ok to unlock. Sometimes the eraser tool will erase areas you didn't want transparent, if so it could be that a line in drawing didn't meet another line and has a gap, any gaps will allow transparency in, to fix this click on the pencil tool, select black as your colour and close the gap.

Step 7 – Once your image is completed in transparency where you want it to be, left click your mouse onto the move tool, in your panel to the left of screen- It's generally near the top and looks a triangle and a four way arrow click on it.

Step 8 – Move your mouse over to your transparent image left click and hold and move the image across to your background image – let go of the mouse.

Step 9 – Left click on the image and hold to move and position your image into the right place.

Step 10- Save your image as jpeg by clicking file- save as- scroll down menu till you find jpeg – save.

Use Photoshop to erase parts that impede the aesthetics of your design

This is the part finished result of meshing together the two images, what I found was it was a little too busy with hair curls encroaching the background window where the two overlayed, so I went back to Photoshop to erase a few curls and clean up the area a bit more.

This is the result of erasing certain curls, works much better now and will do when colouring takes place. Use the normal eraser looking tool and like an eraser rub away what you don't want.

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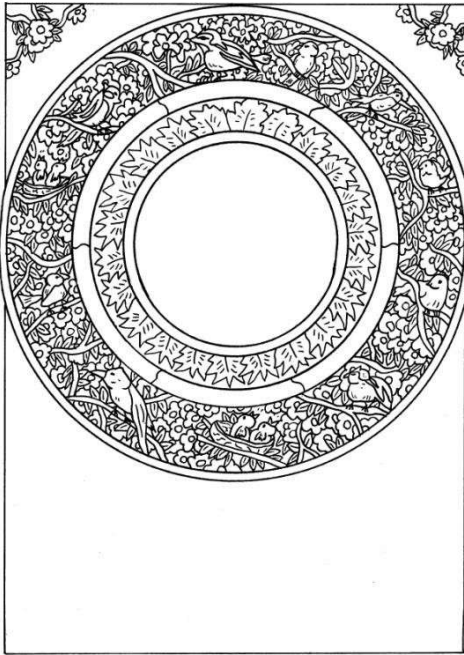Again this is the covering picture that will be messed and layered onto the Autumn menu cover.

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The same look but very different menu

This is the finished Autumn Menu design, so again I am starting to have a cohesive look across all of the menus.

The spring menu, I opted to incorporate the birds, nothing describes spring better then the birds chirping and becoming active with babies. The flowers are coming into full bloom, the leaves are bright and green, and everything is at its best. So I have made the spring menu to be very floral, leafy and lots of birds in the tree branches following on from the Autumn menu where the leaves are bare, this time the branches are full of life.

Once again the overall image will be layered and attached to the window in photo shop.

This is the final spring menu at the drawing stage.

Next – Colouring your design in Photoshop

Photoshop Colours

The next stage of completing your menu designs is colouring them, you can do this manually, however it is much quicker if done in Photoshop.

Think about your colours, you may select 8, your 8 colours are for use on each of your menus however the same 8 colours must be used for each menu.

Start by opening Photoshop
Click on the colour pallet box (left side of screen in the tool panel) select the top box and a pop up will open. Play around with the colour selections and when you find one you like write down the CMYK colour numbers c34 m67, y5, k45 for example, these numbers directly correspond to unique colours. Writing down your numbers means you'll have them for easy referral with each menu you open to colour. CYMK colours are more for use in printing.

Colour: C:12% M:80% Y:39% K:1%

Colour: C:45% M:74% Y:82% K:62%

Colour: C:22% M:82% Y:85% K:12%

Colour: C:15% M:49% Y:26% K:0%

Colour: C:24% M:23% Y:100% K:1%

Colour: C:14% M:99% Y:78% K:3%

Colour: C:84% M:27% Y:83% K:13%

Colour: C:0% M:21% Y:49% K:0%

*CYMK colours are more for use in printing

*RGB colours are more for display on the web

Colouring in Photoshop
Step 1 – open Photoshop – file- open- select image – open (your image should display in your Photoshop program.

Step 2- click the paint bucket icon (left of screen in tool panel's looks a bucket or paint can)

Step 3 – left click on the colour box panel, a pop out will appear- add your colour numbers you wrote down earlier to the CMYK panel for your first colour. This should set up your first colour correctly – left click any panel of your design staying away from the black lines, you want them to stay black. To change colours simply click on the colour panel and add in your new colours numbers to the CMYK panel. Finish colouring your design menus.

Rational- My rational for the colours used in the Autumn menu are:

I wanted to create a sense of Autumn, not only by the colours I have chosen which are those golden and earthy tones which are associated with the falling of the leaves as they turn colour, but also in how Autumn is illustrated, I wanted to showcase how the trees appear when the leaves have fallen, so my inner window circle reflects a bare stick like appearance, and brown leaves free falling, but still with a hint of green to say that the cycle will eventually continue and the leaves will be regenerated.

The circles are reflective of the circle of life and will continue to turn and change as the menu changes seasons reflecting characteristics of each season. The girl however will stay the same to provide stability, continuity and familiarity for frequent customers between the seasonal menus.

I also decided to finished off the menu by adding the filter (Texturizer- Scaling 91, Relief 17)

To use filters and play around with various looks of your completed work go to Photoshop – Filter- filter Gallery and take a look at the various way you can change the look of your artwork.

To add text to the menus

Go to Photoshop – select the T icon in the tool panel-left click and drag across your art work to open a text box – write your words- click move tool and drag your text box to where you wish your words to be placed. Click the T on top of the hill, later versions it's top of screen; this can bend your words to fit curves, play around until you achieve your desire effect.
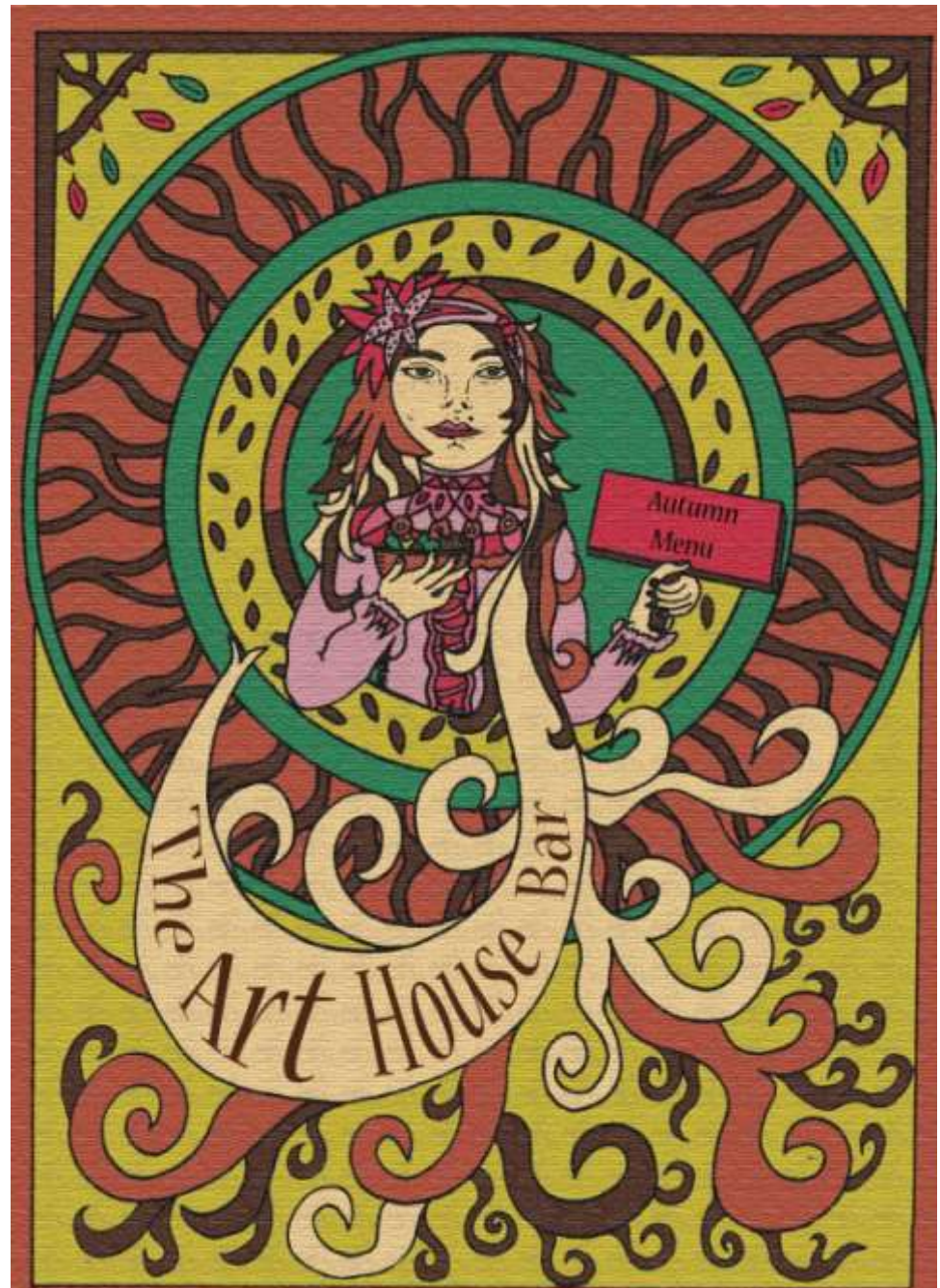
# Remember to use the same 8 colours on all of your menus

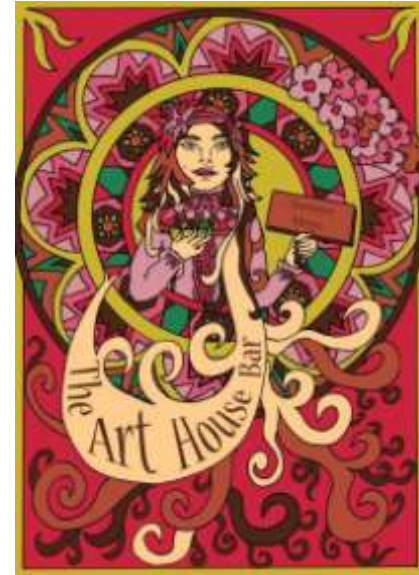Rational- My rational for the colours used in the Spring menu are:

The spring menu to me had to be all about nature, the birds singing out and about in the trees, lots of flowers in full bloom, so pretty and colourful, sweet and romantic. The background is green to show everything has regenerated; the leaves are back and perfect. The varying hues of reds and pinks blend to together perfectly to aid the romantic appeal in the circle of life that has again changed, to reflect the bounty that Spring brings.

 The season where everything is at its finest, prettiest, and most full of life. I decided to keep the sticks, although done simpler from the autumn circle of life to showcase how and what has happened to those sticks/branches with the changing of the seasons.

The girl and her locks are the same as per each menu as is the filtered finish to project a vintage appeal and continuity across all of the menus.

Can you see how each menu looks very different with the different use of the same 8 colours but still have continuity across all 4 menus.
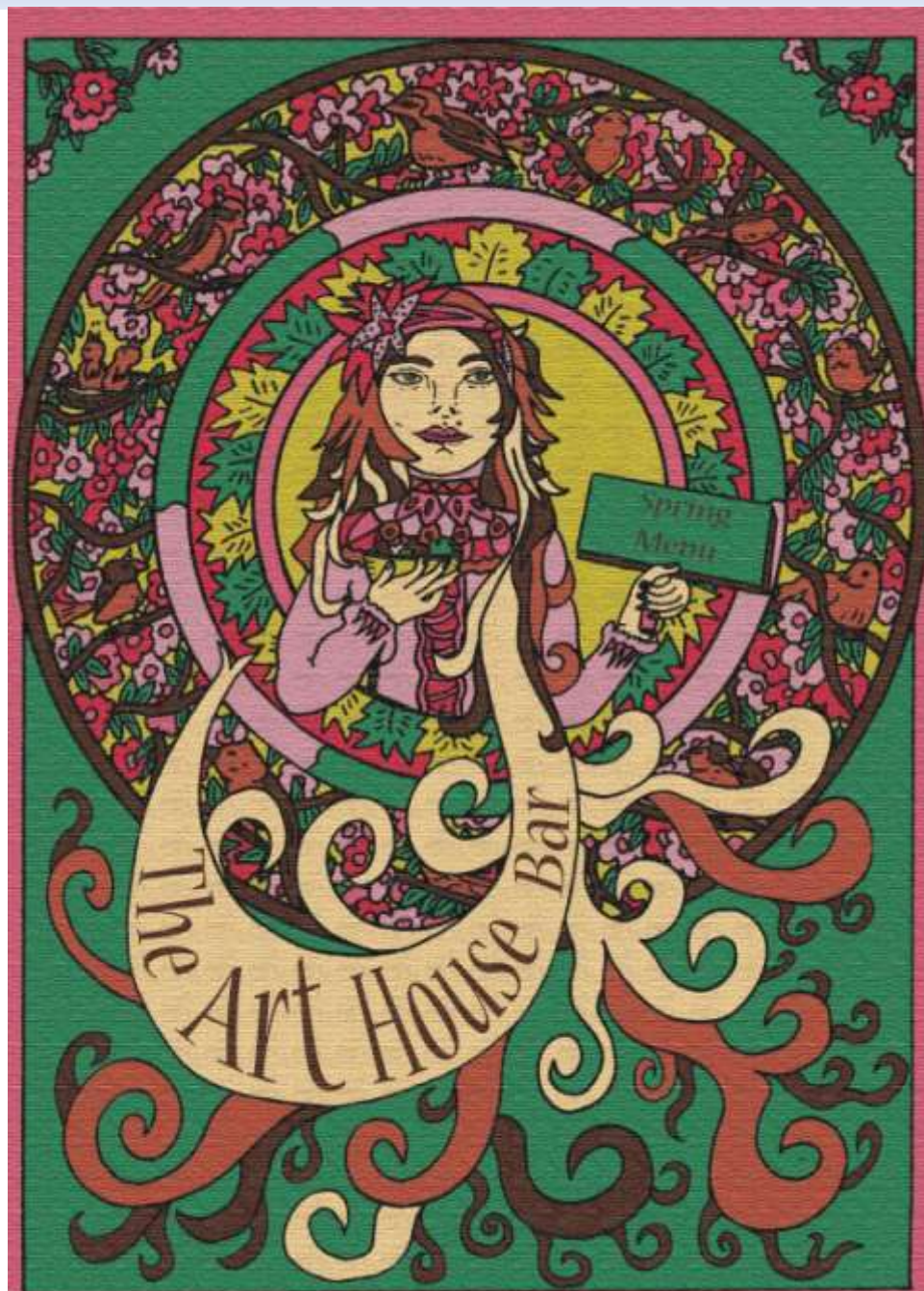
Each menu has a unique look

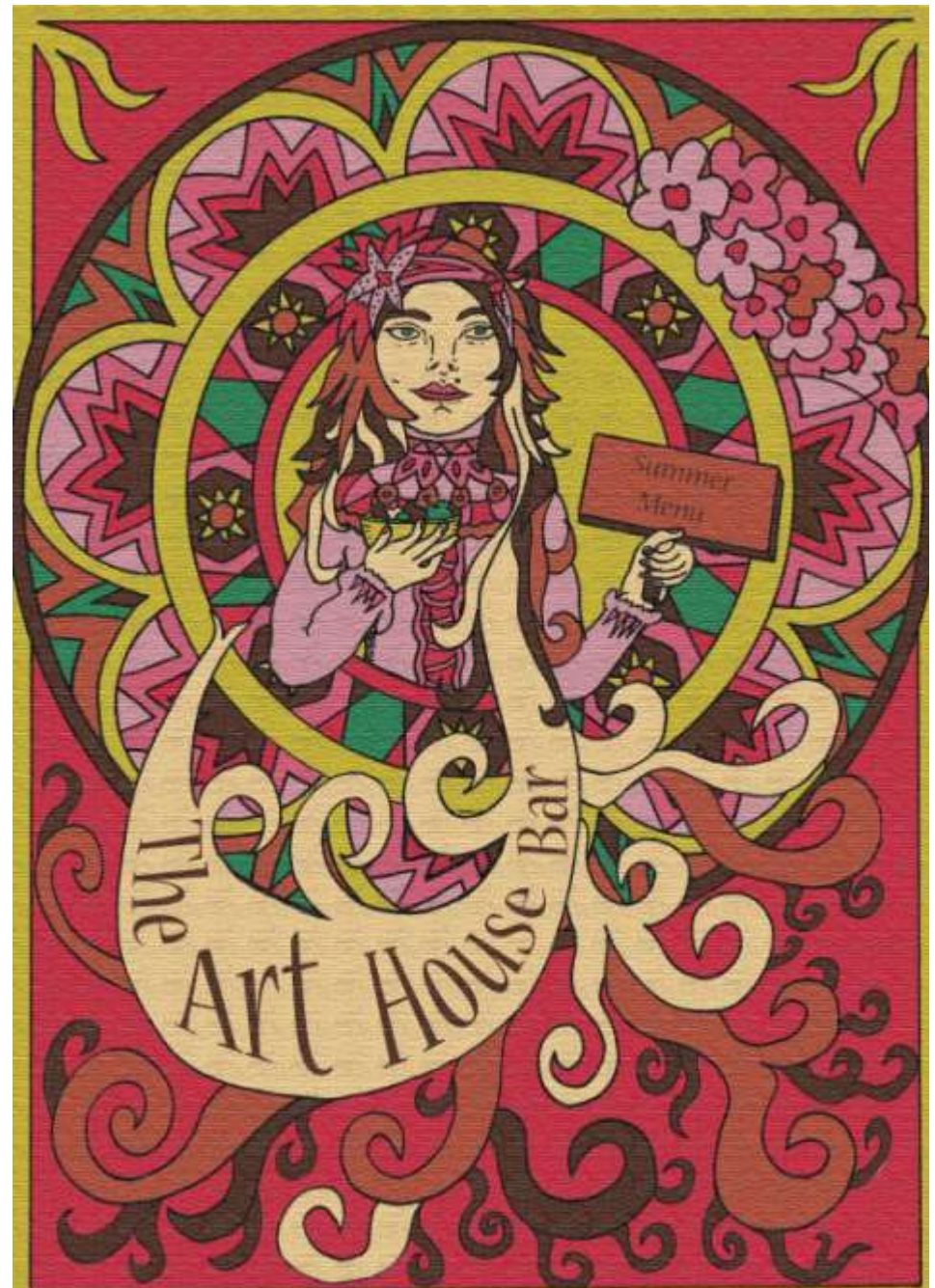Rational- My rational for the colours used in the Summer menu are:

My idea for this summer menu was to create an essence of heat, fire and earth. Summer is hot especially in Qld, around Australia Summer sees many fires starting hence the redness and yellow focus of this work.

Our landscape in summer is more known for its rugged harshness so I went with sharper more pricklier shapes within the circle of life but completed in the soft floral pallet to imply a floral content also.

The sun type shapes within the centre circle were inspired by the furious heat felt in summer and how you feel you can't escape it on boiling days, it's simply all around you.

Overall I wanted the colours to project, fire, flowers, romance, and be artistically good to look at, complex but with sensuality.

Again the girl is the same as the previous menus to project continuity and has been textured with the filter (Texturizer-Scaling 91, Relief 17) to be the same as the other menus in a modern aesthetic with a vintage feel.

Last one….

(Finished Winter menu)

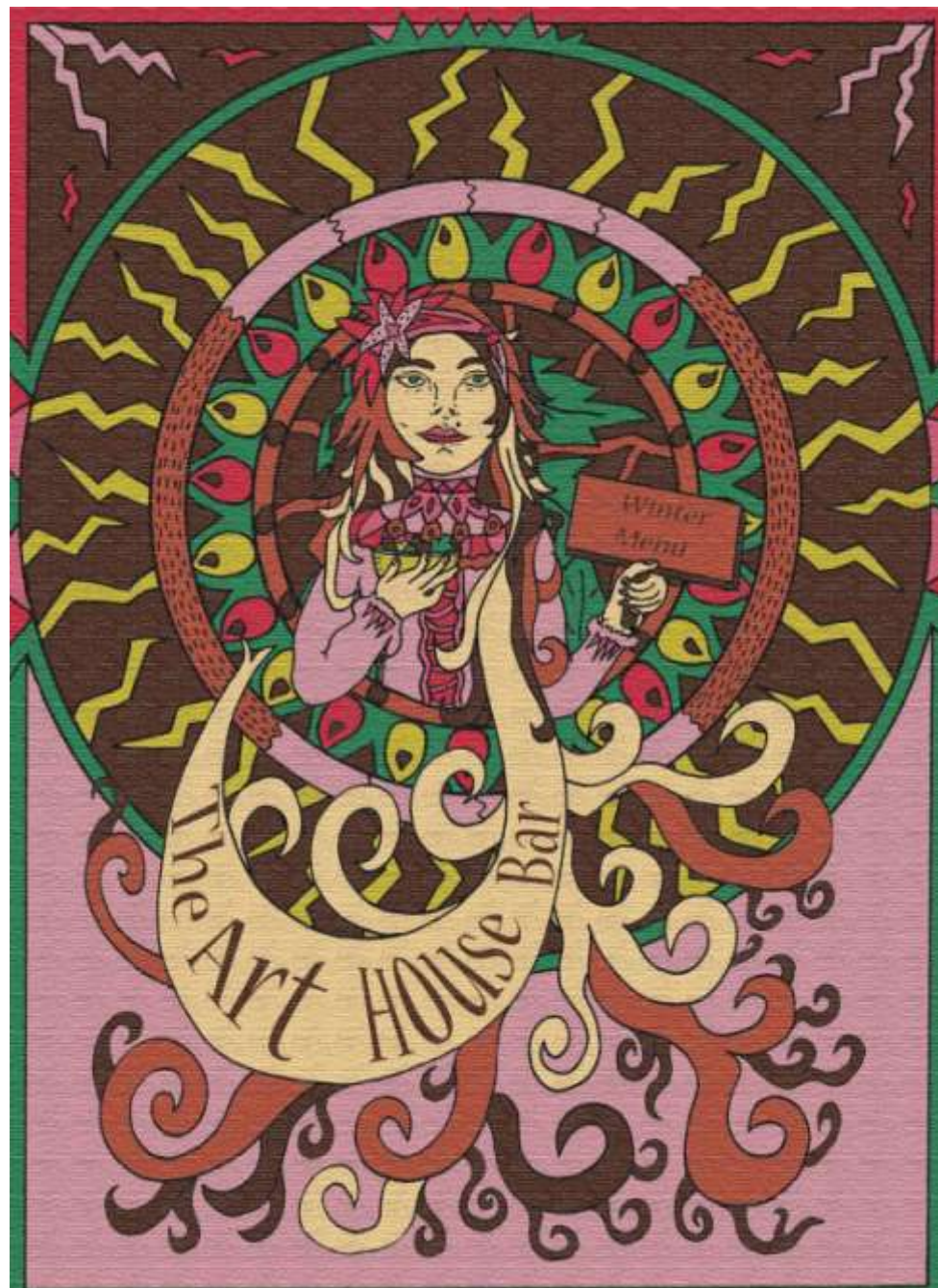Rational- My rational for the colours used in the Winter menu are:

Winter I wanted to portray the weather, so the shapes I used were more jagged to portray lightening; the brown and light pink background I was inspired by a murky dusty sky storm.

The red and yellow rain drops in the centre circle I thought about rain droplets coming from so high up in the sky, that when they leave the clouds and gain speed they could heat up turning red, only to cool instantly on hitting the ground turning to yellow.

The leaves in the centre with sticks poking at them, signify after a storm has hit.

This was probably the hardest to get coloured, what I would have killed for a dark blue and a grey to get a more moody look, but hopefully the lightening does its best to portray a more unstable climate.

Again this design has been transformed to a more vintage Look by using a filter (Texturizer- Scaling 91, relief 17) in keep it in line with the other seasonal menu products. The same girl as you can see covers all four designs for continuity and familiarity for frequent visitors.

So as you can see 4 seasonal menus, all different but still the same, it is definitely hard sticking to just eight colours especially with such detailed illustrations, but it is certainly cheaper especially given that could turn your menus into other merchandising products like t-shirts where screen printing definitely means less colours, less money.

Even though there is only 8 colours in every menu and the same 8 colours, they really take on a different look each one, and I don't think people would even realize there were the same 8 colours in each design.
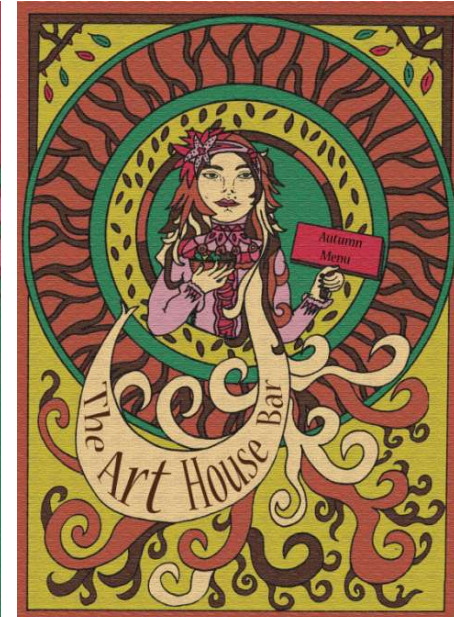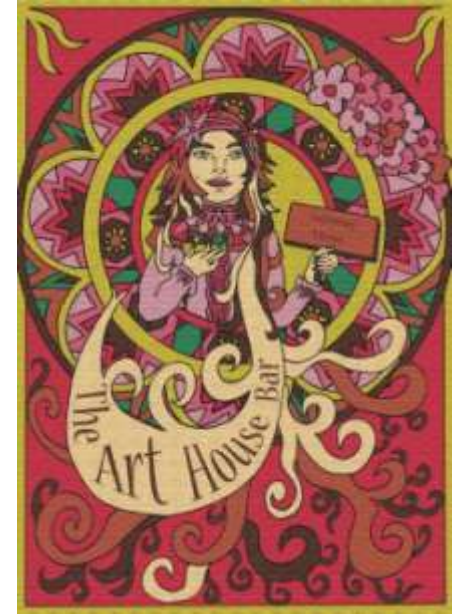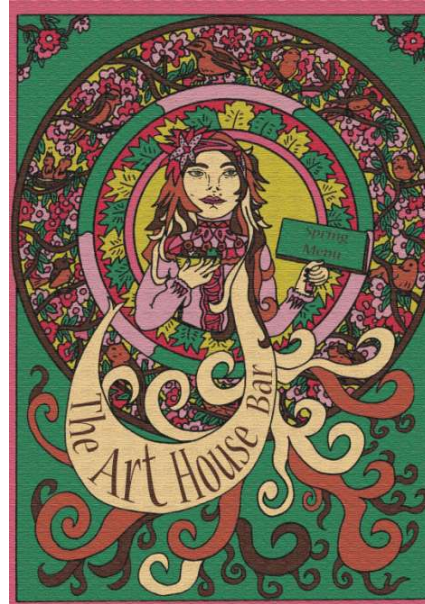
Toilet Doors

Our next piece of Art Nouveau Styled art design is to look at a couple of alternatives for Toilets doors in a bar. I will do one in characters and the other in plain patterning so you can get the feel for how different each series can look.

First we shall have a look at the breakdown of the patterned doors.

Art Nouveau oozes romantic appeal, even old posters advertising theatre plays can look romantic. It's all in the curved lines.

So if there is one thing that you take from this lesson on Art Nouveau it is curved lines and geometric patterns.

For more inspiration check out the master of the Art Nouveau period -Alphonse Mucha. He was undoubtedly one of the best artists from the era.

So here again, I have hand draw my design and digitally coloured the image using Adobe Photoshop, I have also added a textured filter over the design to give it grainy rough look.

I spoke earlier about the use of subtle humour to turn old fashion Art Nouveau to a more modern vibe, this is the perfect example of doing that, very subtle yet a cheeky take on an old Adam and Eve theme of using leaves to cover up private parts, but also taking on a Roman Warrior feel by creating the wheelchair in a chariot type depiction. Because the woman is holding the beer gives her strength and modernizes the overall image.

Again natural earthly tones, lots of floral depiction, curved lines even in the depiction of the hair, and foliage patterns.

Getting to know your art styles when designing is important, even if you just research it in picture form. But I do recommend if you have a few minutes to spare learn a little about the history, because it does make a difference to your mind set and your head space when drawing or creating.

Create a file that you can add snippets of historical information to and build a library bank of images that you can draw inspiration from, it help immeasurably as an artist or designer.

Thanks for taking the time to read this lesson, I hope that you got something from it, you can read more of my art lessons at www.elzingacollective.com.au.

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Karen Elzinga (Bachelor Degree Fine Art & Visual Culture)