

# The poster:

from practical function to work of art



Mikel Bilbao Salsidua

**BILBOKO ARTE  
EDERREN MUSEOA  
MUSEO DE BELLAS  
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Fig. 1  
 Front cover of *Le Courrier Français*, no. 40, 6 October 1895  
 It reproduces Jean de Paleologue's poster "Pal", which advertised the exhibition marking the 100th anniversary of the invention of lithography Galerie Rapp, Paris, October-November 1895  
 Private collection, Bilbao

*"Advertising is the flower of modern life; a statement of optimism and cheerfulness; it distracts the eye and the mind. It is the most heartfelt demonstration of the vitality of people today."*  
 Blaise Cendrars. *Publicité = Poesie*, 1927<sup>1</sup>

"Is there such a thing as street art?" Today the answer to this question, formulated by the writer and theoretician Gustave Kahn in 1901,<sup>2</sup> would make reference to a wide-ranging series of examples and ways of defining artistic creation. However, in the early 20th century one of the most likely answers to this question would have been: "Yes, posters." In fact, since the last quarter of the 19th century, terms such as "artistic posters" and "illustrated posters"<sup>3</sup> were frequently used to give a name to this new and striking medium which attracted the attention of passers-by and potential consumers from the walls of city streets.

The emergence of the modern poster coincided with a period of major political and socio-economic changes. Thus, in the 19th century, the rise of liberal thought and its support for an incipient free market governed by the laws of supply and demand significantly altered both the commercial context and the general public's consumer habits. We thus witness the rise of brand names, which were distinctive elements in an increasingly competitive market, and with them the need to disseminate a striking image of their products which differentiated them from the rest. It was in this context that the advertising poster encountered a rich and fertile terrain for growth.

1 Blaise Cendrars. "Publicité = Poesie" in *Aujourd'hui*, Paris, 26 February 1927.  
 2 Gustave Kahn. *L'esthétique de la rue*. Paris : Charpentier, 1901.  
 3 The terms *affiches artistiques* y *affiches illustrées* were frequently used in periodical publications of the late 19th century such as *La Plume* and *L'Estampe et L'Affiche*, as well as in exhibition and sale catalogs of the time. See Reims 1896 and Sagot 1891.



Fig. 2  
 The different stages in the production of the poster advertising Pianos Schiedmayer, Stuttgart, with a design by Max Laeuger, 1894  
 Taken from Jean Louis Sponsel. *Das moderne Plakat*. Dresden: G. Kühnmann, 1897, unpaginated  
 Private collection, Bilbao

## A long-established technique in the service of a new medium

As an advertising format that combined image and text and which was normally produced on paper, the emergence of the poster was made possible due to the invention and perfection of lithography. This technique, invented in 1796 by Aloys Senefelder, was almost a hundred years old at the time when the poster began to attract significant attention (fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> Its particular characteristics were enumerated by Senefelder himself in his monograph *Vollständiges Lehrbuch der Steinruckerey*, published in Munich in 1818<sup>5</sup> and translated into English and French just one year later. The book was an immediate success. Over the next few years a large number of publications such as *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari* published a large number of prints in this technique, while numerous artists made use of it as a means to create some of their work. Speed and the low cost of this method of graphic reproduction are probably two factors which explain the popularity that lithography enjoyed from its outset.

The incompatibility between grease and water is the fundamental principle of lithography, a process that starts with the reversed reproduction of the original design for the poster on a porous, calcareous stone matrix.<sup>6</sup> The design is made with a greasy lithographic crayon or with brush and greasy ink, after which a technical process affixes it to the stone. Once the drawing is complete, a solution of gum Arabic and nitric acid is applied to the stone, which is a mordant that affects the areas of the stone's surface which are devoid of ink or greasy crayon and makes them more porous. After a few hours the matrix is rinsed with water, another coating of gum Arabic is applied and a turpentine wash. After this, bitumen with turps is applied in order to fix the drawing made on the stone with the lithographic crayon and the matrix is now ready for reproductions of the poster to be printed. The result is a surface area with porous zones that absorb water and others that repel it, which are the ones with the drawing executed in the greasy crayon. Finally, once on the lithographic press and after dampening the stone with water, the surface is inked using a roller soaked with greasy ink. The rest is achieved through the principle of the repulsion of the elements involved. The water concentrates in the permeable zones and repels the areas of drawing, while the ink stays in the areas containing the motifs of the poster executed with the lithographic crayon or greasy brush. As a result, the only thing left to be done is to place a sheet of paper over the inked stone, pass it through the press and thus obtain the final lithograph.

While this procedure would be sufficient for producing an image in a single ink, due to its chromatic complexity the modern poster required the perfection of that technique, resulting in the development of colour or chromo-lithographs.<sup>7</sup> The essence of the process is the same, but in order to produce a colour lithographic, a stone is required for each colour. In addition, the design of the poster has to be deconstructed so that each lithographic matrix has the visual motifs corresponding to each colour. The image reproduced

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4 Between October and November 1895 the Galerie Rapp in Paris held an exhibition to mark the centenary of the invention of lithography. Various posters to announce it were produced, notably two by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) and Hugo d'Alesi (1849-1906), in addition to the front cover of *Le Courrier Français* reproduced here (fig. 1).

5 Senefelder 1818.

6 These lithographic stones are generally of the size of the poster to be printed. A standard format is 100 x 70 cm, with a thickness of between 5 and 10 mm. In the case of large-format posters, various lithographic stones were used and the final poster was thus produced by sticking together various sheets of paper.

7 Senefelder himself had experimented with chromolithography but it was perfected by other lithographers such as Godefroy Engelmann, who patented the process in 1837.

here from Jean Louis Sponsel's *Das moderne Plakat*, published in 1897<sup>8</sup> (fig. 2), is particularly useful as it shows the stones corresponding to three colours as well as the final result after passing the sheet of paper through the press over the three lithographic stones coated with yellow, red and blue ink, respectively.

Another of the techniques frequently used in the creation of posters is the offset technique. With this technique, which was perfected in the early 20th century, both the inking process and that of passing the sheets through the press are automated, which allows for the production of more images in less time. Like traditional lithography, offset is based on the principle of the repulsion of water and grease. The drawing is produced with the lithographic crayon on a metal matrix,<sup>9</sup> specifically a zinc plate that is dampened with water and then inked. After this a gyrating rubber cylinder passes over the plate and captures the image, which is transferred to a sheet of paper.<sup>10</sup>

From its outset paper was, and largely continues to be, the preferred support for the modern poster. Given the ephemeral nature of advertising per se, it is not surprising that the support itself was similar in nature. In fact, the large-scale manufacture of cheap papers for advertising use was an ongoing factor from the second half of the 20th century. As a result, it was common to employ procedures that neutralised the acidic nature of these supports and thus prevented further physical deterioration of the work. Furthermore, as was the case more than a century ago, the function of the poster is as ephemeral as the advertising campaign of the product or the duration of the event that it sets out to promote. This factor, in addition to the above-mentioned poor quality of the support, has meant that some important posters, which are referred to in the press or illustrated magazines at the time, have been lost for ever, even though posters were not devised as unique works of art but are rather images produced in order to disseminate the images as widely as possible through the printing of a number of copies that varies in response to the requirement for promoting the event or product in question.

Another aspect that should be noted is the fact that the emergence of the modern poster in the second half of the 19th century opened up new business opportunities for printing firms, leading many of them to diversify their output and even to specialise in this new medium for communication and consumer persuasion. This was the case with the lithographic studios of Paul Dupont (fig. 3), Chamis, Champenois,<sup>11</sup> Charles Verneau, Émile Lévy, A. Bellier, Lemercier, F. Appel,<sup>12</sup> and Vercasson, among others. While the number of printers that produced the posters now represented in the collection of the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao is too great to refer to them all in this text,<sup>13</sup> at least three should be singled out for their historical importance and the fact that they are represented in the collection in a significant manner.

Chaix, founded in 1845 in Saint-Ouen in France by Napoléon Chaix, was originally a branch of the Imprimerie Centrale des Chemins de Fer. In its early decades it principally printed books, travel guides, travel tickets, leaflets and posters, all associated with the railway. In 1881 it changed its name to Imprimerie Chaix, from which point it became extremely well known as a lithographic printers specialising in posters.<sup>14</sup> Chaix's

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8 See Sponsel 1897, unpaginated (double-page ill. between pages 232 and 233).

9 In contrast to traditional lithography, offset does not require the drawing to be inverted on the matrix, given that it does not enter into direct contact with the paper. As a result, the starting point is the actual drawing, as it is inverted and then returned to its original direction when it is transferred to the rubber cylinder and from there to the paper.

10 For this and other techniques, see Maltese 2009, pp. 269ff.; Vicary 1993, pp. 29ff.

11 Founded in 1878 by Ferdinand Champenois, this studio printed posters by leading designers such as Alphonse Mucha. On this firm, see Bordet 2004.

12 The F. Appel printers was founded in Paris in 1846, operating from number 12, rue du Delta until 1890, at which date it moved to number 3, rue Vauvan.

13 All are named in the entries on each poster in the exhibition.

14 On this printers, see Chaix 1945 and Belnard 1990.





Fig. 3  
 The Paul Dupont printing works, Paris  
 Photograph taken from Marius Vachon, *Les arts et les industries du papier en France, 1871-1894*.  
 Paris: Librairies-Imprimeries réunies, 1894, p. 194  
 Private collection, Bilbao

importance lay not only in its large output and its extensive roll-call of artists with whom it worked, but also in the fact that it was the press that printed *Les Maîtres de l'affiche* collection between 1895 and 1900.

Gráficas Laborde & Labayen in Tolosa dated back to the 19th century, although the association between José María Laborde and Antonio María Labayen Werlinder only began in 1903.<sup>15</sup> Located in the city centre of Tolosa, its output was relatively diverse as in addition to producing posters the firm also printed lithographs, catalogues, programmes for local festivals, labels, the lithography on boxes of preserves and even banknotes valid during the period of the Republic. This range of activities meant that the firm possessed a range of equipment and machinery<sup>16</sup> and also collaborated with a large number of draughtsmen who worked for them on the production of original designs for posters, either as fixed employees or in an occasional manner. The Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao has almost one hundred posters printed by this firm, which closed down in 1974 although its premises existed until 2009, when they were demolished.

Imprenta y Litografía Ortega was founded in Valencia in 1871 by Ramón Ortega Font. Its activities were wide-ranging, from the publication of books, leaflets and mastheads to banknotes and posters. The studio produced posters for local festivals, sporting and political events, advertising and films. It was best known, however, for its bullfighting posters, printing many of the posters for the most important events of this type in Spain. It ceased production in 1997 but the work produced by the firm is represented in many of Spain's leading collections. The Museo de Bellas Artes has several dozen posters produced in its lithographic workshops.<sup>17</sup>

15 Various members of the Laborde family opened different lithographic printing studios with varying degrees of success. The one run by Guillermo and Feliciano Laborde was short-lived and only active between 1862 and 1865. More successful was the one run by Juan José Laborde, which was active from 1838 to 1894, at which point Laborde's widow took over. After this the business was known as Fototipia, Fotocromo y Litografía Vda. de J.J. Laborde.

16 Among its rooms was one for making inks, a room for drawing, a line for hanging the paper so that it was acclimatised before being printed with the design in various inks, and various spaces for the printing equipment. It also had the required areas for handling the paper, paper aligning tables and guillotines for achieving the perfect finish with each item printed.

17 In addition to the posters in the present exhibition, the collection has many more produced by this printers, created by various designers including Julián Alcaraz (1876-1952), Roberto Domingo (1883-1956), Santos Saavedra (1903-1997) and Luis García Campos (1928-2011).

## The complex balance between function and creativity

The poster is a medium of visual communication that generally combines two elements: image and written message. The combination of the two plays an essential role in the relationship between the message and its intended audience, for which reason some aspects must be particularly well devised and oriented so that this connection works. Every day the city offers us a large number of these visual stimuli which, to a greater or lesser extent, succeed in capturing our attention, if only momentarily. Among all these elements, the poster must be striking enough to stand out and adequately fulfil the role for which it was intended. As such, the concept, form and colour, which are the key elements in a poster, are generally carefully conceived and realised by the artist. In addition, particular attention is usually paid to the manner of composing the image, the arrangement of the elements, division of the space and characteristics of the text.

The overall public perception of the poster and the immediate comprehension of its context are determined by multiple factors. While on occasions various rhetorical elements are used,<sup>18</sup> as a whole the poster tends towards a graphic, specific and direct expression of the message. With a poster, there is no time to explain the outstanding merits of the product in question so the basic information must be conveyed in an immediate, attractive way, using an appropriate format. This means that the designer has to work with a range of conditioning factors and it is thus not always easy to achieve the desired balance between creativity and the function that the design in question must fulfil.

In 1935 Adolphe Mouron Cassandre (1901-1968), one of the greatest poster designers of the first half of the 20th century, said: "...the poster demands absolute modesty. The artist cannot express himself in the poster and even if he could, he has no right to do so."<sup>19</sup> Despite the categorical nature of this statement, few artists have rivalled Cassandre in the originality of the visual effect and the uniqueness of the language deployed. He also stated that the poster must resolve three fundamental problems which he termed optical, graphic and poetic. In order to do so, it must "make itself seen" in a striking manner through the use of colour and the clash and contrast of forms (optical), transmit an idea that can be rapidly and easily read (graphic), and generate associations of ideas which create a long-lasting emotion in the viewer (poetic).<sup>20</sup> Without a doubt, the solution to the problems set out by Cassandre gave rise to a type of bold, clear and evocative poster which effectively fulfilled the function for which it was created.

In *The Poster. Functions, Language, Rhetoric*,<sup>21</sup> François Enel proposes that the poster has eight functions: informational, persuasive, financial, relating to security, educational, environmental, aesthetic and creative. Many of them reflect relatively simple questions such as What is it advertising? Do you need it? and Can you afford it? Others, however, are more difficult to specify or quantify depending on the brief or the period in question. In fact, it could be said that this attempt to classify the functions of the poster reflects a contemporary and professional mindset that has little to do with the aims of advertising in the late 19th century. It

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18 On the poster's rhetorical procedures, see Bouza 1983 and Enel 1974, pp. 91ff.

19 Letter to M. Stahly of 11 March 1935; taken from Mouron 1985, p. 48.

20 Ibid., pp. 49-50.

21 Enel 1974, pp. 27-48.



should be remembered that the evolution of the poster itself ran parallel to that of advertising techniques, giving rise to increasing professionalization both in communication techniques and in the professional profile of the artists involved. A clear demonstration of the increasingly specialised nature of the sector is evident both in the proliferation of monographs on advertising published from the 1920s onwards<sup>22</sup> and in the fact that in the late 19th it was painters and draughtsmen who produced posters but by the 1930s the figure of the graphic designer was beginning to emerge.

### “Poster mania” or collectors of “shouts on the wall”

From its outset, the modern poster was considered an innovative and attraction medium with an elevated creative component. Posters were commissioned from draughtsmen and painters, who made every effort to capture the viewer's attention through dynamic, colourful designs. These “shouts on the wall”,<sup>23</sup> symbols of modern life and of the new times that were emerging in the late 19th century, enjoyed widespread acceptance. For all these reasons it is not surprising that despite their functional, ephemeral nature, an interest in collecting posters emerged at an early date. The publication of *Les Maîtres de l’affiche* between 1895 and 1900 is a clear example of “poster mania”. Conceived of by Jules Chéret (1836-1932) and published by Chaix, this collection reproduces in a reduced format 256 posters by around 100 artists of different nationalities.<sup>24</sup> In addition, this period saw the proliferation of lavishly illustrated books intended to promote the new medium, notably *Les affiches illustrées* (1886-1895),<sup>25</sup> *Das moderne Plakat*,<sup>26</sup> *Picture Posters*,<sup>27</sup> *Les Affiches étrangères illustrées*,<sup>28</sup> and *The Modern Poster*.<sup>29</sup> Periodical publications also played a key role in the growing reputation of the poster, notably various specialist titles such as *The Poster*,<sup>30</sup> a monthly illustrated publication that appeared between 1898 and 1900, or the particular treatment given by *La Plume* to the poster and various designers in a number of its issues.<sup>31</sup> Throughout the 20th century the poster continued to benefit from the existence of specialist publications which disseminated and analysed the most striking designs of each period.<sup>32</sup>

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22 Notable titles include Paul Dermée and Eugene Courmont, *La técnica del cartel moderno*, 1925; Pedro Antequera Azpiri, *La publicidad artística para todos*, 1928; Rafael Bori, *Las artes gráficas y la publicidad*, 1929; Rafael Bori & José Gardó, *Tratado completo de publicidad y propaganda*, 1931; and Pedro Prat Gaballí, *Publicidad racional*, 1934.

23 As Cassandre termed them.

24 These lithographs measure 39.5 x 29 cm and have an identifying relief stamp as well as an edition number. Four lithographs were published every month. The collection of the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao has a number of them (inv. nos. 87/67, 13/27, 13/28, 13/29, 13/30, 13/31, 13/32 and 13/33).

25 Maindron 1896.

26 Sponsel 1897.

27 Hiatt 1895.

28 Bawens... [et al.] 1897.

29 Alexandre... [et al.] 1895.

30 On this publication and its importance, see Hewitt 2002.

31 Particularly notable is issue no. 110 of 15 November 1893, which was entirely devoted to the illustrated poster, as well as the special monographic issue devoted to Eugène Grasset of 15 May 1894.

32 Notable, among others, are *Art and Publicity*, *Commercial Art*, *Arts et Métiers Graphiques*, *Modern Publicity*, *Gebrauchsgraphik* and the magazine *Graphis*.

Exhibitions of posters can be considered one of the factors that contributed to the rise of collecting in this field. Among the most outstanding, given its size, was the exhibition held at the circus in Reims in 1896 (fig. 4), supervised by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898).<sup>33</sup> On display were 1,690 posters created over the course of more than a decade in countries such as France, Germany, Italy and Japan. Furthermore, posters now began to be acquired for their artistic merits, aside from the function for which they were created. This phenomenon is confirmed by a number of publications, such as the catalogue of illustrated posters published by Edmond Sagot in 1891,<sup>34</sup> which lists 2,223 posters with prices ranging between 2.50 and 60 francs. The foundations were thus laid for an area of collecting that has expanded beyond the domestic scope and important public and private collections of posters are now to be found across the globe.

## A brief history: the origins of the modern poster and its evolution in the 20th century

The origins of the modern poster undoubtedly lie in France and the artist Jules Chéret is undoubtedly considered the father of this form of expression and communication. While Chéret did not invent the poster in a strict sense, given that there are numerous earlier examples, what is clear is that he established the characteristics which defined its subsequent evolution. From an early date Chéret's posters were considered works of art and he himself stated that his creations could be seen as a type of large mural, with the street as their place of display.<sup>35</sup> Chéret's studio produced more than 1,000 posters,<sup>36</sup> notably those for the Paris Casino, the Moulin Rouge, the Folies Bergère and a number of series, including those he designed for Saxoléine. In these and many other examples the female figure is the iconographic core, around which Chéret arranged the elements characteristic of his designs.<sup>37</sup> The figure or figures that are the dominating elements in this artist's compositions are generally surrounded by a halo of colour while the design is often completed at the top with a very visually striking slogan. A key figure in the birth of the modern poster, Chéret influenced a large number of illustrators.<sup>38</sup>

Théophile Alexandre Steinlen (1859-1923) first trained in Lausanne, Switzerland, then moved to Paris in 1881 where he met the painter and illustrator Adolphe Willette (1857-1926), who in turn introduced him to Rodolphe Salis (1851-1897). Born in Châtellerauld, Salis was the owner of the cabaret Le Chat Noir,<sup>39</sup> for which Steinlen produced one of his most popular posters. He began designing posters in 1885 and barely a decade later his images, characterised by their fluid line and use of flat colours, had become extremely popular. Reference has often been made to the mutual influence between Steinlen and Toulouse-Lautrec, which is evident in various formal features and even in the subject-matter of their respective posters. In

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33 Entitled *Exposition d'affiches artistiques, françaises et étrangères, modernes et retrospectives*, it was held in the circus in Reims between 7 and 17 November, 1896. The catalogue includes a detailed list of the posters on display with corresponding technical details provided on each one and its country of origin. See Reims 1896.

34 Sagot 1891.

35 This and many other aspects of the poster as a medium for artistic expression are to be found in Jules Chéret. "The art of the hoarding" in *The New Review*, vol. XI, July 1894, pp. 47-50.

36 See Broido 1980 and particularly Paris/München/Albi 2010, one of the most complete studies on Chéret to date.

37 In many of his posters he used the Danish dancer and actress Charlotte Wiehe as a model. The women in his posters, popularly known as *chérettes*, were revolutionary in nature, representing a type of liberal, modern woman that was soon imitated by many women of the time.

38 Chéret's influence is evident in the work of other poster designers such as Lucien Lefevre (1850-1902), Albert Guillaume (1873-1942) and Georges Meunier (1869-1934).

39 Located on the Boulevard Rochechouart, it was active between 1881 and 1897. Among its clients were leading musicians such as Erik Satie and Claude Debussy, the painter Paul Signac, the novelist Guy de Maupassant and the poet Paul Verlaine.



Fig. 4  
Ernest Kalas  
Front cover of the catalogue of the *Exposition d'affiches artistiques, françaises et étrangères, modernes et rétrospectives*, Reims, November 1896

contrast, some of Steinlen's posters also reveal an approach close to social realism, evident in designs such as *Le Journal: La Traite des Blanches* of 1899, *Le Petit Sou* (fig. 5) of 1900 and the posters that he produced during World War I.<sup>40</sup>

The work of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) took poster design to a new level, representing a balanced combination of creative audacity and commercial instinct. Toulouse-Lautrec's first poster, *Moulin Rouge: La Goulue* of 1891, reveals all the features that would characterise his subsequent designs. In contrast to Chéret, who created a stereotype of a woman based on a model that he used to publicise different products and events, Toulouse-Lautrec produced posters for well-known individuals of the day who were closely associated with the spirit of late 19th-century Paris. In contrast to Chéret's almost industrial-scale output, Toulouse-Lautrec's work can be considered of a more craft-based type as it consists of just over thirty

40 On Steinlen see, among others, Bargiel/Zagrodzki 1986, Bilbao 1991, Barcelona 2000 and Madrid 2006.



Fig. 5  
Théophile Alexandre Steinlen  
*Le Petit Sou. Journal de défense sociale*, 1900  
Colour lithograph on paper. 200 x 97.9 cm  
Private collection, Bilbao

posters. As an artist, Toulouse-Lautrec was as popular as he was controversial. Nonetheless, the communicative effectiveness of his posters was unquestionable from the outset, characterised by their emphasis on line, large areas of flat colours and a certain tendency towards the caricatural. These characteristics, combined with a rejection of perspective and the artist's particular manner of composing the scenes, has led them to be associated with Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodcuts. Notable among Lautrec's oeuvre in this field are the posters he made for Aristide Bruant in 1892 and 1893; *Caudieux* and *Divan Japonais*, both of 1893; *Salon des Cent* and *La Chaine Simpson* of 1896; and *Jane Avril* of 1899.<sup>41</sup>

41 On Toulouse-Lautrec and the poster, see Paris 2002, Valencia/Barcelona 2005-2006 and Madrid 2005.

Eugène Grasset (1845-1917), a devoted student of the work of Viollet-le Duc and of oriental art, was one of Chéret's most important competitors, despite deploying an extremely different style and language. Grasset began to design posters at a relatively late date in his career given that his first commissions arrived in 1886. Nonetheless, his contribution was significant and he is considered a pioneer in the use of plant motifs and abstract ornamentation. One of his most important theoretical contributions was his *Méthode de composition ornementale* of 1905. Among Grasset's most popular posters are *Encre L. Marquet* of 1892, *Jeanne d'Arc – Sarah Bernhardt* of 1890, and *Exposition E. Grasset – Salon des Cents* of 1894. All of them reveal a marked preference for ornamentation, the use of large areas of homogeneous colour and pronounced outlines, characteristics that define the illustrations and poster designs of this pioneer of Art Nouveau.<sup>42</sup> Grasset's aesthetic also influenced other poster designers such as Paul Berthon (1872-1909).

There is no doubt that Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939) is considered the quintessential representative of the Art Nouveau poster. From a child Mucha was noted for ability to draw but he trained relatively late as an artist. After a brief period in Vienna where he worked as a painter of stage sets, in 1885 he enrolled at the Munich Kunstakademie. In 1887 Mucha moved to Paris and entered the Académie Julian, followed by the Académie Colarossi the following year. In 1894 Lemercier lithographers commissioned him to design the poster announcing the play *Gismonda* starring Sarah Bernhardt. The success of his design was such that the following year Bernhardt and Mucha signed a six-year collaborative contract, during which period Mucha designed a number of posters, set designs, costumes and jewels for the actress. This activity marked the start of a successful career marked by numerous commissions, awards, honours and decorations both in Europe and the USA. Mucha's style is characterised by the predominance of draughtsmanship and an undulating line, the use of soft colours, the heavy outlines of the figures and an all-over type of ornamentation. At the heart of the artist's designs lies the female figure: a distant, unobtainable image of woman that powerfully attracts the viewer. In many of his posters this appeal, combined with the artist's emphasis on the decorative, results in a clear predominance of the artistic over the commercial. Among Mucha's most notable posters are those he produced for Sarah Bernhardt between 1894 and 1900; the one for Job cigarette papers in 1896; *Bières de la Meuse* of 1897 (fig. 6); *Moët & Chandon Grand Cremant Impérial* of 1899; and *Cycles Perfecta* of 1902.<sup>43</sup>

Henri Meunier (1873-1922) and Henri Privat-Livemont (1861-1936) are two important representatives of the Belgian Art Nouveau poster. Meunier, who was born into a family of artists,<sup>44</sup> designed posters between 1895 and 1915. Privat-Livemont began his artistic training in Brussels then in 1883 was awarded a grant which allowed him to pursue his studies in Paris. Following his return to Belgium he started to design posters, a field in which he left more than thirty notable examples. The use of the female figure as an advertising motif, the undulating forms of these figures, the use of colour and even the type of woman to be seen in both these artists' posters inevitably suggest the influence of Alphonse Mucha. Nonetheless, Privat-Livemont introduced a number of interesting innovations such as the use of a double outline filled in with white, which emphasises the separation between the figure and the flat coloured background.<sup>45</sup>

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42 Notable on Grasset are Arwas 1978, Murray-Robertson 1981 and Lausanne 2011.

43 On Alphonse Mucha see, among others, Bridges 1992 and Madrid/Barcelona... [etc] 2008-2009.

44 He was the grandson of the realist sculptor Constantin Meunier and the son of a printmaker.

45 See Schoonbroodt 2007.





Fig. 6  
Alphonse Mucha  
*Bières de la Meuse*, 1894  
Colour lithograph on paper. 148.5 x 104.7 cm  
MNAC-Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona

Spain represents a slightly paradoxical case, given that at the end of the 19th century some of the above-mentioned publications started to give particular prominence to bullfighting posters. However, aside from the importance and the distinctive nature of posters associated with that activity, the poster was enjoying a much richer and more diverse moment in the country at this point.<sup>46</sup> The designs by Ramón Casas (1866-1932) for the Anís del Mono liqueur brand and for the weekly publication *Pèl & Ploma*; by Adrià Gual (1872-1943) for Minimax and Cosmopolis Cyclos; and by Alexandre de Riquer (1856-1920) for the Antigua Casa Franch, the cream and polish manufacturers S. Ricart, and the 3rd Exhibition of Fine Arts and Industries of 1897 (fig. 7) are all clear examples.<sup>47</sup>

In Great Britain the distinctive style of the posters and illustrations designed by Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898) reveal a dual influence: on the one hand, the British tradition associated with the work of the Pre-Raphaelite painters and the Arts and Crafts movement, and on the other, French Art Nouveau. Beardsley's posters

<sup>46</sup> The importance of Catalonia within the context of the graphic arts is assessed in Barcelona 2002.

<sup>47</sup> On the *modernista* poster in Spain, see Eguizábal 2014, pp. 81-113. For Ramón Casas and Alexandre de Riquer, see Valencia 2005 and Terrassa (Barcelona) 2006.





Fig. 7  
 Alexandre de Riquer  
*3ra Exposición de Bellas Artes e Industrias Artísticas*, 1897  
 Colour lithograph on paper. 29 x 49 cm  
 Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao  
 Inv. no. 87/67  
 From the collection *Les Maîtres de l'affiche*, no. 64, first published in 1895 (99 x 150 cm)

and illustrations divided both critics and public alike, with some praising his modernity and others seeing his designs as a vulgarisation of the Kelmscott style.<sup>48</sup> Among Beardsley's most notable posters are *Publisher*, *Children's Books*, *The Pseudonym and Autonym Libraries* and *A Comedy of Sighs!*, all of 1894. All reveal the significant influence of Japanese prints, which the artist keenly collected. Beardsley's perfectly defined drawing style, the large areas of flat colour and the expressive use of black and white are some of the distinguishing features of the work of this artist, who died aged only twenty-five but who left a profound mark on other English artists of his day and had a notable influence on American posters of the late 19th century.<sup>49</sup> Also in Britain, the Beggarstuffs, the pseudonym used by William Nicholson (1872-1949) and James Pryde (1866-1941), were notable for compositions that were quite remote from the prevailing Art Nouveau language of the late 19th century, based on the application of completely flat fields of colours against which the figures were outlined. While the Beggarstuffs' works were undoubtedly of notably high artistic merit, their commercial success was limited and few of their designs were produced in large print runs. This has meant that their creations are now greatly sought-after and can reach high prices in auctions. Among their most important posters are *Hamlet* and *Kassam Corn Flour*, both of 1894, *Harper's Magazine* of 1895, *Rowntree's Elect Cocoa* (fig. 8), and *The Black and White Gallery* of 1901.

48 The Kelmscott Press was a company founded in 1891 by William Morris which produced meticulously crafted editions of original texts and new editions of classics. Its striking designs placed particular emphasis on aspects such as the typography, illustrations and binding.

49 In addition to Beardsley, other names of note within this context are "The Four" members of the Glasgow School, Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928), J. Herbert McNair (1868-1955), Margaret Macdonald (1865-1933) and Frances Macdonald (1874-1921). While in some respects they reveal some parallels with Art Nouveau, their works demonstrate a clear evolution towards a rectilinear and stylised treatment of the forms, a restrained use of floral and undulating elements and a clear tendency towards symbolism.

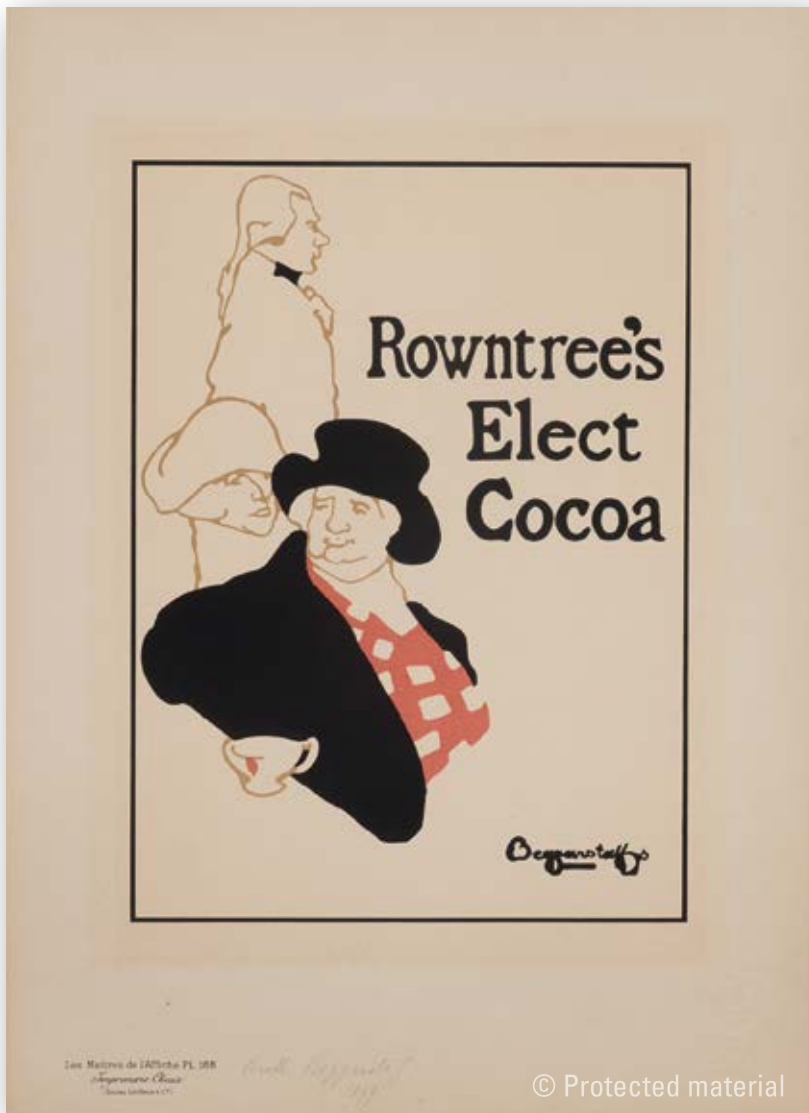


Fig. 8  
 Beggarstaffs (William Nicholson and James Pryde)  
*Rowntree's Elect Cocoa*, 1899  
 Colour lithograph on paper. 40.1 x 29.1 cm  
 Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao  
 Inv. no. 13/33  
 From the collection *Les Maîtres de l'affiche*, no. 168, first published in 1895 (95 x 70 cm)

Notable poster designers in the United States include William H. Bradley (1868-1963) and Edward Penfield (1866-1925). Bradley can be considered an example of the influence in the United States of models devised by Aubrey Beardsley and William Morris and in fact in 1894 the self-taught Bradley founded the Wayside Press, which looked to Morris's Kelmscott Press as its example. In general terms it could be said that the language of Bradley's posters was based on the pre-eminence of flat forms and stylised outlines, characteristics which link him to Beardsley. For his part, Edward Penfield was noted for his display posters designed for *Harper's Magazine*.<sup>50</sup> Penfield's career was marked by his rivalry with Bradley and Ethel Reed (1874-1925) while his style is characterised by a vigorous line, the use of flat colours and the absence of spatial references in the backgrounds of his posters, obliging the viewer to focus on the figures and the message.

At the turn of the century the language and artistic resources deployed by poster designers varied between ideas derived from the recent past and new, innovative approaches. The Vienna Secession was founded in

<sup>50</sup> See inv. no. 13/27.

Austria in 1897 with Gustav Klimt as its first president.<sup>51</sup> With regard to the graphic arts and poster design, one of the most important creative figures within the Secession was Koloman Moser (1868-1918). Trained at the Academy and the School of Applied Arts in Vienna, Moser's graphic work reveals a formal sobriety that has certain parallels with the Glasgow School. Furthermore, in contrast to other Art Nouveau schools such as the French and Belgian, the designs of both Moser and Alfred Roller (1864-1935) are marked by a greater interest in a geometrical treatment of the forms. Among Moser's most notable posters are *Frommes Kalendar* and *Richardsquelle* (both of 1899) and those for the Vienna Secession's fifth and thirteenth exhibitions of 1899 and 1902 respectively.

There is no doubt that Germany was one of the most innovative centres for design in the early 20th century, led by creative figures such as Peter Behrens (1868-1949).<sup>52</sup> In the field of graphic design, the *Plakatstil* or "poster style", of which the leading representative was Lucian Bernhard (1883-1972),<sup>53</sup> promoted a minimalist language that can be considered the opposite of German Art Nouveau or *Jugendstil*. A flat coloured background, the striking presence of the product and the brand name are the three elements normally to be found in these posters. Notable examples include those designed for Priester matches in 1903, Steinway & Sons pianos in 1910, Stiller shoes in 1912, Bosch in 1914 and Manoli cigarettes in 1915 (fig. 9). Within the *Plakatstil* and continuing Bernhard's approach were other figures such as Julius Klinger (1876-1950), Hans Rudi Erdt (1883-1918) and Julius Gipkens (1883-1968). All of them worked for the lithographers Holerbaum & Schmidt. In addition, Ludwig Hohlwein (1874-1949) is considered one of the principal German poster designers of the first half of the 20th century. His first designs date from 1906 and his prolific career developed together with the complex political transformation of interwar Germany. Over the course of his career his language evolved from the simple forms and naturalist images of his early work towards a combination of flat backgrounds over which he located the outlined figures and slogans with extensive text. Among Hohlwein's most important posters are *Confection Kehl* of 1908, *Starnberger See* of 1910, *Riquet Tee* of 1922, *Bad Kreuznach* of 1927, his 1929 recruitment poster entitled *Und du?* [And you?], and *Deutsche Lufthansa* of 1936.<sup>54</sup>

From the end of the 19th century a series of important poster designers emerged in Italy who would enjoy major international reputations. Among them was Leonetto Cappiello (1875-1942), who moved to Paris in 1898 where he worked exclusively for Vercasson printers until the 1920s. Despite his Italian origins, Cappiello is considered one of the great innovators of the French poster in the early 20th century. His style, which made use of a dark, plain background against which a figure stood out, expressed enormous colour and optimism and influenced a number of other designers such as Jean d'Ylen (1886-1938). Among Cappiello's finest posters are *Anis Infernal* of 1905, *Oxo* of 1911, *Papier a Cigarettes Job* of 1912, *Cognac Boutelleau* of 1919, *Bitter Campari* of 1921 and *Nitrolian* of 1929.<sup>55</sup> Other outstanding figures are Marcelo Dudovich (1878-1962) and Leopoldo Metlicovitz (1868-1944). Dudovich began his training at the Scuola Capi d'Arte in Trieste then moved to Milan in 1898. There he started work for Ricordi,<sup>56</sup> which in addition to its international fame as a music publishers, printed some of the finest Italian posters of the early decades of

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51 Klimt himself designed one of the posters that announced the group's first exhibition in 1898.

52 Behrens is considered the first industrial designer. He contributed major innovations to the field of typography and left behind numerous examples of his skills in the fields of architecture, industrial design, typography and graphic design. Particularly noteworthy are his contributions as artistic advisor to the AEG from 1907 onwards.

53 The pseudonym of Emil Kahn. On this designer, see in particular Stuttgart 1999.

54 On this artist, see Stuttgart 1985 and München 1996.

55 For more detailed information on this artist, see Paris 1981 and Rennett 2004.

56 The director of Ricordi was the painter, designer, illustrator and poster designer Adolfo Hohenstein (1854-1928). Of German origin, he is considered the father of Italian poster design, working in the Italian Art Nouveau or *Liberty* style.

the 20th century. Dudovich, who made use of an eclectic style, had an extremely long career. Among his most celebrated posters are *Fonotipia Dischi Artistici* of 1906, *Dunlop* of 1908, *Mele & C. Napoli* of 1913, *La Rinascenza* of 1925 and *Crociera Aerea nel Decennale* of 1933, the latter two with notably Futurist echoes.<sup>57</sup> While Metlicovitz's early work can be associated with the *Liberty* or *Floreal* style, his long career meant that he experimented with a varied range of artistic idioms, to be seen, for example, in the posters that he created for Moretti raincoats in the 1930s.

World War I offered a wide range of opportunities for the poster outside the commercial field and designers could now make full use of its powers of communication and persuasion in the service of ideas. As a result, between 1914 and 1918 all the nations involved in the conflict produced posters intended to encourage recruitment, celebrate patriotic values, arouse sympathy and solidarity towards victims, denigrate the enemy and collect funds for supporting the war effort. One of the most popular war posters was *Britons: Lord Kitchener Wants You. Join your Country's Army!* created in 1914 by Alfred Leete (1882-1933), which inspired numerous imitations such as the famous image of Uncle Sam pointing to the viewer in *I Want You for the US Army* designed by James Montgomery Flagg (1877-1960) in 1917. In France, World War I was a context in which some veteran designers such as Adolphe Willette or Georges Goursat (known as "Sem": 1863-1934) demonstrated their powers as draughtsmen with occasional designs. Two of the most prolific poster designers were Abel Faivre (1867-1945) and the above-mentioned Steinlen. In 1916 Faivre created one of the most popular war posters of all times, entitled *On les aura!* In addition to his activities in the field of posters, in 1921 Faivre published a series of satirical vignettes on the war entitled *Jours de Guerre 1915-1919*.<sup>58</sup> At the end of his career Steinlen designed a large group of posters including *Journée Serbe* and *En Belgique les belges ont faim*, both of 1915. He also produced dozens of drawings and prints that were published in 1918 in a special issue of *L'Art et les artistes* entitled *La Guerre par Steinlen*.<sup>59</sup>

During the interwar period poster design reveals the influence of the avant-gardes and the rise of Art Deco. The cult of modern life, the machine and speed are some of the defining characteristics of Futurism. It is thus not surprising that the aesthetic associated with this movement, founded in Italy in 1909 by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944), had a wide-ranging influence on the world of the poster. As a result, designers such as Federico Seneca (1891-1976) experimented with this language and made a decisive contribution to updating the Italian poster. Seneca's poster for the Coppa della Perugina of 1924, in which all the emphasis is on the racing car in movement, or the simplification of the human form in the posters for Perugina chocolates and Pastas Buitoni in the late 1920s are a clear example of a use of the Futurist idiom, which had an international influence. The key Futurist figure with regard to design was, however, Fortunato Depero (1892-1960), who produced not only posters but also set designs, interior design such as that of the Cabaret del Diavolo in Rome in 1922, and also worked as an illustrator for magazines including *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, which brought him international fame and recognition. Notable among Depero's posters are *Teatri degli Indipendenti* of 1922, *VIII<sup>a</sup> Mostra d'Arte di Como* and *Mandorlato Vido*, both of 1924, *Magnesia S. Pellegrino* of 1925 and the series of posters that he produced for Campari between the 1920s and 1940s.<sup>60</sup> Also worthy of mention are the designs produced in the 1920s and 1930s by Giuseppe Maggnoli (known as "Maga"; 1878-1933), Plinio Codognato (1878-1940), Paolo Federico Garretto (1903-1989), Erberto Carboni (1899-1984) and a number by Gino Boccasile (1901-1952).<sup>61</sup>

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57 Some interesting bibliographical references on this artist in Granzotto 1999 and Trieste (Italy) 2002.

58 Faivre 1921.

59 Mauclair 1918.

60 For Depero, see in particular Torino 2004, Rovereti (Italy) 2007 and Scudiero 2009.

61 For the influence of Futurism on posters, see Forli (Italy) 2008 and Valencia 2010.



Fig. 9  
 Lucian Bernhard  
*Manoli*, 1911  
 Colour lithograph on paper. 68 x 93 cm  
 Museum für Gestaltung Zürich

Cubism, the movement led by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and Juan Gris, marked a break away from the traditional way of conceiving painting. Thus the illusionistic representation of reality and the use of perspective, aspects that had prevailed in pictorial practice for centuries, now gave way to a new idiom based on the deconstruction of the model into multiple fragments and the generation of a new reality and a new work through its reconstruction. Among the works in which the application of the concepts of Cubism to poster design are most evident include the poster that Fernand Léger produced for Rolf de Maré's Ballets Suédois in 1922 and the posters entitled *Southern Railway* and *Nach England, Über Vlissingen Tagesschiff* of 1930 by Austin Cooper (1890-1964). Edward McKnight Kauffer (1890-1954) was very probably one of the designers most capable of combining elements of Cubism and Futurism in his posters, of which notable examples include the one for the *Daily Herald* of 1918, *Metropolis* of 1926 and *Power: The Nerve Centre of London's Underground* of 1930.<sup>62</sup>

The emergence of Constructivism in 1914 gave both art and artists a markedly social and political role, although this vision was not shared by all Russian creative figures of the time.<sup>63</sup> Constructivist artists renounced "art for art's sake" in order to focus on creative procedures closely linked to functionality with the intention that the work of art should be conceived with a particular end in mind. This approach had a direct effect on the graphic arts, a field in which a large number of artists were working at this period. One of the

<sup>62</sup> On this artist, see Haworth-Booth 2005 and Webb/Skipwith 2007.

<sup>63</sup> Kazimir Malevich, the leading representative of Suprematism and the champion of "art for art's sake", conceived of artistic creation in terms diametrically opposed to those of Vladimir Tatlin, the pioneer and promoter of Constructivism.

most important was the architect, painter, graphic designer and photographer El Lissitzky (1890-1941). Lissitzky experimented with painting, graphic design and photomontage and his designs enjoyed widespread dissemination through his collaboration with magazines such as *Veshch*, *Wendingen*, *Broom*, *Merz* and *De Stijl*. Among his most important posters are *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* of 1919, *USSR-Russia. Exhibitions at the Museum of Decorative Arts, Zurich* of 1929 and *Give us more Tanks, Anti-tank Guns and Aeroplanes* of 1942. The posters designed by Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956) are characterised by their unusual compositions and viewpoints, the arrangement of the elements and the use of photomontage. Particularly significant are his posters for *Dobrolet* and Mozer watches of 1923, the popular *Books* of 1925 and the poster that he designed to promote the film *The Battleship Potemkin* in 1926. Notable alongside Lissitzky and Rodchenko was Gustav Klutssis (1895-1944), whose posters include *The Development of Transportation is essential for fulfilling the Five-Year Plan* of 1929, *We will return our Coal Debt to the Country* of 1930 and *Constructing Socialism under the Banner of Lenin* of 1931. These and other images summarise the essence of Constructivism, reflected in the boldness of their images and their pronounced socio-political content.

The influence of other avant-garde movements such as Expressionism is evident in some specific posters, including those which Otto Arpke (1886-1943) and Erich Ludwig Stahl (1887-?) designed to promote the film *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* directed by Robert Wiene in 1919. The jagged lines, distortion of the forms, subjective and individualistic style and markedly symbolic content of designs associated with Expressionism are to be found in other posters, such as those created by Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980)<sup>64</sup> during his early years or the one that Heinz Schulz-Neudamm (1899-1969) produced to promote the film *Metropolis*, directed by Fritz Lang in 1926. However, in the 1920s and 1930s German poster design can be particularly associated with the emergence and activities of the Bauhaus. Founded in Weimar in 1919 by Walter Gropius, its aim was to expand its students' creative potential and to free them from any artistic prejudices. The celebrated phrase "form follows function" sums up one of Gropius's key concepts and reflects the idea to which all good design should aspire, including that of a poster. The works of graphic designers such as Herbert Bayer (1900-1985) summarise the features of the rationalist language characteristic of the Bauhaus, features which are to be found in the poster that Bayer produced for an exhibition on Kandinsky in 1926, or the one for the Exhibition of European Decorative Arts of 1927 held in Leipzig in which the visual content is reduced to just the typography and to grey, blue and red rectangular forms. One of the artists who most promoted the new Bauhaus approach within the field of graphic design was Jan Tschichold (1902-1974). While never part of that school, his publication of 1928 entitled *Die neue Typographie* [The new Typography]<sup>65</sup> is considered a manifesto of its fundamental ideas applied to typography. Tschichold proposed a typographic design based on transmitting contents in the simplest and most effective manner, an approach that is evident in many of his posters, including the series that he produced to promote the films shown at the Phoebus Palast in Berlin, such as *Die Hose* [The Trousers] of 1926, *Der General* [The General], *Die Frau ohne Namen* [The Woman without a Name], *Orient-Express* and *Napoleon* (fig. 10), all of 1927.<sup>66</sup>

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64 Such as *Kunstschau - Mai-Oktober Wien* (1908) or *Pietà* (1909).

65 Tschichold 1928.

66 On this designer, see Le Coultre/Purvis 2007 and Jong... [et al.] 2008.



The so-called “musketeers of the poster” – Cassandre, Paul Colin, Charles Loupot and Jean Carlu – require separate mention given that their work fuses the spirit of the Roaring Twenties with that of Art Deco. In addition, their careers offer a clear example of the increasing professionalisation of graphic design. Adolphe Mouron Cassandre (1901-1968) is considered one of the leading names in modern poster design in the inter-war period. He studied at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Bordeaux and at the *Académie Julian*. He started work as a designer for Hachard & Cie., and in 1923 created what is considered his first poster, *Au Bucheron*. From that point onwards his striking designs revolutionised the world of French posters. Cassandre was able to express his ideas in an extremely impactful language that combined elements associated with avant-garde movements such as Cubism and Futurism in an eclectic manner. His posters are also a clear example of his ability to capture the viewer’s attention given that his simple, striking and radically innovative designs with their markedly geometrical style, distinctive typography and brief text transmitted the message required by the brand or product to the potential consumer in a direct manner. Among Cassandre’s most popular posters are *L’Intransigeant* of 1925, *Étoile du Nord* and *Nord Express*, both of 1927, *L’Atlantique* of 1931, *Dubonnet* and *Grande quinzaine internationale de Lawn-Tennis* (fig. 11), both of 1932, and *Normandie* of 1935.<sup>67</sup>

Using a notably personal and less rationalist style than Cassandre, the posters of Paul Colin (1892-1985)<sup>68</sup> reflect the Paris of Maurice Chevalier, Josephine Baker and *La Revue Nègre*. During the course of his lengthy career he produced more than 1,900 posters, the majority of them simple designs with a central figure, usually in movement, against a plain or graduated background and a slogan that is normally located at the top or bottom edge. Colin’s skills gave rise to some of the most dynamic posters of the 1920s and 1930s, including *La Revue Nègre* of 1925, *Tabarin* of 1928, *Serge Lifar* of 1935 and the later *Silence – L’ennemi guette vos confidences* of 1940 and *Le Progrès* of 1954.<sup>69</sup>

The earliest posters by Charles Loupot (1892-1962) date from 1916, from which date onwards his reputation and number of commissions increased, leading him to specialise in this medium. Using a style that combines the influence of Cubism and Futurism, Loupot frequently made use of pastel effect and spray paint in his works. All his works reveal an exceptionally pure style and enormous creative capacity, characteristics to be found in posters such as *Voisin Automobiles* of 1923, *Jouets. Au Bon Marché* of 1926, *Valentine* of 1928, *T. Twining* of 1930, *Sérodent* of 1935 and the lengthy series that he created for *St. Raphaël* from the 1930s to the 1950s.<sup>70</sup>

Jean Carlu (1900-1997) is another of the great names of the French inter-war poster. For Carlu the poster should not just be seen but also remembered among the enormous number of visual images that fill the city and bombard the viewer’s retina. This combination of visibility and memorability is evident in the force and rigorous design of all his posters from his earliest works onwards. Among Carlu’s most notable creations are *Pépa Bonafé* of 1925, *Aquarium de Monaco* of 1926, *Paris Soir* of 1928, *Mon Savon* of 1930, *Disques Odéon* of 1930 and *Pour le désarmement des nations* of 1932.<sup>71</sup>

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67 On Cassandre, see Mouron 1985.

68 Inv. no. 90/12.

69 On this poster designer, see Weill/Rennert 1989.

70 Inv. no. 12/72. Of interest on this designer is Zagrodzky 1998.

71 On this designer, see in particular Paris 1980.

The Spanish Civil War and World War II were two conflicts in which the poster played a significant role as a propaganda element. As noted above, World War I was a testing ground that revealed the potential of this medium, when artists began to experiment with themes and images intended to mobilise the population. Almost two decades later the communication techniques, themes and idioms used in war posters achieved a notably high level of sophistication. Calls to defend the country, scorn and fear of the enemy and its possible victory as well as ridiculing the opposing side or demonising it are some of the most frequently recurring concepts used in such posters. Between 1936 and 1939 a significant number of Spanish designers produced posters in support of the Republic, creating images that often reveal the influence of the avant-garde movements such as Constructivism and Cubism. Notable designers include Arturo Ballester (1892-1981), Emeterio Melendreras (1905-1986), Mauricio Amster (1907-1980), Josep Renau (1907-1982), Juan Antonio Morales (1909-1984) (fig. 12), José Bardasano (1910-1979), Lorenzo Goñi (1911-1992) and Carles Fontseré (1916-2007).<sup>72</sup> The opposing side had its own posters, albeit fewer in number, including designs by Juan Cabanas Erausquin (1907-1979), Carlos Sáenz de Tejada (1897-1958), Teodoro Delgado (1907-1975) and Manuel Bayo Marín (1908-1953). For its part, World War II encouraged the creation of important posters, notably the one issued by the British Government in 1939 entitled *Keep Calm and Carry On*, as well as *We Can Do It!*, designed by J. Howard Miller for the American company Westinghouse Electric in 1943 with the famous image of Rosie the Riveter. Also important was the work of the above-mentioned Jean Carlu, whose anti-war activism is evident in the early 1930s. Among his designs, Carlu produced a poster in support of the Spanish Republic entitled *Bombes sur Madrid* in 1937, and a series of posters created in the United States, including *Give 'em both barrels* of 1941; *Production! America's answer* of 1942; *America open your eyes!* and *Entre le marteau et l'enclume*, both of 1944.

The years following World War II saw interesting work by various designers who had emigrated to the United States, including Herbert Matter (1907-1984) and the above-mentioned Hebert Bayer, the Russian Alexei Brodovitch (1898-1971) and the Czech Ladislav Sutnar (1897-1976). In Europe, one of the most interesting directions was that pursued by the Swiss School or International Typographic Style. In the early decades of the 20th century Switzerland had a number of important designers including Otto Morach (1887-1973), Charles Kuhn (1901-1975), Otto Baumberger (1889-1961) and Niklaus Stoecklin (1896-1982), all characterised by their use of a realist treatment. Quite different, however, was the work of the Swiss School, which deployed a rationalist, synthetic idiom which largely continued the direction opened up by some of the pre-war avant-garde movements. The order and minimalism achieved by the International Typographic Style was the result of a process initiated by creators such as Ernst Keller (1891-1968), Max Bill (1908-1994) and Théo Ballmer (1902-1965), who began to experiment with this language in the 1930s. One of the most important designers of the Swiss School was Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914-1996). His posters are based on a neutral, direct design which communicates with the viewer without any evident interference or techniques of persuasion. Müller-Brockmann's creations have a visual power and a degree of modernity that they retain today, decades later. Notable among his extensive output are *American Books Today* of 1954, *Wir telefonieren mit der ganzen Welt* [We phone the whole world cheaper and faster] of 1957, *Juni-Festwochen Zürich* of 1959,

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72 On the Republican poster during the Spanish Civil War, see, among others, Julián 1993 and Fundación Pablo Iglesias 2004 and 2008.

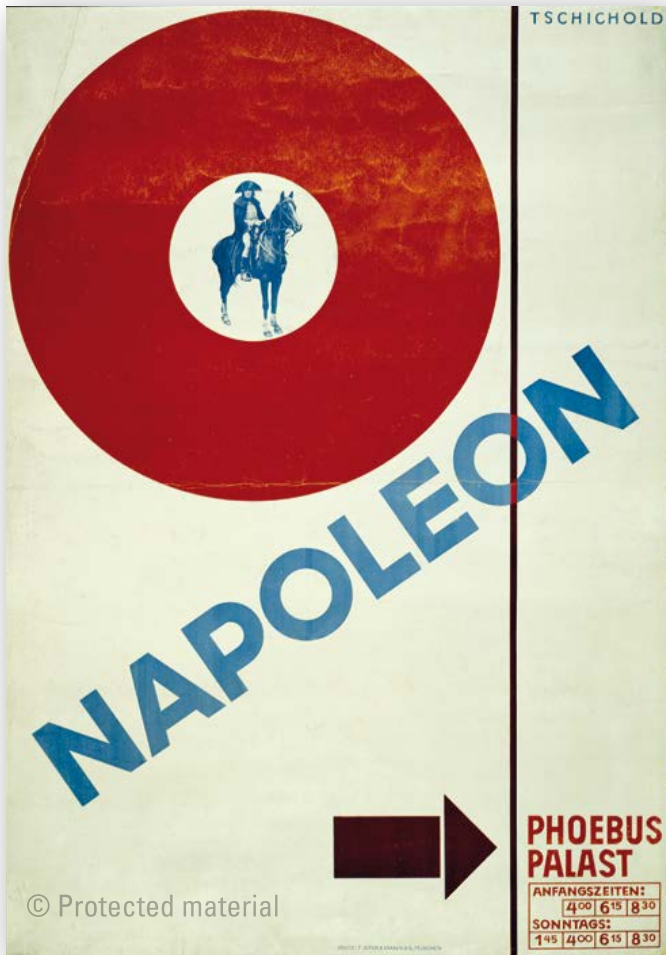


Fig. 10  
 Jan Tschichold  
*Napoleon*, 1927  
 Colour lithograph on paper. 118 x 84 cm  
 Kunstbibliothek – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin



Fig. 11  
 Adolphe Mouron Cassandre  
*Grande quinzaine internationale de Lawn-Tennis*, 1932  
 Colour lithograph on paper. 159 x 119 cm  
 Museum für Gestaltung Zürich



Fig. 12  
 Children looking at the poster *Los Nacionales* by Juan Antonio Morales on a street in Madrid  
 Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. Archivo General de la Administración,  
 Photographic archive of the Delegación de Propaganda of Madrid during the Civil War  
 Ref. F-04052-54373

*Der Film* and *Weniger Lärm* [Less Noise] (fig. 13), both of 1960.<sup>73</sup> Similar in approach are the designs of Armin Hofmann (born 1920), which are notable for the contrasts between elements such as the colour, line and forms. Much of Hofmann's work is in fact based on the contrast between two colours, normally black and white, the presence of images that tend towards abstraction and striking typography. Among his finest designs are *Die gute Form* [Good Form] of 1954, *Giselle* of 1959 and *Rothko-Chillida* of 1962.

Another important creative centre from the 1940s onwards was the so-called New York School. The designer Paul Rand (1915-1996) was one of its leading figures. Extremely knowledgeable about the European avant-gardes, from which he inherited his particular skill in manipulating forms, Rand never lost sight of the essentially communicative function that a poster, magazine cover or advertisement must fulfil. Particularly worthy of note among his posters are those entitled *Subway Posters Score* of 1948, *No Way Out* of 1950, *Explore with Books – Book Week* of 1958, *American Institute of Graphic Art* of 1968, and *IBM* of 1982.<sup>74</sup> Other important designers of the New York School include Bradbury Thompson (1911-1995), Alex Steinweiss

<sup>73</sup> On this designer, see Müller-Brockmann 1995 and Purcell 2006.

<sup>74</sup> On Rand, see in particular Heller 1999 and Kroeger 2008.

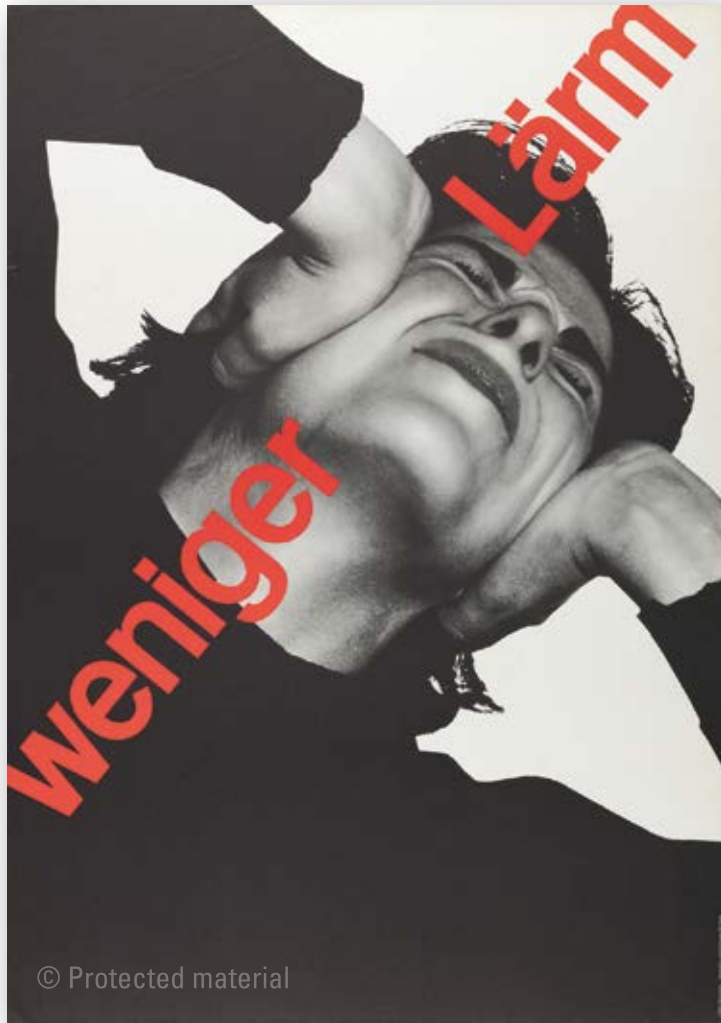


Fig. 13  
Josef Müller-Brockmann  
*Weniger Lärm*, 1960  
Colour lithograph on paper. 128 x 90,5 cm  
Museum für Gestaltung Zürich

(1917-2011) and Alvin Lustig (1915-1955), who applied their innovative ideas to record and book covers. Within the field of poster design the work of Saul Bass (1920-1996) became extremely popular, partly due to his links with the film industry. Bass trained in New York with György Kepes (1906-2001), founder of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the MIT. Kepes introduced Bass to the language of Constructivism and the Bauhaus, from which he probably inherited the synthetic approach that characterises many of his works. Bass worked with great directors such as Otto Preminger, Billy Wilder, Alfred Hitchcock and Martin Scorsese. Among his best known film posters are those for *The Man with the Golden Arm* of 1955, *Bonjour Tristesse* of 1954, *Vertigo* of 1958, *Exodus* and *Anatomy of a Murder*, both of 1960, *Advise and Consent* of 1962, and *The Cardinal* of 1964. Bass also designed the credits for some of these films and others, including a number considered masterpieces, such as those for *West Side Story* and *North by Northwest*, the latter directed by Hitchcock in 1959.<sup>75</sup>

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75 On Saul Bass, see Bass/Kirkham 2011.

In the 1950s and 1960s Italian graphic design benefitted from the contribution of two leading names, Armando Testa and Giovanni Pintori. Considered one of the finest Italian post-war poster designers, Armando Testa (1917-1992) opened an advertising studio in Turin in the 1940s that became one of the most important in this sector in the country. Until well into the 1960s he produced a large number of posters using a style based on synthetic design, often accompanied by an element of humour. Among his most striking examples are the posters he designed for Carpano vermouth between 1949 and 1950, *Atlante Pirelli* of 1954, *Nastro adesivo Scotch* of 1959, *Punt & Mes* of 1960 and *Plast Milano* of 1972.<sup>76</sup> For more than three decades from the late 1930s onwards Giovanni Pintori (1912-1999) was employed in the advertising department of Olivetti, a key firm in the history of industrial design. There he worked with Marcello Nizzoli, contributing to the creation and consolidation of the company's corporate image. Deploying a restrained but extremely effective approach, Pintori created posters such as *Olivetti* of 1949, *Hispano Olivetti*, *Lexicon 80* around 1950, *Olivetti Elettrosumma 22* and the series for the *Olivetti Lettera 22* model between the 1950s and 1960s.

Another creative centre worthy of separate mention is Poland. Polish posters of the second half of the 20th century were outstanding for the originality that dozens of designers brought to this field, most of them associated with the world of culture and the arts. Between the 1950s and 1970s the language employed in these posters for films, operas, ballets and plays had little or nothing to do with the various trends and schools currently in vogue. In fact, designers such as Henryk Tomaszewski (1914-2005), Waldemar Swierzy (born 1931), Wiktor Gorka (1922-2004), Jan Lenica (1928-2001) and Roman Cieslewicz (1930-1996) (fig. 14) rethought the medium through their use of an essentially pictorial and very expressionist language, creating images with a high symbolic and metaphorical content that rarely fail to impress the viewer.<sup>77</sup>

In contrast to the gravity of the Polish poster in the years after World War II, the work of the French-born Raymond Savignac (1907-2002) provides a true counterpart, given that he conceived of the poster as a means of amusing the viewer. The simplicity of the language, use of bright, striking colour, refined irony and touches of Surrealism are among the defining characteristics of this artist. Among Savignac's most popular posters are *Monsavon* of 1949, *Olivetti Lettera 22* of 1953, *Gitanes* of 1954, *Aspro* of 1964, and *Bic* of 1977.<sup>78</sup> Other designers also pursued this direction, using humour as a communicative device. They include Herve Morvan (1917-1980) and Herbert Leupin (1916-1999), the creator of memorable posters which promoted leading brands such as Binaca (1951), Pelican (1952), Coca-Cola (1953) and Agfa (1956).

The 1960s saw important changes that largely determined the idioms and subjects of a number of posters. The complex socio-political climate of this decade was marked by protests in various countries by citizens who were increasingly aware and critical of the nature of established authority and its law and order systems. The anti-Vietnam war demonstrations and the social malaise in France, culminating in the protests of May 1968, are clear examples. Associated with the latter phenomenon, the critical and socially committed posters of Atelier Populaire filled the streets of Paris with slogans such as "A la révolution", "La lutte continue" and "Non a l'université de classe" (fig. 15).<sup>79</sup> Similarly, in the United States, the emergence of counter-cultural trends such as the hippie movement were reflected in so-called psychedelic posters. This new aesthetic can largely be associated with the figure of the music promotor Bill Graham and the legendary

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76 On this designer, see in particular Torino 1985, Madrid 1989 and Torino 2001.

77 On the poster in Poland, see Famulicki/Kurpik 2005.

78 On Savignac, see in particular Paris 2001.

79 On May 1968 posters, see, among others, Gasquet 1978.





Fig. 14  
 Roman Cieslewicz  
*L'attentat*, 1972  
 Offset on paper. 40 x 60 cm  
 Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao  
 Inv. no. 14/24

concerts that he organised in the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco for groups such as Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and The Velvet Underground. The designer Wes Wilson (born 1937) was commissioned to produce posters for them, developing a style that would be adopted by other designers such as Victor Moscoso (born 1936), Loren Rehbock (born 1941) and Peter Max (born 1937) (fig. 16). Also notable in the 1960s was Milton Glaser (born 1929), creator of the famous logo *I love New York*, whose career is defined by a marked interest in eclecticism and an ongoing concern for rethinking and reinventing. Both characteristics are to be found in posters such as *Dylan* and *Mahalia Jackson*, both of 1967, *Big Nudes* of 1968, *Sony Tape Full Color Sound* of 1979, *NY Film Fest* of 1988 and *Art is... Whatever* of 1996.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> On this designer, see Glaser 1983 and Glaser 2000.



Fig. 15  
 Atelier Populaire  
*Non à l'université de classe*, 1968  
 Serigraph on paper. 90 x 53 cm  
 Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris

Japanese design emerged forcefully on the international scene in the 1950s. In general terms, Japanese designers located themselves between tradition and the assimilation and reformulation of various aspects of the European avant-gardes. Many poster designers, among them Ryuichi Yamashiro (1920), Masuda Tadashi (1922), Kazumasa Nagai (1929), Ikko Tanaka (1930-2002), Shigeo Fukuda (1932-2009), Tadanori Yokoo (1936), Sato Koichi (1944) and Takenobu Igarashi (1944), clearly reveal this process of synthesis. Yusaku Kamekura (1915-1997) is worthy of separate mention for his pioneering role and his contribution to the development and international dissemination of Japanese graphic design. Kamekura studied at the Institute for New Architecture and Industrial Arts in Tokyo, a school that played a key role in introducing Bauhaus theories into Japan, and the use that Kamekura made of photography, geometrical elements, colour and typography reveals the evident influence of the Bauhaus on his work. Some of his most important posters are *Peacefully Use Atomic Energy* of 1956; *SP A Great New "35"* of 1957; the series of posters for the *Tokyo 1964 Olympic Games* (fig. 17); *Mexico 68*; *Expo '70 in Osaka*; and *Design Forum '87*.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> See Tokyo 1996.

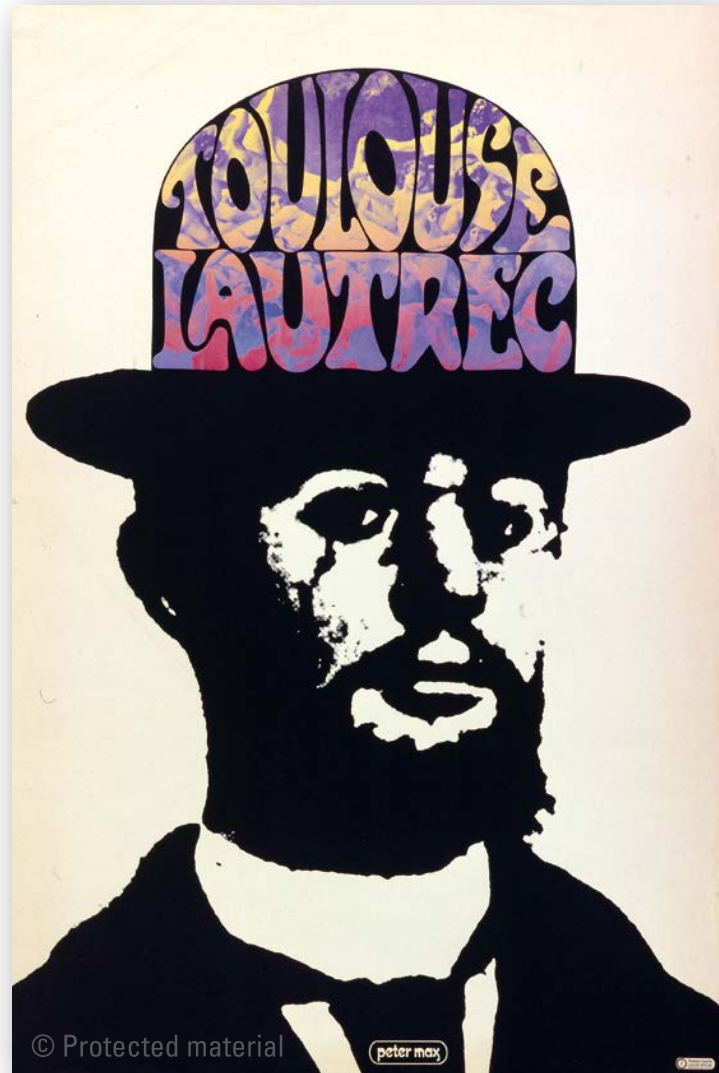


Fig. 16  
Peter Max  
*Toulouse-Lautrec*, 1967  
Offset on paper. 91.5 x 61.5 cm  
Museum für Gestaltung Zürich

Numerous graphic designers and design groups stand out in the final decades of the 20th century. The Wild Plakken collective emerged in the Netherlands in the late 1970s, comprising Frank Beekers, Rob Schröder and Lies Ros, all born in 1952. From its outset the group had a clearly political stance, seeing its design as a tool for “arousing awareness”. Wild Plakken only worked for clients committed to social and political change such as trade unions, human rights supporters, ecological groups and left-wing parties. Using a dynamic, clear and direct style and making use of bold colours and techniques such as photomontage, this group, which continued active until the 1990s, created a very distinctive aesthetic that has inspired generations of designers. Among Wild Plakken’s most popular posters are *Women Against Apartheid* of 1984 and *Culture in Another South Africa* of 1989.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, Post-modernism called many of the values that underpinned western society into question, with the consequent need to change many of the postulates that had prevailed during the period of industrial society. Post-modernism thus arose as a trend which broke away from the international style and in the field of design questioned the characteristics of the rationalist language that had been so influential since the 1940s. Historical and decorative elements were now reassessed by a generation of new designers who focused much of their creative energy on individual values, the cult of forms and the



Fig. 17  
Yusaku Kamekura  
Tokyo 1964, 1964  
Serigraph on paper. 102 x 55 cm  
Museum für Gestaltung Zürich

absence of social commitment. However, the context occupied by the world of the poster was so eclectic and diverse that it makes the already complex task of systematic classification required by any historical study still more difficult. Nonetheless, various leading designers who made significant contributions to the poster in the final decades of the 20th century can be singled out. They include Wolfgang Weingart (1941), Rosmarie Tissi (born 1937), April Greiman (born 1948), Michael Vanderbyl (born 1947) and Paula Scher (born 1948). The latter, who trained at the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, worked from the late 1970s onwards as a designer of record sleeves and advertising for the CBS and Atlantic record labels. Many of her designs reveal the influence of movements such as Constructivism, Art Deco and the Swiss School, as seen in *The Best of Jazz* of 1979, *The Diva is Dismissed* of 1994, *Happy Earthday New York* of 1995, *Art is...* of 1996, *America Cult & Culture* of 1999, and *Feld Ballet Tech* of 2001.

Just as in the 19th century the birth of photography resulted in the decline of the hegemony of painting as a medium for an iconic apprehension of reality, in the second half of the 20th century the poster was partly displaced by other more direct means such as radio, television and internet. It could be said that this period was characterised by a dual process, given that the application of the poster gradually became more restricted and specialised. A brief study of the images now to be seen in our cities would suggest that the poster has possibly lost a great deal of its importance in a commercial context but that it continues to be extremely relevant in the context of cultural promotion and political and social activism.

The philosopher, critic and professor of communication theory Marshall McLuhan wrote: "Historians and archaeologists will one day discover that the ads of our time are the richest and most faithful reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities",<sup>82</sup> a statement which time and history have confirmed. Posters of the past offer a wide-ranging sample of consumer habits and customs of their era. The posters of today, which cry out for our attention from walls, hoardings and stands in our cities, still provide this information but we may need a little time to realise this.

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82 McLuhan 2009, p. 272 (essay first published in 1964).

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