Contents

Jürgen Döring

In 1966, the Polish poster artist Jan Lenica observed: "The poster undoubtedly has a function, it has a job to do, and it must fulfill this duty. However, its meaning lies not in what it has to convey, but in what it has to say in itself."

The "meaning" of posters, what makes them special and leads to their being admired many years after their creation, is the subject of this publication and the accompanying exhibition. We consider posters as an artistic genre that has its own history, its own artists, and its own designers. Although the main task of posters is advertisement, our focus has been primarily on design innovation and artistic quality.

Diversity and classification

The variety of themes that we see on posters today developed gradually. The first posters advertised events: theater productions, concerts, or troupes of traveling performers. These early printed announcements were simple in design. They generally contained longer texts, accentuated by bold headlines, and often used simple woodcuts or decorative frames as eye-catching features to complement the text.

Until well into the nineteenth century, however, in many places only official announcements were allowed to be posted publicly. An example from the princely city of Güstrow shows how this led to some strange practices. The city boasted a princely theater, which was visited regularly by groups of traveling players. They were not allowed to post their announcements (which have been preserved in the Güstrow city archive) in the streets, but only in specific, but generally accessible, entrance halls. The public display of commercial advertising had been permitted in France since the 1789 Revolution and in England too from the eighteenth century. But in the German states, with a few exceptions, it was apparently not until after the revolutionary years of 1848/49 that posters could be displayed publicly.

Advertising of consumer goods only appeared later, initially in the form of small advertisements and adhesive labels. In this sector, posters only emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, and from the start they looked different from event posters. Most of them were so-called "chromolithographs," elaborately printed color lithographs that were too delicate to be displayed outside in all weathers. They were highly detailed, painting-like creations to be admired at leisure within stores and at close range.

In the period after 1890, when modern, artistic posters appeared in Paris, within just a few years both event posters and product advertising adopted the progressive forms of the Parisian Art Nouveau poster.

Political posters, the third major thematic area after posters advertising culture and consumer goods, had already appeared sporadically since the French Revolution. But they only emerged in larger numbers and underwent continuous development at the time of the outbreak of World War I.

Posters in the areas of culture, consumer goods, and politics can be usefully classified according to the client in question. In the cultural field there are, for example, exhibition, theater, movie, and music posters, as well as advertising for a wide variety of media, from the early book posters around 1830 to today's announcements of new websites. Product advertising can be divided up according to the various economic sectors—car and bicycle posters, fashion and food posters, perfume, cigarettes, and much more. Political posters can be classified in line with their historical background. They began in 1914 with war posters, followed by election posters—in democracies—and propaganda posters in dictatorships. Protest posters only became more prevalent after 1968, whereas public information posters—for example about road safety or sexually transmitted diseases—appeared in increasing numbers from the mid-twentieth century onwards.

There are a few exceptional cases that do not fit into this classification by theme and client. They include artists' posters—posters that are designed by visual artists rather than professional designers, and that stand out as something special because of their personal style. Although most artists' posters are exhibition posters, they also include some remarkable political posters and sometimes even product advertisements. Artists' posters have existed since Expressionism around 1910, but enjoyed their heyday between the 1950s and the 1980s. Decorative posters form another exceptional category. These were decorative prints on current topics or featuring popular motifs that appear in the form of posters without actually advertising anything. As a rule, they were sold to enthusiasts and collectors through poster stores. The majority of these decorative posters were created between the 1960s and the 1980s. Many of them, and often the best, come from the former Eastern bloc countries, Poland in particular. The situation is similar in the case of so-called "gig posters"—concert posters which are not used for advertising, but which have been sold to collectors and fans as small-format silkscreen prints since the 1990s. Artists' posters, decorative posters, and gig posters do not normally attract much attention on the art market or design scene. In a history of the poster, however, they should not be omitted entirely.

Let us return to the three major thematic areas: cultural and political posters, and product advertising. The different roles that these thematic areas played at different times and in different countries are important in the history of the poster. In Parisian Art Nouveau the most interesting designs could be found mainly among revue and theater posters. By contrast, the German Sachplakat or "object poster" before World War I was dominated by product advertising. Things looked different in the 1920s, when outstanding work was produced in all three areas—albeit unevenly distributed. During World War I, political posters were inevitably to be found in all the countries involved. After the war, political posters of lasting importance emerged, particularly in the German Reich and the new Soviet Union, while in France revue and theater posters came to prominence after World War I, during the Art Deco period.

Product advertising, which had led the way in all three thematic areas in terms of both numbers and turnover since the 1920s, would become increasingly uninteresting in design terms. Innovative poster designers received fewer and fewer orders from the commercial sector. The work of a few Parisian poster artists formed a notable exception, especially that of A.M. Cassandre, who created product advertising almost exclusively. But among the great Art Deco designers there were others who also regularly designed posters for consumer goods. Raymond Savignac and Bernard Villemot continued this tradition in France well beyond World War II, but they were exceptions. Starting with the United States, modern agencies had long since taken over product advertising, ensuring that a corporate identity was respected. Under these conditions, individual poster designs have very few opportunities.

Since World War II, innovative poster designs have been created almost exclusively for clients in the cultural sector, in particular for theaters and museums. In this industry, state subsidies created and still continue to create artistic freedom which is often reflected in imaginative and experimental designs. However, since the 1990s marketing strategies have increasingly been setting the agenda in this sector as well, and thus limiting the scope of individual design work.

Posters in literature

In the early 1890s, Paris succumbed to the craze of affichomanie, or "poster mania." The overwhelming success of the artistic poster was expressed in newspaper articles, books, and exhibition catalogs. In Paris, Ernest Maindron published Les Affiches illustrées (1886–1895), which provided the first overview of French posters; Picture Posters (1895) by Charles Hiatt appeared in London; and two years later, Das moderne Plakat was published by Jean Louis Sponsel in Dresden. These books contained numerous illustrations, many of them in color—a great rarity at the time. The first magazines devoted to the phenomenon of the illustrated poster were also filled with lithographic reproductions. Between 1895 and 1900, Jules Chéret published Les Maîtres de l'Affiche in Paris, and in London from 1898 onwards artists and collectors were able to

Large Masquerade with Full Orchestra at Lorenz Ahrens
Type printing and woodcut, 44.8 × 36.8 cm, Hamburg 1813

Mit Hoher Erlaubniß
ist am Mittwoch den 22sten December 1813

Große Maskerade

mit vollständig besetztem Orchester
bey Lorenz Ahrens
auf der Neustädter Neustraße No. 287.

Es sind Zimmer eingerichtet wo man sich nach Belieben umkleiden kann,
und alle Arten Masken-Habite zu haben.

Entree I Mark.

Anfang 7 Uhr.

Mecredi le 22. Decembre 1813.

BAL EN MASQUE

chez Mr. Laurent Ahrens, rue Neustädter Neustrasse No. 287.
Entrée 1 Mk. On commencera à 7 heures

Gedruckt bey Langhans. Ellernthorsbrücke N. 189.

Druckerei Langhans

Decree Announcing Complete Ban on Trade
in Foreign Faience Products
Type printing and woodcut, 22.5 × 18.7 cm, Copenhagen 1770

Vocal and Instrumental Concert Organized
by Doctor Andreas Romberg
Woodcut and type printing, 44.5 × 36.7 cm, Hamburg 1812/13

Through a "placat" (poster) issued in 1770 with the intention of promoting sales from the domestic manufactory in Kellinghusen, the Danish King Christian VII announced a prohibition of imports of "foreign faience wares." The small sheet of paper, printed on both sides, would hardly be considered a poster today, and is of interest in our context primarily through the early use of the word "placat." The handwritten notation below reads: "To be published in Kellinghusen and displayed (affiziert) throughout the bailiwick." The word "affizieren" is a Germanized version of the French "afficher," meaning to announce or to place on display. While the French word for poster, "affiche," is directly derived therefrom, the German word "Plakat" can be traced back to the Dutch word "placaat" (which is related to the word plakken = to paste up, stick up), the word used for official announcements and placards since the early modern era. Both the words "affiche" and "Plakat," along with the English word "poster" (from: to post, i.e. to announce) have linguistic origins that are related to public announcements and official notifications.

The two other publications are invitations to a masked ball and to a concert organized by the composer and violinist Andreas Romberg (1767–1821). In form, they still correspond entirely to official announcements, but are however printed on one side only. On each, a frame printed from a woodblock emphasizes the significance of the text, which is printed in variously sized letters with the intention of attracting maximal attention. The tax stamps confirm the government authorization for their display. In the German Empire, and in Europe in general, the use of public notices was the preserve of the authorities. Only in England, where press freedom had prevailed since the 17th century, and in France following the revolution of 1789, was the display of private notices in public spaces permitted. Significantly, the first posters in Germany made their appearance during the French occupation during the Napoleonic Wars.

Official announcement for
Schleswig-Holstein

Druckerei Langhans

F. W. Nordmann, Berlin's New Advertising Columns, Berlin 1855

Precursors of the Poster

Providing the public with information about events and by-laws is a necessity in every community. For a long time, the most common, and probably the only way to do this was through the town crier. He walked along the streets shouting out proclamations and event news. From the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards, official announcements were increasingly made in the form of printed sheets of paper, known as notices, which were displayed in public. Also widely available were leaflets or pamphlets, offered for sale by authors or printers, with information about new developments, for example, or praising the qualities of traveling troupes of actors—an early form of advertising. Such leaflets differed from posters in that they had longer texts in small print; however, as early as the eighteenth century the boundaries between these and posters as such were not clearly defined.

The announcement of new books took a different path. Before publishing houses appeared in the eighteenth century, printers used to organize the distribution of books. The printing companies attended trade fairs and had their books sold by traveling salesmen. In the eighteenth century, the first retail shops appeared in cities like London and Paris, and early forms of advertising developed. Soon small advertisements in magazines and newspapers provided regular information about new publications. It was not until after 1830, when the press flourished in Paris with the July Revolution, that small-format posters came into fashion for presenting new books (see p. 14).

From the early Modern Age, craftsmen, tradesmen, and innkeepers had a different medium of advertising at their disposal. They hung guild signs above their entrances: the baker displayed a pretzel, the tailor a pair of scissors, and the locksmith crossed keys —a thoroughly effective form of advertising in the picture-less times before the nineteenth century. It was only when production shifted to factories in the course of the nineteenth century that consumer goods had to be advertised nationwide, and modern forms of product advertising developed, from packaging to advertisements to posters.

Origins of the Poster

To a large extent, the origin of the poster remains a mystery. There has been little research in this area; moreover, it is probable that only a very small percentage of the early posters have survived. They were printed on cheap paper and were not intended to last forever. Another problem is not having a clear definition of what a poster is. Some of the older publications on the history of posters move the origin of the poster as far back as Antiquity and consider the sgraffiti on the walls in Pompeii and Rome to be early forms of the poster. When, however, we define the poster as a printed sheet of paper announcing something and visible from a distance, then its origins lie in the years around 1800.

Before the French Revolution, censorship had a firm grip on the European continent. Public proclamations were the royal prerogative of the head of state and his government. After the

revolution in 1789, caricatures of the monarchy, announcements of revolution festivities or propaganda pictures for the revolution were posted on house walls or fences in many places in Paris. Everyone could participate and make their opinion public. These new freedoms were soon restricted again, but from this point on, whenever the state's grip loosened somewhere, prints—the first posters—immediately appeared, providing the public with information. This happened, for example, in Hamburg in 1812/13 during the French occupation (p. 12), in Paris after the July Revolution of 1830, and again in the revolutionary years 1848/49 in many places in Europe.

Early Posters

While posters were initially rare gems, their numbers gradually increased with the economic upswing following the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. From around 1830, lithographic posters appeared, announcing new books. They often looked like enlarged book covers (p. 14). Owing to the quality of the paper, but also because they were frequently colored, they were obviously intended for indoor use. With their small-scale scenes and texts, the idea was for them to be viewed up close in bookstores or theater foyers.

Orlando Parry, Street Scene in London, detail, London, ca. 1840

Carle Vernet, The Billposter, Paris, ca. 1820

A different form of poster probably came into being slightly earlier than that: These mainly advertised events and were printed in a simpler and coarser form using woodcuts and large letters. In London, there is an image preserved from the time around the year 1840 depicting a house wall plastered several meters high with posters advertising theater performances. In the Leipzig City Archive there are comparable, very simple woodcuts with large printed texts, which also date back to the 1840s. The layout of such posters was in many respects based on the leaflets of past centuries, which also combined image and text and attracted attention with large headlines.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, new developments began to emerge. Showmen—traveling musicians and actors, as well as animal tamers, magicians, and strongmen—became important clients and turned their preferred lithographic institutions into the largest in the world (pp. 24–27). Product advertising, which also became increasingly important after 1850, took other paths. Here, the small and elaborately printed chromolithographs, which were exclusively suitable for interiors, won through (p. 30 following). They basically imitated paintings, while the showman posters with their shrill narrative appeal were closer to modern advertising.

Christian Bettels, active 1883–ca. 1930
Adolph Friedländer (printing), 1851–1904

Tiger—Stock poster for a zoo
Color lithograph, 84.5 × 63.4 cm, Hamburg ca. 1885

Nouma Hawa—The World's First Female Lion Tamer
Color lithograph, 119 × 80.5 cm, Hamburg 1888/89

In 1872, Adolph Friedländer founded a lithography establishment in Altona, today a district of Hamburg, which soon specialized in posters. To begin with, his customers were cabarets and pubs located in St. Pauli. In 1883, Friedländer acquired a lithographic rapid printing press. The same year, the first posters were ordered by Carl Hagenbeck, who later became a zoo director; this was followed during the subsequent year by numerous commissions from artistes and performing artists from around the world. Alongside Strobridge in Cincinnati, the printing shop developed into one of the leading addresses for this type of clientèle, of such importance for poster history before 1900. Adolph Friedländer, a trained lithographer, was no draftsman, and instead hired illustrators like Christian Bettels, and later Willy Eigener, who specialized in animals. The gradual decline of the printing business began with World War I. Friedländer lost his international clientèle, and became increasingly local in orientation. In 1935, the National Socialists closed the Jewish family enterprise.

The Singhalese poster advertised a 'Völkerschau'; Hagenbeck had hired several families in Sri Lanka who, with elephants and colorful traditional costumes, exhibited their everyday life. They traveled through Europe, drawing a public of millions over a period of years. In the poster, we see a snake charmer holding up an illustration of his home—like a singer of street ballads at a fair.

The magnificent head of the tiger may have been produced for a traveling menagerie, or for an animal trainer, and printed on-demand as a "stock poster." It would have been given an appropriate imprint as needed, or provided with an extra title sheet supplying performance dates.

The French artiste Nouma Hawa, on the other hand, who traveled through Europe with her menagerie on her own train, announced herself as the world's first female lion tamer. Her costume generated as much furor as her artistry as an animal trainer. On top of a flesh-colored leotard, which revealed considerable amounts of leg, she wore an upper garment with train, and in her hair, a tiara set with precious stones. The poster presents her in full splendor, but exaggerates the number of animals; as a rule, she appeared with a single Barbary lion.

Christian Bettels,
Adolph Friedländer (printing)

Adolph Friedländer (printing)

Ernest Hébert (attributed), 1817–1908
F. Champenois (printing)

"Bubbles"—Pears Soap
Chromolithograph, 22 × 14.5 cm, London 1886/1887

Sunlight Soap
Chromolithograph, 73.6 × 36 cm, London 1887

Chromolithography differs from modern color lithography, first introduced by Jules Chéret, primarily through the much larger number of printing stages involved; it required the great experience of the professional lithographer to attain the astonishingly perfect results that were standard. Alongside Aberle & Co. in Berlin (see the following pages), Champenois in Paris—where Alphonse Mucha would later have his designs printed—were among the leading printers of chromolithographs in Europe.

The motifs employed were often the work of staff illustrators, but in many instances popular works of art were copied and suitable inscriptions added. In the 1880s this new marketing method was introduced by Thomas J. Barratt, the managing director of Pears Soap in London. The most famous example is Bubbles, a painting by the pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais. Barratt purchased the painting and had the company name and a bar of soap inserted for advertisements and small posters. Although Millais received harsh criticism for agreeing to this use, Bubbles was one of the most popular advertising images for decades. The competitor Sunlight Soap responded with a painting by the renowned, if not so famous, academician George Dunlop Leslie, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy the following year. In France, too, companies referred to recognized works of art—for example, in this advertisement for the fine cotton fabrics of the British company J. & P. Coats. In the oval cutout the poster copies a work by the Parisian Salon painter Ernest Hébert.

after John Everett Millais
1829–1896

John White after George Dunlop Leslie
1835–1921

Jane Avril appearing at the Jardin de Paris
Color lithograph, 127 × 91 cm, Paris 1893

Divan Japonais—music café
Color lithograph, 79.8 × 60.6 cm, Paris 1892/93

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec designed only 30 posters, yet they played a very particular role in his artistic oeuvre, and for his recognition as an artist. His first poster —also his first lithograph—was an advertisement for the dancer Louise Weber, known as La Goulue, with her partner Valentin le Désossé ("the boneless") at the Moulin Rouge. The large-format sheet is enlivened by strong contrasts: in the background, appearing entirely in black (as in the shadow play at the nearby cabaret Le Chat Noir) is the audience; on the left, abbreviated in yellow, are the electric lamps (an attraction at that time); at the center, the dancer. Her face expresses obliviousness, while her shamelessly displayed stockings inevitably draw the viewer's gaze. In front, rendered as a gray silhouette, and with exaggerated, caricatural features, is the male dancer. La Goulue's outstretched leg converges precisely with her dance partner's nose—a gross transgression of academic art conventions. The poster was praised by critics, although the commissioning client, the impresario Joseph Oller, quickly replaced it with one of Chéret's lighthearted prints.

The art of the severely disabled artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, who suffered from alcoholism and syphilis, was sparked by the people in his surroundings. He sought proximity with the stars, portraying them in their public roles and their private lives. Jane Avril, who suffered neglect and abuse as a child, began dancing in a psychiatric clinic. In 1889, she performed self-abandoned and idiosyncratically ecstatic dances at the Moulin Rouge, among other venues. A highpoint of her career arrived with her appearances at the Jardin de Paris, an elegant coffeehouse, in 1893. Toulouse-Lautrec's poster—which was preceded by numerous preliminary studies—shows her in a typical pose. A conspicuous feature is the framing around the composition, with its truncated bass player in the foreground. Toulouse-Lautrec used another commission from the café-concert Divan Japonais in order to portray his friends: at the center, once again, is Jane Avril, with her orange-red hair; behind her the critic Édouard Dujardin, and on the stage, recognizable through her long, black gloves, is the chanson singer Yvette Guilbert, who was revered by Toulouse-Lautrec.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec
1864–1901

La Goulue appearing at the Moulin Rouge
Color lithograph, 169.5 × 124 cm, Paris 1891

Alphonse Mucha
1860–1939

F. Champenois—Imprimeur éditeur
Color lithograph, 65.8 × 49.9 cm, Paris 1897

Alphonse Mucha launched his career as a decorative painter in his hometown of Ivančice in what is today the Czech Republic. He never completed his studies at the Munich Art Academy, but instead moved to Vienna, and, in 1887, to Paris. He worked as an illustrator, fulfilling minor commissions for printing firms. In late 1894, through the intercession of the printer Lemercier, Mucha received his first poster commission. Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), celebrated star of the Belle Époque, needed a poster for her role as the Byzantine Queen Gismonda. The actress, as owner of the Théâtre de la Renaissance, and as the poster's commissioner, was delighted with the design.

Gismonda was to be the first of a seven-part series of posters portraying the actress in various roles, always in full-length and standing, framed by texted fields and a rounded arch. On Gismonda, she is seen life-sized like a statue in a niche, an impression reinforced by the mosaic-style lettering of the inscription. When the poster for La Dame aux Camélias appeared the following year, critics praised Mucha as a master of the white poster. This poster is characterized by its pale colors, but also the composition's tranquility and dignity. Hamlet and Medée are given more powerful colors. In Medée, the actress confronts the viewer in the central scene of the piece, holding a bloody dagger above the corpses of her sons. Photos and preliminary drawings show that Mucha worked with models, whom he photographed before endowing them with Bernhardt's facial features.

In his posters for commercial clients, such as the firm Job, which manufactured cigarette papers, Mucha positions not the marketed product at the center, but instead one of his idealized female figures. His most elaborate decorative circular design dates from 1898. It provides a backdrop for a young woman—the personification of lithography—who leafs through a large album of color prints. The richly colored composition appeared with a variety of texts, but may have originally been created for Champenois, Mucha's printing firm. Printing companies throughout Europe used the centenary of the invention of lithography to call attention to their artistry.

As early as 1896, Mucha accepted a five-year contract with the printing firm Champenois, which thereby became exclusively responsible for marketing his designs. At the Exposition Universelle of 1900, Mucha made his grand appearance with the decoration of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Pavilion. Afterwards, now exhausted, he withdrew from commercial obligations, executing designs for external clients only occasionally. In 1910, he returned to his homeland, where he produced a gigantic cycle on Slavic history.

A Document of German Art:
The Exhibition of the Artists' Colony. Darmstadt
Color lithograph, 126 × 44.3 cm, Darmstadt 1901

Peter Behrens
1868–1940

Simplicissimus flyer.
The Breslau Riots or the Severed Hand
Type printing on wallpaper with lithographic
color progression, 77.3 × 54.2 cm, Munich 1907

Simplicissimus
Color lithograph,
77.5 × 54.7 cm
Munich 1897

The Munich native Th. Th. Heine was the first graphic designer in Germany to engage with the specific tasks of the medium in designing his posters. Like the English poster artists before him, he chose red and black as signal colors and reduced his draftsmanship to the essentials. The Simplicissimus bulldog became a symbol of the bite of this publication, the first German satirical journal of international standing. Teeth bared, it opposed the "forces of order," demonstrating the magazine's combative stance.

At irregular intervals, Simplicissimus published so-called handbills, thin special editions on specific topics. Taking place in Wroclaw (then the German city of Breslau) in late 1907 was a demonstration against the Prussian three-class franchise system, in the course of which a policeman severed the hand of a protester with his saber. Heine translates this event into an image with a degree of abstraction, albeit dramatically, positioning the black hand, still dripping blood, on garishly tinted wallpaper. In these posters, Heine emerges as a political artist who advocated his rights and those of his colleagues in Wilhelminian Germany. As a caricaturist for Simplicissimus, he spent six months in prison for the offense of lèse-majesté.

Despite this, he received numerous commissions for product advertisements, and was extremely successful with his precise, often ironic motifs.

With its idiosyncratic format (it is even narrower than the posters for the Vienna Secession) and enigmatic motif, Peter Behrens's eccentric design for the first exhibition of the Mathildenhöhe artists' colony in Darmstadt is something genuinely unusual. The caryatid, positioned between luminous precious stones, seems to elongate the sheet, stretching it into the heights. She embodies the ennoblement of humanity through modern art. Two years earlier, the Grand Duke of Hessen-Darmstadt had founded the Mathildenhöhe artists' colony, a model settlement devoted to the unity of art and life, which now presented an initial exhibition touting its achievements as a "document of German art." In 1899, Behrens—who initially studied painting before turning toward the applied arts—was among a group of artists who were invited to Darmstadt by the grand duke. Behrens's home in Darmstadt, which he designed himself, was the first building realized by this artist, who would later become so important as an architect.

Thomas Theodor Heine
1867–1948

In 1901, Lucian Bernhard (originally Emil Kahn) moved from Munich to Berlin. After 1905, he began to develop the "Sachplakat" (object poster), discovering a promoter in Ernst Growald. An eloquent spokesman for modern advertising, Growald was a co-owner of Hollerbaum & Schmidt, the most important printer of posters in Berlin. Before long, other draftsmen began producing designs in Bernhard's style, and an astonishing highpoint in Berlin's poster culture was reached around 1910. Bernhard was a member of the German Werkbund, and served the "Society of Friends of the Poster" as an artistic adviser. He became an honorary member in 1910. World War I interrupted the development of the commercial poster in Germany, and Bernhard created a series of remarkable war bond posters. After the war, he traveled repeatedly to New York before settling there permanently.

At Hollerbaum & Schmidt, Lucian Bernhard was regarded as a specialist in the "technical poster." His designs for spark plugs by Bosch and for the Lloyd automobile manufacturer are among the most spectacular of their kind to predate World War I. Lloyd Kraftwagen (Lloyd Motor Vehicles), an offshoot of the Bremen shipping line Norddeutscher Lloyd, was established in 1906, and survived two world wars with moderate success before merging with the Bremen Borgward company. A glance at the poster reveals that the artist was concerned less with technical details than with a reduction to visually incisive elements—here, the radiator grille, the headlights, and the hubcaps are singled out and emphasized by means of red. A breathtaking backdrop and the seemingly dangerous view from below transform motoring into a grand adventure.

Lucian Bernhard
1883–1972

Lloyd Automobile
Color lithograph, 118.5 × 90.2 cm, Berlin 1913
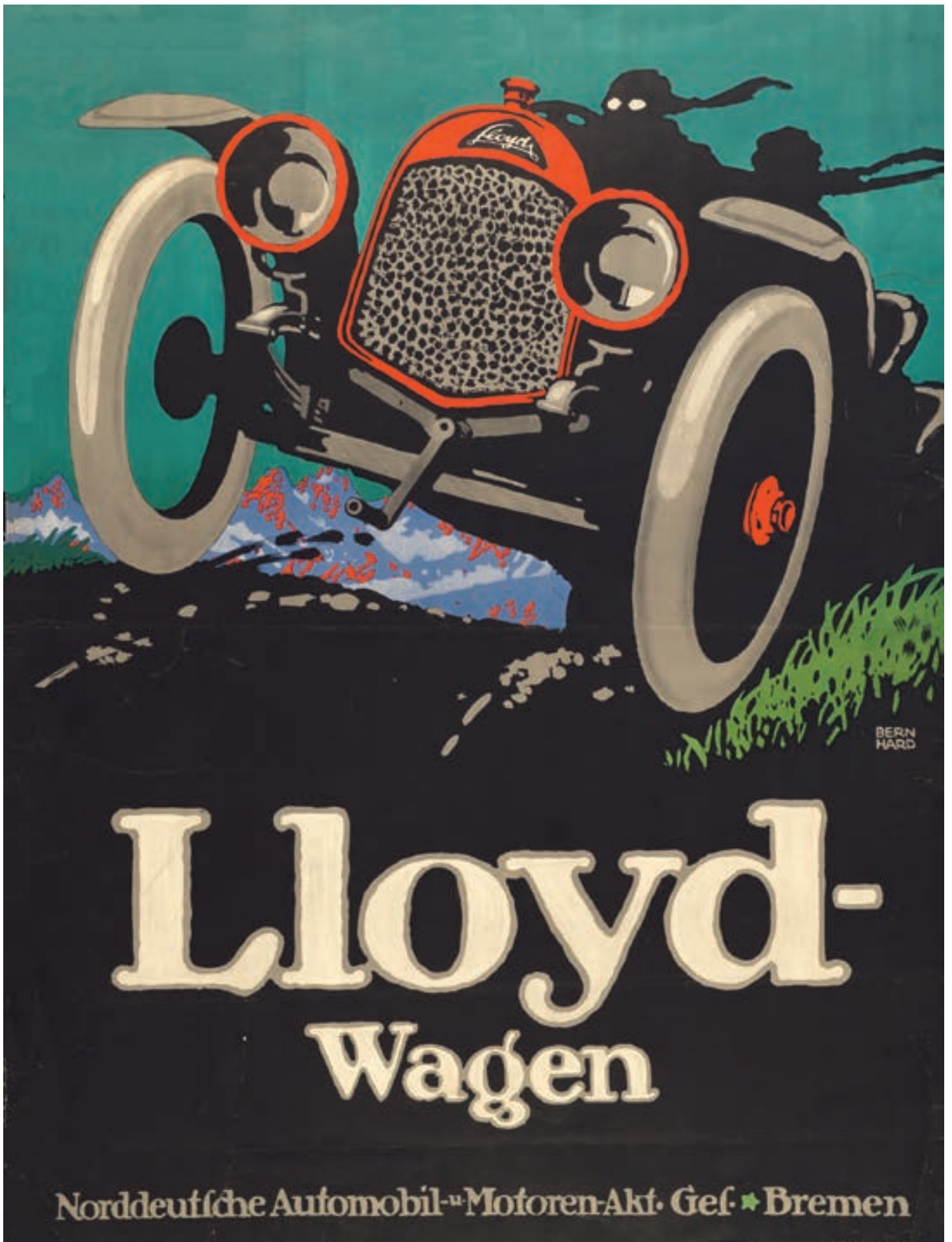
Beginning in the 1890s, recognized artists often designed posters, in the process making essential contributions to the medium's development. But only after the turn of the century, when the poster had been universally established and professional poster painters set the tone, did younger artists emerge who consciously distanced themselves from the conventional commercial poster. They renounced ingratiating motifs and instantaneous legibility, and with their individual styles and idiosyncratic motifs, their images were often highly original and unmistakable.

Priority must be accorded here to the designs of the artists' group Die Brücke, which starting with their founding in Dresden in 1905, regularly announced exhibitions and publications by means of posters. In their search for an authentic art free from academic conventions, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel, Max Pechstein, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and others arrived at Expressionism. Primitivism and power was expressed in vibrant colors and coarse forms. These posters stand out by virtue of their strong lines and renunciation of elegance and superficial beauty. Like Kirchner, Pechstein devises a characteristically Gauguinesque woman. His Amazon can also be interpreted as a declaration of war against the established art scene—together with the other Expressionists, he was excluded from the annual exhibition organized by the Berlin Secession, and programmatically announced the show devoted to the "Rejected."

Hermann Max Pechstein
1881–1955

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
1880–1938

Georgii Stenberg, 1900–1933
Vladimir Stenberg, 1899–1982

The sons of Swedish parents, Georgii and Vladimir Stenberg were born in Moscow, where they attended various art schools. In 1919, they joined the Constructivist artists' group OBMOKhU. They created experimental sculptures in iron and glass, and worked as designers for various theaters. In 1925, they received a gold medal for their stage designs at the international Art Deco exhibition in Paris. Their first film poster dates from 1923, and it was followed by approximately 300 more, particularly in the years between 1927 and 1929. Until Georgii's early death in an accident, the Stenbergs worked consistently as a team. Aside from their very first film posters, which they signed with "Sten" or "Stenberg," their fraternal collaborations bear the signature "2Stenberg2." They received commissions from ReklamKino, the main advertising agency for the film industry.

This poster, which promotes the American silent film Behind the Door of 1919 (with Hobart Bosworth), is among the Stenbergs' first film posters, and still bears the simple Stenberg signature. Here, the two are already at the height of their powers. The head of the captain in this World War I drama makes an impression of steely, manly resolve that is consistent with the film's Russian title, "The Steel Captain." Little is known about the Soviet film The Man from the Forest, but the poster, with its deliberate calm and refined cut through the face, belongs to the Stenbergs' best. Michail Dlugatsch also designed a poster for the same film (see p. 176).

All for the Front! All for Victory!
Offset lithography, 89.7 × 59.3 cm, Moscow 1942

Storm into the Third Year of the Five-Year Plan
Color lithograph and photogravure, 102.1 × 71.7 cm, Moscow 1930

Gustav Klucis and El Lissitzky are among the early representatives of the Soviet avant-garde. Until 1924, Klucis taught at the WKhUTEMAS art school. He designed portable kiosks and other curious items of equipment for Soviet propaganda. In his posters, produced from the late 1920s, he worked with photomontage and dynamic, often diagonally oriented compositions in red and black. For his photographs of heroic workers, he and his wife Valentina Kulagina often served one another as models. The black and white photographs were reproduced in photogravure, while the contrasting red was printed lithographically. Only later did Klucis increasingly employ hand-drawn illustrations, as well as a broader range of color. In 1938, despite his glorification of and support for the Stalinist cult of personality, he fell victim to a purge and was executed.

Alongside his free art, Lissitzky—like Klucis, a revolutionary from the first hour—devoted himself in particular to exhibition design and layouts. His montages for the magazine Russia in Pictures were well known. Among his few posters (see p. 129), this one was the last, produced more than 10 years after its predecessor. With its black and red photomontages, it is formally related to the posters produced beginning around 1930, but is an anomaly among the heroic painted propaganda images of World War II.

El Lissitzky
1890–1941

Gustav Klucis
1895–1938

The Soviet Union Is the Avant-Garde of the World Proletariat.
Protect the Soviet Union
Color lithograph and photogravure, 143.6 × 104 cm, Moscow 1931

Tokyo Olympic Games 1964
Offset print, 102 × 73 cm each, Tokyo 1962 and 1963

Yusaku Kamekura is regarded as one of the fathers of modern Japanese graphic design. In 1951, he was among the founders of the Japan Advertising Artists Club (JAAC), the first professional organization of Japanese graphic artists, which made a major contribution to the unprecedented rise of Japanese graphic design through its annual exhibitions. Financed by eight companies, the Nippon Design Center opened in 1960 under Kamekura's direction. His best-known works include the posters and brand identity of the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. What seems at first glance to be a snapshot taken by a sports reporter turns out on closer examination to be the result of a well thought-out concept. The dramatic lighting illuminating the runners creates a feeling of concentration that real sports photography might produce at best by chance. The grainy image intensifies the sense of speed. Confirmation that this is a deliberate effect rather than a technical limitation is provided when we examine the image of the swimmer, who emerges pin-sharp out of the darkness,

In 1966, New Yorker Lance Wyman won the bid to provide the visual branding of the Mexico City Olympic Games with a logo that cleverly combines the year "68" with the five Olympic rings. From this starting point, Wyman and the Mexican director of the games, architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, developed a graphic system of rounded letters and shimmering, black-and-white, parallel lines—perhaps inspired by the work of the British Op artist Bridget Riley. Even today, the look remains distinctive, both typical of its time and highly original. Wyman remained in Mexico City for five years, subsequently founding his own studio in New York.

Yusaku Kamekura, 1915–1997
Osamu Haysaki (photo)
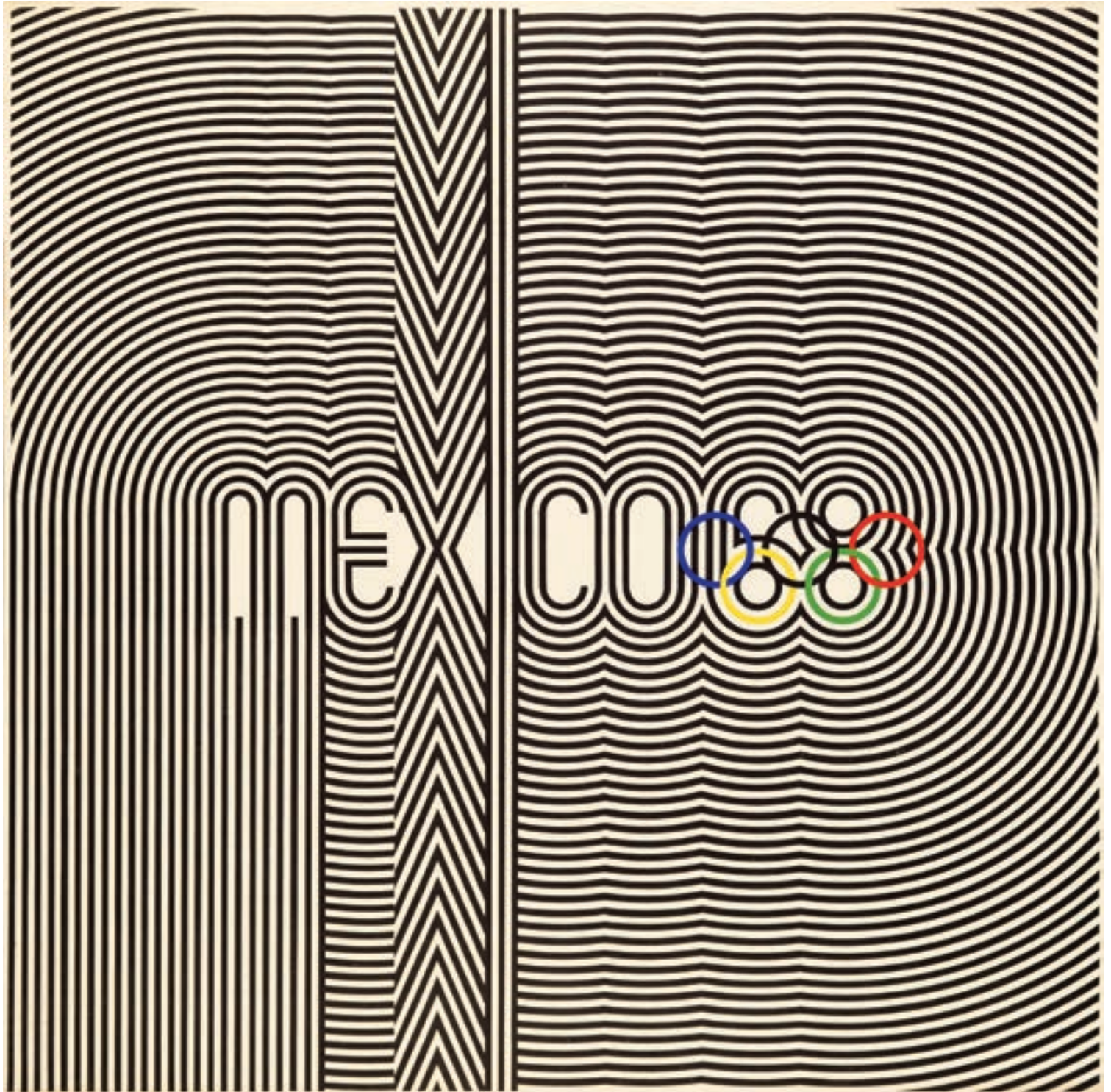
Lance Wyman, *1937
Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, 1919–2013

Siegfried Fischer—Publishing House
Silkscreen print, 118.8 × 84 cm, Frankfurt 1976

It's time to fly to Hanoi
Offset print, 118 × 84 cm, Frankfurt 1968

Gunter Rambow belongs to a group of German graphic designers who began working with photographic design in the late 1960s. A major inspiration was the London design group Hipgnosis, which had been creating extraordinary record covers since 1967. After training as a glass painter, Rambow attended Kassel's Hochschule für bildende Künste between 1955 and 1963, studying with Hans Hillmann. As early as 1960 he launched a design studio jointly with Gerhard Lienemeyer. This studio community expanded in 1972 to include Michael van de Sand. While working as a lecturer at the Gesamthochschule Kassel from 1974, and from 1991 to 2003 at the Karlsruhe Hochschule für Gestaltung, Rambow remained the creative head of the studio. In 1967, he created his first major poster series for the Frankfurt publisher Adam Seide, who used humorous, satirical images to advertise his cultural magazine Egoist.

Rambow has taken on political issues since 1968. He expressed his opinions on the Vietnam War in a cryptic poster, which can be seen as an extremely critical statement: a dead blowfly sits on a orange-red stain—an allusion to the defoliant Agent Orange that was used extensively in Vietnam. To this he added the line "It's time to fly to Hanoi," echoing the rallying cry of US fighter-jet pilots.

Rambow orchestrated angry attacks on right-wing radicalism and later campaigned for the Green Party. From the 1970s on Rambow gained international recognition for his larger series of works, including those for the Schauspiel theater in Frankfurt and for publisher S. Fischer Verlag. Both series confined themselves to black-and-white photomontages, some of which featuring spectacularly original imagery. In later series, too, for example for the theater in Wiesbaden, Rambow employed stark black-and-white contrasts, largely rejecting the use of color.

Gunter Rambow
*1938

Hamletmaschine by Heiner Müller.
Production at the Schauspiel, Frankfurt
Offset print, 118.8 × 84.3 cm, Frankfurt 1980

Virgin Records—Virgin Tokyo
Offset print, 102.8 × 145.5 cm, Tokyo 1991
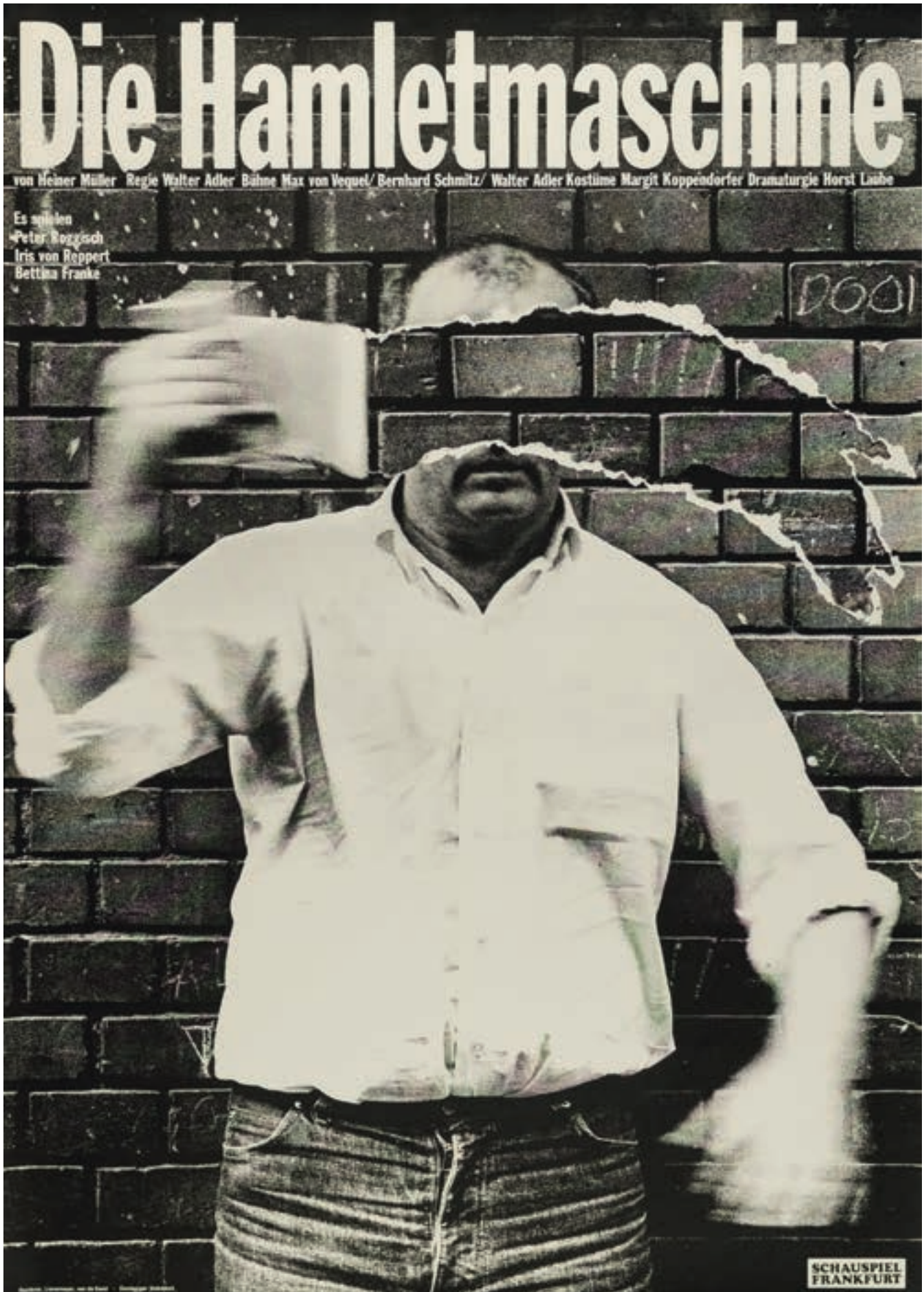
Makoto Saito is fascinated by the human head. Since the second half of the 1980s, he has been constantly inventing new ways to present it as an image (see also previous pages). He begins with a photo that he presents in a spectacular way by cropping it, moving sections, coloring or repeating them. The finished motif rarely refers to the client concerned. In the case of the poster for Virgin Records, one might interpret the choice of a striking black face as a reference to the relationship between singing and black music—especially since the focus is on the mouth area. But we feel that for Saito it is more about the creation of a unique image than about advertising for black music specifically.

Koji Mitsutani also chooses the head as a motif for his pair of images, but he uses it completely differently, submerging the image in deep blue. A heavy red cross strikes through the face, as it were, creating an extraordinary symbolism. For the mouth, whose color palette is reversed, this is further intensified in the close-up. The crosses have a certain legitimacy in terms of the subject of the poster, as the cosmetic brand they are advertising is not intended for use on the face and mouth. A member of the Nippon Design Center since 1977, Koji Mitsutani launched his own design studio in Tokyo in 1983. He has numerous clients in the consumer goods sector and accepts a wide variety of jobs from packaging to logos and overall brand identity. In 1999, he began work on his Merry Project, for which he photographed over 20,000 laughing faces, and which he exhibited at Expo 2005 in Japan's Aichi prefecture.
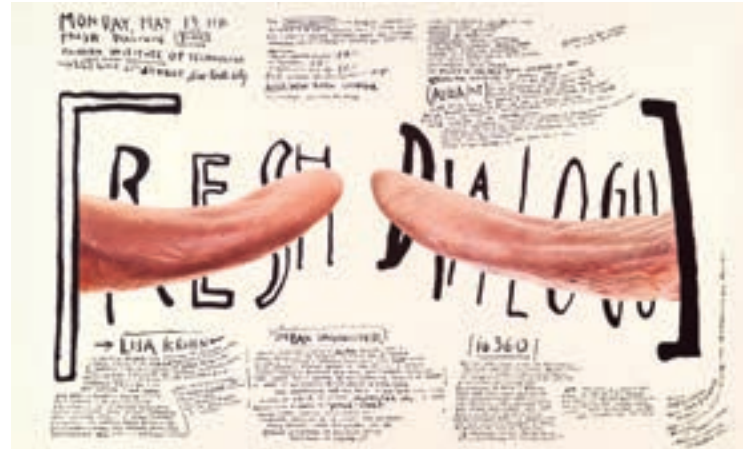
Makoto Saito
*1952

Prexceed—Yanagiya cosmetics company brand
Two offset prints 102.9 × 145.5 cm, Tokyo 1993

Koji Mitsutani
*1951

Set the Twilight Reeling.
Lou Reed
Offset print, 98.5 × 67.8 cm,
New York 1996
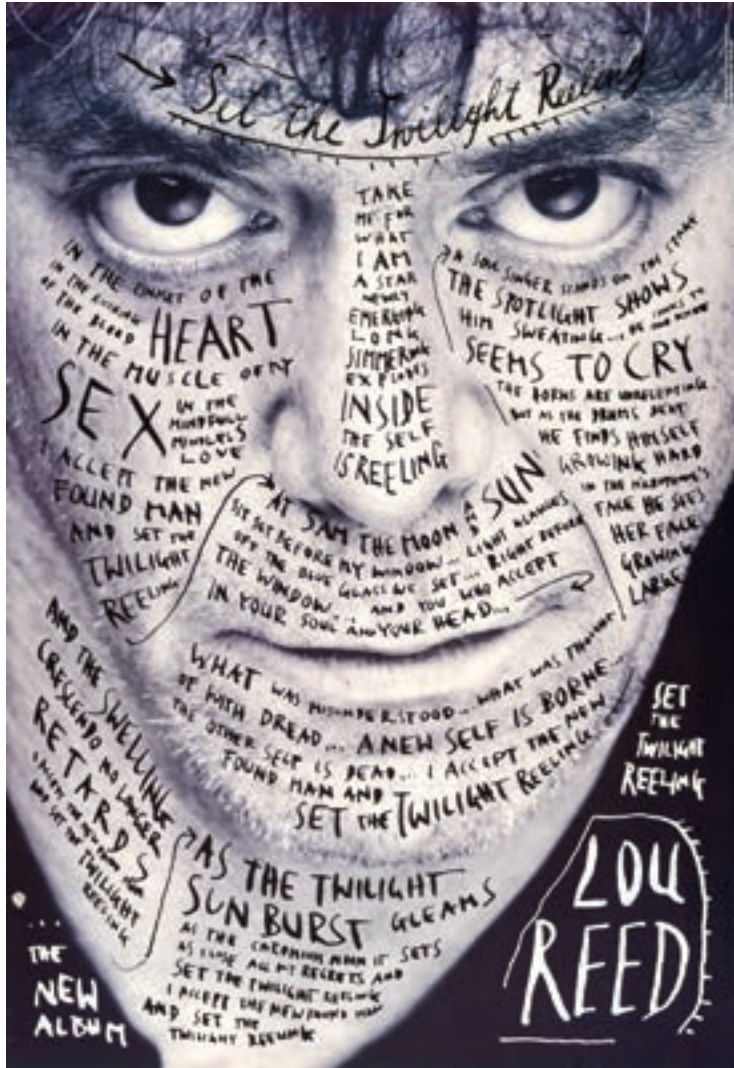
Fresh Dialogue.
Lisa Krohn and Stefan Sagmeister at the
Fashion Institute of Technology
Offset print, 61 × 99 cm, New York 1996

Stefan Sagmeister is one of the best-known figures in the field of graphic design, especially since he has departed from the graphic artist's classic areas of work in recent years to make a name for himself through elaborate exhibitions on major topics such as happiness and beauty. In many of his works, Sagmeister opts to focus on himself as the reference point, using disguises, and surrounding himself with attributes. Physical presence becomes a design tool. For Sagmeister, the way he uses lettering and the process of writing always means including the writing surface, such as here—in his best-known poster—his own body or the face of the musician Lou Reed. He is less interested in classic typography, preferring instead to create short films in which words emerge out of surprising and strange objects.

Sagmeister comes from Bregenz on Lake Constance, and his enthusiasm for graphic design was clear even while he was at school. After studying at the Vienna Hochschule für Ange-wandte Kunst, in 1987 he won a scholarship to the renowned Pratt Institute in New York, where he ultimately launched his own design studio in 1993, achieving fame for his CD and record cover designs. Since 2012, he has led the studio together with Jessica Walsh under the brand Sagmeister & Walsh. Their clients include major corporations such as Levi's and HBO as well as cultural institutions such as the Guggenheim Museum.

Stefan Sagmeister
*1962

American Institute of Graphic Art.
Event featuring Stefan Sagmeister at the
Cranbrook Academy of Art in Detroit
Offset print, 100.1 × 69.5 cm, New York 1993

Between Me And Tomorrow.
Jugendtheater Sempach
Silkscreen print, 128 × 90.6 cm, Lucerne 2012

Under Milk Wood. Play adapted from the work by
Dylan Thomas at the Theater Aeternam in Lucerne
Silkscreen print, 128 × 90 cm, Lucerne 2011

Erich Brechbühl is one of the leading representatives of a Lucerne poster school that emerged in the 1990s. Alongside Warsaw and Chaumont in France, the city has developed into a center of European poster culture and organizes exhibitions and workshops annually on current as well as historical themes in poster design. While still at school, Brechbühl was active in the cultural arena, founding Mix Pictures, an agency for short films and events at the age of 13. After a typography apprenticeship, he completed a second apprenticeship as a poster designer in Niklaus Troxler's Willisau studio between 1998 and 2002 (see p. 292). In 2002, he set up his own studio in Lucerne called Mixer. In 2009, Brechbühl was one of the co-founders of the Weltformat Graphic Design Festival in Lucerne, named for the standard Swiss poster format.

Brechbühl's posters usually advertise cultural events, theater productions, exhibitions, festivals, and the like. The design often starts with the title or a keyword of the title and creates from it a full-bleed image, transforming the letters of the word in a highly original way. Perhaps the best-known example is the poster for Stefan Sagmeister's exhibition, The Happy Show (see p. 342). Brechbühl creates the lettering out of twisted yellow balloons, in a confusingly compact arrangement that fills the entire picture space—if you can decipher the words, the very idea will make you happy. For Dylan Thomas' radio play Under Milk Wood, in which the thoughts of the villagers roam abroad in the course of one deep dark night, Brechbühl chooses a black-and-white sheet of paper, literally cutting the letters out of its fine grain. The Sempach Youth Theater's production is about growing up: as a symbol of childhood, Brechbühl depicts a luminous orange water wing, which the swimmer can deflate after use.

Erich Brechbühl
*1977

Stefan Sagmeister. The Happy Show.
Museum für Gestaltung at Toni-Areal, Zurich
Silkscreen print, 128 × 90 cm, Lucerne 2017