

Poster art in Barcelona and Valencia from the late 19th century to 1939

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ABSTRACT

In the late 19th century, the cities of Barcelona and Valencia became important hubs of poster art thanks to specialised graphic industries and a large number of artists who explored their advertising capacity with extraordinarily quality, always cognizant of the latest developments. In both cities, the modern poster had commercial uses, institutional and political use. The vast number of posters produced during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) is particularly noteworthy.

KEYWORDS: advertising, chromolithograph, graphic arts, Art Nouveau, Civil War

INTRODUCTION

The cities of Barcelona and Valencia have been, and still remain, two important graphic arts meccas in Europe. Proud of their tradition, they are still places where the passion for graphic design and advertising is felt intensely. The origins of the current situation dates back to the last third of the 19th century, when the convergence of different economic factors, as well as the evolution of communication in modern cities, fostered the birth of full-colour advertising posters, a process we can find in all the major European and American cities.

Indeed, in the 19th century, the two Mediterranean cities experienced economic progress which fostered their urban growth and consolidation as capitals of their respective regions of Catalonia and the País Valencià (henceforth the Region of Valencia). In Barcelona, which was at the forefront of a network of small and medium-sized cities, the importance of the textile industry should not eclipse the existence of other manufacturing sectors, such as publishing, construction and metallurgy, as well as an important agrofood transformation industry.

In the Region of Valencia, the importance of the agricultural sector has been celebrated to such an extent that the famous Valencian orange and an iconography based on farm products have been mythicised, although in reality they were only representative of the region near the city of Valencia. However, the region has a longstanding history of industrialisation with its ceramics, yet just as in

Catalonia, textile products like wool and silk were also very important there, along with other manufactured products such as footwear and the furniture and later toy industries.

Both were major export hubs, especially towards Spanish and Latin American markets, and they had bustling retail sectors, with small shops and large department stores, which also fostered the advent of advertising techniques. They soon became two epicentres of the tertiary sector, with a wide array of service companies, and they also led the first wave of tourism coming from northern Europe and North America, attracted by the good weather, the variety of landscapes and the cultural richness. Barcelona and Valencia, with their respective coastlines and hinterlands, along with Mallorca and the other Balearic Islands, were at the forefront of a tourism industry which used posters as a prime means of promotion.

Even though Catalonia and the Region of Valencia had a time-honoured publishing tradition, with the installation of printing presses since the era of the incunabula in the second half of the 15th century, and both had printing presses in their medium-sized cities, the production of the great chromolithograph posters which we are examining in this article was concentrated in the two capital cities. There was a large number of well-equipped workshops in both Barcelona and Valencia which were open to the new techniques as they evolved.

Likewise, both cities were famous for their vibrant art worlds, with a large contingent of draughtsmen, painters and photographers trained in the most prestigious art academies (the Escola de Llotja in Barcelona, the Acadèmia de Sant Carles in Valencia) or in private schools. Many of these creators found professional work in the field of ad-

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vertising. A close relationship was also forged between the two cities, often one-way: Barcelona became an appealing destination for creatives from other parts, and many Valencians (and some Balearic Islanders) moved there either temporarily or permanently.

For these and many other reasons, both regions were also considered to be at the vanguard of modernity in Spain.

ORIGIN OF THE MODERN POSTER

The birth of the modern poster in the last few decades of the 19th century was associated with the first few tentative steps in advertising, which was evolving away from word-based adverts in the press and street posters printed with typography and at most including small black-and-white engravings. The evolution in graphic techniques, with the development of the chromolithograph, allowed large, full-colour printed material to be produced; this, in turn, led to the development of the poster, which would prove highly attractive amidst the chaos of the modern city. It was a laborious technique (expert technicians had to transfer the drawing that the artist created to the lithographic stone and then the zinc plate in as many units as the number of colours to be printed). Later, technological progress allowed photography to be applied to the printing process.

These material factors, along with the convergence of favourable social and economic conditions, turned posters into a successful medium in the developed countries of Europe and the Americas. France, and especially Paris, was perceived as one of the fulcrums in the rise of this graphic style: the works of Jules Chéret in around 1880 and especially of Toulouse-Lautrec, the creator of some of the memorable posters for the cabarets of Montmartre since 1891, were internationally admired. In just a few years, the modern poster also found success in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In Spain, there was a unique type of poster for bull-fights, initially based solely on typographic texts accompanied occasionally by small illustrations. But the advent of the chromolithograph technique enabled large posters with stereotypical scenes and a free use of colour to be made, which were highly popular abroad. They were similar to the posters for fairs and festivals, which were also vertically elongated and occupied by long strings of text.

It is difficult to pinpoint a specific date to start a history of poster art. In Barcelona, Josep Lluís Pellicer made a poster featuring an academic drawing for the 1888 Universal Expo, and in the subsequent years he created epigraphic posters for municipal art fairs, while Josep Pascó made a large poster for the Mercè festival in 1892, in which the texts were superimposed upon a large image of Columbus' caravel, as that year marked the fourth centennial of the "discovery" of America. Likewise, in Valencia we can find a poster for the summer fair of 1888 fea-

turing a female figure who personified the city, a conventional work by an unidentified artist, a trend that would continue during the 1890s.

THE ART NOUVEAU POSTER

It was not until the late 19th century, with the early expressions of graphic Art Nouveau (known in Catalonia and elsewhere as Modernisme), that the first posters appeared following the most advanced criteria in which the image dominated, while text was reduced to its minimal expression. The cultivators of this visual synthesis, most of them from the world of painting and press illustration, began to work in advertising occasionally, spurred by the examples which were arriving from Europe and the United States.

What is regarded as the first modern poster made in Barcelona is the one by Alexandre de Riquer to advertise the *Exposició de Belles Arts i Indústries Artístiques* of 1896. Riquer had travelled to London, where he became familiar with the postulates of the Aesthetic Movement and Arts & Crafts, and he also admired US poster artists such as Edward Penfield and Will Bradley, whose work he collected. In his posters, which were symbolist in spirit, Riquer placed mediaeval-style female figures in the scene, using simplified drawing with thick outlines, in illustrations with a vast profusion of decorative details, like the posters for *Salón Pedal* (1897) and *Mosaicos Escofet-Tejera y C^a*, which is made to resemble a ceramic tile.

Along with Riquer, the other great name in Catalan Art Nouveau poster art is the painter Ramon Casas. Trained in Paris, he poured his facility with life drawing into posters, as in his famous advertisement for *Anís del Mono* (1898) and the poster that advertised the launch of the cultural magazine *Pèl & Ploma*, which he financed (1899). Other times, he exploited caricature, such as in the poster for *Putxinellis 4 Gats* (1898) for the tavern where the Art Nouveau crowd gathered and Picasso often went. Later, Casas took advantage of the technical possibilities of printing to faithfully reproduce his charcoal drawings on different posters, such as the surprising *Sífilis* from 1900. Along with Casas, other outstanding poster artists include his colleagues Santiago Rusiñol, a painter and writer who made two good posters to advertise his literary works, and Miquel Utrillo, essentially an art critic and historian who partnered with Casas on a pair of posters and made a brief series of his own.

Perhaps the most prolific poster artist in Catalan Art Nouveau was Antoni Utrillo, the cousin of Miquel Utrillo. He owned a lithograph company where many of his peers' posters were printed, and where his charming, simplified drawings with international influences emerged, such as *Real Club de Regatas* and *Manteca Esbensen*. Other printers who also created noteworthy posters were Adrià Gual, a prominent figure in theatre who cultivated graphic symbolism, and Carles Barral Nualart. The Cata-



FIGURE 1. Ramon Casas used caricature to advertise the puppet shows held at the 4 Gats, the bar where the Art Nouveau artists of Barcelona converged. (1899)

lan school of Art Nouveau poster art, which was centred in Barcelona, also included other notable names, such as Manuel Feliu de Lemus, Josep Llaverias and Francisco de Cidón, who knew how to play with the blank spaces in a synthetic drawing style akin to the British Beggarstaffs.

They were all appreciated abroad in around 1900: the specialised magazines from England (*The Poster*, *The Poster Collector's Circular*) and France enthusiastically reported on the emergence of the Catalan poster artists. Likewise, for a brief period, several collectors emerged, such as Lluís Plandiura, who collected and publicly exhibited a large number of posters from Catalonia and abroad. In some cases, foreign authors worked for Catalan clients, such as the poster *Barcelona Ciudad de Invierno* (1909) made by John Hassall after winning a contest, and the numerous commissions of the Italian-French artist Leonetto Cappiello (for El Siglo department stores, Vilajuïga water, Gallo pasta and Ortiz & Cussó pianos, among others). However, the international partnerships did not last long.

Once this new medium had become common on the streets, it became the preferred means of advertising, especially for commercial and institutional purposes. It was also cultivated in other cities in Catalonia, albeit to a lesser extent.

With regard to the region of Valencia, Art Nouveau came to the graphic arts via Artur Almar, the author of a



FIGURE 2. "Cigarrillos París", poster by Ramon Casas (1901), 130 x 90 cm.

poster for the 1898 July Fair which incorporated elements from international Art Nouveau. But its most prominent practitioner was Josep Mongrell, who made a conventional poster for the July Fair in 1901 but in 1902 started to produce a series of posters featuring monumental and highly decorative female figures, such as for the Fair of Xàtiva, the fairs commemorating the coronation of King Alphonse XIII and the fourth centennial of the Universitat de València. However, his most notable posters were for the July Fairs of 1902 and 1903. He also designed generic posters for popular festivals, with blank spaces that each city could fill with the specific dates of their event. These proved to be very popular; several models of them are known, such as one depicting two female figures, one of them a Winged Glory, joined by a garland of roses, and another with a standard-bearer on horseback, both from the first decade of the century. Later, after he moved to Barcelona, Mongrell particularly excelled as a professor at the fine arts school, where he left a significant mark because of his teaching prowess.

Alongside Mongrell, the posters of Vicent Climent stand out, such as the one advertising the 1909 Regional Expo of Valencia, which is fully pictorial. He also made several posters for Barcelona, where he was a teacher at the fine arts school, such as the proper academic image for the 1911 international art exhibition.

THE ADVENT OF ART DECO

The 1910s and much of the 1920s are a period that is often ignored in Catalan and Valencian poster art, even though it was a time when its development reached extraordinarily high graphic quality, on par with international modernity yet with unique features that distinguish it from what was happening in other countries. Indeed, the posters from this period gradually incorporated the characteristics of the first formal manifestation of what we have called Art Deco: highly decorative with extravagant colours, elements of exoticism and a certain refinement. Yet at the same time, a local strain called Noucentisme was developing, especially in Catalonia, which harked back to classical models and sober compositions. The two currents often overlapped.

At that time, the relationship between Valencia and Barcelona became more fluid. Numerous Valencian poster artists moved to Barcelona, attracted by its flourishing graphic industry, while others worked for the Catalan capital without ever leaving Valencia.

One of the artists who has been considered characteristic of Noucentisme experienced such a notable evolution that it is impossible to pigeonhole him: Francesc Galí, a prominent draughtsman and muralist and a renowned educator (Joan Miró was his disciple). His first posters boast splendid colours, often using flat inks with no outlines and shadows in unreal colours, such as the poster for the 1910 Spring Festival in Barcelona, the poster advertising the *Vell i Nou* magazine and the poster for the campaign to combat flies, which features a lugubrious, impactful image. Soon, however, Galí developed his characteristic style, with female figures floating within the poster space (Hotel Industry Expo, Orquestra Pau Casals), which shortly thereafter evolved towards an Art Deco simplification in the two posters for the 1929 Barcelona International Expo.

Another great artist of Noucentisme, Josep Obiols, also an engraver and muralist, followed a similar professional arc, from the iconic 1921 poster for the Associació Protectora de l'Ensenyança Catalana, bearing an image of a dutiful boy going to school in the neo-popular style, and the 1930 *Setmana Hotelera*, featuring the painter's characteristic cherubim, to simpler works for the 1934 Barcelona Spring Festival and the 1936 musicology conference.

Other notable authors from this period in Barcelona were the cartoonist and painter Feliu Elias, working under the pseudonym of "Apa"; the refined Robert Cartes, whose oeuvre is brief and little known; the expert in posters for automobile and motorcycle races Antonio Garcia, who dynamically captured speeding vehicles; the aforementioned Cidón, who retained his synthetic style, now resembling that of the British artist Tom Purvis, in the posters for El Siglo department store, and who moved to Tarragona before ending up in Zaragoza; Gaspar Camps, who after starting in the Art Nouveau style, following in the footsteps of Mucha, harnessed his drawings to adver-



FIGURE 3. The poster by Josep Obiols to promote education in the Catalan language (1921, reissued in 1923) uses the resources of popular art in an image which appealed to viewers.

tise luxury products; Vicenç Nubiola, who specialised in posters with farm themes; the members of the Jener family (the father, Eduard Jener Casellas, designed colourful posters for the regattas in the port of Barcelona and bull-fights since 1913, while one of his sons, Eduard Jener González, made Art Deco designs for the perfume company Myrurgia brimming with sophistication, and another son, Juli Jener, produced different posters featuring simplified drawing in the 1930s); and Pere Montanya, who was associated with the Seix & Barral printing press since 1909 and created posters for automobile races, regattas, the first automobile expo in 1920 and advertisements for Freixenet champagne. Another famous name which would reappear in the 1930s is Francesc Fàbregas, who in 1920 earned renown with a poster for a landscape exhibition and in 1922 won a contest to advertise Sorel cognac, with a female figure wearing a traditional Andalusian dress captured with flat splashes of colour. After a stint in Argentina, where he met with resounding success, he returned to Barcelona for a while, where he presided over the Associació de Cartellistes before moving back to Argentina permanently.

The Valencians who lived in Barcelona included Lluís Garcia Falgàs, the designer of the poster for Iberia dyes (1920), a true advertising classic showing a girl holding

five ribbons of different colours; Garcia Falgàs would remain active during the Civil War. Another is his brother-in-law Pasqual Capuz, who stands out for a poster for Barcelona's Carnaval in 1917, along with his poster for the 1920 art exhibition, with colours that resemble the paintings of Anglada Camarasa; his posters for the Barcelona Trade Fair, where he repeated the same design every year with changes in the technique; and his poster advertising the athletic events of the 1929 International Expo, this time with more simplified figures and the background reduced to bands of flat colour. The most prominent name among the Valencian colony living in Barcelona is surely Josep Segrelles,¹ the author of posters like the one for a hydroplane race (1920), where an aircraft glides along raging waves; the poster for the 25th anniversary of Futbol Club Barcelona (1924), and numerous tourist posters and adverts for car races. An internationally renowned illustrator (he worked in the United States), Segrelles also designed important works for Valencia, such as the first poster for the Fallas, the capital of Valencia's festival of fire (1929).

Also worth mentioning are names like Carlos Ruano Llopis, who is regarded as one of the most prominent poster artists for bullfights, which he produced in vast quantities for the Ortega printing press of Valencia, until he moved to Mexico in 1934; Amadeu Desfilis, the author of the poster *Valencia, Playa del Mediterráneo* (1920?), featuring the image of a woman dressed in traditional garb along with flowers and oranges; and Artur Ballester, who made the first poster for the 1926 Book Day festivities. A promising young artist was Antoni Vercher, who died prematurely at the age of 33 after making posters like the one for the Fair of Valencia in 1920, with a semi-nude female figure surrounded by flowers in the pure Art Deco style, along with a poster for the National Tourism Bureau, featuring a Valencian landscape with a traditional hut, and the poster for the 1932 Fallas.

THE GENERATION OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC AND CIVIL WAR POSTERS

The generation of the Second Spanish Republic, who primarily worked in the 1930s, created an interesting, original, fully modern body of work. The majority of its members got their start in commercial advertising, but the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) shifted them to producing wartime posters. These works are etched into the collective memory and highly prized, but they signal the end of an era which for many of them meant exile or silence at home under the Franco dictatorship. These poster artists reached their peak in around 1925 and coalesced around the 1929 Barcelona International Expo, so they were able to make mature works upon the arrival of the Republic in 1931, with the winds of change it brought on all levels, which were particularly noticeable in Valencia.

The photographer Gabriel Casas had actually anticipated the municipal elections of 1931, which triggered the proclamation of the Republic, with a series of six posters using the photomontage technique. The photographic poster gradually became more common, and it gained importance with the outbreak of the Civil War, even though works based on drawings still predominated during those years.

Still in the 1920s, some poster artists had made outstanding works, such as the elegant Gerard Carbonell, the rigorous Lluís Muntané and the tender Evarist Mora, authors of posters for the social action campaigns of the Caixa de Pensions savings bank. Josep Alumà, who reaped success in 1919 with the poster for the Reial Cercle Artístic ball held at the Liceu opera house, specialised in the more grassroots spectacles in Barcelona's Parallel neighbourhood: particularly noteworthy are his advertisements for the magazines *Cri-cri* (1922) and *Charivari* (1927), which show his evolution from an exotic, highly decorative Art Deco to a more simplified, dynamic version. The Valencian Ernest Guasp, the author of innovative caricatures verging on abstraction, also designed noteworthy theatre posters with evocative drawings enlivened with dashes of colour.

The cutting-edge poster artist in the new scene in Barcelona was Josep Morell,² who specialised in tourism posters; his evocations of landscapes were often reduced to geometric shapes with forced perspectives and dynamic, diagonal compositions (*Girona, la Ciutat de Pedra*, 1932). He also excelled in commercial and political posters (*Philco* and *No Passaran!*, respectively).

Other representatives of 1930s poster art were J.L. Rey Vila, who designed the outstanding posters for the high-end fashion boutique Santa Eulalia, along with more combative war posters under the pseudonym of "Sim"; Joan Queralt, who introduced a streamlined, constructivist Art Deco with the use of airbrushing; and Enric Moneñy, who specialised in tourism posters, especially for the coastal town of S'Agaró. Prominent in Moneñy's oeuvre is the poster for the Tourism and Sports Expo in 1934, with the schematic image of a large swallow, which would become the symbol of the Oficina de Turisme de Catalunya.

The 1929 Expo, along with the tumultuous international political situation, attracted artists from Central Europe, such as the Czech Karel Černý, the Swiss Frisco Milliod and the German Fritz Lewy, all of whom incorporated the new approaches from their homelands into Catalan poster art. Most particularly, Černý was active in commercial advertising (posters for Molfort's socks), and his studio was a major hub where other artists also worked, such as the Russian Mariana Goncharov (under the pseudonym of "Fair") and the writer Pere Calders. In turn, Lewy, who signed his works "LY", was primarily active in poster art during the war, with works featuring simplified, geometric drawing and the isotypes that Otto Neurath and Gerd Arntz had created. Some of the handful of women in this history, including Carme Millà and Mariona Llach, also emerged during the war.



FIGURE 4. Impossible perspectives, a dynamic diagonal composition and colour applied with an airbrush characterise this and other posters by Josep Morell (1933), who specialised in tourism posters.

The outbreak of the Civil War gave rise to one of the peaks in the recent graphic tradition of Barcelona and Valencia. The output from these two cities is noteworthy, and the posters that were printed during the 1,000 days of war are a testimony of that tumultuous period. They were made by a group of creators who were more or less committed to filling the city and village streets with outstanding works which are still studied and collected today.

Valencian poster-makers made particularly brilliant contributions, led by Josep Renau,³ an airbrush virtuoso since the first posters for the July Fair (1929, 1931) and the author of tourism posters (such as *Valencia, Jardín de España*, from 1930, a synthesis of huts, orange and palm trees and Mediterranean light), and film posters (an activity he continued during the Spanish Civil War and in his exile in Mexico). He forged his own personal style early on, such as in the poster for the *Las Arenas* swimming pool (1932), which features a low vantage point, unreal colours and an elegant eroticism. The posters that Renau made in Valencia, Madrid and Barcelona during the war, some of which include photographic images (such as *El Comisario*, *Nervio de Nuestro Ejército Popular* for the Communist Party) are among the most noteworthy war posters produced in the republican zone.

Another great name in Valencian war posters is Manuel Monleon. Just like Renau, he stood out for his use of airbrushing and as the author of photomontages, especially for the anarchist, naturist magazine *Estudios*. However, his war posters were composed solely of expressive, direct drawing which was meant to impact the viewer. The aforementioned Artur Ballester also belongs to this group of Valencians; he specialised in drawing personalities with an epic figurativism in vivid colours (*¡Llor a los Héroes!* and *Campesino: Trabaja para el Pueblo que te ha Liberado*). Likewise, his brother Vicent, who signed his works V. Ballester Marco, was the author of posters with more schematic drawing, which use the elegance of Art Deco to convey bellicose, revolutionary messages.

While Vicent Canet was very active during the war, his poster art had also been quite fruitful before it. Back in 1923 he had shown his decorative sensibility and mastery of colour in the poster for the coronation of Our Lady of the Forsaken, the patron saint of Valencia, with the religious image enveloped in flowers making the design of the Valencian flag. He particularly stood out for his posters of the spring festivals in 1927, 1928 and 1929, where he zoomed into natural elements (flowers, a butterfly, a swallow) captured with flat ink, similar to the poster for the 1934 Valencia Fine Arts Expo. During the war, he was the leader of the artists' union which included poster artists, with their fine arts atelier. Just like many other activist artists, he was later purged by the Franco regime. Other authors who had not gone into exile suffered from a worse fate, such as Lorenzo Aguirre, the author of posters for the bonfires of Alicante, who was executed.

Other Valencian artists who were active during and after the war include Luis Dubón, Rafael Raga and Ferran Cabedo Torrents. Some of them, like Peris Aragó, excelled in the genre of film posters both before and after the war.

Some poster artists took part in the two cities' propaganda efforts on behalf of the government of the Republic and its ministries, which moved first to Valencia and then to Barcelona to flee the bombs that were raining down on Madrid. Often within the orbit of Josep Renau, who became the Spanish government's head of graphic propaganda, we can find the Polish artist Mauricio Amster and the Madrid native José Bardasano, as well as the Valencian Gori Muñoz, who made prominent works in both cities.

With regard to the Barcelona artists who stood out during the 1936-1939 war, prominent names include Carles Fontserè, the author of works which have become iconic, such as the image of the farmer with his scythe raised and the slogan *Llibertat!*; in his book of memoirs, he gave a complete picture of what those months of creative fervour during the war were like, as well as his subsequent exile. Other noteworthy names include Lorenzo Goñi, who is primarily remembered for his poster *I Tu, Què has Fet per la Victòria?*, with the injured soldier chiding the viewer by pointing with his index finger, as in oth-



FIGURE 5. In this poster, Josep Renau (Valencia, 1907 – Berlin, 1982) shows his mastery of colour and drawing with a low vantage point, yielding a dream-like result characteristic of Art Deco. (1932). 100 x 68 cm. Colour lithograph on paper. Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

er famous posters; and Martí Bas, the prolific author who made several large-scale posters in support of the weapon factory, such as *Feu Tancs!* and *Indústria de Pau? De Guerra!*

The posters created during the war were mostly overseen by the political parties and unions, but in Catalonia they were also promoted by the Propaganda Commission, which was in charge of disseminating instructions by a variety of media (including illustrated books and magazines, radio broadcasts, cinema newsreels, etc.). In the case of posters, this gave rise to numerous photography-based works, such as the celebrated *Aixafem el Feixisme!* by Pere Català Pic, with the image of an espadrille, the footwear of the working class, stepping on a swastika.

Clearly, the individual contributions of these and other artists, such as the painter Antoni Clavé and Cristóbal Arteche, Ricard Fàbregas, Albert Sanmartí (working under the pseudonym of “Artel”), Solà, Rafael Tona, Josep Subirats and Friedfeld, along with the aforementioned Sim, Lewy, Garcia Falgàs and many other anonymous artists, comprise a group that has often been singled out as the swansong of the poster art tradition in Catalonia. The end

of the Civil War and the start of the Franco dictatorship led many of them into exile and silenced many others. Thus, 1939 can be considered the end of an era.

THE INFRASTRUCTURES BEHIND POSTERS: ASSOCIATIONS, COLLECTORS, PRINTING PRESSES

These 50 years of poster art bear witness to how the profession developed from the standpoint of both its cultivators, who improved their means of training and organised themselves into different platforms that defended their interests, and the public's acceptance of their work, which went from being considered merely a means of advertising to occupying a prominent place in the cultural discourse as an art form available to anyone, a hallmark of modern cities.

Indeed, we have mentioned how the first wave of Art Nouveau posters was enthusiastically watched by local and foreign critics, who reported on them in specialised magazines. And they were also collected and soon became considered part of the cultural heritage: Lluís Plandiura's large collection was acquired by Barcelona's public museums in 1903. Poster contests also piqued a great deal of interest and produced some of the most memorable works of the period. This dynamic gradually subsided as the importance of poster art was already fully integrated into both cities' artistic and cultural life.

More initiatives of this kind were undertaken in Barcelona. Associations reached their peak during the years of the Republic, with the 1931 founding of the active *Associació de Cartellistes*, which organised exhibitions, participated on the juries of numerous poster contests and began to publish a magazine in 1936, which was thwarted by the outbreak of the Civil War. However, before that, posters already had a place in the advertisers' organisations created around Pere Prat Gaballí, who introduced what were called “rational advertising” techniques to Europe. After holding a theoretical and practical class on advertising, in 1915 Prat Gaballí gathered a group of talented disciples around him who spread his teachings from the recently created advertising agencies via books and specialised magazines, the classrooms of trade academies and the *Publi-Club*, which was formed in 1927, and was important enough by 1935 to organise the *Congrés Internacional de la Publicitat* (International Advertising Conference). These advertising theoreticians and practitioners analysed the phenomenon from many vantage points (psychological, perceptive, economic, ethical, etc.) until reaching optimal results for both the advertiser and the recipient, without ever veering from the truth. To them, posters were a powerful medium in an overall strategy that also included newspaper advertisements, mailings, container and wrapping designs, shop window arrangements, etc.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, union organisations became more prominent. The *Sindicat d'Artistes*

was active in Valencia, encompassing drawers, painters, sculptors and poster artists; in Barcelona, a platform called the *Sindicat de Dibuxants Professionals* was created, which was behind many of the posters published during the early months of the war. In both cases, the poster artists organised themselves into cooperative ateliers, from which they carried out all the steps in poster design, from the initial sketch to the execution of the final artwork ready for printing.

Even though there were no specific schools where they could learn the techniques of designing and making posters, both cities had fine arts and applied arts schools where official courses on advertising illustration were offered at some point. Both Barcelona's *Escola de Llotja* and Valencia's *Acadèmia de Sant Carles* were the epicentre where the majority of artists discussed in this article were trained, and at some points they were joined by other schools, such as Barcelona's arts and crafts schools, which offered specific classes on poster art. Likewise, some artists ran private drawing academies or trained the future cultivators of the genre in their ateliers.

There were also experts who achieved mastery of the trade from inside the profession by getting their start as apprentices at large specialised printing presses, which often had their own in-house drawing studios that drafted the projects. The young men who joined them (almost always men; there were few women in this period) learned the rudiments of the profession and were gradually given more important assignments.

There were many presses which specialised in printing posters. Some of the most prominent ones from the *Art Nouveau* period in Barcelona have already been mentioned, such as the one owned by Antoni Utrillo and Gual, but there were many others, such as Thomas, Henrich and Rieusset. One of the most cutting-edge presses was the aforementioned *Seix & Barral*, which was created from the merger of two prior companies and had a drawing studio with an impressive roster of names, led by Ricard Giralt Miracle, who is considered one of the fathers of modern graphic design in Catalonia. Other prominent studios, especially in the 1930s, were *Atlàntida*, *Barguñó* and *Grafos*. With regard to the city of Valencia, the most important studios were owned by Simeón Durá and Ortega; they operated for decades with extensive staff and produced most of the bullfighting and festival posters glued to walls all over Spain, in addition to countless commercial projects. Alongside these presses, *Aviñó*, *Mirabet* and *Gráficas Valencia* also stood out. Both cities regularly served clients all over Spain, especially the Balearic Islands, even though there were several competent ateliers there, such as *Empresa Soler* in Palma, which issued an outstanding poster by F. Mellado for the *Esperanto Jocs Florals* poetry contest in 1925.

The most common kind of poster was meant to be glued to the walls on streets, sometimes anarchically, the walls of houses and later in places set aside for this purpose (billboards, advertising columns). This led to the es-

tablishment of a standard format, which was 100 x 70 centimetres in Barcelona and Valencia, along with their multiples and divisors (half or quarter, or double or quadruple; there were also elongated shapes, such as the posters for fairs and bullfights). With very few exceptions, the posters from Barcelona and Valencia are vertical. One variation on the poster printed on paper is the tin poster, which was better able to withstand the elements for a longer time. Some printing presses specialised in them: the most prominent was the *Gottardo de Andreis* factory in Badalona. Tile panels were also made for the façades of shops and other establishments, which were often transferred from the material that had previously appeared on paper posters. Alongside these street posters there were other kinds, like indoor posters, usually mounted on cardboard, which could mostly be found in retailers (on counters, walls or shop windows). This kind of poster made it possible to add more decorative elements, like fretwork, more varied shapes than just a simple rectangle, along with reliefs or openwork and even the articulation of parts of the figures in some cases. Occasionally, these cardboard posters were also used to make calendars.

THE POSTER IN HERITAGE AND RESEARCH

This entire legacy of colourful images can currently be seen and enjoyed thanks to the collectors and museums around the world that have conserved copies of them. By their very nature, posters are fragile, ephemeral works; in theory, their shelf life does not extend beyond the dates of the event announced or the market life of the commercial product. For this reason, the paper used was not always the highest quality, and they were at the mercy of any hand that could tear them down, scrawl on them or glue another poster from the competition on top of them.

This is why it seems miraculous that copies of so many posters have survived. We cannot be sure that today we have access to all the posters that were made in the two cities during this period, and indeed some of them which are documented by photographs have not yet been found in any collection and can, in theory, be considered lost. However, there are different institutions where they are conserved and displayed, even though there is no specific poster museum, as there are elsewhere in the world. Without listing them exhaustively, we can cite the poster collections conserved at the *Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya*, the *Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona* and the *Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya*, as well as at the *Biblioteca Valenciana*, the *Arxiu de la Diputació de València* and the *Institut Valencià d'Art Modern*, among others.

Some museums have special collections, such as the *Museu Faller de València*, with posters that advertised the city's most famous festival, and the *Institut del Teatre de Barcelona*, which has a considerable set of posters for theatrical productions. The *Filmoteca de Catalunya* and the

Institut Valencià de Cultura also have notable samples of film posters.

There are several collections specialising in political posters from the 1930s and especially the Civil War, such as the library of the Pavelló de la República in Barcelona and the collections of the Universitat de València, the Abadía de Montserrat and the Museu de Reus, among others. Other centres conserve fascinating examples of Catalan and Valencian war posters, such as the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid (which also has samples from other periods and on other subjects as well) and the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica in Salamanca, as well as museums and universities around the world, including the Imperial War Museum in London, the Library of Congress in Washington, Brandeis University in Massachusetts and the Taboureaux Collection in Seine-et-Marne, among others.

It is important to recall the contributions of private collectors as well. The most prominent ones are Marc Martí and Jordi Carulla in Barcelona, as well as Mateu Llinàs, who specialises in cardboard and tin posters, and Josep Huguet in Valencia, whose collection is on deposit at the Museu de la Impremta in Puig de Santa Maria. Publications that in some way refer to posters, either monographs or meant for more general audiences, also play an important role in disseminating this heritage, such as the studies by Enric Jardí, *El cartellisme a Catalunya*, from 1983,⁵ and *Carteles y cartelistas valencianos* by Rafael Contreras, from 2003,⁶ as well as the publications by Jordi Carulla, which contain full-colour reproductions of his collection.^{7,8,9,10} Also worth recalling are the countless books on Spanish Civil War posters, along with studies devoted to certain prominent artists, such as Ramon Casas,¹¹ Josep Morell and Josep Renau. Recently, a lot of information can be found online in catalogues from cultural heritage centres or on an array of websites, blogs and image collections.

CONCLUSION

Posters are a suitable medium for disseminating a wide range of messages. This article has discussed different poster genres which Catalan and Valencian artists cultivated with professionalism and efficacy. They include

posters for commercial products in all their variations; retail propaganda, from tiny boutiques to large department stores; tourism posters and posters that advertised fairs, festivals and celebrations, conferences, exhibitions and shows; religious and political posters; social and hygiene awareness-raising campaigns; war posters; and many other genres are all testimonies of the era and can be used today to learn more about the society of the past, from everyday life to the major milestones in history.

All these posters produced in Barcelona and Valencia between the late 19th century and 1939 are part of a notable body of work which reflects the society, communication and culture of a half-century brimming with changes and accomplishments, at a time when modernity was being forged. They are also a repertoire of informative, evocative images, and at times unforgettable proof of the skill of world-class artists.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Santi Barjau (Barcelona 1962). PhD in Art History from the Universitat de Barcelona with a thesis on the Oliva de Vilanova printing press (published in 2002 under the title of *Art i aventura del llibre*). His main field of interest is poster art from the first half of the 20th century, a topic he has examined in the blog *Els "meus" cartellistes* [cartellistes.blogspot.com]. He has focused on Catalan Art Nouveau architecture and particularly on the architect Enric Sagnier, the topic of his Bachelor's thesis. He has worked at the Museu de les Arts Gràfiques of Barcelona and the graphic departments of the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya and the Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona, where he is currently employed.