

Posters: A testament to our history.

HOW HAVE POSTERS EVOLVED OVER TIME?

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SECTION H

Posters: a testament to our history.

Inquiry Question: How have posters evolved over time?

Why did I choose this topic?

- Posters have always fascinated me, ever since I was first introduced to them in school. Posters have this amazing ability to convey a myriad of information, emotions, news, messages, etc. with minimal images and text. Posters are the best form of visual communication in my opinion. They connect with people and influence their behaviour both consciously and subconsciously. The possibilities of use for poster are endless and timeless. Throughout the years, they have served as a major influential media in some of the crucial historical events. The ability of the poster to be so versatile and to touch the hearts and minds of every type of person in the crowd is what fascinates me the most. They captivate the attention of the viewers and impact their lives and the lives of the ones around them. Angelina Lippert, who is a curator at Print House (New York), rightly says "Posters are powerful because they have no barrier of entry, which is why they produce such memorable images; their howls of protest reminding us that, even in today's screen-obsessed culture, when you want your voice to be heard, there's nothing quite like ink on paper." That is the power of a good poster.

Design context:

- The design context for posters is understanding the interaction between the imagery and the text. How the placement of these elements plays an important role in how the poster is received by the viewers. One of the most important elements of a poster is the colour scheme which requires the designer to understand colour theory and implement it correctly. People need the poster to express their feelings and thoughts in a language that could be understood universally. Posters have given people a voice and have motivated them throughout our history and then continue to do so. A designer has to be very careful while making a poster so as not to have it be misinterpreted by the viewers. The scale and size of the images and the text is also very important. Understanding which typeface to use where is also something that has to be learnt and implemented well. While making a poster for a client, there has to be a clear interaction. This interaction has been made easier through the advancements in technology as now the designs can be shared with the client through a mail and notes can be exchanged as well, this has enabled a good client-designer relationship.

Discussions/Arguments/Theories:

- Argument 1 –

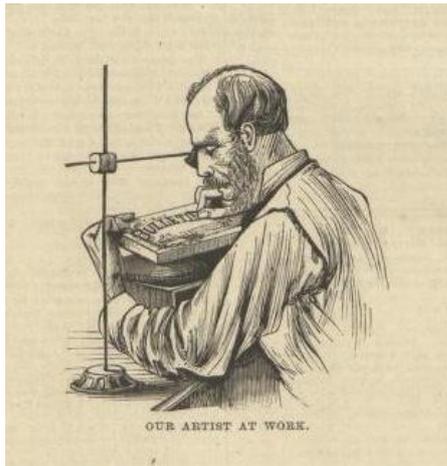
The advancements in the field of technology paved the way to many opportunities and possibilities for not only the making but also the method of printing of posters. Before technology came around, the process of making a poster was to sketch it out on a paper with a pencil. It was hence harder to be mass produced. There are, however, pros and cons to this as there are two sides to a coin. The emergence of computer softwares has helped designers to work more efficiently and has hence made their jobs easier. These softwares have also helped designers get more creative and achieve results that they otherwise could not have. Previously, there were limitations in the making of a poster but now that is not the case. Designers have been able to create some very scintillating posters due to technology. Typography also experienced the impact of the digital revolution, which occurred in the late 1950s. Designers started to come up with new typefaces and scripts. On the other hand, technology also resulted into the practice of plagiarism. It has stunted the imagination and originality of designers all around the world as they turn to the internet to get inspiration for the theme of their poster. Technology also eliminated the ownership rights to designs as anyone can get prints and it would still be considered as an original. Today, anyone who buys a packet of Chupa Chups can say that they have an original artwork of the renowned artist 'Salvador Dali', as he designed the logo for the brand. Technology has also improved the communication between a designer and the client as the designs can be sent via email and notes can be exchanged



Moulin Rouge, 1890 (left) ; Dumb ways to die, 2012 (right).

- Argument 2-

Posters have been around for a long time and have immensely evolved ever since they were first made. The initial posters consisted only of text that was bold and readable. It served as a way to convey information and news to the people. These posters were made using the method of lithography. Lithography was invented by a German actor and author 'Alois Senefelder' in 1796. Lithography is a method of printing originally based on the immiscibility of oil and water. This technique had limitation of colour and design. Of course, technology changed the game of poster making completely but I believe that the major turning point in the making of posters was when 'Chromolithography' was discovered by a French printer 'Godefroy Engelmann' in 1837. It allowed the designers to achieve multiple colours and designs in their poster. This was done by layering multiple layers of metal sheets on top of each other on a paper to get the desired design. The addition of images made the posters more appealing to the public and were better received. It became easier to grab the attention of the people and to get the message across. This resulted in the making of many iconic posters that were used for recruitment for the army, political propaganda and advertisement. Chromolithography gave rise to a myriad of possibilities to combine imagery and typefaces and make posters that connect with the people and have impact on them.



Artist using the lithographer (top left), A collection of lithographs (top right), An engraved map on a stone along with its print on a paper (below).

- Argument 3 –

According to French historian Max Gallo, "For over two hundred years, posters have been displayed in public places all over the world. Visually striking, they have been designed to attract the attention of passers-by, making us aware of a political viewpoint, enticing us to attend specific events, or encouraging us to purchase a particular product or service." Gallo's words explain the effect and purpose of posters very well. Posters made in different countries reflected that country's unique culture. France had posters on cafes and cabarets, Italy had posters for the opera, Spain had posters for bullfights and festivals, Germany had posters for trade fairs and magazines and Britain and America had posters for literary journals and circuses. They all had a distinctive style as well. The Dutch posters showed restraint and orderliness, the Italian posters showed drama and grandness and the German posters showed directness and medieval influence. These styles found their way across the world due to migration and influenced the posters in every country they went. World War I proved to be the biggest advertising campaign the world has ever seen. Posters were widely used for this purpose. They started their new role of promoting propaganda. They conveyed messages to the people about raising money, recruitment of soldiers, boosting volunteer efforts, encouraging production and provoking outrage about the enemy and their atrocities. The Bolsheviks used the art of posters to win the civil war against the Whites, during World War I. Lenin and his followers proved

that the poster could be used as a weapon. This shows how posters played an important role in the major movements in history.



Conclusion:

Posters have come a long way since their birth. They have seen the emergence of technology and experienced it. They have evolved in every aspect except for one. They have gone from hand drawn to digital but their purpose remains the same: to convey a message and to have an impact on the viewers. No matter who you are, a poster will reach out to you in a crowd and will impact you knowingly or unknowingly and that is the beauty of it. Technology has changed the world of typography and has altered the way we look at it. Posters are timeless and their value and influence is ever-lasting even though their purpose keeps changing. Poster making has changed drastically over time and they continue to keep themselves a la mode. "Today's illustrators wear their respective styles like an overcoat, and unless major changes in fashion occur overnight, they tend to keep that coat for many seasons, while adding accessories that keep you up-to-date." (Wiedemann 2010). Posters are not only reflective of the time they were made in but also the place. They are truly a beautiful way to look at our history in all its glory and struggle. The relationship and the interaction between the client and the designer have also improved and that has become an asset in the making of a poster. "Don't let your perceptions of the what seems to be a "tradition" in the design community (or any other community for that matter) dictate how you go about your work" (Ward 2010). Posters have transformed a lot over the past 100 years through the advancements in technology that happened during the digital revolution and it is exciting to see what they will bring to us in the future, how they will change and how they will bring about change.

Bibliography:

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