

The mass  
communication  
namely radio  
television cultural  
studies essay



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## **Introduction**

Other than the mass communication, namely radio, television and the Internet, Graphic Design considers one of the effective forms of communication. Graphic Design itself is a creative process that assembles images, colours, words and symbols to create a visual impact which grabs the viewers' attention and requires them to think. It is all around us: at the bus stations, at the train stations, on the Light Rail Transit (LRT), even in small gadgets that we see or touch every day, like the cigarettes packages, mobile phone cards and much more. The field of Graphic Design basically covers up advertisements, posters, publications, product design, from illustration to animation, from symbols to typography. The world of Graphic Design is enormous and everything has its own history. The best way to learn and get know to Graphic Design is to look into and study the history of it in certain period and in certain countries. Europe leads the way in art development and many art movements either the long term or the short period are taking place here especially during the inter-war period. The art movements of Europe transform from the Classical Art that emerges before 1880s to the Modern Art that conquers the world at the end of the 18th century until now. Hence, we can study that the elements used in art developments transform and go with the flow to suit the culture at certain period. Eventually, the art developments that take place in the past help form the significant graphic design styles in the early 20th century and the industries start to see graphic design as a strategy to promote something. By examining the history, culture and lastly the art movement of Europe before and during the inter-war period, poster design stands firm in the field of

graphic design and thus this is the new perpetual strategy adopted by the European business and industry. And within the field of poster design, we can see that other new strategies that had been applied include the poster style and the target market.

## **2. 0 Background:**

In the First World War (1914-1919), Europeans lived in an unpleasant and depressed living condition. Thousands of men died each day. The country lost so many young men that it can be counted as the 'loss of generation' (Sumler, 1973, p. 119). The numbers of casualties reached 850, 000 in German while it was 410, 000 in Great Britain. This condition became even worst in winter. All countries suffered from the shortage of consumer goods. Food was not enough for the civilians who did overwork. The state of poverty increased, land was destructed, agriculture production was destroyed and much more. During the last period of the war, the government controlled over the civilian population became extremely rigid. Rationing, direction of resources to key industries, and limitations of workers' freedom of movement were very common. The inter-war period (1919-1939) marked the end of The First World War. It was known as the period between The First World War and The Second World War. Europe was rebuilt into a new world even though during that time many Europeans were still remained unemployed. The entering of the Inter-war period had Europe to favourable stability and prosperity peculiarly between the years 1925 to 1929. The inter-war years witnessed the growth of Europe culture in reaching the mass market. During the war Europeans learned to produce everything faster than ever before as the American techniques of mass production- the assembly

line or 'chain belt' method of production was imported to Europe. The goods that had been largely produced at that time included the household appliances, clothing, foods and automobiles. It stimulated the Europe economy because more and more Europeans started involving themselves in the industrial production. Not only the wealthy, but more Europeans from the middle and lower classes were given jobs opportunity. They were believed to have more purchasing power (Sumler, 1973, p. 250). Even the entertainment industries, newspaper and the producers of consumer goods began to shift their target audience and looked into this mass group for their profit rather than to the rich and upper class. The middle and lower classes learned to dress better, lived in nicer home, purchased good quality goods, pursued higher level education, read good books, and attended concerts, theatrical performances like the rich and well-bred always did.

## **Figure 1:**

### **Moulin Rouge (1891)**

The mass market spent more on leisure activities which previously enjoyed only by the wealthy. Night clubs and cabarets were springing up like mushrooms after the rain in this new era. Before that restaurants had never put on professional and costly floor showed only in the large theatre-restaurants, for instance, Moulin Rouge in Paris, shown in Figure 1 above. Now many restaurants provided live entertainment such as Jazz Band. In addition, exhibition, theatre, cinema, books and buildings at that time gave us a hint that Europe was transforming. The commercial cinemas or the movies were notably the big business during the 20th century. The 20th century was known as the "Jazz Age" which the public showed certain

passions for cars, travel, the telephone, the radio and the other sophisticated science and technologies. These wealthy people were proud of their hedonism. Ironically their craziness and happiness symbolized the rapidness of Europe in entering the prosperous years between years 1925 until 1929 and then into the nightmare of the Great Depression, which wiped all the smiling faces away. Europe in the 20th century witnessed not only the bonanza of the country brought by the technologies, but also the discard of the old and the acceptance of the new attitude towards sex. Women's roles had changed entirely. They contributed to the household and families, and even in the workplaces. They started to take over the jobs of men and filled up the labour shortage since most of the men were being called up for the military service. Even when the men returned, women did not resign, they still kept these jobs because they had enjoyed an economic freedom that they never had before. Another evident proof of the new attitude towards sexes can be noticed in women's clothing. Women's freedom was symbolised by the length of their hemline. When women started to work, their skirts had been shortened from the ankle level to the knee level for convenience. Hence, women stood a spanking role at that time as the era of men went out and worked hard whilst women looked after the families had become old-fashioned. The inter-war years undoubtedly were a period of transformation for Europe in everything from the rules of advertising to the construction of department buildings, from the language used in the publication to the marketing of food. We can see that their effort in resuscitating the country with a rich diversity of culture by absorbing the new knowledge from the other leading countries such as America, the recognition of the middle and lower classes and their commitment to the

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country for a better living, the rise of night life entertainments, and lastly the acknowledgement of women's contribution for both the country and the families. These were the things that dominated the Europe in the beginning of the 20th century. Target market shifted from the well-bred to the middle and lower classes and the women because they conquered the social. Advertisers and agencies changed their advertising strategy by investigating what was going on in the society, what the mass market needed in order to keep a life, what they desire for to be satisfied and what women craved for to be morefeminine. And eventually the gap between the social classes was reduced and Europe was actually on its way to achieving a great step towards country democracy, socialism and communism. The social status of the citizens were no longer been judges by their styles of dressing like what it used to be before, which the middle and lower classes could not even afford a nice suit.

### **3. 0 Analysis:**

**The role and function of posters was the most distinct change in the field of graphic design industries in Europe in the inter-war years. During The Second World War at the end of the 19th century, posters actually had been created for army purpose. Those kinds of posters were formal and restricted. Agencies advertised posters for communicational requirements such as looking for financial aid, recruitment and calling for soldiers, more to spreading the propaganda. They aimed at finding the capable, brave and independent men to join the army group.**

#### **Figure 2:**

##### **Belle Eroque (1871)**

**While in the beginning of the 20th century, the poster craze spread in Europe where we saw the emergence of creative and splendour posters. For instance, during the years of Belle Eroque (poster shown in Figure 2) in 1871, advertisers used posters to promote French culture and the same can be seen on the other countries in Europe, they used posters for any special cultural events advertisements. The role of posters in the beginning of the 20th century was the consequence of the posters in the late 1890s, advertisers still employed and recognised posters as a good advertising strategy. Moreover, the rich culture of Europe, the art movements and the social requirements uplifted the importance of posters as an advertising tool for announcing new products, services or events.**

#### **Figure 3:**

##### **Advert for Dr Scholl's Foot Powder**

**(1930)**

**Figure 4:**

**Advert for Wigglesworth " Golden Tan" sun screen cream**

**(1930)**

Going into the masses was one of the strategies used by the advertising industry during the inter-war years. The middle and lower classes held the majority in the society since most of them were given jobs and they gained salary even though the salary was not favourable. European's life was made easier with the development of ready-to-serve canned foods, cheap-to-wear clothes, and the appearance of stores selling many goods and simplified one's shopping so that they can purchased all the things they wanted in just one store. Consumer goods such as clothing, household appliances, foods and automobiles were no longer available only for the rich but were now available for the masses at lower prices. It was the years of consumerism, the middle and lower class started to buy goods and led a good life. Thus industrial posters were created, ranged from daily life products to the electric motors. Figure 3 and Figure 4 showed the industrial posters on consumer goods. It was their effort in approaching the mass market, workers became the element used on the posters. [http://www.retrosnapshots.com/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/p/o/poster234\\_3.jpg](http://www.retrosnapshots.com/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/p/o/poster234_3.jpg) [http://www.retrosnapshots.com/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/p/o/poster232\\_3.jpg](http://www.retrosnapshots.com/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/p/o/poster232_3.jpg)



**Figure 6:****Champagne De Rochevre European Advertising Poster (1920)****Figure 5:****Café Jacamo Europe Advertising Poster (1920)**

Figure 5 was an old European vintage poster for Jacamo coffee. The illustration depicted a young woman dressed up and drinking a cup of coffee. While Figure 6 was an advertising poster illustrated a socialite women was sipping champagne. From these advertising posters one can know that women enjoyed an economic independence and they were willing to spend on the leisure activities.

**Figure 7:**

Monso Fans French Advertising Poster (1920)[http://www. retrosnapshots.com/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/p/o/poster226\\_3. jpg](http://www.retrosnapshots.com/media/catalog/product/cache/1/image/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/p/o/poster226_3.jpg)Moreover, the invention of sciences and technology dramatically affected women's lives. Figure 7 above was the advertising poster showing a woman was standing in front of the Monso fans. The woman on the poster seemed enjoying the cool air generated from the fans. It meant a satisfaction towards life, a convenience that had been brought by the advancement of the technologies to the women. Homemaking was not a hard job for women anymore. Even for the industries areas, the growth of commercial laundries and factory production of clothing, canned foods, and household appliances created opportunities for women to work and gained the financial freedom. In the late 19th century Jules Cheret had already started to portray women as his poster design elements and his <https://assignbuster.com/the-mass-communication-namely-radio-television-cultural-studies-essay/>

posters on women were more to demonstrating the elegance of them. At this time we had already knew that artists or designers started to portray women in their paintings or theatre posters. While in the 20th century, women became gradually important as advertising targets for products and commercial posters. Both centuries were featuring women and we can see how the roles of women had changed, from just a theatre posters features to the target market audiences.

**Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, Jules Cheret's style was simpler and more dynamic. He used to compose large figures in the centre of the poster, decorating it with his own letterforms, applying simple backgrounds yet to make the central images stood out with his glowing colours concept: the combination of blue, red and yellow for striking images. This was also known as the Art Nouveau style. This style was born in France at the end of the 19th century until the The First World War. Nikolaus Pevsner (as cited in Phillip B. Meggs., & Alston W. Purvis., 2012) had made his explanation on Art Nouveau,**

**The long sensitive curve, reminiscent of the lily's stem, an insect's feeler, the filament of a blossom or occasionally a slender flame, the curve undulating, flowing and interplaying with others, sprouting from corners and covering asymmetrically all available surface. (p. 200)**

**Art Nouveau posters were easily recognized by its sumptuous and curvilinear designs. The sensual, organic images changed the face of advertising and launched a poster craze swept Europe.**

**Figure 9:**

**Palais de Glace (1893)**

**Figure 8:**

**La Diaphane (1890)**

Figure 8 showed a renowned theatre actress, Sarah Bernhardt patted the rice powder on her face while Figure 9 showed a skater in a red and yellow dress. At the end of the 19th century, Jules Cheret usually featured modern and independent women in his posters. Even the colour of their hair was

modern, for in year 1890 when the poster was first printed, women were just starting to dye their hair. Initially red hair was just a sign of modern women, and only at that time it just became a sign of liberated women. Before that, women were seen as either the traditional homemaker who took care of children and kept the house running. Cheret featured " self-assured, happy women who enjoyed life to the fullest", this inevitably gave women a way of expressing themselves without saying anything. They were able to express themselves through the cloths they chose to wear, the way they positioned themselves in the photos and their expression on their faces. Besides that, Jules Cheret used black lines with the primary colours, the red, blue and yellow to give vitality to the image. Apparently the poster appeared to be eye-catching with the three primary colours. He usually positioned the figure or figures with elegant body gesture in the centre, and surrounded by some soft watercolour-like washes. Bold lettering was an important element that often echoed the shapes and the gestures of the figure, fitted in the overall design, and at the same time the words remained readable. The decorative fonts became popular in the 19th century and were used broadly on posters and advertisements. This style of type and lettering could be organic that emphasized humanity's connection to nature. The English Art historian, Herbert Read (as cited in Phillip B. Meggs., & Alston W. Purvis., 2012) ever said that, The life of any art movement is like that of a flower. A budding in the hands of a small numbers of innovators is followed by full bloom; the process of decay begins as the influence becomes diffused and distorted in the hands of the imitators who understand merely the stylistic manifestations of the movement rather than the driving passions that forged it. (p. 228)The Art Nouveau period had ended. Art Nouveau slowly

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decolourised followed by the end of The First World War. It was ever been the style that largely used by the advertisers in most of the poster design. But numerous of poster quantities were produced and soon the Art Nouveau style had been glutted. Art Nouveau at some time in the past represented an attitude and the appreciation towards materials, processes and value.

**From 1895 until 1906, history of poster art changed from an intriguing, exotic, historical and introspective style, which it is also known as the Art Nouveau style, to one that marked the beginnings of simpler, rational, functional, dynamic and eclectic approaches to modern design. Posters style transformed from curvilinear shapes to geometric shapes, in order to explicate the advertising message to the target audiences. It was the Art Deco style in which it had deeply influenced the design and advertisement. Art Deco was the popular style that shaped the Graphic Design poster during that time- The Jazz Age, it represented a machine age aesthetic that expressed the speed, power, scale of modern technological changes and innovations and all kinds of flashy new inventions. Technology and sciences changed the commerce and industry area. Transportation and communication was made easier by the innovation of the cars, the airplanes, the boats and the radio transmission. The mechanical, machine-made and industrial solid forms of Art Deco became an important graphic design source and a new direction in pictorial images**

**Figure 10:**

**Die Frau Ohne Namen (1927)**

**Posters in this style used only a simple and minimal composition of imagery and bold, clear types, but the strong colour used made them a dominant style. Pictorial posters and films were used for disseminating communist message across the country, requiring only low level of literacy, and with little chance of local interference with central message. Concise text and simple illustration were the fundamental elements of design that were being applied. Posters at that time were strictly typographic. By 1923, typography and letterpress design became a distinct subject. In the above typography design, a couple of social activities and figure representations have been presented.**

**In Paris, the Art Deco designer A. M. Cassandre dominated French poster design for almost 16 years. Cassandre was one of the greatest poster designers of the 20th century who well-known for his poster composition and interesting geometrical shapes. Cassandre's designs of smooth towering ships and speeding trains were considered to be the famous and typical Art Deco images. Gyorgy Kepes (as cited in Philip B. Meggs., & Alston W. Purvis, 2012) in describing Cassandre's poster design stated that,**

**One unifying device employed by Cassandre was the use of a contour line common to various spatial units. The double outline takes on a double meaning, similar to a visual pun. It refers to inside and outside space simultaneously, and the spectator is therefore forced into intensive participation as he seeks to resolve the apparent contradiction. But the equivocal contour line does more than unify different spatial data. It acts like a warp, weaving the threads of color planes into one rhythmical unity. The rhythmical flow of the line injected the picture surface with a sensual intensity. (p. 293)**

**Art Deco, like Art Nouveau before, spread quickly throughout Europe. It was the peak of modernity. It marked the popular geometric kinds of works of the 1920s and 1930s.**

### **Figure 11:**

#### **Nord Express railway (1927)**

We can see the influence of Modernism here: the train had been simplified, reduced to basic geometry shapes of straight lines, rectangles, cylinders, circles and squares. The perspective of the train shown in Figure 11 was in exaggerated and interesting, emphasising on the wheels and lines which suggested fast and forward motion, of speed and of power. In addition, Cassandre intentionally arranged the words according to the thick and bold white lines to express a railway track. This travel poster targeted on citizens who like to go for travelling. He only used capitals in his designs because he believed they were more legible, especially when seen on a large scale. The way Cassandre links his typography with his images is one of the hallmarks of his design. Type is not a separate element but is integrated with the image to create the unified composition.



## **Figure 12:**

### **Normandie Ship Advertising Poster (1935)**

**Cassandre's splendid masterpiece of the Normandie was also the most famous poster at the Art Deco style. In this era, middle and lower classes enjoyed a luxury life and celebrated sophisticating years with the entering of technologies. With transportation, for instance, boats, cars and airplanes and the radio transmission, communication between two different places were made easier. Citizens went for travel was no more a hard thing. Figure 12 depicted a luxurious ocean liner which was glamorous icons of international travel between 1920s-1930s. It was very simple and powerful pictorial representation. Everything from the flock of tiny birds to the upward sweeping vantage point is designed to accentuate the great ocean liner's scale and stately character.**

#### **4. 0 Conclusion:**

The First World War saw the first large scale use of posters for political purposes while posters were being widely used for advertising during the inter-war period. The inter-war years were the years of nation enjoying the fun and celebrating prosperity, the improvement of the European lifestyle, the status of women in the society subsequently changed, the spread of consumer goods that had brought convenience to the citizens and last but not least, the evolution of the graphic art style on posters and advertising posters. After the Second World War, the use of advertising posters in the market was declined subsequently. Europe was effectively taken over by sophisticated media such as photography, radio and later television.

Unfortunately most posters and advertising posters were of a more

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ephemeral nature. One tended to see, touch, forgot and throw away or replaced them with a new one. Only the messages would be carried on. From the history of posters in Europe, one has to appreciate the importance of posters in delivering information between the industries and the consumers. And posters are always the best way to look into the culture of a country. As a part of the 21st century, people should appreciate the history of posters in the past and uphold and unite the world of Graphic Design to create more impact and surprise.