

Early days of American poster art recalled

The American art poster, born in 1893, was designed to promote magazine sales. The poster immediately became a "hot" item among collectors.

This is the period surveyed in "American Posters of the 'Gay Nineties'" at Detroit Institute of Arts. Approximately 90 original posters and magazine covers from the museum's permanent collection are on display through Sunday, Sept. 18, in the Schwartz Graphic Arts Galleries.

In 1893, Harper & Brothers publishers made the momentous decision to promote Harper's Monthly Magazine with monthly placards.

Edward Penfield, the young director of Harper's art department, designed this first popular poster.

THE BOLD SIMPLICITY of Penfield's design revolutionized the art of the poster and commercial design in America. Soon other publishers were employing young artists to design posters and covers for their periodicals. In addition to Penfield's



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The bold simplicity of Penfield's design revolutionized the art of the poster and commercial design in America.

work. The images of Will H. Bradley were particularly influential.

Referred to as the American Beardsley, Bradley distilled the current artistic styles of England, most notably the work of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Penfield, on the other hand, drew from the French humor and design sensibility of Bonnard, Vuillard, and Toulouse-Lautrec.

To accommodate public demand, publishers announced that the posters could be purchased directly from the firm or would be included as a bonus to subscribers. As early as 1895, exhibitions of the new American art posters took place — including one in Detroit's Hotel Cadillac organized by the Women's Exchange and Decorative Arts Society of Detroit.

By 1899, the craze was over. Many small publishing houses went out of business as economical photo-mechanical processes replaced the commercial relief and lithographic techniques for the production of posters and covers.

Penfield continued to produce monthly posters for Harper's until August of 1899.

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fad dissipated as quickly as it had begun, but the artists' work had endured. Their innovative designs set new standards for future decades.

Along with Bradley and Penfield, artists represented in the exhibition include Elsie Brown Bird, Claude Fayette Bragdon, William L. Carqueville, Joseph Christian Leyendecker, Florence Lundborg, Blanche McManus, Maxfield Parrish, Ethel Reed, Louis John Rhoad, Henry Morikka Rosenberg, Rob Wagner and Charles Herbert Woodbury.

The exhibit is open during regular museum hours, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday.

David Kiehl, associate curator of prints and photographs, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, will discuss the exhibition in a lecture at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 14.



Commercial lithograph by Edward Penfield issue of Harper's. It belongs to the collection of (American, 1866-1925), is from the March 1897 the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Rare autos gather on hall's lawn

The sleekest, fastest and most exotic automobiles ever built will be gathering Sunday on the rolling lawns of Meadow Brook Hall, Oakland University in Rochester Hills.

One of America's premier events for automobile enthusiasts, the Meadow Brook Concours d'Elegance traditionally draws more than 10,000 spectators to view the more than 200 vintage automobiles from the 1910s, classic and contemporary eras.

This year's featured "marque" (automobile) is the Auburn, with nearly two dozen handcrafted examples of these exotic roadsters on display and on the move in full throttle. The featured sports car marque is Porsche, with several rare

early models in attendance. Held in conjunction with the Meadow Brook Concours are two other weekend events — the Meadow Brook Historic Races at Waterford Hill Racecourse held Saturday-Sunday, and the Meadow Brook Concours d'Elegance Art Exhibition, which is held on the grounds of Meadow Brook Hall on Sunday.

THE MEADOW BROOK Historic Races feature race cars from the turn of the century through the contemporary era. The art exhibit features the works of 12 automotive artists.

Highlights of this year's Concours will include one of just six 1934 12-

cylinder Packards ever produced, Sidney Greenstreet's 1948 Chrysler Imperial, the King of Denmark's 1933 Cadillac Phaeton, the 1912 Dico used in the movie "Somewhere in Time," a 1959 Tipo 61 "Birdcage" Maserati, and the 1956 Porsche 550A RS Spyder, with serial number one, which Wolfgang von Tripps made legendary during the 1956-57 European racing seasons.

Honorary chairman for this year's Meadow Brook Concours is Richard Kughn, Detroit businessman and owner of Lionel Trains. Kughn's Carail Museum houses more than

150 classic cars. He will take several Auburns, including a 1929 Auburn Boat-tail Speedster, to this year's Concours.

Chairman for the event is Duane Miller, vice president of advanced engineering, Nissan Corp.

Meadow Brook Hall is the Tudor-styled 100-room mansion of automotive widow Matilda Dodge Wilson. Each year, the Concours is the largest single-day fund-raiser for Meadow Brook Hall.

For further event information call Meadow Brook Hall at 370-3140.

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