



## **Posters: New Research, New Perspectives**

*Tuesday 13 December 2016, 10.00 – 17.15*

**Seminar Room 5**

### **Abstracts**

*Underground Women*

#### **Oliver Green**

Oliver Green will explain how the research for his book *Frank Pick's London* led to new revelations about UK poster commissioning in the early twentieth century. Pick's approach at London Underground revolutionised the appeal of what was then known as 'commercial art'. In particular, Pick gave many opportunities to women designers that were rarely offered elsewhere. The inter-war period is the so-called golden age of the travel poster, but nearly all the work went to men. As in the world of fine art, women were often the subject but rarely the artist. Pick's Underground was different, and this presentation will showcase some of the many talented female designers who emerged in this period. Their work was all over London on every Tube station but most of them are still unknown names today.

*Visual Culture and Conflict: The Graphic Poster Collection at Imperial War Museums*

#### **Richard Slocombe in Conversation with Professor Jim Aulich and Dr. Leanne Green**

Mass produced war publicity is one of the familiar representations of the First World War. Exhibited, reproduced and adapted; imagery and information taken from this material contributes to narratives that continue to pervade western society.

Imperial War Museums are known to house one of the most complete collections of First World War posters. Amassed between 1917 and 1922 and conceived as a 'chamber of memories' for future researcher's by the museum's second Director General, Lesley Bradley, the collection was intended to provide, on the one hand, an encyclopaedic record of the war's impact on popular visual culture, and on the other, evidence of the impact of total war on everyday life.

Beyond 1918, holdings are equally impressive. Posters relating to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, Communist rule in East Germany and the Cold War document the key political events of the 20th century on a global scale. While the transformation of the poster as a medium for protest is covered with examples posters from the

1960s peace movements through to the rise of the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and the Stop the War Coalition.

Focusing on, but not limited to, posters produced during the First World War, and taking an internationally comparative approach, this session will consider the narratives and discourses present in 'war posters' and deduce how such posters work visually to convey meaning to their viewers.

### *Promoting British Design – 1956 and 2016*

Professor **Catherine Moriarty**

The Design Centre for British Industries opened in London in 1956. Its aim was to educate consumers, engage overseas buyers, and inform designers, manufacturers and retailers. Leading graphic designers such as Abram Games and Hans Schleger were commissioned to create posters to promote its work. Broadly 510 x 720 mm in size, and displayed on the outside of the Design Centre and elsewhere in the capital, the posters conveyed a distinctive and consistent message about the importance of consumer education and the values of good design. Sixty years on, Margaret Howell has made a selection of these posters from the Design Council Archive at the University of Brighton Design Archives, for exhibition at her Wigmore Street store (4-20 November 2016). What does this re-display tell us as curators and consumers of posters and British design?

### *Arresting the eye, shocking the public? What the safety poster says about British society*

**Mike Esbester**

Based on work funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council, this paper will place the safety poster in its broadest context, exploring the reasons behind the introduction of persuasive techniques that 'arrested the eye' at the start of the twentieth century, and the growth of this means of attempting to prevent accidents in the years that followed. It also explores how attitudes towards 'shock tactics' have changed over the course of the century. The paper draws upon the poster collections of the National Archives, the National Railway Museum, the British Safety Council and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

*Keep Safe and Carry On...*

### **Dr. Paul Rennie**

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has been promoting safety in relation to industry, road traffic and home and leisure for 100 years. For most of that period they have used posters to communicate their messages simply and economically. Nowadays, the posters have been replaced by different kinds of messages across all kinds of media. RoSPA's safety posters have played a key role in shaping the interactions between people and the machine system of the modern world. Dr Paul Rennie will describe his own work in uncovering the history of these posters and the subsequent re-discovery of the RoSPA poster archive.

*Alcohol Health Education Posters of the 1970s*

### **Alex Mold**

Alex Mold will talk about her work on alcohol health education posters from the 1970s. The paper will explore a set of local campaigns created by the Health Education Council to combat alcohol related problems. She will analyse their aims, pointing to a change of tactics, techniques and targets over time. She will also explore how the posters constructed different notions of the 'public' and how this relates to broader understandings of how to deal with the alcohol problem.

*"Finest Printing on the Road"*

### **Michael Diamond**

Theatre companies touring popular melodrama around Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made this claim because managers thought that success was impossible without effective posters. What is more, as Michael Diamond shows, using illustrations from his unique private collection, the posters which survive provide a unique tool for researching plays which are an unjustly neglected aspect of the social history of the period.

*Modern Movements: the Posters of S. John Woods*

### **Claire Smith**

S. John Woods, known for his role as Advertising Manager at Ealing Studios, is credited with helping to transform cinema's graphic landscape in the 1940s. His archive, recently acquired by the BFI, reveals how he rooted his process in his own love of British surrealism and abstraction. Throughout the 1930s he moved in artistic circles exhibiting alongside Ben Nicholson, Henry

Moore and Barbara Hepworth, soaking up the energy and fervour of the interwar generation and contributing to exhibitions and publications that challenged the established order. This paper will explore how his early career as an artist shaped his later role at Ealing. The posters produced under his direction adventurously nod to the art movements with which he engaged; nostalgically lean towards Britain's rich typographical past; and are infused with the bite of wartime realities; creating a unique graphic style to underpin Ealing's quintessentially British brand.