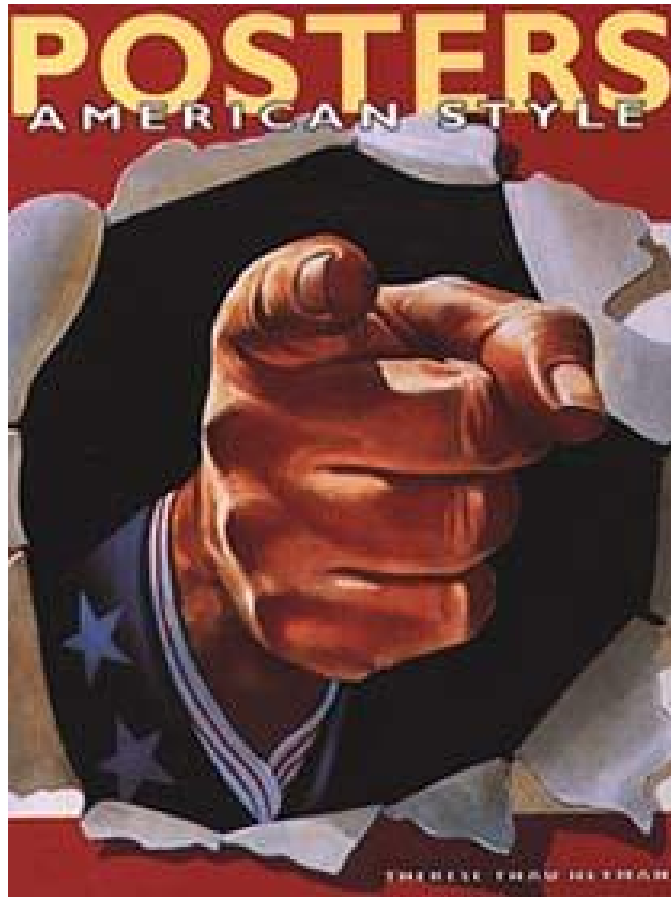


Posters American Style



<http://americanart.si.edu/posters/intro.html> (Dead Link 9-7-2022)

141 color illustrations

Posters American Style, which accompanies a touring exhibition of the same name, brings together some of the great graphic images made in the United States over the past century. Any selection from the many thousands of surviving posters must necessarily be incomplete and subjective; however, curator Therese Heyman has focused this gathering on major artists and images that have endured in our collective memory. Combing through private and public collections across the country, she has winnowed a wealth of material, highlighting the finest designers and most urgent messages while documenting movements and revivals that establish a historical overview.

This web site for *Posters American Style* uses the newest communications inventions to learn about one of the oldest communications inventions. The Internet is a high-tech descendent of the humble printed poster. Both media let people express opinions and appeal to a broad public. Yes, posters still exist in the "actual" world while the Internet can instantaneously reach viewers around the entire globe. But the similarities are more striking than the differences. Posters and the Web both thrive on limited text and strong graphics. Both are cheap to produce (after you invest in the equipment!). And because they are cheap, posters and the Internet are favorite ways to rally a response or advocate a cause. They narrow a gap between huge corporate or institutional interests and the private concerns that you and I have. They reinforce democracy by letting ordinary folks—students, for instance—speak their minds and be heard.

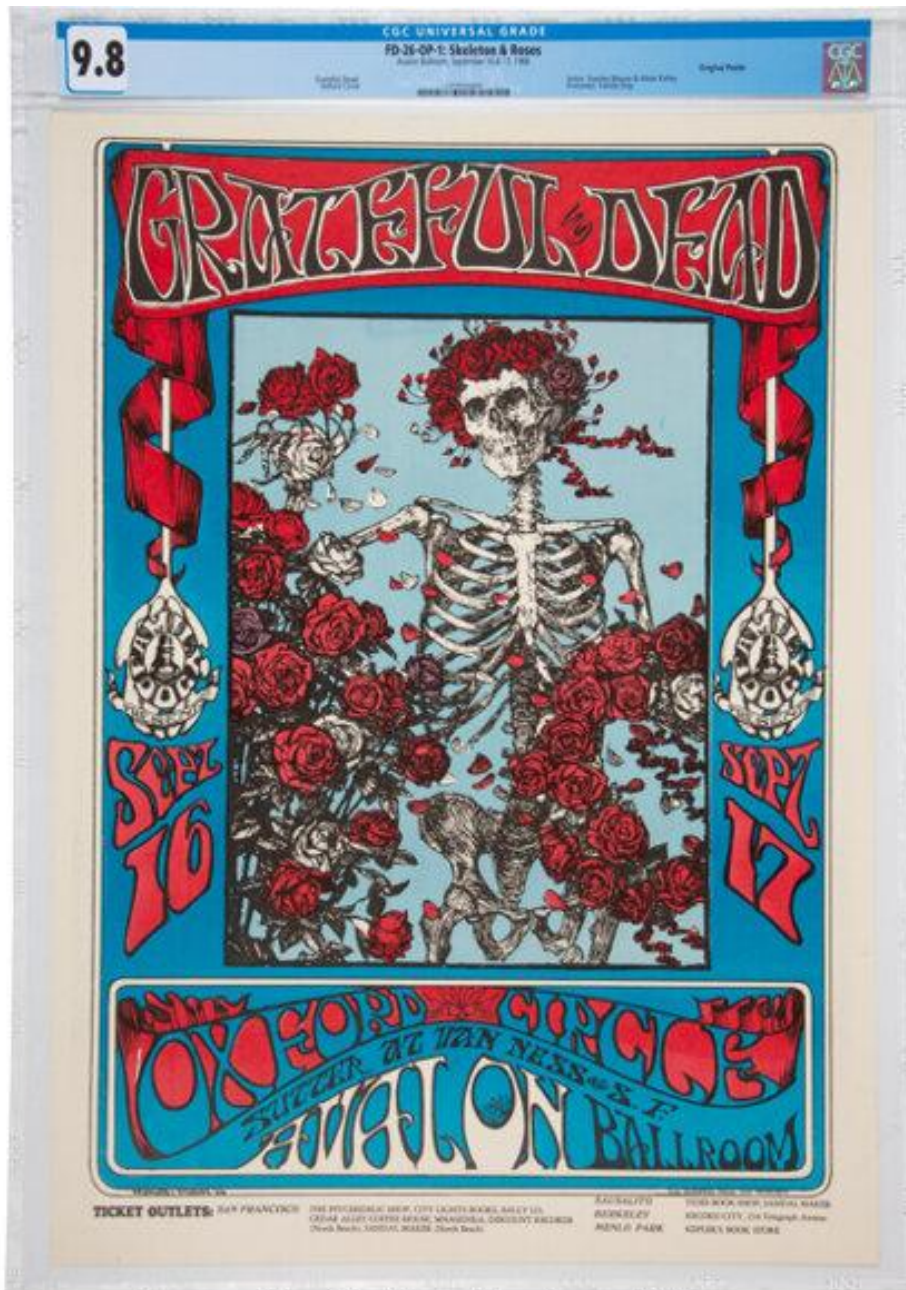
The *Posters American Style* web site has no more important goal than encouraging students to speak out and be heard. "Building citizenship" is the way to say it in educationese, but it's really as much about "building personality." In a world where human interactions are being replaced by voice mail, phone menus, and ATM or fax machines, it is hard to get a personal point of view across. The strategies of posters—snappy graphics, punchy titles, humor, irony, shock, artistry—are designed to stop us in our tracks, draw us in for a closer look, pause for a moment of reflection. We're always busy doing something else, so posters are designed to catch us on a bus or dashing to school.

Today, as web site designers seek vibrant graphic images and powerful, terse captions to appeal to mass audiences, the fundamental lessons of poster design seem more contemporary than ever. And as telecommunications technologies promise a new democratization of publishing in years to come, this sampling of great posters offers one of the best records available of our aspirations, concerns, and struggles in the "American Century" now concluding.

Elizabeth Broun
Director, Smithsonian American Art Museum

Skull and Roses/Grateful Dead, Oxford Circle, Avalon Ballroom Poster, San Francisco ~ 1966

MAKER: Alton Kelley and Stanley Mouse, United States



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

<http://americanart.si.edu/posters/impact.html> (Dead Link 9-7-2022)

The Impact

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of American posters is the way they reflect, magnify, and even alter American culture. Posters mix art and commercial interests; they communicate phrases and can depict the various forms of advocacy that form our unique history. No matter how graphically striking posters are, it is their content—the reminders of past events, the glamour of film stars, the need to fight wars—that captures our attention.



Avalon Ballroom Poster above printed on a T-shirt