

November – December – Swiss Poster

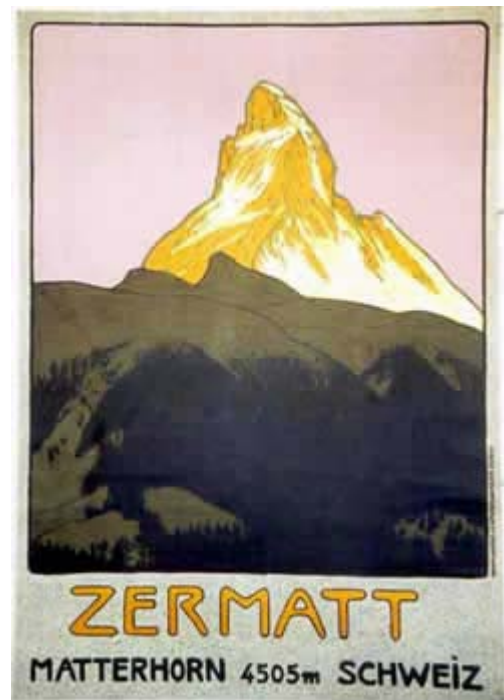
The Swiss poster exhibition is being prepared in the collaboration with the Basel Poster Collection (Basel Plakatsammlung) and is under the patronage of Ambassador of Swiss Confederation. The show will contain of posters from the entire 20th century from the Basel Collection (works from the first part of the century) and from the Poster Museum at Wilanów collection (works from the second part of the century).

Basel Poster Collection includes more than 50,000 Swiss posters and its history goes back to 1896. The oldest posters are from 1880 and the newest from the past few months. Every year the Basel Poster Collection obtains about 1000 new posters. **This collection shows the surprising fact that during the whole 20th century Switzerland produced more poster masterpieces than any other country.** There are a lot of reasons, among others the international tradition which absorbed and emulated the best solutions worked out by other countries. Such a high level of Swiss graphic design is also a result of the efficient policy of supporting and promoting poster art and its creators and the generations of great teachers who shaped the younger graphic designers.

The first Swiss posters were the **tourist posters** that promoted ski resorts, spas and outdoor activities. They were produced as an effect of the Switzerland's popularity at the beginning of the century as journeys' and trips' destination.



Augusto Giacometti, *Grisons – Switzerland*, 1918



Emil Cardinaux, *Zermatt*, 1908

After the World War I Switzerland became a pioneer of **graphic design**, a new discipline that arose as a result of industrial boom and a brand new print and reproduction techniques connected with it. Swiss designers absorbed its rules from the Russian Constructivists, Dutch movement *De Stijl* and Bauhaus experiments.



Otto Baumberger, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 1928



Walter Kach, *Form without an ornament*, 1927

During the World War II and after it Swiss advertising poster was dominated by the so called **sachplakat (object poster)**. It made a reference to the Swiss sense of precision and the universal language of symbols. *Sachplakat* consisted of a realistic image of an object placed on a neutral, uniform ground.



Niklaus Stoecklin, *Binaca*, 1941



Herbert Leupin, *Bell*, 1939

In the 50s in Switzerland a new style of graphic design was developed. It was based on the achievements from the 30s and its influence was far wider than the borders of the Confederation. Because of the strong base on the typographic elements, the style has been called the **International Typographic Style**. In the 70s it became a leading graphic style in the world and its influence is visible until the present day.

The most characteristic elements of the International Typographic Style were: mathematical grid that made the structure ordered and uniform, sans-serif fonts (especially Helvetica, introduced in 1961) and black-and-white photography which replaced drawn illustration. These posters looked simple and rational, of precise structure as well as clear, objective and harmonious.

The new style fit perfectly into more and more global market that was shaped after the World War II. Globalization produced a need for an objectiveness that should have been provided by the clarity of word and symbol. Corporations needed an international identification and global events, such as the Olympic Games, required universal solutions that the International Typographic Style was to provide so it made it spread all over the world.



Armin Hofmann, *City Theater in Basel*, 1960



Max Bill, *Switzerland's cultural posters*, 1974

In the 70s and at the beginning of the 80s the International Typographic Style began to lose its importance, criticized for being cold, formal and dogmatic. Graphic designers that stood against this style began to create in a more spontaneous way; they were open to any experiments and willing to bend and even break the rules of graphic design. The posters made in recent years are often called **postmodern posters**.



Niklaus Troxler, *Marty Ehrlich Quartet*, 1994



Stefan Meichtry, *Fellini Festival*, 1984