



Indian River Poster Company

Fine Vintage and Movie Posters

The Art of the Poster

A Brief History of the Poster as an Art Form
1890-1914

Jules Cheret (1836-1932) is often referred to as the “father of the modern poster”.

Artist, printer, advertiser and entrepreneur describe Cheret and his role in the poster movement of the Belle Époque period (1871-1914).



Women were important in the Belle Époque era and Cheret, more than any other, featured women prominently in his work.

It's reasonable to suggest that the use of a beautiful woman to sell a product, still with us today, saw first light in the poster art of Jules Cheret.

Sounding like a 50's girl group, “The Cherrets” (the name applied to the women featured in Cheret's work) became the rage in Europe and a contemporary of the Gibson Girl in America.

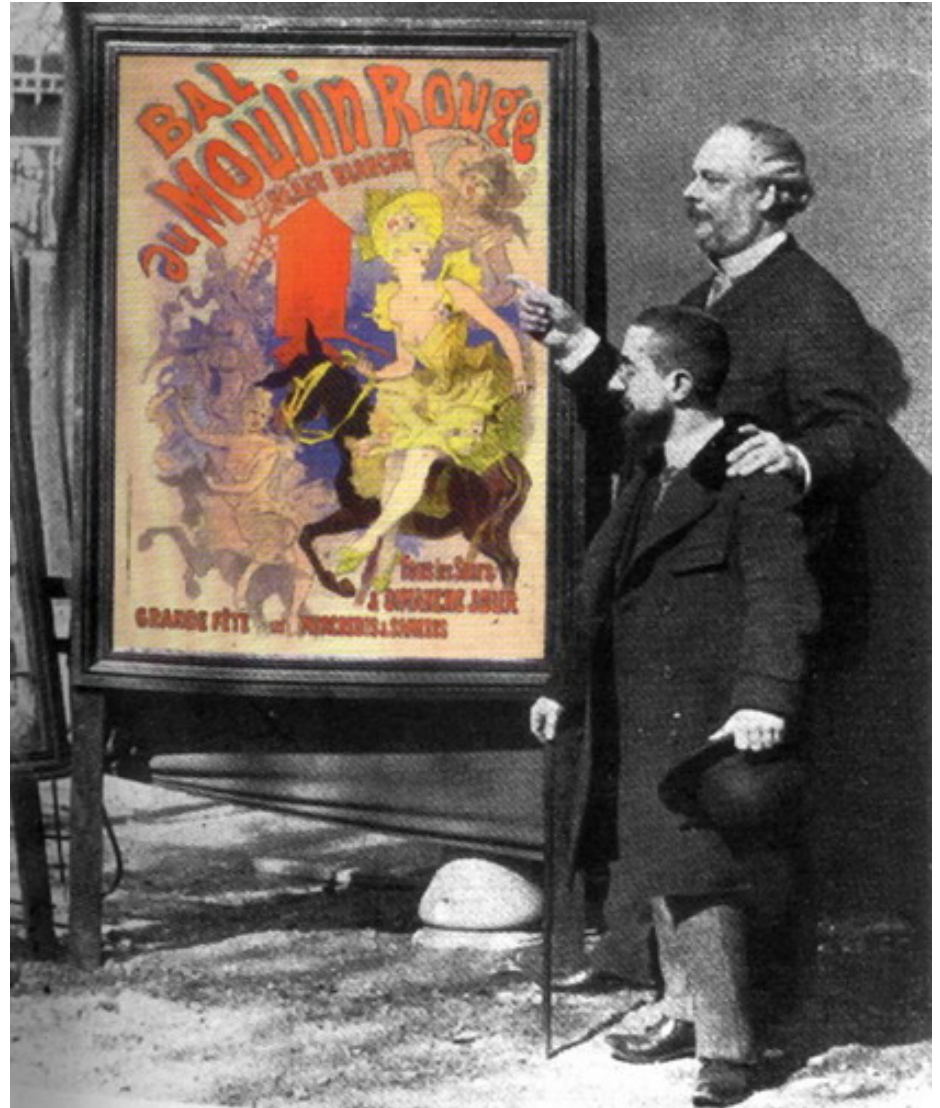


Cheret was friends with other artists of the period, as a printer he published much of their work.

Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, Alphonse Mucha, Edward Sagot, Henri Privat-Livemont, and Theophile-Alexandre Steinlen were his friends and contemporaries.

In the 1890's, when poster art enthralled Paris, it was often difficult to keep a poster in place for more than a few days before someone removed it for their own collection. Being responsible for the posters he displayed, Cheret took a dim view of having to spend his time replacing these purloined posters.

And so, he created his most lasting product, "Les Maîtres de L'Affiche".



Théâtre de l'Opéra



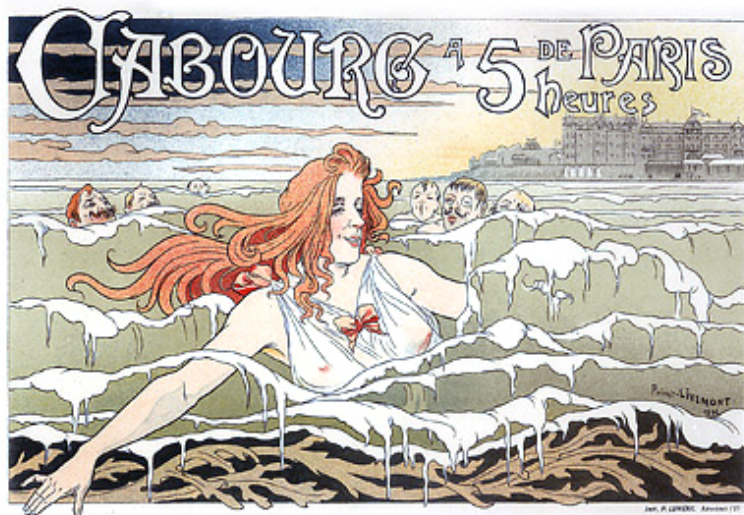
CARNAVAL 1896
SAMEDI 15 Février
GRAS
G^d. VEGLIONE DE GALA

Les Maîtres de L’Affiche

The Masters of the Poster was a subscription series created by Jules Cheret to allow collectors to receive smaller and more affordable versions of their favorite posters.

Starting in December 1895, subscribers received four posters every month. The posters were a standard 11” x 15”, or roughly a quarter size of the displayed version. The first poster every month was by Cheret with the other being by popular artists of the day. Over five years, 265 Maîtres were published.

Because of their size, Maîtres were very popular and remain so today were individual plates, depending on artist, are available from as little as \$250 to \$5500.



How Stone Lithography Works

Lithography, or offset printing, is essential to the high quality found in poster art. In the earliest days, blocks of limestone were used as the printing plates. These blocks weighing as much as 1000 pound each, were sanded to ensure perfect flatness.

The artist then creates the image on the stone, in reverse, with a grease crayon. There is one plate for each color, so the artist creates one image for each color.

The stone is then soaked in water, with the greased portion repelling the water and the non-greased portion absorbing the water.



Then an oil based ink is applied to the plate, and absorbed only by the artist's greased image.

Paper is then pressed into the stone with the ink transferring from the artist's image onto the paper.

There is one plate for each color. A normal poster will use 5-6 plates for a completed image.

The Maquette

Poster art up to the advent of television was the primary advertising medium in the world and in the days before World War I, advertising was the domain of the printing houses.

Employing a team of artists, these printing houses would create ads on “spec” through the creation of a maquette, or first draft version of the final image. The maquette was often created with a specific client in mind, but in some instances might be used for multiple campaigns.

Once the use of a maquette was approved by a client, the printer and the artist set about creating the poster. This included adding the desired text, supplied by the client and detail to the image.

Below left, Leonetto Cappiello creates a plate for his poster Portofino-Kulm with the original maquette in background as his guide. The finished poster is at right.

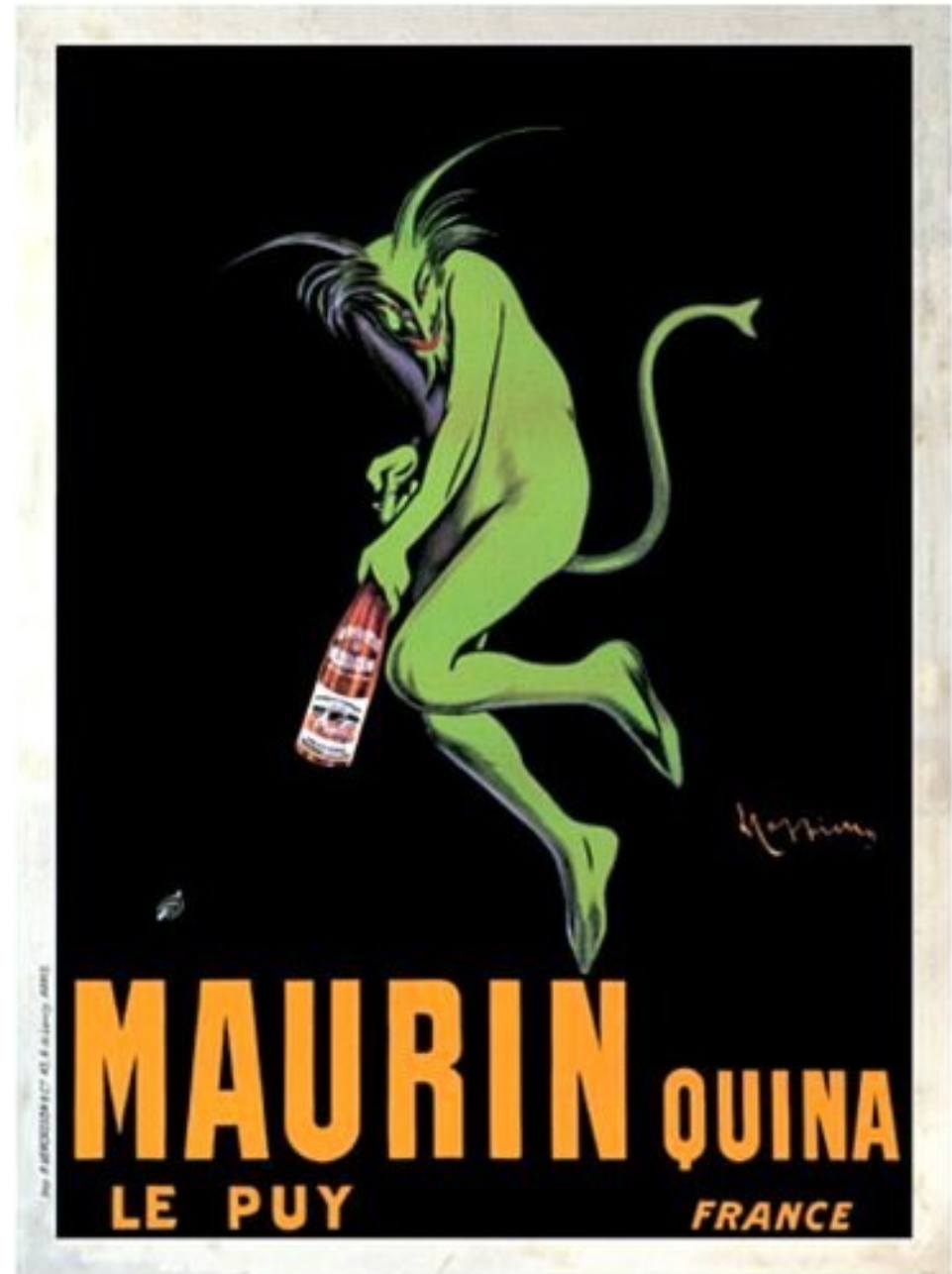


Leonetto Cappiello

As with all popular art, over time a counter revolution occurs that changes the entire dynamic. In poster art, Leonetto Cappiello was the agent of change at the turn of the 20th century.

The Art Nouveau of Cheret, Toulouse-Lautrec and Mucha was on the wane. As with any creative field, originality eventually gives way to indulgence and the need for change is welcomed.

Cappiello created a world of color, of whimsy, bold and dynamic. Often using black backgrounds his images jumped off the page to grab the viewers attention. This was still the world of advertising and Cappiello and his style definitely got everyone's attention.



Travel had a great impact on vintage posters in the times before World War I. In Europe expanding rail service brought distant locations closer to home and the great train stations of Paris and London provided the gallery space for these posters.

Hugo d'Alesi was preeminent among the early travel poster artists.

Early travel posters usually included post card style vignettes of other scenes in the area, while many also included time tables from Paris to the poster destination.

While the product poster artists like Cheret and Cappiello relied entirely on one image, the travel artists still favored text and multiple images



World War I changed everything. These great artists were now caught up in a horrific war the likes of which was never seen before, or after.

Some artists, like Cappiello served their country, while others, faded from view.

The war brought a new field of art to the poster, the political and patriotic work that extolled everyone to do their part. It would be six long years before life returned to normal, and with it a new school of art – Art Deco.

Next time World War I and the return to normalcy.

