

Georges Paul Leroux

French, 1877-1957

Exposition Universelle/Palais de l'Optique/ La Grande Lunette, 1900

Color lithograph

Gift of Gabriel P. and Yvonne M. L. Weisberg, in honor of Lisa Michaux, for the Weisberg Collection at the MIA 2010.68

Optique Pavilion Paris World Fair, 1900

Charcoal

Lent by Dr. Gabriel P. and Yvonne M. L. Weisberg

By the time the Exposition Universelle of 1900 opened, the French public had become accustomed to the new inventions pervading and changing their lives. Rather than educating people about the benefits of technology as the 1889 Exposition had done, the 1900 fair used innovation to create a land of fantasy. Under the glow of electric lights, moving walkways conveyed visitors to attractions like the advertised Palais de l'Optique, which housed a 65-yard-long, 20-ton telescope known as La Grande Lunette. A guide to the exposition boasted that this telescope "is the largest device that has ever been built for exploring the sky and puts the moon just a few kilometers from the Earth." Georges Leroux illustrates this imaginative idea with a beautiful woman. His preparatory drawing shows that he originally envisioned her in a realistic way, but she became more statuesque to emphasize this impressive invention. As she lowers the luminous moon toward a spellbound spectator, she demonstrates how technology allows us to experience what once existed only in our dreams.

Jules Chéret

French, 1836-1932

Montagnes Russes, 1889

Color lithograph

Gift of Kate Butler Peterson 2010.107.2

Roller coasters were a recently developed diversion in 1889, and this one in the Boulevard des Capucines was open to adventure-seekers every day of the week. The ride involved an actual element of danger, given its lack of modern restraining devices. Journalist Camille Debans, however, scoffed at the daring of those who rode this coaster. In his guide to Paris, he recalled how men and women stood during rides on an 1817 Parisian roller coaster, sometimes tumbling to their deaths. By comparison, the riders depicted by Jules Chéret "sit in a bourgeois manner on benches" and finally disembark "with a trace of vain satisfaction, as if worthy of admiration for the danger faced." Indeed, the bright smiles worn by Chéret's riders emphasize the fun of the ride rather than its hazards. But whatever their degree of risk, the intense experience of roller coasters thrilled riders into losing themselves completely and living only in the moment.

Jean-Paul Laurens

French, 1838-1921

Theâtre Egyptien de l'Exposition, 1900

Color lithograph

Gift of the Print and Drawing Curatorial Council 2003.213.6

For those who weren't able to embark on an overseas vacation, the Universal Expositions of 1889 and 1900 transported several distant countries to France in the form of replica villages. Exposition planners attempted to maintain some authenticity by bringing workers and parts of buildings from the represented countries, but the villages were mostly a form of spectacle. They were also meant to garner support for colonization, which many saw as an unnecessary distraction from domestic affairs. Although it never became a French possession, Egypt had been a source of national fascination since Napoleon led a failed military campaign there in 1798. The advertised theater was part of the Egyptian village in the 1900 Universal Exposition. There, sightseers could be doubly removed from reality,

engrossing themselves in the Ramses drama while visiting a version of Egypt that existed mainly in France's collective imagination.

François Flameng
French, 1856-1923
Grisélidis, c. 1900

Color lithograph

Gift of funds from John E. Andrus III 2003.213.3

The theaters and opera houses of Paris provided nightly distractions, allowing audience members to share the joys and sorrows of the characters on the stage. Parisians welcomed the opportunity to disappear into a world of fantasy, and half a million individuals flocked to the theater each week in the 1880s and 90s.

In the advertised Jules Massenet opera, *Grisélidis* marries the Marquis, who decides to fight in the crusades. He believes so strongly that his wife will remain faithful in his absence that he makes a bet with the Devil. While the Marquis is away, the Devil tries to lure *Grisélidis* into betrayal by deceiving her and even kidnapping her son. She patiently resists all his temptations, and the family is ultimately reunited. Such a happy ending may have lingered with theatergoers as they stepped out into the streets, reluctantly facing the real world again.

Georges Fay
French, ?-1916
Le "Quartier" Cabaret-Salon, 1897

Color lithograph

The Modernism Collection, gift of Norwest Bank Minnesota P.98.33.83

With its location near the universities of the Latin Quarter, this advertised cabaret was also situated at the heart of a major controversy swirling around Paris. In 1894, Captain Dreyfus, a member of the Army General Staff, was convicted for giving information to the Germans. After evidence surfaced that Dreyfus had been framed, the writer Emile Zola published a letter in his defense in 1898. The Dreyfus Affair then became an unavoidable topic, made especially contentious because Dreyfus was Jewish. Most of the students in the Latin Quarter were pro-Dreyfus and often demonstrated their support.

Stepping away from student protests and into this cabaret near the Sorbonne may have offered a welcome break. Cabarets provided space for avant garde artists to share their work with one another, and they were eventually opened to the public as entertainment spots. The irreverent satirical songs, dances and shadow plays that were performed allowed artists, like this engaging red-haired figure, and the public to enjoy a little fun.

Geo. Blott
French, dates unknown
Les Cycles Michaux, 1896

Color lithograph

Lent by an anonymous Saint Paul collector

Bike culture of today provides a popular alternative to our car-centric lives, especially in Minneapolis. While our enjoyment of the bicycle stems from the fact that it is a relatively simple machine, it seemed advanced when first introduced in 1861. Early prototypes had been powered by hand cranks or simply pushing off the ground. Pierre Michaux is credited with attaching pedals to the front wheel, transforming bicycles into a viable and popular mode of transportation.

Unfortunately, the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 ruined Michaux's fortunes and suspended the bicycle's development for years. Contemporary models, like those in this poster, did not appear until the 1880s and 90s, and the Michaux name reemerged only when Henry Michaux

reestablished his father's company in 1894. Today Pierre Michaux's memory lives on in a monument built to honor him in Bar-le-Duc, and his legacy graces each modern bicycle equipped with the pedals he invented.

Kees van der Laan
Dutch, 1903-1983
Leert Vlieg, 1931
Color lithograph

The Modernism Collection, gift of Norwest Bank Minnesota P.98.33.104

Of all the new forms of transport available in Europe in the early twentieth century, airplanes were the fastest. Flying was also the most fantastic way to travel, allowing man to routinely do something once seen as impossible. The Nationale Luchtvaart School, established in 1927 in the Netherlands, is the oldest flight school in Europe. Its first students operated private planes, but it began to train airline pilots in 1931. The simple "Learn to Fly" message of the poster was aimed at attracting more workers to the fledgling airline industry, helping it become bigger and, eventually, more accessible to those outside of elite circles. The advertised school still operates out of Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, where many travelers now see flight as a wearying and uncomfortable element of their vacation rather than the awe-inspiring experience it once was.

A. M. Cassandre (Adolphe Jean-Marie Mouron)
Ukrainian, active in France, 1901-1968
Nord Express, 1927
Color lithograph

The Modernism Collection, gift of Norwest Bank Minnesota P.98.33.9

While new transportation technology caused a great deal of change and upheaval, it was also celebrated as an exciting achievement. Cassandre portrays the modernism of the train with clean and simple shapes and emphasizes its power by having us look up at its towering iron form from a track-level perspective. He also emphasizes the speed of the railway with straight lines that disappear rapidly into the distance.

Cassandre's celebratory poster may have helped the public to see train trips as an enjoyable part of a journey rather than just a means of transport. Immediately upon boarding, passengers could escape the routine of ordinary life and enjoy the possibilities afforded by industrialization.

Paul Colin
French, 1892-1985
Smokestack, 20th century
Color lithograph

Gift of Marguerite and Russell Cowles P.79.82.2

Transatlantic travel surged after the American Civil War, with many shipping lines beginning to accommodate passengers as immigration to America increased. Greater competition among ocean liners caused fares to drop, making it possible for more people to journey to another continent. The advertised ship, most likely the *Île de France*, set sail in 1927 and boasted a six-day crossing time between Le Havre and New York. This extended journey between home and away suspended passengers in a luxurious environment where they felt free to act in ways they might not under other circumstances.

Paul Colin demonstrates that the engineering achievements behind these ships also fascinated the French public. The passengers on the deck are dwarfed by the mass of the ship's hull, and the gleaming smokestacks emphasize the new power that could take them across an entire ocean.

Artist Unknown

French

Kina Perrier Aperitif, 19th century

Color lithograph

Gift of Marguerite and Russell Cowles P.79.82.5

Beginning with Napoleon's attempt to conquer Egypt in 1798 and continuing with colonialism, France became captivated by the Middle East and Northern Africa. Many nineteenth-century artists began depicting the East in their art, a trend known as Orientalism. While several of these artists had actually traveled to the countries they painted, Orientalist works are typically based more on fantasy than reality.

Though it borders France, Spain was sometimes treated in an Orientalist manner. The flamenco dancer and toasting toreador in this poster look realistic, but it is clear that the artist also relied on his imagination. The giant Spanish guitar and the bull lurking in the background are examples of the fanciful elements that often defined Orientalism, causing critics of the movement to label it as escapist. Though it seems curious that this artist used images of Spain to promote a French tonic, he effectively demonstrated that Kina Perrier could transport the drinker to a more exotic place.

Jules Chéret

French, 1836-1932

Pippermint, 1890

Color lithograph

Gift of Bruce B. Dayton P.85.6

In addition to being one of the first artists to experiment with posters, Jules Chéret created a female type that graced a huge number of advertisements at the turn of the twentieth century. Known as chérettes, these women were cheerful, inviting and, above all, attractive. In this incarnation, Chéret uses reds and oranges to suggest that the chérette is seated near a fireplace. Her alluring smile is illuminated as she pours Pippermint crème de menthe, possibly for a visitor, and it appears she is about to have a memorable evening.

Chéret's strategy is still being used today. While ads often use smart ideas and humor to highlight a brand's benefit, sometimes a simple message of possibility works best. Chéret, and those who follow in his footsteps, tell us we can be better, happier people. We can trade our mundane lives for the exciting one in the poster—if only we buy the product.

Alphonse Mucha

Czech, active in France, 1860-1939

Job, 1898

Color lithograph

The Modernism Collection, gift of Norwest Bank Minnesota P.98.33.7

Proponents of the Art Nouveau movement of the late 1800s sought escape from the limitations of past traditions, and they achieved it by creating a new style. By applying this style to all forms of creativity, they hoped to eliminate the separation between art and craft. Alphonse Mucha did just that by treating the poster, humbly temporary and commercial, like a canvas. Unlike the woman in Chéret's Pippermint poster, Mucha's female figure is more symbolic than seductive. She rests in a circle representing harmony, surrounded by a mass of curving hair. For many who came upon this poster in the streets, this may have been their first experience seeing fine art elements outside of a place of worship.

The Job cigarette paper being advertised also represents literal escape. Despite Mucha's use of an idealized female in this poster, respectable women of the nineteenth century did not smoke. This pleasure belonged to men, who could use it as an excuse to retreat into smoking rooms and the company of male friends.

Privat Livemont

Belgian, 1861-1936

Absinthe Robette, 1896

Bitter Oriental, 1897

Color lithographs

Lent by an anonymous collector

In the late 1800s, the political situation in Belgium was not much better than it was in France. Unrest led to riot followed by military occupation in 1886 and a general strike in 1893. The breathtaking beauty of Privat Livemont's Absinthe Robette and Bitter Oriental posters, however, gives no indication of trouble. His female figures, both draped in gauzy cloth, look serenely upwards as they receive alcoholic gifts from the heavens. The spiritual and sensual atmosphere of these posters is characteristic of the Symbolist movement of the time. Symbolists were inspired by, and tried to evoke, dream-like states of fantasy and pleasure. They were also heavily influenced by a variety of mystic religious beliefs. Of course, achieving unearthly states would have been easier after indulging in the advertised drinks. Absinthe was particularly potent and could cause hallucinations—a side effect possibly welcomed as a source of escape and inspiration.

Leonetto Cappiello

Italian, active in France, 1875-1942

Cinzano Vermouth, 1910

Color lithograph

Gift of Marguerite and Russell Cowles P.79.82.8

Leonetto Cappiello's poster for Cinzano Vermouth is radically different from the other alcohol advertisements on display. Rather than a perfectly beautiful woman, Cappiello presents a red and pink zebra bucking against the reins of a toga-wearing rider. This incongruous design represents a new direction in advertising. Cappiello uses an isolated image so vivid and memorable that it makes the product unforgettable, too. While the image he chose may not seem to relate to the brand or what it will do for the consumer, it actually makes an appealing promise about Cinzano's effects. This bizarre sight is just one example of the type of visions that may result from drinking enough of the advertised vermouth.

Peter Müller-Munk

German, active United States, 1904-1967

Normandie Pitcher, c. 1935-1937

Chrome-plated brass

The Modernism Collection, gift of Norwest Bank Minnesota 98.276.60

In addition to inspiring public awe, modern transportation influenced a new decorative arts aesthetic. Everyday objects began to assume the forms that allowed vehicles to reach their tremendous speeds. Steamships were the first vessels to have these streamlined shapes, and one of the fastest steamships of the 1930s was the French Line's sleek, Art Deco Normandie. The shape of this pitcher recalls the fashionable ship's knife-edge prow and rounded stern. Those who owned this object could likely afford a fare on the luxury liner. Seeing the pitcher around the home may have served as a reminder of an untroubled time spent cruising between continents.

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Smith and Zimmer

American, dates unknown

Safety Bicycle, c. 1893

Steel, rubber, leather

Lent by Jon Sharratt

Overman Wheel Company

American, dates unknown

Victor Highwheel Bicycle, 1885

Steel, rubber, leather

Lent by Jon Sharratt