



'Poster by Martin Peikert, 'MOB'. Offset lithograph printed in about 1925 by Klasfelder, Vevy. Condition B+, backed on linen, 102 x 64cm (40 x 25 inches). Sold at Christie's recent Ski Sale for £1,932 (including buyer's premium).



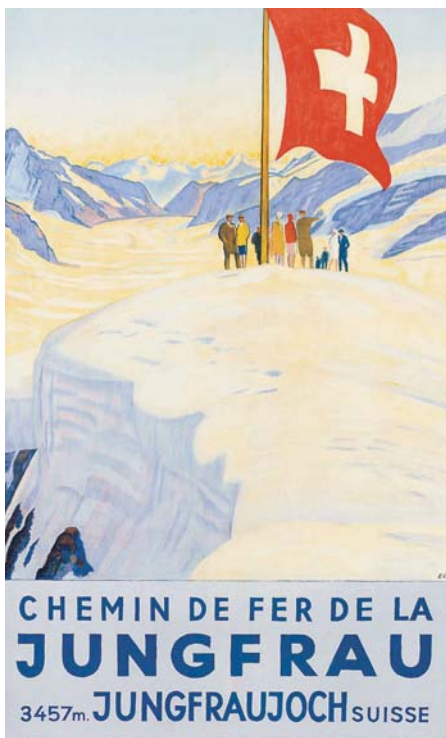
Poster by Emil Cardinaux, 'Palace Hotel, St Moritz'. Lithograph printed in 1920 by Wolfsberg, Zurich. Condition A, backed on linen, 127 x 90cm (50 x 35 1/2 inches). Sold at Christie's recent Ski Sale for £12,425 (including buyer's premium).



Poster by Charles Hallo (ALO), 'Chamonix-Mont Blanc, PLM'. Lithograph printed in about 1924 by Cornille & Serre, Paris. Condition A-, framed, 107 x 79cm (42.5 x 31 inches). Sold at Christie's recent Ski Sale for £1,518 (including buyer's premium).

Art Deco Posters

by Brenda Greysmith



Poster by Emil Cardinaux, 'Jungfrau'. Lithograph printed in 1928 by Wolfsberg, Zurich. Condition A-, backed on linen, 102 x 64cm (40 x 25 inches). Sold at Christie's recent Ski Sale for £1,518 (including buyer's premium).

Stylish and bold, the Art Deco poster's artistic gusto is undeniable and buyers worldwide relish the strong images and streamlined designs. Striking colours created maximum impact. Unusual viewpoints and dramatic perspectives conveyed a sense of excitement. In contrast to cluttered Victorian style, large areas were daringly left blank. Typography assumed a new importance, with sleek modern sans serif typefaces used as an integral part of the overall design.

Subjects reflected the changing society. Shipping, railways, motor cars, aviation, travel and sport were becoming increasingly important encouraging growing numbers of people to break away from traditional lifestyles. The most successful poster designs capture a sense of exhilaration at these developments. The motoring posters of the 1920s and 30s for example, include those featuring Grand Prix races, many of which are dominated by a sense of speed.

Dedicated collectors look for posters all year around, but winter focuses attention on the ski slopes, so Christie's South Kensington holds its annual Ski Sale in February and, while it includes a variety of items, it's the posters which steal the show. Visiting the sale or studying the catalogue is a great way to appreciate the appeal of posters generally and

Art Deco examples in particular. The striking designs of the 1920s and 30s encapsulate the elegance, exclusivity and sophistication of skiing. The sale attracts interest from around the world, especially among private collectors who want something decorative for their chalet or to hang in their home as a reminder of happy holidays. Visitors to these Alpine resorts are often pretty well-heeled so prices of a few thousand pounds will not daunt them. The market's made even more competitive by hotel managers on the lookout for vintage items showing their own establishment or the surrounding area. Prices can be high, with the resorts that remain popular today attracting the most interest: Chamonix, St Moritz and Gstaad command a premium. Demand is also strong for posters showing hotels such as the Palace or Cacahat's Majestic.

One reason for the interest in Art Deco ski posters is that there are few other visual images of the early days of the sport. (Freezing weather conditions have discouraged the painting of many a snowy alpine scene.) But the skiing poster not only recreates the sport's vintage days, it does so with all the pizzazz of advertising. Many are promoting either skiing competitions or resorts and have all the flair and exuberance of early motoring, shipping and railway posters.

The market for posters generally and particularly those in Art Deco style is showing a healthy upward trend. But whatever the subject value will depend primarily on the reputation of the artist. Signed posters by well-known names will top the price list. More affordable are those by lesser-known designers and the many unsigned examples. For these value depends on the quality of the design and how well it reflects the mood of the times. As with all antiques and collectables, rarity will also affect price. In addition, prices for motoring posters tend to be affected by the vacillations of the vintage car market.

The vast majority of the Art Deco posters that survive were published in France, although many of the artists were actually from other countries. Among the most sought-after Art Deco poster designers are Cassandre (Adolphe Jean-Marie Mouron) and Paul Colin. Roger Broders is also one of the most collectable. He designed for the Paris, Lyon, Mediterranean Railway (PLM) between the wars and his simple, bold and bright posters include many skiing scenes. Other names to watch out for include Anton Reckziegel (who designed posters for the Swiss railways), Otto Morarch, Emil Cardinaux (who designed posters for the Jungfrau railway), Rene Pean, Henri Tanconville, Roger Soubie and Louis Tauzin. Motoring poster collectors search out key artists Georges Hamel and Robert Felucci.

In England, many of the best posters of the 1920s and 30s were designed for the London Underground, London Transport and the various railway lines. There are also good designs for Shell Oil. Posters for the London Underground were commissioned by general manager Frank Pick from many talented artists, among them the American Edward McKnight Kauffer. Other designers working in the transport poster arena included Tom Purvis, Frank Newbold and Terence Cuneo, while Laura Knight and Frank Brangwyn were among those creating railway posters.

Because of the healthy prices for original Art Deco posters, inevitably there are some fakes around. These can often be spotted with the aid of a magnifying glass. Most reproductions are made using photographic offset litho techniques where the image is made up of small dots. Some research into poster artists and which printers they normally worked with will also help identify incongruities. Size can be a giveaway too. Originals were printed in standard sizes which are different from those of later reproductions.

Poster condition is of great importance. Many were printed on inexpensive paper and some wear is inevitable. Small creases and tears may be acceptable, but serious damage is best avoided. Many have been backed on linen, making them a bit sturdier, but if a poster has been restored find out what's been done. And remember to protect your posters from deterioration. Get them framed by a reliable craftsman who uses acid-free backing and bordering paper. Then keep them out of direct ultra-violet light to prevent them fading.



Poster by Roger Broders, 'Sports D'Hiver dans Les Vosges'. Lithograph printed in about 1930 by Lucien Serre, Paris. Condition B, backed on linen, 98 x 61cm (38.5 x 24 inches). Sold at Christie's recent Ski Sale for £2,622 (including buyer's premium).



Poster by NIX, 'Sun and Snow in Germany'. Offset litho printed in about 1930. Condition A, backed on linen 99 x 62cm (39 x 24.5 inches). Sold at Christie's recent Ski Sale for £1,380 (including buyer's premium).



Poster by Theo Doro, 'Sports D'Hiver dans Les Vosges'. Lithograph printed in 1931 by C. Courtois, Paris. Condition B+, backed on linen, 97 x 64cm (38 x 25 inches). Sold at Christie's recent Ski Sale for £3,313 (including buyer's premium).



Poster by R. Sonderer, 'Luchon-Superbagnères'. Lithograph printed in 1932 by Lucien Serre & Cie, Paris. Condition B+, backed on linen 99 x 63cm (39 x 24.5 inches). Unsold at Christie's recent Ski Sale (estimate £1,700-£1,900).