

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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POSTERS FOR THE FAMILY SERVICE ASSOCIATION, an exhibition of 9 posters commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art for The Family Service Association of America, will be on view at the Museum, April 18 through May 13. Although in past years the Museum has often cooperated with private foundations as well as government agencies to commission posters by American artists and has, on several occasions, commissioned posters for its own activities, this is the first such project ever organized by the Museum for a social welfare agency. As the principal institution in the world concerned with the qualitative selection, collection and exhibition of modern graphic design, the Museum of Modern Art has long sought to encourage the wider use of poster art. In addition to sponsoring poster projects, the Museum has, since it was founded in 1929, presented thirty exhibitions devoted exclusively to posters and has acquired the world's largest collection of modern poster art from both this country and abroad.

The first Museum sponsored poster competition was held in 1933, when the Museum was only four years old. That same year an exhibition of posters by Toulouse-Lautrec was also on view in the Museum's galleries. In 1941, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Army Air Corps, the Museum sponsored a competition among more than 600 artists who were commissioned to design recruiting and defense bond posters for the government. Thirty of these posters were exhibited at the Museum and \$2,000 were distributed among fourteen prize winners, many of whose designs were produced by the government during the war years. A year later, in 1942, in cooperation with the Office of Inter-American Affairs, the Museum helped our government contact and commission this country's foremost designers to create posters for the Latin American audience. In 1949, the Museum initiated and co-sponsored with the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis a project for twenty-three artists who were invited to produce educational posters on polio. Three of the posters were published and distributed throughout the world by the National Foundation.

Among the thirty poster exhibitions held at the Museum have been one-man shows of work by such famous artists as A.M. Cassandre and E. McKnight Kauffer; group exhibitions of posters by artists here and abroad and specialized shows such as "The History of the Modern Poster" and "Lettering in Poster Art." During the Second World War eleven different poster exhibitions, dealing with various aspects of defense such as "Britain at War," hoarding and salvage, were sponsored by the Museum. Recent poster exhibitions have included "Posters by Artists" and New York Times advertising posters. Posters have also figured prominently in such theme exhibitions as "Art in Progress," "Modern Art in Your Life" and in retrospectives such as those devoted to the work of Ben Shahn and Bonnard and in the exhibition of paintings and lithographs

by Toulouse-Lautrec, on view at the Museum this spring from March 21 through May 6.

In addition to these exhibitions and competitions, the Museum maintains its own poster collection which includes more than 1300 outstanding examples of contemporary posters made in this country and abroad for institutional, political and commercial purposes, as well as war posters and posters designed for artists' exhibitions. Beginning with the Art Nouveau posters of Toulouse-Lautrec, Steinlen, Cheret and Bonnard, done in the 1890's, the collection extends through the Stijl movement, the Bauhaus school and surrealism to current posters in which lettering is the sole visual symbol. Highlights of the collection are the great poster developments of the 20's and 30's, starting with the Russian suprematists, the German Bauhaus and, later, the French movement headed by Cassandre and Carlu, and the London Underground series by E. McKnight Kauffer. The post-war period is covered in greater detail than any other period and includes posters from almost every country in the world.

Mildred Constantine, Associate Curator of Graphic Design and responsible for the Museum's activities in this field has said:

"The Museum believes that the creative artist functions as a part of the living world, whether he paints easel pictures or designs posters. Posters play an important role in the social scene, by direct communication or by evoking ideas or emotions to which the observer subconsciously reacts. Through the medium of the poster the creative artist can translate a multitude of social, scientific and educational ideas into a visual language understood throughout the world."
