

Graphic Design:

From Trade to Profession (1940-1980)



Poster *Industria y Arquitectura 2.ª Exposición g.R.*, 1954



Poster *Tintes Iberia*, 1950

Content	Graphic Design Collection
Area	532 m ²
Number of pieces	554
Duration	2 or 3 years
Curator	Anna Calvera and Pilar Vélez
Exhibition design	BOPBAA Arquitectes. Josep Bohigas Arnau, Francesc Pla Ferrer, Iñaki Baquero Riazuelo
Graphic design	

Malva García. Clase bcn

This exhibition, dedicated to the pioneers of graphic design, is based on graphic arts collections recently acquired by the museum. In it, posters, a range of advertising materials, both 2D and 3D, packaging and books illustrate the evolution from the commercial artist (advertising draftsman or poster painter) to the graphic artist and, subsequently, the graphic designer. The production context changes, and the trade becomes a profession. This will be the first in a series of exhibitions that will encompass the entire spectrum of graphic design, from the 1940s to the present.

A history of the 20th century: commercial artists who became designers

Graphic Design with pencil and brush

Calendars, displays, labels, press advertisements, packaging and the king of graphic arts in the fifties and sixties: the poster. A selection of some 550 works, which show the evolution from publicity artwork to design, from the years immediately following the war to the beginning of the eighties. Graphic Design: from Trade to Profession (1940-1980) gathers together the work of pioneers of design, such as Josep Artigas, Josep Baqués, Pere Creus, Amand Domènech, Ricard Giralt Miracle, Enric Huguet, Eugeni Moradell, Antoni Morillas, Josep Pla-Narbona, Ramon Ribas and Tomàs Vellvé, and shows the importance of Grafistes Agrupació FAD, which had a decisive influence on the professional recognition of the first designers. Next to them, America Sanchez, Enric Satué, Toni Miserachs and Yves Zimmermann, who open the road towards a new idea and a new image of design. Pilar Vélez and Anna Calvera curated this exhibition, the first large format exhibition presented in Barcelona on the pioneers of design. It puts together work done since 2007. Since then personal assets have been added from designers and from the archives of companies. These have extended and transformed, also updating it, the collection of the former Gabinet de les Arts Gràfiques de l'Ajuntament de Barcelona.



Póster. *Combinación perfecta*, 1962
Josep Pla-Narbona (1928)



Display *Polil. Cruz Verde*, 1948
Josep Artigas (1919-1991)

Large trays suspended from the ceiling in mid-air in the room, with publications in small and medium formats—books, records, flyers, cards, leaflets, postcards, daily papers and magazines— and some individual hoardings with the best posters for the Fira de Mostres and the pharmaceutical industry. The assembly of the exhibition *Graphic Design: from Trade to Profession (1940-1980)*, carried out by BOPBAA Architects, is very aware of the distance between the spectator and the work: it attempts to reproduce proximity with leaflets and promotion materials, one of the keys to the efficacy of graphic design. The visitor establishes a feeling of nearness to the exhibits, which allows her to evaluate the graphic inventiveness, the subtlety of the composition, the virtuosity of the artwork, the skill in the application of the typography.

Graphic Design: from Trade to Profession (1940-1980) is an exhibition of a thesis. The Modernist poster, the work of painters and illustrators, has been left aside and the professional aspect has been stressed, in a sequence which begins in the years immediately following the war. It begins with the generation who trained in the thirties as commercial artists in publicity studios and publishing houses, and ends with the generation who entered as apprentices and collaborators in the first design studios, before the emergence of design schools in the sixties. Some works from this period, such as the poster for Polil by Josep Artigas, the posters by Ricard Giralt Miracle's Grup R or the promotional elements of the pharmaceutical industry —especially those of Laboratoris Ubach—, have become classics. Others, such as the Osborne bull by Manolo

Prieto or the motorway sign by Enric Hugué, are visual icons. The great international contests held in Barcelona in the sixties also generated very powerful images: the Fira de Mostres, the Saló Hogarhotel, the Saló Nàutic and the Saló de l'Automòbil provided work and public recognition to the pioneers of design. Another important aspect are the best wishes for holidays and tourism leaflets. Graphic design contributed to creating the image of the culture of leisure.

Specialized high quality printing presses such as Filograf and Casamajó converted some of these printed works into little graphic jewels and collectors' pieces. They incorporated first productions, special papers and inks, and they designed pieces which could be assembled with volume, like little graphic sculptures. Next to all this production, which connects with craftsmanship, graphic designers were an important part of the new mass culture, which was evident in magazines, campaigns, street hoardings, large print runs and leaflet hand-outs in retail outlets and at the Fira de Mostres.

Functionality versus visual imagination

The discourse of the exhibition leaves sociological elements to one side and concentrates on strictly graphic aspects: the different formats and supports used in graphic design, tendencies and schools and the various paths followed by professionals in contact with international movements and tendencies in design. One of these aspects worth underlining is that some of these designers, such as Josep Artigas, Josep Pla-Narbona and Joan Pedragosa, worked in Switzerland, where they came into contact with the most modern tendencies in international design.

In one of his books on the history of design, Enric Satué established a differentiation between pictorial design and architectonic design which is still useful today. The pioneers drew and painted in order to design and they dominated the professional scene in the fifties and sixties. The ever increasing complexity of publicity and of visual communication defined a new professional profile. The poster gave way to packaging, the editorial illustration to collection design, from composing leaflets and postcards to projecting integrated corporate identity programmes.

From the point of view of plasticity, graphic design in the sixties and seventies follows the example of the Neue Grafik of Basle and Zurich, influenced by New Typography and Concrete Art. But at the same time it drifts towards pop-art, which recuperated illustration and pictorial forms, imagination and freedom, and which acted as a counterpoint to functionalism and graphic purism.

A document of the history of design

As a complement to the graphic elements there is an audiovisual of the billboard publicity campaign by the company RED —«*Conozca España en Barcelona*» (Get to know Spain in Barcelona); «*Para vivir siempre... practique ejercicios espirituales* (Live for ever... practise spiritual exercises)» (1963)—, which assembled in the Grupo 13 Catalan designers in ADG-FAD and designers in Madrid. A collection of photographs was recovered which show the Rambla de Catalunya and Passeig de Gràcia with large hoardings. It was a way of publicly affirming the importance of the publicity image and visual communication and acted as recognition of the creators, who began to associate in order to strengthen the profession. It is the first time that this material has seen the light of day. A number of interviews with designers of the time has been filmed, such as Enric Hugué, Pla-Narbona, Ramon Ribas and Pere Creus, who all took part.

Graphic Design: from Trade to Profession (1940-1980) is the first of a series of exhibitions of the history of graphic design. It will continue in three years' time with an exhibition dedicated to the design boom in the eighties.

Outstanding pieces

Exhibition *Graphic Design*

1940-1952

Poster makers and commercial artists



Publicity for the pharmaceutical industry

Recsodan, Lab. Prem, SA, the fifties

Amand Domènech (1920-2002)

Donated by the Domènech Serra family
GAGB 9.051/14



Display

Polil. Cruz Verde, 1948

Josep Artigas (1919-1991)

On loan from CRAI - Fine Arts Library
(Universitat de Barcelona)

1953-1960

Towards professionalization



Poster

Industria y Arquitectura 2ª Exposición g.R, 1954

Ricard Giralt Miracle (1911-1994)

Donated by Daniel Giralt Miracle, 2008
GAGB 23/08



Publicity graphics

Blevit carne, 1968

Blevilat 12, Blevilat 18. Instant milk for babies,

Lab. Ordesa, 1961

Àngel Grañena (1929)

Donated by Àngel Grañena, 2014
GAGB 9.186/14.03,9.179/14.02,9.179/14.03

1961-1968

The institutionalization of graphic artists



Poster

Sector automóvil, 1967

Tomàs Vellvé (1927-1998)

Donated by Vellvé Arilla family, 2014
GAGB 9.448/14



Book Cover

Retrat en fum, Col·l. La Cua de Palla, Edicions 62, 1968

Jordi Fornas (1927-2011)

Donated by Anna Calvera, 2014
GAGB 9.446/14



Poster

Combinación perfecta, 1962

Josep Pla-Narbona (1928)

Donated by Pla-Narbona, 2010
GAGB 70/10

1969-1980

The consolidation of graphic design



Kitchen containers, 1974

Josep Baqués (1931)

1974

Donated by Josep Baqués, 2014
GAGB 8.939/14, 8.938/14, 8.940/14, 8.937/14, 8.941/14, 8.946/14



Publicity for pharmaceutical and veterinary medicine

Calcium Sandoz Forte, Lab. Sandoz, 1974

Enric Huguet (1928)

Donated by Enric Huguet, 2014
GAGB 9.600/14.05



Poster

Horse shows in Asturias, 1970

Elías + Santamarina

(Elías García Benavides, 1937, and José Santamarina, 1948)

Donated by José Santamarina, 2014
GAGB 8.823/14

1980-...

The path to the normalization of graphic design



Poster

ICSID 1971 Ibiza, 1971

Yves Zimmermann (1937)

Donated by Yves Zimmermann, 2008
GE 065

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