

FRESH PERSPECTIVES *on the Permanent Collection from* DARTMOUTH'S STUDENTS

A SPACE *for* DIALOGUE

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CHECKLIST

All objects are in the collection of the Hood Museum of Art.

William Bradley, American, 1868–1962
When Hearts Are Trump by Tom Hall, 1894,
lithograph; PS.955.133
The Chap Book ("Pegasus"), 1895, lithograph; PS.973.30

William Carqueville, American, 1871–1904
Lippincott's for January, 1895, lithograph; PS.967.211

Frank Hazenplug, American, 1873–1908
The Chap Book ("The Black Lady"), 1896,
lithograph; PS.967.213

Maxfield Parrish, American, 1870–1966
Scribner's Number Fiction August 1897, 1897,
lithograph; PS.967.133

Ethel Reed, American, 1876–before 1920
In Childhood's Country by Louise Chandler, 1896,
lithograph; PS.972.170

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Frank Hazenplug, *The Chap Book* ("The Black Lady"), 1896, lithograph.
Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College; PS.967.213

ADVERTISING WITH STYLE: American Art Posters of the 1890s



Ethel Reed, *In Childhood's Country* by Louise Chandler, 1896, lithograph. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College; PS.972.170

On your way to work today, you probably passed a dozen or two. On your lunch break, you saw a handful more. On your way home, when you stopped at the grocery store, there they were again. But did you remember even one? In an age when the constant bombardment of images is both commonplace and expected, it is no wonder that the poster has become little more than white noise. Since its inception, the poster has changed in shape, content, and style, adapting to the visual, aesthetic, and technological milieu of the period. It has become part of our urban landscape and a catalogue of our visual aesthetics. While we may find it odd to consider the poster as high art, this *Space for Dialogue* invites you to allow for the possibility. *Advertising with Style* specifically explores the artistry and stylistic influences that were part of the American "Poster Craze" of the 1890s, a phase that changed the way Americans looked at posters and established the artistic standards borne by the medium today.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, in urban areas throughout America, small posters with striking imagery, bold coloring, and strong compositions started popping up in shop windows, newsstands, and bookstores. These posters, many of which advertised magazines and books, attracted audiences with their aesthetic vibrancy. Previously, advertisements had been more strictly informative, outlining the contents of specific publications or listing the benefits and details of products. These were the unsigned works of craftsmen who cared more about pleasing their clients than aesthetic expression. Not surprisingly, then, the unconventionality of the new wave of posters, singular in conception and creative in composition, was met with great enthusiasm. Harper's, Charles Scribner's Sons, J. B. Lippincott Company, and the firm of Stone and Kimball all participated in the "poster craze," along the way helping to launch the careers of artists and designers such as William Bradley, Maxfield Parrish, John Sloan, and Ethel Reed.

This was a time when the average American began to enjoy more leisure activities, like riding a bike or going to the theater. In addition to an interest in social recreation, there emerged a fresh enthusiasm for literary publications, including novels, monthly magazines, and daily papers. This literary boom gave rise to more competitive marketing initiatives directed at the public, advertising campaigns that were in turn affected by such European stylistic trends as Art Nouveau and the Arts and Crafts Movement as well as by certain broad characteristics of Asian art, in particular Japanese woodblock prints. The American artists who embarked on this bold enterprise had absorbed the societal and cultural changes of the period and utilized the technological advances made in color printing to create a poster style that was unique, dynamic, and aesthetically their own.

The literary poster emerged transformed from this progressive atmosphere to set a new contemporary standard for advertising. In her poster for a collection of the poetry of Louise Chandler, Ethel Reed combines the style of Art Nouveau with the aesthetic of Japanese woodblock prints to create a visually engaging and slightly provocative work of art. Within the confines of a tall, narrow sheet of paper, Reed attempts to represent the transition from childhood to adulthood articulated in the title poem, "In Childhood's Country." Reed's incorporation of Art Nouveau's curvilinear lines and rich forms infuses the image of the young girl with a sensuality and languidness beyond her years. Bold colors and blocked shapes evoke the stylization of form associated with Japanese prints and impart a somber atmosphere around the loss of innocence implied by the young girl's half-lidded eyes, rosy cheeks, bare shoulders, and voluminous hair. The two influences, although fundamentally different, are inherently graphic and appealing. Ethel Reed adopted both styles in her design to create a visually engaging yet easily read and understood poster.

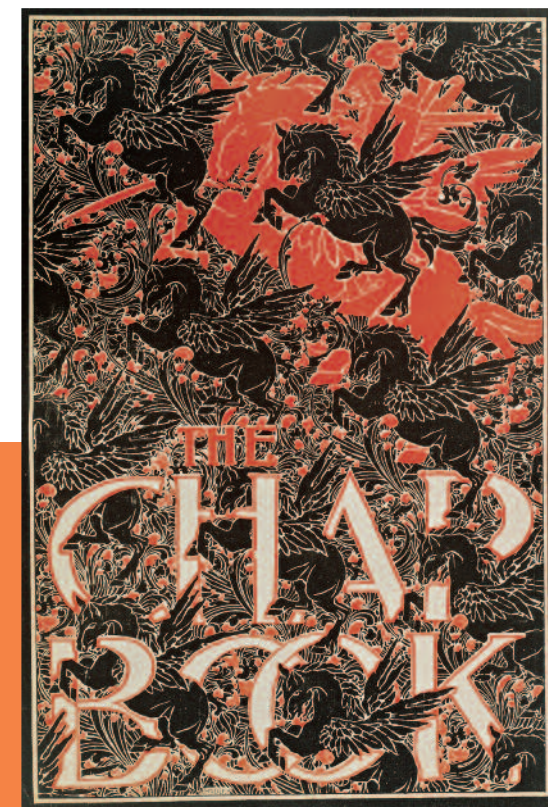
William Bradley, perhaps the most renowned artistic talent to have emerged from the 1890s poster revolution, utilizes the stylistic aesthetic of the Arts and Crafts movement in his poster design for *The Chap*

Book to attract his audience with a web of dynamic imagery. This movement, which first became popular in England during the 1880s as part of a backlash against the ideals of the Victorian era, revered the stylized and simple two-dimensionality of medieval imagery along with the aesthetic of handcraftsmanship. This style manifests itself in Bradley's representation of the mythological figure of Pegasus. He transforms the horse into an ornamental element, flattening and then repeating the image to such an extent that it is almost unrecognizable as an individual form. Taken as a whole, these abstracted images create a particular patterning effect that is rooted in medieval ornamentation but transformed by modern abstraction. This manner of representation deemphasizes the physicality of the horse in favor of the elegance of its silhouette.

Frank Hazenplug's 1896 poster for *The Chapbook* incorporates a series of sinuous curves and stylized figures to create a dynamic yet elegantly rhythmic design in a manner reminiscent of Art Nouveau and the style of the French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Hazenplug's representation of a woman—possibly the actress Sarah Bernhardt—in the foreground as an unearthly, shell-like white visage draws heavily from the French art scene. While America was diving into its poster revolution, Toulouse-Lautrec was papering the streets of Paris with his own nightlife imagery. Simple in composition but bold in representation, his posters often presented figures in silhouette or with masklike facial features. Hazenplug draws upon Toulouse-Lautrec's aesthetic to create his own visually intriguing poster.

Today, though posters and fliers still cover our urban landscapes, they compete with many other forms of commercial advertisements, promulgated via television, magazines, and the Internet. The works in this exhibition remind us that the graphic posters of the 1890s were as startlingly impressive in their era as the most technologically sophisticated video clip today. With their stylish integration of text and image, art posters of the 1890s set the standard for later posters and retain powerful visual appeal more than a century later.

Stephanie Trejo '10
Homma Family Intern



William H. Bradley, *The Chap Book* ("Pegasus"), 1895, lithograph. Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College; PS.973.30