



THE ART OF READING

American Publishing Posters of the 1890s

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PORTLAND ART MUSEUM, OREGON

HARPER'S

JUNE

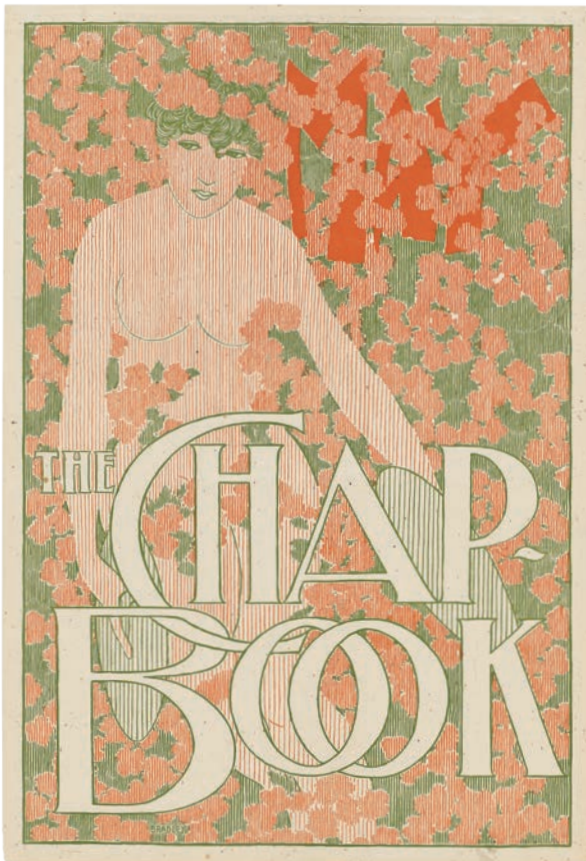


THE ART OF READING: American Publishing Posters of the 1890s

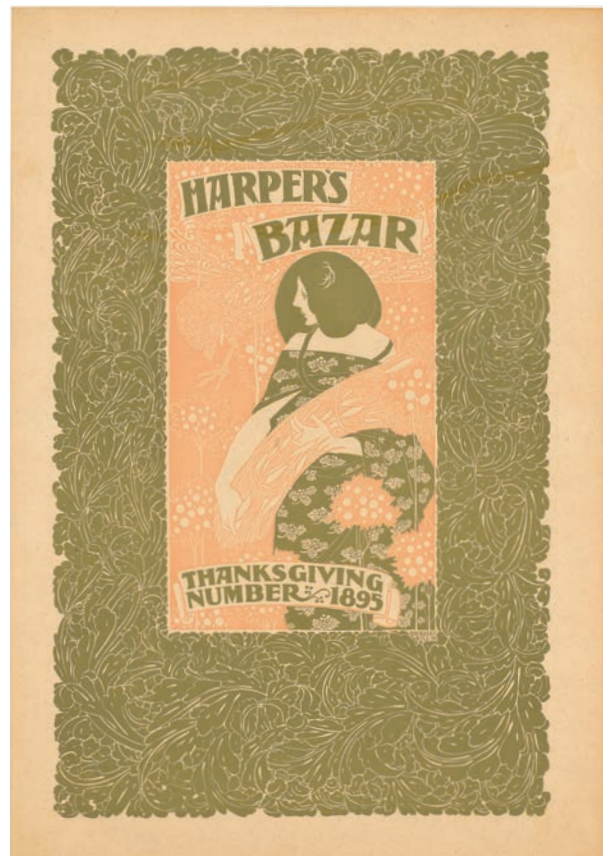
The artistic poster first flourished in the United States in the 1890s. Initially inspired by French poster designers and other trends pioneered in Europe, American artists soon created their own unique style. Publishers were the first to adopt this new form of advertising, employing outstanding young artists and illustrators to advertise their periodicals. Booksellers and newspapers soon followed, resulting in an explosion of publishing posters throughout the decade. Collectors took note, buying copies of these fetching designs and sparking a “poster mania” in the United States. This explosive growth was not to last, however; by the turn of the century, the American poster renaissance was already in decline. Drawn largely from the collection of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler—a major

gift promised to the Portland Art Museum—as well as recent acquisitions by the Museum and other local loans, this exhibition features original posters from this brief but exciting chapter in design, art, and literary history.

Few artistic movements have a precise moment of origin, but in the case of the American literary poster, one can pinpoint its launch to April 1893, when *Harper's Magazine* published Edward Penfield's first poster. Penfield was the head of the art department at Harper and Brothers, and had trained at the Art Students League in New York; when *Harper's* decided to make a poster to increase monthly sales, the magazine turned to the young Penfield for a design. As he



8 William H. Bradley



7 William H. Bradley

recalled later, it was a quick experiment that he completed overnight, but it struck a chord with the sensibilities of the American public: "I think the American Poster has opened a new school whose aim is simplicity and good composition."¹ The success of Penfield's poster gave *Harper's* the confidence to continue this effort; Penfield would be their exclusive poster designer from April 1893 to July 1899. His designs featured the genteel clientele the magazine hoped to attract, and depicted well-heeled men and women in leisurely pursuits, frequently with a copy of *Harper's* in hand. Although the figures appear stoic in expression, Penfield allowed for hints of whimsy in his compositions, often referring to the activities common in a given month. In June 1895, for example, a serious young college graduate in cap and gown peruses the latest issue of *Harper's* while thoughtfully smoking a pipe (cat. 28), while in August 1895 a woman in a bathing suit reaches for the copy of *Harper's* that she has accidentally dropped into the bay.

Soon other magazine and book publishers chased after the poster fad, including Charles Scribner's Sons, the Century Company, and J. B. Lippincott Company, hiring talents such as William L. Carqueville, Joseph J. Gould Jr., and Maxfield Parrish, among others. Foremost among them was William H. Bradley, who, together with Penfield, is considered the leader of the American poster renaissance. Bradley, a talented poster artist, designer, and typographer, was asked to create a poster for *The Chap-Book*, one of the "little magazines" that gained favor in the 1890s. These diminutive periodicals were known for following the latest in avant-garde literary trends and attracted a specialized audience. Bradley's posters for *The Chap-Book* brought him and the publication widespread fame. For the May 1895 poster (cat. 8),



42 Ethel Reed

he created a highly sophisticated composition using just two colors. The flatness evokes the current vogue for Japanese prints, while the beautifully designed and integrated text speaks to the influence of the English Arts and Crafts movement, as does his poster for the Thanksgiving issue of *Harper's Bazar* in 1895 (cat. 7).

By 1894 book publishers were commissioning posters for sensational novels and short stories, such as *The Phantom Death*, advertised with a poster by A. W. B. Lincoln (cat. 21). In Boston, the publisher Lamson, Wolffe & Co. hired Ethel Reed, who was just twenty years old when she rose to fame illustrating books, designing covers, and creating posters in the Bostonian literary world. One of the few women to break into the all-male world of publishing posters, Reed was praised for her talent both in the United States and in Europe. A reviewer in the *Art Collector* noted her "great facility of line and



21 A. W. B. Lincoln

sweeping freedom in encircling her color masses” and lauded her “artistically refined temperament.”² These qualities can be seen in her posters for the books *Folly or Saintliness* and *Miss Träumerei* (cats. 41 and 42).

Newspapers, too, began issuing posters. Among the finest are designs by the English-born artist Louis John Rhead, whose poster for the *New York Journal's* morning edition echoes the style of the French poster designer Eugène Grasset (cat. 44). Many newspaper commissions, however, were handed over to staff illustrators, who did not sign their work. *The New York Journal* and the *New York World*, in particular, made great use of posters to boost sales of their Sunday editions, luring readers with fanciful illustrations and sensational headlines. More illustrative in style but full of wit, these ephemeral postings attracted great attention for the prosperous newspaper industry in fin-de-siècle America (cat. 46).

The wealth of enticing poster designs sparked a collecting craze. Poster exhibitions sprang up in American cities, new

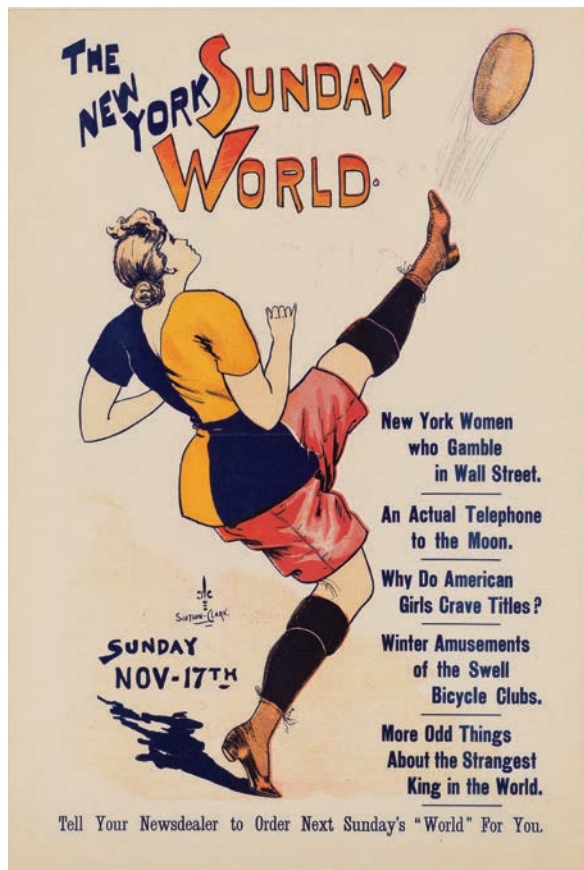


44 Louis John Rhead

publications devoted to this art form chronicled the latest designs, and enthusiasts hosted “poster parties” for which guests were invited to dress as the subject of their favorite poster. Enterprising collectors purchased posters directly from the publishers, or bribed bookshop owners and newsstands for the latest designs. By one count, there were more than six thousand collectors in the United States during this time, and another one thousand in Canada.³ Yet despite the widespread enthusiasm, the end of an era was at hand. The reasons were multiple: publishers discovered that the posters were more popular than the books and magazines they hawked, and sought more lucrative methods of advertising; several of the major publishing firms went out of business; and the nascent field of advertising brought more standardization to the industry. During their heyday, though, publishing posters altered the visual landscape of American cities, animating daily life with their bright and playful designs celebrating the thriving world of publishing in this decade.

— Mary Weaver Chapin
Curator of Prints and Drawings

Organized by the Portland Art Museum and curated by Mary Weaver Chapin, PhD, Curator of Prints and Drawings. This exhibition is supported in part by the Vivian and Gordon Gilkey Endowment for Graphic Arts and the Exhibition Series Sponsors.



46 George Frederick Scotson-Clark

¹ Penfield quoted in David W. Kiehl, “American Art Posters of the 1890s,” in *American Art Posters of the 1890s*, ed. David W. Kiehl (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 13.

² Anonymous, “The Artist, The Studio, The Gallery,” *Art Collector* 9, no. 5 (1899), 73.

³ Victor Margolin, *American Poster Renaissance* (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1975), 21.

CHECKLIST

All dimensions listed are for the sheet size; height precedes width. Titles reflect the text as it appears on each poster. The majority of posters were printed using lithography, but many new printing processes debuted during this decade. Because it is difficult or impossible to determine the precise method of production in the absence of contemporary documentation, technique has been simplified to "color lithograph" or "color relief."



48 Charles Herbert Woodbury

Artist unknown

Peterson's Magazine, ca. 1895
Color lithograph
14 ³/₁₆ × 10 ¹/₁₆ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

Artist unknown

New York Herald Sunday November 21st, 1897
Color lithograph
19 × 12 ¹/₁₆ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

Artist unknown

Sunday World April 26, 1896
Color relief
18 × 12 inches
Dan McInnis at Innis Archive

Artist unknown

Sunday World May 3rd, 1896
Color relief
18 ¹/₄ × 11 ³/₄ inches
Dan McInnis at Innis Archive

Artist unknown

The Sunday World New York Feb 2nd, 1896
Color relief
18 × 12 inches
Dan McInnis at Innis Archive

Artist unknown

The Delineator October, 1897
Color lithograph
11 ⁹/₁₆ × 16 ⁹/₁₆ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

William H. Bradley

(American, 1868–1962)
Harper's Bazar Thanksgiving Number 1895, 1895
Color lithograph
16 × 11 ¹/₁₆ inches
Museum Purchase: Funds Provided by the Graphic Arts Council
2019.48.1

William H. Bradley

(American, 1868–1962)
The Chap-Book, May, 1895
Color lithograph
21 × 14 ³/₈ inches
Gift of Clifford S. Ackley in memory of Jon Lincoln and Owen Chamberlain
2018.49.1

William L. Carqueville

(American, 1871–1946)
Lippincott's November, 1895
Color lithograph
19 × 12 ⁵/₈ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

1. Dwight Ripley Collin

(American, dates unknown)
The Philistine, 1895
Color lithograph
24 ¹/₂ × 18 ³/₁₆ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

2. F. Gilbert Edge

(American, active 1890s)
The Sunday World Oct 14, 1896
Color relief
18 ¹/₂ × 12 inches
Dan McInnis at Innis Archive

3. James Montgomery Flagg

(American, 1877–1960)
Atlantic August, ca. 1897
Lithograph printed in black
16 ³/₈ × 12 ⁵/₁₆ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

4. Joseph J. Gould Jr.

(American, ca. 1876–after 1932)
Lippincott's August, 1896
Color lithograph
19 ⁵/₁₆ × 14 ³/₁₆ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

5. Joseph J. Gould Jr.

(American, ca. 1876–after 1932)
Lippincott's May, 1896
Color lithograph
16 ¹⁵/₁₆ × 11 ¹⁵/₁₆ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

6. Joseph J. Gould Jr.

(American, ca. 1876–after 1932)

Lippincott's November, 1896

Color lithograph
16 ⁹/₁₆ × 13 ¹/₈ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

7. Walter Conant Greenough

(American, active 1890s)
A Knight of the Nets, 1896
Color lithograph
13 ³/₁₆ × 17 ¹/₄ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

8. William Sergeant Kendall

(American, 1896–1938)
Robert Blum's Great Decorative Painting in January's Scribner's, 1895
Color relief
17 ¹/₄ × 12 ¹/₂ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

9. Frank Hamilton King

(American, 1871–1941)
The New York Sunday World Dec 1st, 1895
Color relief
19 ¹/₈ × 12 inches
Dan McInnis at Innis Archive

10. Joseph Christian Leyendecker

(American, 1875–1951)
Inland Printer January, 1897

Color lithograph
22 ¹/₄ × 16 ¹/₄ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

11. A. W. B. Lincoln

(American, active 1890s)
Dead Man's Court, 1895
Color lithograph
11 ¹/₈ × 14 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

12. A. W. B. Lincoln

(American, active 1890s)
The Phantom Death, 1895
Color lithograph
10 ⁷/₈ × 14 ¹/₈ inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler

13. A. W. B. Lincoln

(American, active 1890s)
Toxin, 1895
Color lithograph
10 ⁷/₈ × 13 ¹/₁₆ inches
Private collection

14. M. E. Norton

(American, active 1890s)
The Bookman, March, 1895
Color lithograph
16 ¹/₄ × 11 ⁵/₈ inches



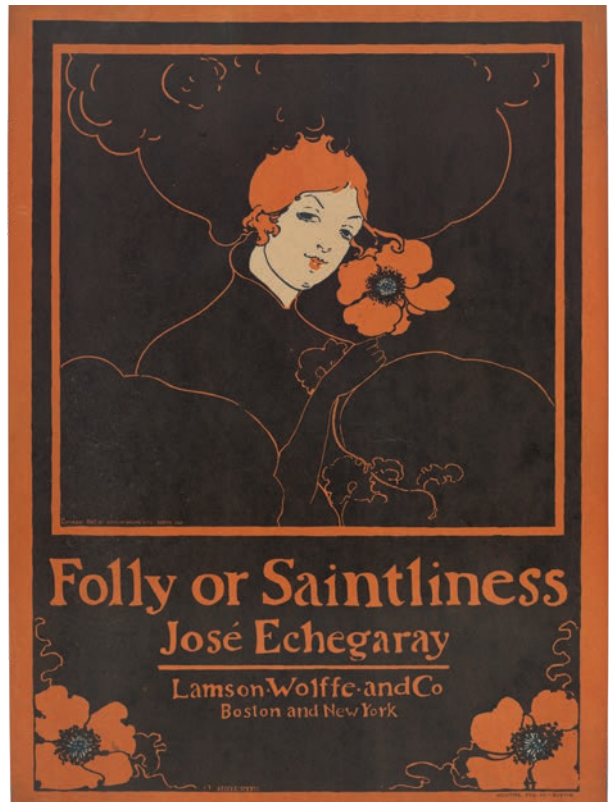
23 M. E. Norton



35 Edward Penfield

- Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
15. **Richard Felton Outcault**
(American, 1863–1928)
Sunday World New York Feb 9th, 1896
Color relief
18 1/2 × 11 1/8 inches
Dan McInnis at Innis Archive
16. **Maxfield Parrish**
(American, 1870–1966)
The Century Midsummer Holiday Number, August, 1897
Color lithograph
19 7/8 × 13 9/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
17. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's Christmas, 1895
Color lithograph
25 1/2 × 20 1/4 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
18. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's February, 1895
Color lithograph
18 3/8 × 12 15/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
19. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's June, 1895
Color lithograph
18 1/4 × 12 13/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
20. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's April, 1896
Color lithograph
17 15/16 × 13 3/8 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
21. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's August, 1896
Color lithograph
19 7/8 × 13 9/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
22. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's Christmas, 1896
Color lithograph
17 5/16 × 12 15/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
23. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's July, 1896
Color lithograph
18 11/16 × 13 11/16 inches
Gift of Lucinda and David Pollack
2019.50.1
24. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's October, 1896
Color lithograph
18 1/4 × 13 13/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
25. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
On Snow Shoes to the Barren Grounds, 1896
Color lithograph
18 1/4 × 11 1/2 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
26. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's July, 1897
Color lithograph
14 × 19 inches
Museum Purchase: Funds Provided by the Graphic Arts Council
2019.48.2
27. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's October, 1897

- Color lithograph
19 7/16 × 14 5/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
28. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's August, 1898
Color lithograph
12 7/8 × 10 7/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
29. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's July, 1899
Color lithograph
9 15/16 × 12 5/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
30. **Edward Penfield**
(American, 1866–1925)
Harper's March, 1899
Color lithograph
15 3/8 × 10 3/4 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
31. **Edward Henry Potthast**
(American, 1857–1927)
The Century, July, 1896
Color lithograph
20 7/8 × 15 1/8 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
32. **Ethel Reed**
(American, 1874–1912)
Folly or Saintliness, 1895
Color lithograph
22 × 13 15/16 inches
Museum Purchase: Funds Provided by the Graphic Arts Council
2019.49.1
33. **Ethel Reed**
(American, 1874–1912)
Miss Träumerei, 1895
Color lithograph
21 7/8 × 13 7/8 inches
Museum Purchase: Funds Provided by the Graphic Arts Council
2019.48.3
34. **Louis John Rhead**
(American, 1857–1926)
L. Prang & Co.'s Holiday Publications, 1895
Color lithograph
21 1/2 × 16 1/8 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler
35. **Louis John Rhead**
(American, 1857–1926)
Morning Journal, 1895
Color lithograph
46 9/16 × 58 11/16 inches
Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and Donald Hastler



41 Ethel Reed

Donald Hastler



38 Edward Penfield

36. **Frederick Richardson**
 (American, 1862–1937)
International March, ca. 1900
 Color lithograph
 25 ⁵/₁₆ × 16 inches
 Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and
 Donald Hastler
37. **George Frederick Scotson-Clark**
 (British, 1872–1927)
*The New York Sunday World, Sunday,
 November 17th, 1895, 1895*
 Color relief
 18 × 12 ¹/₈ inches
 Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and
 Donald Hastler

38. **John Sloan**

(American, 1871–1951)
Cinder-Path Tales, 1896
 Color lithograph
 23 ³/₄ × 13 ³/₈ inches
 Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and
 Donald Hastler

39. **Charles Herbert Woodbury**
 (American, 1864–1940)
The July Century, 1895
 Color lithograph
 19 × 13 ³/₈ inches
 Promised Gift of Daniel Bergsvik and
 Donald Hastler

Cover: 40. Edward Henry Potthast (detail)



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