

The History of Yellowstone Park Company's Stagecoach Poster

"German poster power has long been patterned after the work of Ludwig Hohlwein, who saw Yellowstone Park this way before 1914."

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Ludwig Hohlwein deserves the title of MASTER in the art nouveau. He was a leader of the Bauhaus School when poster artists put forth their efforts to avoid the uninspired copying of earlier periods, and the faithful imitation of nature to sources for transcending the original forms, and moving toward an abstract expression of both nature and previous art forms.

Hohlwein was born 1874 in Wiesbaden, Germany, but spent his long working life in Munich. He was trained as an architect; and from his earliest years had a passionate love for animals which he managed to combine with a zest for hunting and all field sports. Until the year 1906, he remained an architect but specialized in the new field of exhibition design and interior decoration. It was natural, therefore, that his first poster was for an exhibition for shooting and sporting guns. It was issued in 1906, and from then until his death he was a poster artist with a world-wide reputation and an international clientele. He was entirely self-taught, and although his work was soon in constant and wide demand, he never deputed details to assistants and apprentices. He was one of the first artists to realize that the new portable camera could be of the greatest help. He was a firm believer in working from the living model, and he supplemented his own eye with the recording eye of the camera; wherever he went he had his camera ready in hand. His love of sports and animal life was first capitalized by a well-known Munich sports tailor, Hermann Scherrer, who was employed by the famous circus queen, Dora Schumann, and the great Sarrasini to revolutionize the traditional circus poster, and it lent life and color to hundreds of famous household products.

Hohlwein's genius was a combination of ruthless objectivity in his approach to any problem with a flair for new angles and new treatments. Essentials remained; all else was ruthlessly avoided. In the Grathwohl cigarette poster, the looming silhouette of a top-hatted man, cane under arm, fills most of the picture. The background is a greenish-blue and the silhouette is relieved by highlights on the left side of his face. But the touch of genius comes from the single spot of red glowing between his lips. This highly effective poster is titled in a simple script: Die Grathwohl-Zigarette. Hohlwein's Marco-Polo-Tee advertisements show the same sureness in the handling of large masses, in his bold but successful juxtaposition of colours, in his use of shadowing, and in his geometrical forms—these solid slabs of colour in simple shapes which are so well shown in the back of his many posters. Hohlwein must be counted as one of the greatest poster artists. His career stretched from 1906 to the end of the Second World War. It was a monumental achievement.
