

TIME TRAVEL

With travel restricted for the moment, three specialist dealers reveal how vintage travel posters can help satisfy our wanderlust

WORDS NORMAN MILLER

At a time when very few of us can physically travel far at all, vintage travel posters are an evocative reminder of stylish past getaways that fuel our dreams of travelling again. These graphic visions are windows giving us a glimpse of a world of destinations and evocative modes of travel, presented via a seductive fusion of bold colour, distinctive lines and seductive typography. Little wonder old travel posters have a broad appeal.

'Some people choose a poster because of a personal connection to the destination; other people just love the graphic image,' says specialist dealer Kiki Werth (kikiwerth.com). 'Travelling today is routine and often not that pleasant,' adds Karen Lansdown of mid-century poster specialist Travel on Paper (travelonpaper.com). 'But these vintage posters hark back to a time when something like flying across the Atlantic was exciting – and often quite luxurious too.'

And these old-school travel come-ons are true works of art. 'These posters were created to grab the attention of passers-by, presenting artists with the challenge of condensing the message or a concept into a precise, short visual and written



COURTESY OF KAREN LANSDOWN/TRAVEL ON PAPER

A British Railways poster from 1954 by Studio Seven, promoting Blackpool's beaches

Tom Eckersley's simple design from the 1960s advertises a series of UK travel guides for British Railways



COURTESY OF KAREN LANSO@TRAVELONPAPER

European nations are represented by different breeds of dog in this humorous 1960s poster by Dick Negus and Philip Sharland



COURTESY OF KAREN LANSO@TRAVELONPAPER

form in a single artwork,' says Kirill Kalinin, founder of specialist poster gallery AntikBar on London's Kings Road (antikbar.co.uk). 'They are important items of social history that capture the essence of the time they were printed.'

Posters were established as an art form in the late 19th century, when the advent of high-speed colour lithography made mass production possible. They were often created by artists augmenting their income to avoid starving in the proverbial garret – though A-list painters like Toulouse-Lautrec also turned their hand to early poster design. These mass-production masterpieces flaunt the cultural tropes of their day. 'Posters absorbed and reflected prevailing and

changing art styles and fashions,' says Kirill. Art nouveau provided hip graphic inspiration from the late 1800s to the early 1920s, then art deco became a seductive template in the late 1920s and 30s, before it was eased aside when the modernist and mid-century look arrived in the 1950s.

But even within any particular era, distinctive styles could buck general trends. Posters from different countries could channel their own unique look, for example, such as the striking 1930s work of Soviet designer Maria Nesterova-Berzina for campaigns like 'Visit the Resorts of the USSR' – eye-catching visions of proletarian paradises different from those in the decadent West. 'My favourite period for poster and graphic design is the 1920s to 1930s,' says Kirill. 'Some of the most iconic art movements were developed in this era: art deco around the world, constructivism in Russia, Bauhaus in Germany, De Stijl in the Netherlands. There was an explosion of creativity worldwide that resulted in stunning designs. It was an era of elegant style in travel poster design promoting cruise liners, early air travel and steam railways.'

In Britain, the visual dynamism of the Futurist art movement inspired iconic 1930s' posters by Sybil Andrews and Cyril Powers for London Transport. The two often worked together too, signing works with the composite name 'Andrew Power'. London Transport posters also provide proof that a brilliant artist could make anywhere seem enticing. Just check out Edward McKnight Kauffer's lovely 1915 poster bigging up Watford, or a 1920s beauty aiming to entice punters to check out 'Chingford by Motor Bus' (both now in the British Council Collection).



'These posters presented artists with the challenge of condensing the message into a precise, single artwork'



COURTESY OF ANTIKBAR



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Clockwise from top left: Baveno, Italy, designed in the 1950s by Mario Puppo for the Italian National Tourist Board; Air France Extrême Orient, 1950, by Lauren Boucher; Air France USA, 1960s, by Roger Excoffon; Etretat for French Western Railways, 1900s belle époque design by F. Lune

Must-see

V&A Museum

The V&A has been actively collecting posters on an international scale dating back to the early 20th century. The London institution now hosts the UK's most extensive collection, featuring over 26,000 items, including iconic examples by masters of the travel form such as Cassandre and Edward McKnight Kauffer.

○ Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL: vam.ac.uk

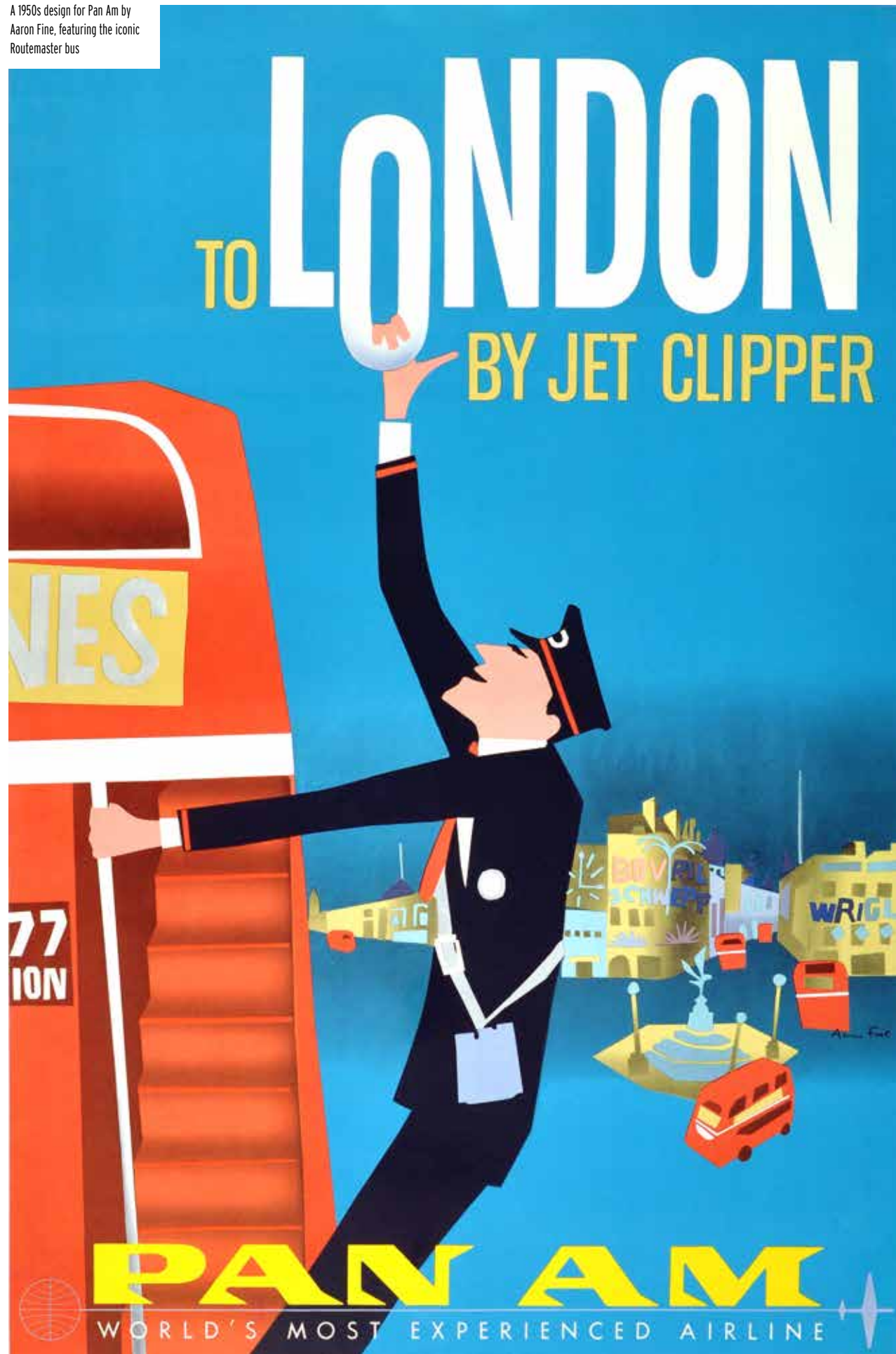
Danish Poster Museum

When we can travel to Europe again, the buzzing historic Danish city of Aarhus is home to a dedicated poster museum with both an exhibition gallery plus a separate archive boasting an incredible 200,000 posters from around the world.

○ Viborgvej 2, 8000 Aarhus, Denmark: danskplakatemuseum.dk/thedanishpostermuseum

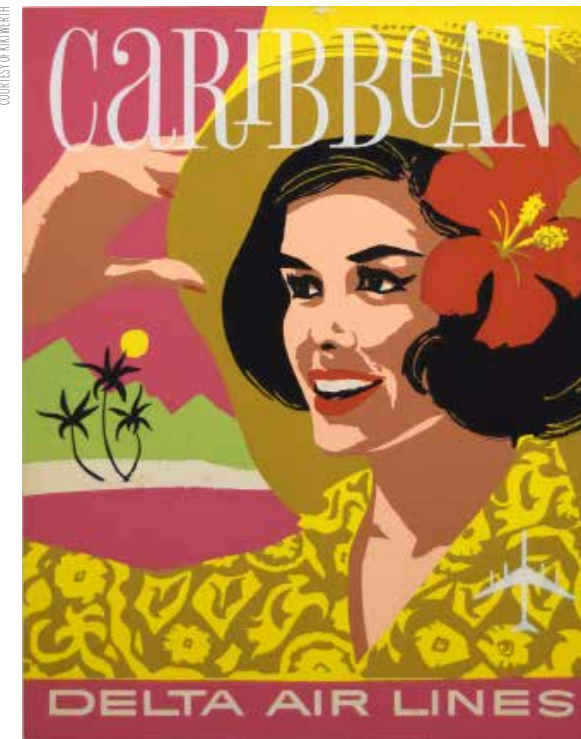
A 1950s design for Pan Am by Aaron Fine, featuring the iconic Routemaster bus

COURTESY OF ANTIKBAR



Silhouetted palm trees and an exotic flower encapsulate a Caribbean holiday vibe in John Hardy's 1960s artwork

COURTESY OF KIKI WERTH



Kiki Werth is a huge fan of British railway posters. 'The golden age was from 1923 to 1940, when GWR, Southern Railways, LNER and LMS were competing for business,' she says. Her top names among UK travel poster creatives include Edward McKnight Kauffer, Tom Purvis for 1920s/30s deco railway posters, plus Harry Stevens's light-hearted bus and underground posters of the 1960s and 70s. Kiki also pays homage to the brilliant Abram Games, whose diverse output includes a raft of memorable non-travel posters created in his role as Britain's official war-poster artist during World War II.

Further afield, Kiki spotlights graphic celebrations of early commercial air travel from the 1930s to 50s, featuring now-vanished airlines like Imperial Airways, plus BOAC and Mark von Arenburg's 1950s Pan Am Clipper posters. Sticking with old US airlines, Karen Lansdown points me towards David Klein's work promoting TWA. Shipping posters from the 1920s and 30s are another hot area, where famous images include the sleekly powerful 1935 cruise-line masterpiece Normandie by French art deco designer Adolphe Mouron (aka Cassandre).

While the rarest vintage movie posters can fetch prices approaching a million bucks once mega-rich collectors like Leonardo di Caprio set their eyes on particular rarities, travel posters are far more affordable – even at the top end. In 2016, a 1934 poster by the Swiss artist Alex Walter Diggelmann advertising Gstaad made the record price of £62,000 at Christie's. But if you had bid for an identical example of the same poster the auctioneer sold in 2011, you could have picked it up for £1,300. And you can start a collection for far less. 'Prices generally start from £150,' says Kirill Kalinin at

Tips for collectors

What to look out for when considering a vintage poster's desirability and value

○ **Physical condition**

Those offered by reputable dealers will be graded from 'A' to 'D' for condition – with 'A' meaning optimum, while 'D' indicates significant restoration work needed. Many vintage posters for sale are backed with linen to add a protective material that also holds the poster firm.

○ **Production methods**

Posters dating from around 1880 to 1950 were made using a technique called stone lithography that gave a distinctive colour and texture. This method was then scrapped

in favour of cheaper techniques, making vintage originals produced the old way more desirable to many collectors.

○ **Renowned artists**

As with any other form of visual work by recognised stars of the form generally add value to a particular design – so long as they are original printings, ideally using stone lithography.

○ **Rare or unusual posters**

Although vintage travel posters are a 'mass production' item, rarity remains a factor that boosts prices for things like limited production runs during periods like World War I. Posters printed in more unusual locations can also command premiums.

AntikBar. 'We also run specialised vintage poster auctions four times a year, where prices start at £20.' At Travel on Paper, Karen Lansdown's stock starts from just £40, although her rarest current poster is just under £1,500. Kiki Werth's price range, meanwhile, sits between £200 and £2,000.

One good way to begin is to decide on a theme that appeals to you. 'Some people focus on a particular company, such as White Star, Imperial Airways or Pan Am, while others focus on a particular country,' says Kirill. 'Often demand is driven by new collectors. For example, I've seen a rising demand for India-related posters recently, which has pushed up prices.' But vintage poster passions are as varied as people. 'Some may decide to collect a particular artist – but I know people who only collect Cornwall posters,' says Karen.

Putting the dealers on the spot, I ask them if they have a favourite in their current stock. 'My favourite at the moment is a London poster designed by Aaron Fine for Pan Am,' says Kirill. 'This minimalist and quirky design [pictured opposite] manages to convey the essence of the city in a fun and approachable way.'

Just to prove the variation you can get in posters promoting the same destination, Kiki Werth and Karen Lansdown both pick Alitalia airline posters promoting Venice – but each utterly different. Karen's choice is an ingenious 1960s typography collage of St Mark's Square by Amilcare Pizzi, while Kiki picks a simple brightly coloured 1950s design by Lemoine. 'It's a happy poster that makes me think of travels to Europe that we miss so much at the moment,' she says.

But through these posters we can all still travel in vintage style – even if only with our eyes for now. ●