

Polish Poster Salon

The beginnings of a series of lectures entitled the Polish Poster Salon are linked to the International Poster Salon in Paris (Salon International de L’Affiche) that operates under the UNESCO *Assosiation Intrenational des Arts Plastiques* (AIAP). The exhibition together with the competition for *the World’s Best Poster* was a continuation of the international poster exhibition organised to mark the 40th anniversary of UNESCO’s operation. The first presentation in the rooms of Parisian *Grand Palais* gathered 600 posters sent by graphic artists from 30 countries from all over the world. The selected 150 titles from those that qualified for the exhibition soon were shown in a few galleries selected by the organizers. The first stage of the European tour of the *International Salon* was the presentation in the Poster Museum in Warsaw whose co-creator and long-time curator, Janina Fijałkowska, participated in the discussions of the competition’s jury in 1986 and 1987. Soon after the completion of the 1st edition of the exhibition, as requested by Commissioner General of the Salon, André Parignaud, national committees for the organization of the International Poster Salon were established whose work was to facilitate organising of the exhibition and evaluating the posters entered for the competition by artists from the respective countries. The Polish committee headed by Assistant Professor Stanisław Wiczorek, Dean of the Department of Graphics and Poster of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and the Curator of the Poster Museum, Janina Fijałkowska started their activities in 1987 by preparing for the 2nd edition of the competition. The climax of the Committee’s work, as provided for in the By-laws drawn up, was the organization of an exhibition entitled *The Polish Spring Poster Salon* during which 36 works were finally selected to participate in the *World’s Best Poster* competition in Parisian *Grand Palais* in 1987. The organization of a cyclical Polish poster exhibition aimed at reviewing works created during the previous year became an integral point of the preparation of the international competition. Two subsequent editions of the Paris Salon preceded by national eliminations organized during the *Polish Spring Poster Salon* were shown in Wilanów Museum each year. Co-operation between the Polish committee and the Paris organizer of the exhibitions expired in 1990 following earlier presentation of the III edition of the *International Poster Salon*. However, the organization of perennial *Polish Spring Salons* in the museum’s rooms has not been interrupted. It was then that the currently binding formula of review exhibition was born, which gathers works sent by the creators themselves. In 1993 6th edition of the *Spring Poster Salon* was accompanied by the audience’s competition for the most popular poster on display. During this edition, Jarosław Wojciechowski, the Exhibition Commissioner started a presentation of works by students and graduates from the Department of Graphics and Poster from the nation’s three largest plastic universities; this presentation was continued for another two years.

By the time the *Polish Poster Biennale* (Ogólnopolskie Biennale Plakatu) in Katowice was reactivated in 1995, the annual presentations in the Poster Museum of Wilanów were the only opportunity for such a wide confrontation of achievements in the field of contemporary Polish poster. Following two years’ break, starting with 14th edition of the *International Poster Biennale* in the Poster Museum in Wilanów, exhibitions of the *Polish Poster Salon* series adopted the biennial schedule that is binding to this day.

In 1997 and 1999 invitations to the exhibition were extended to advertising agencies whose participation could become an interesting point in the wide range of cultural posters presented. A meagre amount of advertising prints sent by agencies and graphic studios confirmed that in utility graphics there is a qualitative division into the commercial and cultural sphere – between individual realizations and the results of work commissioned by teams. An incidental participation of classic poster in commercial advertising campaigns defined its position and function in the area of visual communication towards the end of the 90’s.

In retrospect, the open formula of contemporary poster presentation favours recording important phenomena and tendencies. The 9th edition of the Salon was among other things the beginning of the cyclic presentation of the publishing achievements of the Central Institute for the Protection of Labour (Centralny Instytut Ochrony Pracy) that since 1997 has been organising thematic competitions for the poster devoted to the subject health and safety regulations in a new formula in key with the transformations that occur in the civilisation. In 2001, the audience has an opportunity to evaluate poster-based promotion of cultural events that accompanies the *Kraków 2000 Festival*. In 2003 a record number of works – 420 Polish posters - was presented, including the Polish part of the unique international series of works devoted to the memory of the most outstanding creator of posters Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

The exhibitions of the Polish Poster Salon provide an opportunity to reflect on not only the condition of contemporary poster as an information carrier but also as a graphic work of art. The diversity of techniques, the variety of plastic methods and the plethora of individual recipes for visual communication with the receiver is the proof of the richness and value of salon presentations. The prints gathered in the rooms of the Poster museum show signs of fashions and strongest tendencies that are currently applied not only in the Polish utility graphics but also reveal before the viewers, the greatest fascinations of their creators as well as problems which affect all of us. They prove the constant value of the rich tradition found the Polish poster art, which despite various opinions formulated on such occasion remains an art form that lives.

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