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THE HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE ADVERTISING EXHIBITION 1929, BERLIN

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I.

THE Advertising Exhibition is intended to afford the visitor a survey of the standing of advertising art to-day, of the enormous variety of its forms and possibilities, but with one reservation which arises from the very nature of the matter: For such an exhibition only such means of advertising can be considered as exercise their effect by ocular means. Thus in the main it must be a graphic exhibition and consequently in the "Historic Department" which has been added to the exhibition, only the optic advertising has in the main been considered. Thus acoustic advertising has not been pictorially represented, as might have been done by representations of the various specimens of criers, from the Greek Keryse, the Roman Præco, the mediaeval herald to the street-figures of to-day and finally the wireless announcer. It was only on account of their graphic qualities that a number of the interesting and in part thoroughly charming pictures of criers which were produced in such great numbers in the 18th century and the early years of the 19th century, were to be shown in a few glass cases. The plan had to be abandoned at the last moment for lack of suitable show-cases.

What is the real object of the Historical Department, what has it to offer us, or rather, what is it in a position to offer us? The rest of the Advertising Exhibition is intended, as we have said, to inform us as to the momentary aspect of advertising. It might therefore be regarded as the object of the Historical Department to show us how everything gradually came into being as it exists to-day, and how the achievements of the present are linked with the achievements of the past. According to these preliminaries, however, the Historical Department would be forced to confine itself to the period subsequent to the appearance of Jules Chéret, that is to say, generally speaking, to the last fifteen years of the 19th century. For it is only from this point on that the chain of

development runs on without a break to the productions of the present-day. When modern poster-art came into being, it drew its stylistic inspiration in the main from the Japanese wood-cut. The work of older European poster-art, which had come into being under quite other conditions both economic and social, could not serve as a model for this new branch of art, if only for the reason that it was entirely forgotten. It was only the coming into bloom of a new and modern art of the poster that excited curiosity as to that had formerly been achieved in this sphere, and inspired a number of museums and private collectors to eager efforts to save what could still be saved. To be sure, this was not much, and what is almost worse, it was a purely fortuitous collection, for it owed its preservation, as a rule, only to some happy accident. For who troubled himself formerly about the productions of advertising art? They perished as soon as they had fulfilled their purpose. Thus the material that the historical department has to offer is necessarily burdened with a certain fortuitousness and lack of harmony. Nevertheless, owing to the circumstance that various museums and private collectors willingly put their treasures at our disposal, above all the Germanic National Museum in Nuremberg and the State Art Library in Berlin, a relatively comprehensive collection has been assembled, in which all phases of development are represented by typical specimens. And if there be no complete representation of all branches in the individual periods, yet the fact becomes absolutely clear that advertising in all ages has consciously made use of artistic form and has employed art as an auxiliary in a very great measure.

The material has been divided into 13 cabinets; one of them is devoted to the advertising of antiquity, the others carry on the development from the year 1450 to the final years of the 19th century. The work of the last 15 years of the 19th century has been given relatively large space in three ca-