

Australia surf club



Gert Sellheim is considered one of the most significant graphic artists working during the 'golden era' of Australian poster design in the 1930s. Artists commissioned by the Australian National Travel Association (ANTA) such as Sellheim, James Northfield, Percy Trompf and Douglas Annand created distinctly modern images of the Australian landscape and city life to promote to the world. Sellheim's most famous poster, *Australia surf club*, is one of the works commissioned by ANTA.

Images such as these were disseminated overseas through a network of agencies and representatives and were displayed in railway carriages and on station platforms. The ANTA symbol is integrated into the poster image in the bottom-right corner.

Beach and surf culture have long been part of our national identity and provided inspiration for many artists. *Australia surf club* depicts a rescue exercise in which a lifesaver is reeled into the sea. Sellheim's design appears deceptively simple; however, he has achieved this simplicity through planning. His composition incorporates multiple perspectives. The figures are shown frontally, while the shoreline is seen from an aerial perspective.

Influenced by his European training, Sellheim adopted an international modernist approach to his designs, drawing from a wide variety of art movements including

Cubism, Futurism and Dada. Sellheim also pioneered the use of Indigenous imagery in his poster design, *Corroboree Australia*, and other works including a two shilling Aboriginal stamp in 1948 to symbolise Australian identity, celebrating Indigenous art and culture.

Initially, most posters were woodblocks or metal engravings containing little colour. This changed when French artist Jules Chéret invented a three-stone lithographic printing process that allowed artists to produce vivid and colourful works. The ability to combine words with images made the lithographic poster a powerful innovation. It became the dominant means of mass communication used by ANTA and other organisations.

Sellheim contributed to a wide range of projects, from posters to interior designs, including his 1939 Sulman Award-winning interior design for the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau in Collins Street, Melbourne. Sellheim also designed a sundial and painted murals for the Newburn Flats, Queens Road, South Melbourne, in 1941.

One of his most recognised designs includes the famous winged kangaroo symbol for Qantas, first appearing in January 1947. The original kangaroo symbol on Qantas aircraft was adapted from the Australian one-penny coin.

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Research and Investigation: Social And Historical

The ANTA poster initiative was influenced by English transport posters commissioned by the London Underground Railway and the London and North Eastern Railway Line. Visit the following websites to explore the poster and artwork collection from the London Transport Museum.

London Transport Museum:

<http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/> <http://www.ltmcollection.org/posters/>

Research the powerful and diverse nature of poster design by exploring propaganda and recruitment posters designs for the First World War.

Australian War Memorial:

<http://www.awm.gov.au/>

Compare and Contrast

Discover other posters created for ANTA. Compare the poster design of Gert Sellheim and his contemporaries Percy Trompf and James Northfield.

What do these posters communicate about Australian life in the 1930s?
Why would these posters appeal to an international market?

Visit the website for this exhibition:

Follow the Sun: Australian Travel Posters 1930s–1950s, National Library of Australia
<http://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/sun/>

Explore other artists that have explored the theme Australian national identity.

Visit: *Celebrating Australia: Identity by Design*, Powerhouse Museum
http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/previous/celebrating_australia.asp

Visual Analysis

Posters are designed to attract attention and convey a message quickly and clearly. Choose a poster in the *Art Deco* exhibition that you think is effective and describe why.

Select two design elements from the following to support your response:

- point
- line
- shape
- form
- colour
- texture
- letterform

Select two design principles from the following to support your response:

- balance
- contrast
- cropping
- hierarchy
- scale
- proportion
- pattern

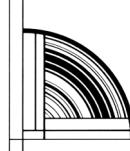
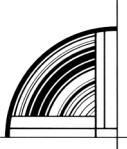
Travel and Transport

The expansion of travel by train, ship, bus, car and aircraft saw the rapid growth of travel for leisure during the Art Deco period.

In the *Art Deco* exhibition locate the following two works by poster artist and designer Cassandre: *Nord Express* and *Normandie*.

How does Cassandre convey a sense of speed, luxury and modernity in his designs?

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You have been commissioned by Tourism Australia to create a poster to encourage people to visit Australia. Before you start your design, please visit the Tourism Australia website to conduct your market research.
Tourism Australia: <http://www.tourism.australia.com/>

Today travel posters have been replaced by a wide variety of other advertising material.

Go to the Melbourne Visitor Centre located at Federation Square and collect an assortment of brochures and advertising material. As a group, discuss in class the effectiveness of these materials in relation to design and communication of key messages.

Typography

Gert Sellheim has incorporated a distinctive Art Deco typeface into his designs.

Compare the type styles used by the various artists represented in the exhibition.

Research other typeface characteristics of the Art Deco period.

Create your own distinctive Art Deco typeface.

Materials and Technology: Printmaking

What is a lithograph?

For information, visit:

Follow the Sun: Australian Travel Posters 1930s–1950s, National Library Of Australia
<http://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/sun/lithography.html>

Research the history of printing technologies from woodblock printing to the photocopier and 3D printing.

Investigate how French artist Jules Chéret revolutionised the mass-production of posters through lithography and how he played a major role in transforming the aesthetic nature of the poster.

Please note: These websites have been gathered from various sources and the listing of them does not mean an endorsement by the National Gallery of Victoria.

Teachers: Although we check each site before listing, please ensure you have thoroughly checked any site before distributing to your students.