

POSTER EXHIBITION IN VALENCIA AND SEVILLE



Modern Hungarian Commercial Posters, 1924-1942.

(El cartel comercial moderno de Hungría, 1924-1942). This was the title of the National Széchényi Library's graphic posters exhibition held at two venues in Spain. The 102 artistic posters selected from the Collection of Posters and Printed Ephemera were first presented by the Valencian Museum of the Enlightenment and Modernity (MuVIM) from 4th June to 2nd September 2009. The other exhibition was opened on 22nd October at the Contemporary Andalusian Art Center (CAAC) in Seville and will stay open until 24th January 2010. Although the latter decided on featuring only 68 posters, the exhibition is no less representative than the one in Valencia.

The nearly two-year story of the exhibition started in January 2008, when head of department Carlos Pérez and deputy director Molina Agulló from Valencia contacted our collection, proposing a modern avant-garde Hungarian poster display. Thanks to the ongoing mediation and assistance given by Dr. László Scholz, the head of ELTE University's

Spanish Department, eventually the idea bore fruit. The project started with selecting the items to be displayed, carried out by art historian at the Hungarian National Gallery Dr. Katalin Bakos. The fact that the Spanish party, which originally intended to have no more than about 70 posters, after the pre-selection decided to stage a larger exhibition was definitely Kati Bakos's achievement. Naturally, it also weighed heavily that wonderful works of wonderful artists had come out (of our stores).

According to the agreement with the Valencian party, NSZL was to start the preparation of the posters for display in the first half of 2008 and carry on until delivery in the spring of 2009. The success of the exhibition continued in Seville, thanks to the Valencian party's recommendation. Thus counting in the second exhibition, we already have two years' history of work and success. The first step was that NSZL restorers, Ildikó Csillag and Ágnes Horváth carefully restored and re-mounted most of the posters. We owe them special thanks. Following restoration, digital photos



A section of the successful exhibition

were taken of the posters, the high quality of which is due to Lajos Karasz and Ádám Ackermann in the NSZL Photo Laboratory. As a result, the exhibition catalogue could be produced in three languages for the Valencian exhibition launched in June 2009. This contained full-page photos of our re-born posters, a study about the period written by Dr. Katalin Bakos, who had designed the themes of the show, and finally

collection, the number one of its kind in Hungary, had a chance to boost its international fame and prestige. Counted by the museum, the Valencian exhibition was seen by nearly nine thousand visitors. We trust we may have similar success with the Seville event. It is promising that following the English press conference I held there on 22nd October 2009, detailed reviews of the event were published in ten local and

national papers (including *El País*). “How come we have such treasures?” one could ask. The NSZL graphical collection of some four million ephemeral prints and posters possesses almost a hundred thousand posters originating from all periods of the 135 years of Hungarian production. And because for two hundred years our library development in general and the collection in particular has been guided by professional criteria, we have been able to gather a truly outstanding stock of artistic posters. This is one of the reasons why



contemporary masters' essays about the art of posters. We are especially grateful to each member of the Poster and Small Print Collection for restoration, photographing and the delivery of artifacts, especially to my colleague Magdolna Elbéné Mester.

We are proud to say that both exhibitions offered unique opportunities for us to introduce modern posters of the interwar period to the Spanish public. To give a few examples, such Hungarian masters' works were displayed as Lajos Kassák, Sándor Bortnyik, István Irsai, Róbert Berény and the Macskássy brothers, some of whom were not completely new to knowledgeable museum-goers.

In addition to informing about the artists and the period, the National Széchényi Library and its poster

we can design exhibitions of such scope in the present as well as in future. This background and the sophistication and success of the Spanish event urge us to show the same material to the Hungarian public. The 102 artistic posters will be on display from the autumn of 2010 at an exhibition organized jointly the National Széchényi Library and the Hungarian National Gallery. At the same time, the magnificent trilingual (Spanish-Hungarian-English) catalogue will be available to Hungarians.

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