
*British Aviation Posters* is a concise history of civil aviation advertising in Great Britain between 1903 and the 1960s illustrated with 102 color reproductions of posters and seventy-four other related illustrations from the British Airways Heritage Collection. The basic text is intended for a general audience. The authors discuss how the development of the airline industry in Great Britain, along with cultural and political changes in the first half of the twentieth century, impacted the way airlines advertised using posters and other media. The posters offer a case study in the evolution of poster arts in Britain with the 1930s and 1950s more thoroughly represented. The authors chose to focus solely on civil aviation and therefore offer no examples from the war years when the airlines primarily served a military function. Anthony and Green describe how posters were used to develop interest in an exciting new technology in the early years of aviation. Between the World Wars airlines used modern design and advertising firms to build a public following despite limited ridership. After World War II nationalized airlines heavily promoted their growing industry with campaigns that emphasized the quality of their planes and service and the excitement and exoticness of their destinations to a public with growing discretionary incomes.

While designers are not the primary focus of the book (almost a third of the posters are by unidentified artists) the authors do provide brief biographical sketches of three key designers who played pivotal roles: Theyre Lee-Elliott who designed the speedbird logo for Imperial Airways; Abram Games who the authors credit with creating the British Overseas Airways Corporation’s post-war image; and Mary de Saulles who designed the red square logo for British European Airways.

The hardback book is handsomely designed with many of the posters occupying an entire page. The reproductions are honest, depicting the posters as objects that are sometimes creased, stained or torn. Although the illustrations are numbered they are unfortunately not keyed to or fully integrated with the text.

Books on posters for rail and ocean transport are common but there are only a few dealing with aviation posters. Although this book is sharply focused on a narrow subset of British airline posters the volume fills a gap in the universe of transportation advertising. The book is suitable for libraries that collect works related to posters, graphic arts, advertising, or aeronautica. The book includes a timeline of highlights in civil aviation, a bibliography of related works, and an index.

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