

The Complete "Masters of the Poster": All 256 Color Plates from "Les Maîtres de l'Affiche" (Dover Fine Art, History of Art)

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Les Maîtres de l'Affiche (The Masters of the Poster) is one of the most prestigious and influential art publications in history. Its 256 color plates have preserved for each succeeding generation a wide-ranging selection of outstanding posters from the turn of the century, when the popular art form had reached its first peak. This Dover edition is the first complete republication of the legendary Maîtres set to devote a full large page to each plate.

Les Maîtres de l'Affiche was issued as separate numbered sheets measuring 11 1/4 x 15 1/2 inches. Every month for 60 months, from December 1895 through November 1900, subscribers received a wrapper containing four consecutively numbered poster reproductions. On 16 occasions, the monthly wrapper also contained a bonus plate, not a poster reproduction but a specially created art lithograph. Jules Chéret, father of the modern poster, emerged with the lion's share of the plates, 60 of the 240 numbered poster reproductions and 7 of the 16 unnumbered bonus plates. Of the 97 artists represented in Les Maîtres de l'Affiche, some were preeminent painters and printmakers at various stages of their careers: Toulouse-Lautrec, Denis, Bonnard, Vallotton, Puvis de Chavannes. Others were famous illustrators and cartoonists of the period, still well known to art collectors and bibliophiles: Forain, Caran d'Ache, Ibels, Willete, Boutet de Monvel, Léandre. But there were also all those whose names say "poster," the conquering pioneers of the new medium: Chéret himself, Mucha, Steinlen, the Beggarstaffs, Grasset, Penfield, Parrish, Bradley, and Hardy.

This edition reproduces the plates in their original numerical sequence, one to a page, retaining the standardized tan border introduced by the editors of Les Maîtres. The bonus plates, originally unnumbered and issued at various times, have been given the letters A through P and have been placed at the end of the volume. The List of Plates indicates the exact months in which Maîtres subscribers received these bonus plates. In order to keep the plate pages uncluttered, the captions on those pages have been limited to plate number (or letter) and the artist's name. The List of Plates also furnishes essential data on the original fullsized posters: their dimensions, the year in which they were first published, city of publication, and specific print shop responsible. A special Dover feature, which is almost certainly a first ever, is a full literal translation of the text of all posters printed in a language other than English. These are all new direct translations from French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, Czech, and Hungarian.

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