

Exhibition Themes

Every Citizen a Soldier

Wartime poster art aimed not only to increase productivity in factories, but to sell the idea that the factory and the home were also arenas of war, uniting people in a sense of shared sacrifice and increased output.

The Poster's Place in Wartime

Even though radio, movies and billboards were primary means of communication, posters could go places other media couldn't reach-- factories, offices, store windows and schools. Posters also had dramatic appeal-- they could be made by anyone and seen by all.

Re-Tooling for Victory: The Factory Front

The 1930's had seen violent labor disputes. The war's demand for goods necessitated these differences be set aside so factories could be productive. For manufacturers, the war was an opportunity to gain greater control over the workforce. Government, businesses and even labor unions produced posters calling for workers to abandon traditional work patterns and make sacrifices in the name of patriotism.

War Aims Through Art: The U.S. Office of War Information

The OWI was established to control the content and imagery of war propaganda. As such, it reviewed and approved content and design of government posters. Some in the OWI saw posters as "war art" and favored more stylized images; others, from the world of advertising, wanted posters to be more like ads. When admen gained the upper hand, the look of government posters changed decidedly.

Fighting for an Ideal America

Production incentive posters did not just exhort people to increase output, they also conveyed social, political and economic ideals of the time. Imagery on posters celebrated the white, middle-class home, the nuclear family, consumerism and free enterprise. They offered a very particular vision of life in an ideal postwar world, and depictions of men and women conveyed certain assumptions about their roles in that world.