Daniele Villa
Franca Zuccoli *Editors*

Proceedings of the 3rd International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Image and Imagination

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Editors

Proceedings of the 3rd International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Image and Imagination

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Preface

For those who work in the field of education and professional development, a key figure in relation to the theme of image is John Amos Comenius (1592–1670), known as Iohannes Amos Comenius in Latin and Jan Amos Komenský in his native Czech. An eclectic character, Comenius was a philosopher, educationalist, theologian, and educator. He is considered to be the father of didactics because he concerned himself with the overall design of the human educational trajectory across the lifespan. Comenius believed that schools should be open to all: places where anything could be taught to anybody/by anyone, albeit via tailored offerings and methods [1] (Comenius 1658). His Orbis sensualium pictus (1658) was the first textbook to include pictures, which dominated over the written text. Here, he made targeted and intentional use of images, chosen with a view to fostering knowledge and learning in children [2] (Comenius 1658). Roberto Farné includes Comenius' approach in his rich overview of the diverse uses of images in the field of education, which he calls "didactic iconology"; explicitly drawing on the work of Erwin Panosfky (1939) [3], he defines this perspective as "[…] the study of images for educational purposes or, more narrowly, for the purposes of schooling. The term 'image' is the common denominator in an extremely broad and diversified range of visual and audio-visual repertoires, which primarily act as media and whose "iconic dimension" is key to the educational communication they are deployed for" [4] (Farné 2002, p. VIII). Since Comenius' day, despite encountering a host of difficulties and at times serious obstacles, images have become part of the world of school, and a crucial element of the teaching–learning process, during which they may be variously consumed, interpreted, produced, and manipulated. Images enhance all educational trajectories, from early years education with children as young as 0–3 years to university and educational and professional development research settings. Scholarly interest in the educational use of image and images themselves as a primary source of knowledge has inspired ongoing debates and processes of inquiry [5,6,7] (Calvani 2011); to be more specific, within the constantly evolving impact of the sphere of image on the world, substantial differences remain between those who understand images to be decorative rather than laden with meaning, and even at risk of distracting us from the sphere of words and numbers, and those who engage with images in all their possible forms. We should note here in passing that the iconic sphere underpins the visual thinking paradigm that was early theorized by Rudolf Arnheim, and whose enormous potential has been coming progressively to the fore [8]. Sometimes educational theory and practice still struggle to draw creatively from the multifaceted potential of constantly evolving and shifting representations and images. However, the suspension of in-person teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 health emergency and the announcement of a global pandemic by WHO (March 12, 2020) forced all forms of education to switch to distance-learning modes that involved exploiting digital instruments to the full. In this case, the world of images not only represented an aid to teaching and learning but also became the very place of possible educational encounter. Consequently, the use of images in education

accelerated at a speed that would otherwise have been unthinkable [9]. The lessons that COVID has taught us, as Edgar Morin has aptly described this painful trajectory, can and must be transformed into challenges [10], which educational research and professional development must embrace and not overlook. Within the process of transformation that is currently underway, images—understood in plural and complex terms—must count among the foundational components of an alternative paradigm in which mindfulness, creativity, and openness in interpretation and production will all be essential characteristics. This conference, the first to take place as a physical encounter following a long hiatus, ably, and fully exploits the meeting of different disciplines that bring different understandings to bear upon images and use them for different purposes [11]. It is a point of interdisciplinary encounter, of enrichment and debate, and of real learning about other areas of knowledge in which images have become indispensable; it explores a shared pathway that we should never tire of pursuing.

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Franca Zuccoli
Daniele Villa

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Contents

Hervé Morvan, Artist and Poet of the "optique de la rue"

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Abstract. After the dark years of German occupation, a new generation of poster artists emerged in France. Although advertising was not yet a marketing tool, these authors proposed a new, original graphic language, with innovative principles of commercial communication: very colorful, lively posters, pervaded by a subtle humor, the "visual gags". The streets are the galleries where to exhibit; the poster is the medium, the viewer the target to hit.

Among this new generation, the artists who emerge are definitely Bernard Villemot, Raymond Savignac and Hervé Morvan. Between 1947 and 1951, the first two occupied the same studio, although their graphic language differed considerably.

Morvan establishes himself after a long apprenticeship. Born in Brittany in 1917, Hervé moves with his family to Paris where he attends the "Ecole des Arts Appliqués", graduating in 1934 as a decorator, painter of murals and stained glass. At first he worked in film advertising (the large billboards that advertised films) before producing, after 1942, his first posters. After the war he worked for important companies such as Perrier, Savora, Panzani; but the commercial poster that made him known to the general public was that of 1948 for the underwear "Scandale", presented at the Exhibition of the Fair of Lyon. His amusing style in advertising products through a drawn gag, is quickly successful; from Gitanes tobacco to Grutli beer, from Primagaz to Geveor wine, from Bendix electrical appliances to Gévéor wine, and again Bally, Petit-Bateau, Mazda, up to Alsacienne and Banania cookies, Kwatta and Lanvin chocolate, etc. Morvan composes "street paintings", with bright colors and simple, but extremely effective, drawings, which also represent an extraordinary repertoire of "visual gags".

For his posters, Morvan is inspired by the light-hearted, playful, reassuring naivety of children; Morvan's graphic repertoire is populated by friendly characters and smiling animals, such as Lanvin's wolf who, instead of biting Little Red Riding Hood, happily bites into a chocolate bar!

Keywords: affiches · french graphics · poster design · advertising · Hervé Morvan

"*Conceiving a poster is not a team activity…*
    It is the work of one man, alone".
    Hervé Morvan.

1 Premise

I am waiting patiently at my barber's, waiting for my turn; as tradition I try to leaf through (with difficulty, due to the disposable plastic gloves, we are in times of pandemic) some of the magazines on the table: *L'Espresso*, *Panorama*, *Oggi*, *il Venerdì di Repubblica*, *Sette del Corriere della Sera*, *Chi*. The amount of advertising pages in most magazines is surprising: most of the time it is much higher than those dedicated to articles. Entire and double pages are dedicated to the most varied advertisements: cosmetics, clothing, motors, food, pay TV, telephone companies, etc… All advertisements described with photographic images, sometimes heavily modified or transformed with Photoshop, with settings resulting from virtual reality, in search of the perfect icon, unreal, but ideal for advertising that product. I look for an advertisement that is not a photo or digitally processed: I can't find it. Those beautiful advertisements of the past, "painted advertisements" that had little to envy to the works of the painters of the time. And the brushes, the pencils, the colors: gone; vanished, cancelled out by the rise of the photographic poster. And where are those "poster artists" who were able to capture us with the strength of the images combined with the poetry of their works, those posters with incisive designs, captivating colors, clear messages, but never shouted. Probably society, commercial rules and communication have changed, so that advertising, in order to be up-to-date and effective, has had to adapt to the new rules of the market, decidedly based on a voracious, impulsive and not at all meditated consumerism. I may be a nostalgic (graphic) artist, but let me tenderly and benevolently remember the good old days of beautiful designed and painted advertising.

Fig. 1. Morvan (a), Villemot (b) and Savignac (c) during a party in 1970.

Fig. 2. Morvan, poster for movie "Casablanca". 1942.

2 Hervé Morvan: From the Beginnings to 1950

In the ateliers of Paul Colin and Cassandre, starting around 1930, some of the most famous "affichiste" were formed who would establish themselves in the following decades, such as Raymond Savignac, Bernard Villemot (Fig. 1), André François, the duo Lefor-Openo and others.

Detached from the most important Parisian graphic design studios, Hervé Morvan appeared, an original and singular "poster artist" who was to establish himself by following a path that was decidedly different from the other poster artists of his age.

His name has sometimes been associated with Savignac's: the reason is perhaps to be found in the fact that both, in 1949 (Morvan was then thirty-three years old, Raymond ten years older), at the time of their sudden fame, had no significant experience in commercial advertising [1]. They are certainly united by the style of their posters characterized by a simple humor, not trivial, sometimes ironic, but basically effective. They are also united by certain graphic characteristics of their posters, such as the design, with its decisive and essential strokes, and the use of colors, bright, applied in a flash, without mediation [2].

The considerable notoriety obtained by Savignac with the Monsavon cow and by Morvan with the sandwich man from Scandal soon spread throughout France, both of them being projected towards a surprising and unexpected success.

But let's go in order. Hervé Marc Morvan was born during World War I on March 18, 1917 in Plougastel-Daoulas, in the Finistère department of Brittany. He was the second son of Pierre and Victoria Le Stir.

After the war, the Morvan family moved to Paris in search of better fortune. There the father found work as a laborer, an occupation he maintained throughout his life. Hervé, and his older brother Pierre, attend municipal schools without appreciable results, but the young Morvan is noticed by his teacher for his ability to draw.

He then enrolled in the School of Applied Arts in rue du Petit-Thouars where he learned, in particular, the techniques of mural painting, fresco painting and stained glass art. In 1934, at the age of seventeen, he graduated brilliantly and soon after found work as a decorator. But in this profession the commissions were rather irregular so he began to make posters for movie theaters. Morvan soon realized that the clients (managers of cinemas, film distributors) were not looking for someone who knew how to do "a work of art": they just wanted striking images, often of dubious taste, but that could effectively attract customers in the theater, licentious images that aimed more at the senses than the intelligence of the passerby.

In September 1937 Morvan is called to military service, he is assigned to the 37th Infantry Regiment, but after only two months he is "temporarily reformed" for health reasons, so he resumes his work. In November 1939 he was recalled to the Arms following the general mobilization, and assigned to the "auxiliary services". This does not prevent him to get married and in February 1940 he gets married in Paris with Louis Féat.

Following the German invasion and the armistice, after a short period of imprisonment, he is released and in 1941 he moves with his wife in Brittany, his homeland; here, waiting to understand what turn of events will take, he resumes painting, so much so that on the identity card that is issued indicates as a profession "artist-painter", and not "decorator", as he had done the previous year, for his marriage certificate.

Fig. 3. Morvan, poster for "Parti Communiste Français, 1947.

Fig. 4. Morvan, poster for "27° Congres CGT", 1948.

Fig. 5. Morvan, poster for movie "Voleur de bicyclette", 1949.

The following year Morvan and his wife return to Paris, where he makes his first film poster designed entirely by him for a film by Léon Mathot: Forte Tête. But the enthusiasm for his work soon turned to disappointment: contemplating his poster on the walls, Morvan exclaimed, "My first poster (…) I put a lot of love and care into this work. Alas, when I saw it on the walls, what a disappointment! It was small, ridiculously small. It looked like a postage stamp. I found it too shiny, in other words, a failure. I discovered the gap between what is posted on the street and what is drawn in the studio" [3].

From this moment on, the commissions for the great film posters follow one another, his are those of "La Grande Illusion", "Le feu sacré", "Tête forte", "Les affaires sont les affaires", "Dernier atout", "Casablanca" (Fig. 2) and others including "Voleur de bicyclette" the French version of Bicycle Thieves (Fig. 5). During the Nazi occupation from 1940 to 1945, Morvan made almost 50 cinematographic posters; in this activity, thanks to his professional qualities and the knowledge he acquired, he will be particularly prolific, in his lifetime he will produce more than 150.

From 1943 Morvan also began to produce posters for shows for singers (such as André Claveau André Dassary, Ricardo Bravo, Victoria Marino, Lucienne Tragin, Germaine Roger and others), for ballets, concerts, as well as advertising for bars, restaurants and dance halls.

After the war, while continuing his intense activity as a film poster artist, Morvan began to create advertising posters with an extremely innovative personal style. Thanks to the ties of his wife, in 1947 he was entrusted with the creation of several posters for the French Communist Party (Fig. 3) and the Left Trade Unions (Fig. 4), as well as posters for the anniversaries of the Liberation and May 1st [4].

In 1948, he exhibited a sketch at the Basel Fair, which was destined to become a milestone in the artist's career: the poster for Scandale, a company that makes girdles and corsets. The painting exhibited immediately provokes astonishment and shock, for the irony, nonconformity and comic verve with which Morvan deals with the theme of a lingerie advertisement [5].

Hervé realizes that what counts for advertising "affiches" are not the good traditional concepts of drawing and the pictorial art learned at school, but the rules and regulations of what he calls "optique de la rue", the street optics. Advertising is not yet a marketing business, the poster is a medium, the viewer, the target. The walls of the city are the ephemeral museum, en plein air, of this art, made of commercial posters, street paintings; the users of this great open-air gallery are the passers-by, all possible customers, potential consumers. These critical considerations prompt him to design synthetic posters that immediately catch the eye of passers-by, both for their simplicity and for the organization and aggregation of their colored masses (Fig. 10).

Fig. 6. Morvan, the four puzzle posters for the advertising of Perrier water, fragmented in the first version, 1950.

Fig. 7. Morvan, the four collage posters for the advertising of Perrier water, final version, 1950.

Fig. 8. Morvan, advertising page of the "Scandale" corsets, 1948.

Fig. 9. Morvan, poster for chocolate "Kwatta", 1950.

Fig. 10. Morvan, poster for beer "Paillette Pils", 1951.

Morvan is, after all, an artisan "a master Geppetto of graphics, who carves his characters with love and passion, not with a chisel, but with a pencil and a brush" [6] (Fig. 11).
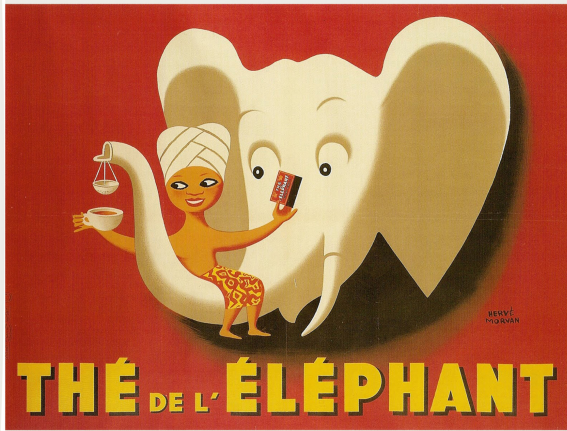
Fig. 11. Morvan, poster for "Thé de l'Eléphant", 1952.
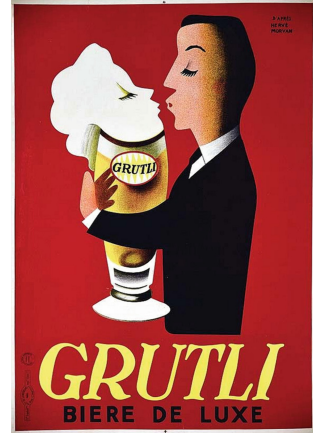
Fig. 12. Morvan, poster for beer "Grutli", 1953.

Fig. 13. Morvan, poster for "Pasta Panzani", 1952.

Fig. 14. Morvan, tray for chocolate power "Banania", 1956.

Fig. 15. Morvan, box for cookies "Alsacienne", ar. 1960.

3 Morvan: The years of Affirmation

The idea of advertising a product through an image or a small scene that proposes a "visual gag", as Alan Weill defines it (Weill 1985, pg. 303), launched by Savignac with the Monsavon poster and by Morvan with the Scandal poster (Fig. 8), soon spread throughout France and beyond [7].

In 1949, Morvan opened his first real studio in Clichy [8]; the notoriety that rained down on him after the exhibition of the Scandal sketch convinced him to embark on a path as a "poster artist" for commercial advertising, a field that was more highly regarded in the profession and normally better paid, even though his activity in the film industry remained intense.

In 1949 he created his first commercial posters for Gerline detergents and Kwatta chocolate (Fig. 9).

In 1950 [9], he created the "poster-puzzle" campaign for Perrier (Figs. 6–7), which would sanction his success on the French poster scene. Morvan has a brilliant and original idea: he sticks on the Parisian walls in the greatest disorder, pieces of brightly colored posters, representing heads and legs of funny characters, but without showing any brand or product; the public wondered with curiosity what could bring together such a disparate set. Over the following weeks, he gradually assembled the fragments of the posters, until, about a month after the first appearance, the characters finally found their identities, an elegant woman, a hunter, a cyclist and an old dandy, all drinking a bottle of Perrier water. This advertising campaign was so successful that the magazine Paris-Match dedicated an entire page to it, reproducing in color the four characters invented by Hervé [10].

From that moment and for more than thirty years the characters created by Morvan will animate the French advertising billboards with their "visual gags" with joyful messages, that transmit good humor. Hervé realized that the walls of the streets are a huge open-air museum, the advertising posters are works of art to be exhibited, whose users, and potential customers, are the many passers-by, albeit distracted and hurried. Hence the need to attract their attention with posters in simple and immediate language, with elementary figures, bright colors, with a commercial message quickly understandable and direct (Fig. 21).

Fig. 16. Morvan, poster for "AGIP Supercortemaggiore", ar.1955.

Fig. 17. Morvan, poster for "Leblanc", 1960.
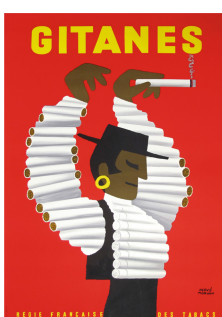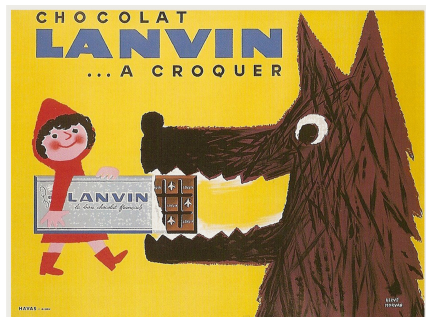

Fig. 18. Morvan, poster for "Bendix", 1965.

Fig. 19. Morvan, poster for "Gitanes", ar.1956.

Fig. 20. Morvan, poster for " Gitanes", 1960.

Fig. 21. Morvan, poster for "Chocolat Lanvin", 1961.

The '50s are marked by a profitable and intense professional activity: the orders for advertising posters follow each other constantly. In 1951 he exhibited at the "Galerie du Siècle" at the Exhibition "du dessin humoristique à la publicité", organized by Publimondial some sketches, in particular the devil of Berger; are of the same year the commercial posters: Kwatta (soluble chocolate), Argentil, Paillette, Lustucru, Savora, Gray-Poupon, Panzani (Fig. 13), Kangourou, Caiman, Maille.

In the following year he made agreements with the volcanic publisher and advertising agent De La Vasselais [11]; Morvan, his wife and trusted assistant Leo Kouper moved into a larger studio at 97 avenue de Versailles in Paris.

Among the many commercial posters of this decade, those of the chocolate Kwatta, with a little boy eating his chocolate fingers, the man in Bally shoes redoing the knot of his tie, the man Gévéor tasting his wine with joy in the neck of his bottle remain impressed, the white elephant that becomes a teapot, the Paillette beer sticker that drinks from the image of the glass on the poster, the cook on the Panzani pasta fork, the gambrinista's kiss with the foam of the Grutli beer (Fig. 12), the penguin/giraffe of the Brandt fridge just to name a few.

On his return from a trip to Italy (where he designed a poster for Agip) (Fig. 16), in 1956 he dedicated himself to restyling the logo of the widespread drink Banania (Fig. 14), creating an advertising campaign destined to leave its mark, followed by the very successful one for Alsacienne cookies (Fig. 15).

From 1955 onwards he devoted himself to the advertising of household appliances, the production of which in those years had had a very strong increase, brands such as Brandt, Satam, Ladem, Amsta, Leblanc (Fig. 17) or radio and television sets such as Atlantic, Philips, Blaupunkt, Radiola and others.

In 1958 his daughter Véronique was born; since then and for twenty-one years he has been drawing the series of posters for the "Jeunesse au Plein Air" movement, an initiative of the French Ministry of Youth.

1961 is the moment of the consecration of his work: he obtains the Martini [12] gold medal for his posters for the French tobaccos Gitanes: among the cigarettes in the background emerges the Spanish dancer and the flamenco dancer with the shirt made from cigarettes (Fig. 19–20). In 1965 Morvan began an intense collaboration that lasted five years with Bendix (a household appliance company) for which he created numerous posters (Fig. 18), but also brochures, letterhead, stationery, what today is called "coordinated image".

4 Morvan: The years of Crisis

But in the 1960s, slowly and progressively, the systematic use of photography in posters and the spread of advertising agencies that were more and more interested in commercial and economic implications than in the "artistic-creative" side, led to a significant decrease in the number of orders from traditional poster designers. This is combined with the gradual abandonment of lithographic techniques in favor of offset and the evolved techniques of commercial communication, to an advertising increasingly linked to the spread through the media, such as radio and television.

Moreover, towards the end of the 60's, the publishing house of Guy De La Vasse-lais, with whom Morvan actively collaborated, ran into economic difficulties and had difficulty paying its collaborators for their work.

After 1972, with only two exceptions, Morvan [13], who until then had resisted this recession well, received no more orders for commercial advertising; which may seem unusual for a poster artist who had designed hundreds of them over the course of twenty years, to the great satisfaction of the clients [14]. To compensate for the drop in orders from the commercial sector, Hervé reconnected with the friends he had kept in the world of cinema and resumed making several posters for films.

From 1968 until 1981 Morvan created a series of posters for the "Foire de Lyon". From 1970 for 10 years will sign the posters of the "Salon de l'Enfance" initiative that took place at the "Palais du Defense" in Paris. In the decade 1970/1980 he created numerous posters for fairs, exhibitions and shows in Paris, Bordeaux and other French cities, not to mention his long series of images to advertise the summer vacation camps "Jeunesse au plein air" [15].

Some of Morvan's notes reveal to us that the poster artist found himself alone in facing the difficulties of the moment.

Morvan dies on April 1, 1980 in his Parisian studio. Afterwards, Léo Kouper and Véronique Morvan tried to keep the atelier alive: some projects designed by Hervé saw the light in 1981 (Jeunesse au Plein Air, Salon de l'Auto, Foire de Lyon). But that "perverse spell that is advertising" [16] that Hervé had kept alive with his talent, the grace of his work, with his unmistakable graphic language, colorful, joyful, mischievous and good-natured has now disappeared with him (Figs. 22, 23, 24, 25).

Fig. 22. Morvan, poster for "Blaupunkt", 1954.

Fig. 23. Morvan, poster for "Brandt", 1955.

Fig. 24. Morvan, poster for "Radiola", 1958.
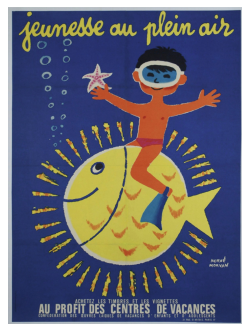
Fig. 25. Morvan, poster for "Jeunesse au plein air", 1975.

Notes

[1] Until then Morvan had basically produced a considerable amount of film posters, almost 150, as well as numerous posters for musical, dance and cabaret shows.

[2] But the two are substantially different in character: Savignac gruffer, a true French "grognard", a lover of luxury cars and comfort, he called himself a "right-wing anar-chist"; Morvan decidedly more jovial and sociable, but with a combative temperament, whimsical, close to the French communist left.

[3] Lelieur A. C., Bachollet R., *Hervé Morvan. Affichiste*, Mairie de Paris, Paris 1997, pag. 26.

[4] See Lelieur 1997, cit. Pag. 37.

[5] Although the work was reproduced in the advertising pages of numerous magazines, in posters and postcards, it was never published in poster format, much to the chagrin of the artist.

[6] Scalzo Marcello, *Riflessioni sulla grafica pubblicitaria francese nella prima metà del XX secolo*, in "*Linguaggi grafici. Illustrazione*", Publica, Alghero 2020, pag. 969.

[7] Authors of the "visual gag" are in France, in addition to Savignac and Morvan, Jean Colin, Pierre Fix-Masseau, René Ravo, the duo Lefor-Openo, André François, Jean Desaleux, Alain Gauthier and partly Bernard Villemot; in Belgium we find Rohonyi, Capouillard and Julian Key; in Italy there are Gian Rossetti, Carmelo Cremonesi, Franz Marangolo, Celestino Piatti and Armando Testa.

[8] With him moved also Léo Kouper (1926–2021) his pupil and assistant, already for some years his collaborator, who will remain with Morvan until the death of the master in 1980.

[9] In this year Morvan signed a contract with Guy De La Vasselais, a publisher, printer, and advertising agent (Lelieur 1997, cit. p. 38).

[10] Paris-Match, issue 8 July 1950.

[11] Guy De La Vasselais was a volcanic character, enterprising, of great temperament; in addition to Morvan and Kouper, over the years, graphic designers such as R. André, Ansieau, Auriac, Bertaux, J and P. Bellenger, Courchinoux, I. Demidoff, Desaleux, R. Falcucci, P. Gabor, and E. Demidoff collaborated for his "Etablissements de la Vasselais". André, Ansieau, Auriac, Bertaux, J. and P. Bellenger, Courchinoux, I. Demidoff, Desaleux, R. Falcucci, P. Gabor, E. Gaillard, A. Gauthier, G. Nicolitch, F. Saint-Géniès, R. Seguin, R. Varenne and Brenot.

[12] The S.A.F. MARTINI & ROSSI, based in PARIS, had instituted in the 50s of the last century, a Grand Prix to promote the art of advertising posters; some of the winners of the Gold Medal, in addition to Morvan, were Villemot in 1957 and 1968 and Savignac in 1964.

[13] Lelieur 1997, cit. p. 49.

[14] During his thirty years of activity, Morvan often created posters for French state-owned companies: Gas and Electricity, Air France, S.N.C.F., the "Loterie National", LOTO, and the Paris headquarters of UNICEF.

[15] Lelieur 1997, cit. p. 52.

[16] Morvan Vèronique, *Hervé Morvan - The Genius of French Poster Art*, Pie Box, Tokyo 2010, p. 11.

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