

THINKING MOUNTAINS 2012: Interdisciplinary Mountain Studies Conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, December 11-14, 2012

### **Mountains as an advertising backdrop**

Having gradually progressed from being a remote, feared wilderness to a playground for city dwellers seeking action, adventure or relaxation, the mountain world evolved around 1900 into a backdrop and key visual motif in the emerging medium of poster art. From a visual arts perspective, mountains had previously only featured as a subject of landscape painting. The staged image of mountains in poster art – typically snow-capped peaks against a blue sky – proved to be a powerful advertising vehicle and was closely linked to the development of tourism and trade in this area. From sporting goods manufacturers to service enterprises, a wide range of companies employed the topos of the mountain to promote their products.

Drawing upon a selection of posters from the 1920s and 30s, this study explores the creative means used to define a mountain aesthetic. By examining the motifs that appear alongside the mountains themselves, it considers how these affected public perception of this world, and to what extent the style of the depictions was influenced by landscape painting. This also raises the question of whether poster art can be regarded as an independent genre between fine art and commercial advertising.

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