

# Swiss poster art leads the way

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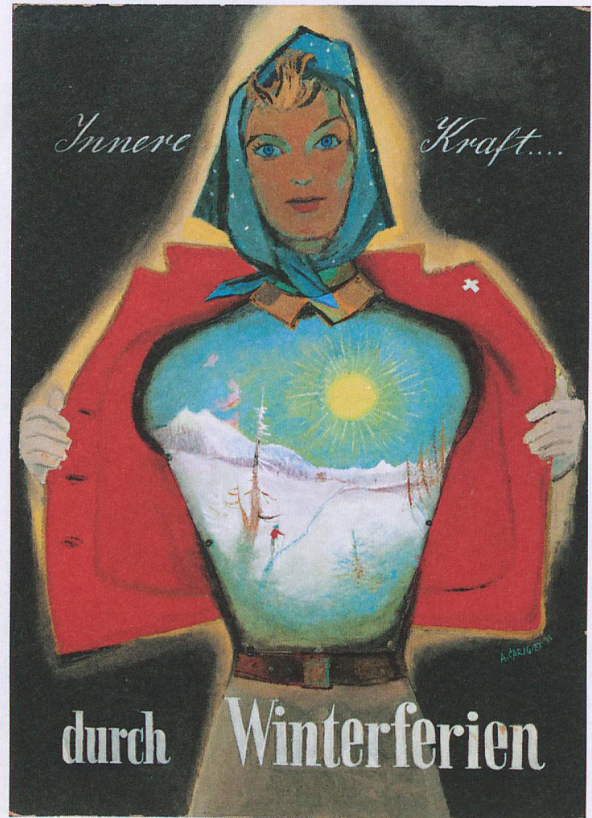
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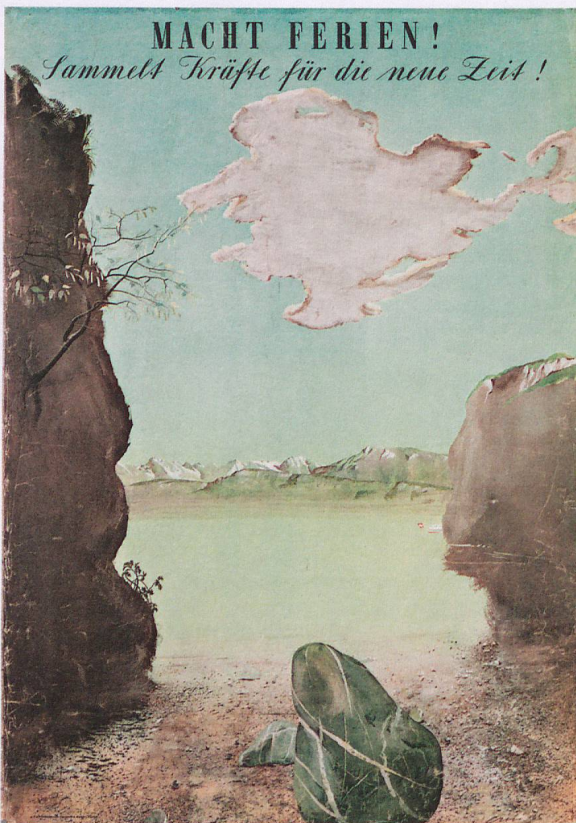
**Emil Cardinaux**

In 1920 he created the first series of posters for the SNTU – his stunning Swiss landscapes brought him recognition far beyond national borders.



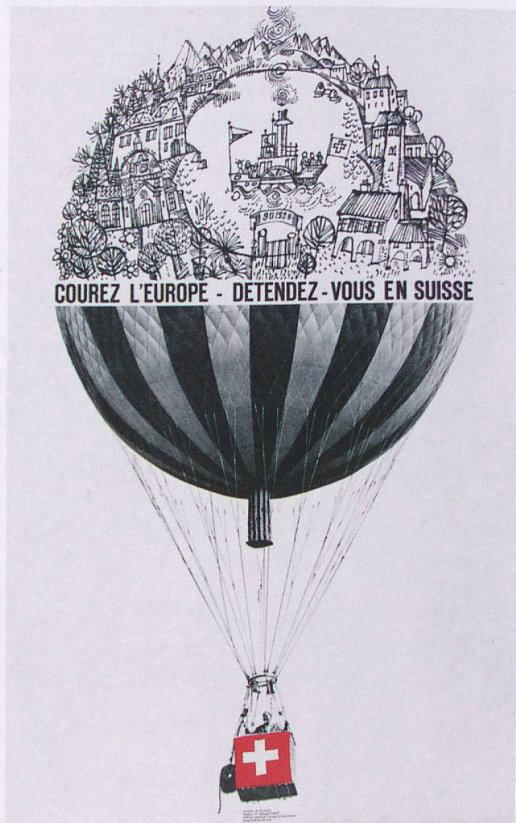
**Alois Carigiet**

The SNTU poster by graphic designer Alois Carigiet, illustrator of the famous storybook "Schellenursli", provoked wide reaction in 1941 with what appeared to be an open blouse.



**Hans Erni**

In 1944 artist Hans Erni was caught up in a scandal surrounding his "Switzerland-Soviet Union Society" poster. The following year he designed a poster for SNTU depicting a cloud, which some thought resembled the shape of the Soviet Union.



**Philipp Giegel / Hans Küchler**

In 1964 the SNTU advertised the idea of taking a break in Switzerland as part of a European tour. Giegel supplied the photography for this poster, with Küchler responsible for the design.

# Swiss poster art leads the way

World-class works of poster art have regularly captured attention since 1920 – and the SNTO has commissioned big names to produce artistic advertising posters, including Emil Cardinaux, Alois Carigiet and Herbert Leupin, who each turned out provocative ideas.

“I am deeply shocked that the director approves the publication of such an aberrant poster!” is how an outraged caller expressed himself to the tourism office receptionist on 18 December 1941. “A lady opening her blouse to show her bosom, which is even painted with a landscape! And to cap it all, she’s smiling with pleasure!”

### The finest in art and design

The enraged telephone message referred to the “Winter holidays for inner strength” poster. The scandalous piece was by no less an artist than Alois Carigiet, creator of the famous “Schellenursli” storybook. Like all the creative minds who took

up pen, brush, pencil and camera for the SNTO campaigns, this native of Graubünden was one of the best in his field, approaching the task with a provocative, pithy and uninhibited style. These skilled craftspeople have left their mark not only on the image of Switzerland as a holiday destination but also on the international reputation of Swiss graphic and design art.

The poster remains the most important and long-lasting form of national advertising well into the 21st century. If the first era of poster art was characterised by expressionist pieces, from the 1930s billboards were increasingly adorned with landscapes. Patriotic slogans such as “Swiss homeland. Powerful and dramatic” were a part of the spiritual defence of the country during World War II. From the 1980s onwards, text and snappy slogans became increasingly important, with the punchy image pre-eminent in Switzerland Tourism’s advertising language.

**Summer campaign “Take a holiday – create jobs”:** for the first time, a campaign pointed out the significance of tourism for the economy.



**The film “Everyone’s a Skier”** combined aspects of the military with tourism and was shown abroad as well as to US soldiers on holiday in Switzerland after the war. Switzerland marketed itself as an attractive winter destination.



1940

1941

1943



*Pleasure drives were banned due to fuel shortages.*

## “Artistically, Switzerland was the central reference point in graphic design for decades.”

**Christian Brändle** has been head of the Museum für Gestaltung (Design Museum) in Zurich since 2003 and is co-curator of the anniversary exhibition “Take a Holiday!” He has also worked for the Kunsthalle Basel and the Opernhaus Zurich, amongst other cultural institutions, and is a qualified architect. We talked to him about the artistic achievement of SNTO/Switzerland Tourism’s posters.



### Which is your favourite poster from Switzerland Tourism or the SNTO?

“All roads lead to Switzerland” by Herbert Matter, 1935 (see page 12). Everything that makes a good poster is here: the outstanding drama of the image, with the enormous impression of depth created by the eye’s journey from road surface to snowy summits; the striking, reduced colour choices; and, above all, a story which plays out in the viewer’s own mind. When I look at this poster I want to jump into a cabriolet and whizz down the hairpin bends. On top of this, the lighter, triangular road space forms an ideal background for producing the poster in different language versions with the red script.

### Which artist has most strongly influenced Swiss tourism posters?

Matter is certainly one, with his innovative use of photography and the collage technique. His work contributed to the recogni-

tion of Swiss graphic art, in particular in the US – a reputation that persists today. Heroes such as Burkhard Mangold, Walter Herdeg and Carlo Vivarelli have also performed absolutely pioneering work.

### What were the ingredients needed for a good tourism poster back then, and what is required today?

A good poster captures attention with attractive visuals and clever text. It awakens longings and a desire for travel. And very often, the tourism poster also evokes emotion. “I want to go there, too” or “I want to feel like that, too” are always appropriate target responses.

### How would you rate the artistic achievement of Switzerland’s tourism posters, in comparison with those from other countries?

Artistically, Switzerland was the central reference point in graphic design for decades. This power to innovate has dropped off signifi-

cantly since then – that’s regrettable, and is certainly connected with the willingness of the commissioning agency to take a risk. Today, in contrast, what I find remarkable is the striking quality of the imagery used. I would say that Switzerland is generally promoted with a twinkle in the eye and a sense of humour.

### Is the poster still significant as an advertising medium today?

The poster continues to be the most popular form of advertising. Posters are widely accepted by the public: in contrast with all the TV and billboard advertising we see, posters aren’t perceived as a nuisance. If you want to reach the widest possible audience with your message, the poster remains an excellent option. And if that poster stands out for its design, then we would take great pleasure in accepting it into our poster collection – the largest in the world!

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**Donald Brun**

The professional advertising artist Donald Brun designed the poster "Spring holidays" for the SNTO in 1945. He wrote Swiss graphic design history with his works, and in 1952 became a co-founder of the Alliance Graphique Internationale (AGI).

© The Herbert Matter Estate/Fotostiftung Schweiz



**Herbert Matter**

Herbert Matter is considered to be the founding father of the modern photographic poster, due to his innovative use of photography and the collage technique. The SNTO winter poster of 1934 is part of a permanent Matter exhibition at the MoMA, New York.

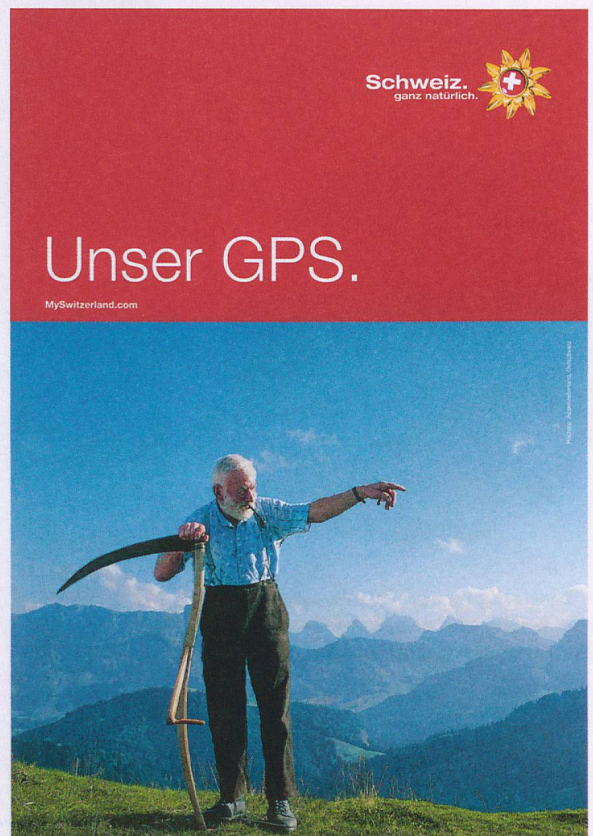
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**Herbert Leupin**

Without Leupin there would be no purple Milka cow. He primarily devoted his poster art to typical Swiss brands – including the SNTO. These posters impress first and foremost with their sense of lightness and humour.

© Switzerland Tourism



**Switzerland Tourism**

The 2006 campaign by Switzerland Tourism was created by Spillmann/Felser/Leo Burnett (SFLB). Peter Felser, who subsequently created Sebi & Paul, placed a cliché in an original context here too.