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Historic Posters Offer a Unique View into the 1920s Work Place

“Say it With Snap!” Opening Party
September 13, 2013 at Goldstein Museum of Design, Gallery 241

Can posters inspire employees to improve their work habits and increase productivity? Between 1923 and 1929, Chicago-based Mather & Company answered the needs of a rapidly changing American work force by issuing colorful posters with catchy slogans designed to cajole, coax, and even admonish employees to perform at their best. The content in these historic posters captured a moment in time not unlike our own: when changes in society and employment trends upended the relationship between workers and management.

“Say it With Snap!”: Motivating Workers by Design, 1923-1929, which opens September 14th at the Goldstein Museum of Design in Gallery 241 (at McNeal Hall on the University of Minnesota’s St. Paul campus) surveys the visual strategies and thinking behind the Mather & Company posters. The exhibition shows how the direction of the graphic messages changed over time, shifting from incentives targeting white-collar workers and their managers in the early years to a greater focus on factory workers.

Co-curator Dulce Roman sees Mather’s images as signposts of a unique kind of optimism. Such posters, she observed in a 2010 New York Times review, “reinforce the idea that life goes on in spite of great economic hardship.” She added, “I hope viewers will consider the radically different economic times experienced between the boom . . . of the 1920s and the hardship of the Depression . . . and realize that these periods are cyclical.”
The opening reception for “Say it with Snap!” will be Friday, September 13, 6-9pm at Gallery 241 in conjunction with the “Ink Link: Letterpress Mixer” (an AIGA Pivot event). Admission to the opening party is free. Light hors d’oeuvres and cash bar provided.

The “Ink Link” event is 6:30–9:00 PM in the basement level print studios in McNeal Hall. $10 general admission, students free. Registration for Ink Link at: http://register.cce.umn.edu/Course.pl?sect_key=187658 Ink Link information at: https://events.umn.edu/028665

“Say it With Snap!” is co-curated and organized by Dulce Maria Roman, Curatorial Chair and Curator of Modern Art at the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida in Gainesville; and Jon Williams, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Prints and Photographs at the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, DE. The exhibition is toured by ExhibitsUSA, a national program of Mid-America Arts Alliance. ExhibitsUSA sends more than twenty-five exhibitions on tour to more than 100 small and midsize communities every year. Mid-America is the oldest nonprofit regional arts organization in the United States. More information is available at www.maaa.org and www.eusa.org.
An automatic door is located just around the corner from the metered handicapped parking at the back of the building. Visitor drop-off/pick-up is available at the accessible Buford Avenue entrance and the accessible first entrance on the Lower Buford Circle.

Public Transit
For bus information, call (612) 373-3333 or visit http://metrotransit.org/tripplanner/

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