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**Curtain going up!**

**Collecting Broadway Posters**

SMACK DAB IN THE MIDDLE: Design Trends of the Mid-20th Century

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What do you do when the house lights come up following your very favorite movie? Well, you buy another ticket, and watch it again (like the lady from Wales, who viewed “The Sound of Music” 900-plus times.) And then you buy the DVD, for perpetual re-watching. What do you do when your favorite Broadway show closes? Not much. Live theatre is transitory: when your favorite show has one. There are window cards for the classics (“My Fair Lady,” “Phantom of the Opera”) half-masks to thumb through, souvenir showbooks are “Playbills” and what they were. At one time, New York City was home to a nest of theatrical ticket brokers, licensed to sell theatre tickets for a price. But for the true Broadway buff, the best keepsake is a “window card.” These 14” x 22” posters are slices of theatrical history; almost every show has one. There are window cards for the classics (“My Fair Lady,” “Phantom of the Opera,” “Oklahoma!”); the former-in-their-time-but-now-overlooked (“Red-head,” “Li’l Abner”); and for the out-and-out flops (“Sherry,” “Legs Diamond,” and oh, so many more.)

Window cards got their name because, in the beginning, that’s what they were. At one time, New York City was home to a nest of theatrical ticket brokers, licensed to sell theatre tickets for, essentially, whatever they could get. Agency windows were plastered with cards hawking the latest Broadway hits. Theatre memorabilia-lovers often made the rounds of the agencies, hoping to wheedle cards promoting recently-closed shows, from agents who were usually willing to oblige—for a price. And then, ticket scalping was banned in New York. Agents either closed up shop, or moved their base of operations to less stringent New Jersey, taking their window cards with them. What were theatre lovers to do? Luckily, poster specialist Roger Puckett, of NYC’s Trio-ton Gallery, persuaded printers that there was a market for window cards amongst the hordes of fans filling the city’s theatre seats. Soon, immortality was once again assured for Broadway’s good, bad, and downright ugly. Since a poster’s primary purpose is to draw in the crowds, finding the right “hook” for a show is paramount: those glowing “Cats” eyes, for instance, or the sad-faced little “Les Miserables” girl. If a star is taking center stage, then the poster had better, in some way, emphasize that.

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**Quote of the Week**

Those who expect to reap blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it.

*Thomas Paine*