

New Graphic Techniques

The advertising of an airway company linking Europe with the United States, like American Overseas Airlines, presents a practical as well as an esthetic problem. AOA were the first in this field to realize that what suited the American public was not necessarily the best adapted to European needs. In launching a special program for Europe, Mr. H. W. Bernhardt, the director of AOA advertising in London, had to take a number of factors into account. Posters, guides, and leaflets had to be designed for simultaneous use in many countries with different languages. They had to underline the distinctive features of air travel, above all its speed and the variety of services it performs. They had also to avoid all trodden paths if AOA advertising was to be easily distinguishable from that of other airlines.

The air provides the most modern form of travel. Therefore, in seeking the solution, Mr. Bernhardt looked for designs in harmony with modern trends. These he found with the talented Lewitt-Him duo, who have been working in close cooperation with him during the past year. Copy, lay-out, and designs are the subject of constant consultation between Mr. Bernhardt and Lewitt-Him, and the lively sense of partnership which they have developed is responsible for the unity of style achieved in the resulting publicity.

As so often before, the compulsion of practical requirements acted as a stimulus to creative ingenuity. The outstanding feature of work by Lewitt-Him is its imaginative quality. Most interesting is the way in which the imagination, at first cribbed and confined, proceeds to master the idea of motion. The pictorial translations of the relativity of time and space—a concept which aviation has brought down into the realms of everyday fact and experience—are explored with all the delight of new discovery. It goes a long way beyond mere illustration or caricature. It represents, in fact, a definite attempt to give pictorial form to abstract ideas. The result is achieved with a notable economy of means. The eye is never diverted from the subject by unnecessary detail. Everything in these designs, including the finely gradated coloring, helps to build up an effect which, however strong, is suggested rather than stated. The lettering is usually discreet and not allowed to upset the balance of the whole. The ideas connected with air travel are speed, saving of time, convenience and, not least, the joy of soaring into the sunlight ever-present above the clouds.

Two AOA posters illustrating the effect of air travel on the traveler's time. (SEE INSIDE BACK COVER FOR OTHER MODERN AOA POSTERS.)

(Reprinted from *Graphis 22*, by G. O. Austen.)

Airlines have compressed into a few hours journeys which formerly took days and even weeks. It is precisely this new relationship between time and distance which the artists have brought out in a series of startling contrasts.

The "shrinkage" of time is spatially illustrated by a map of the world folded and drawn tight at the center by a thread of an air route. A pocket-watch, standing upright on an airfield with air lines for hands, is elongated at one side to suggest the time gained by the air traveler. Weight too has a changed significance. The aircraft defies the laws of gravity and lifts a large packing-case over a globe which has become relatively small. The sense of motion is implied by an airliner describing a violet parabola under a starry sky through a gateway formed by the initials AOA. A shadowy projection of these initials underneath leads the eye in horizontal perspective toward the distant goal, USA.

Travel advertising is generally associated with pictures or photographs of landscapes. These designs differ in that they are applicable to air travel alone. A few carefully selected symbols convey a universally intelligible message. They show at a glance all that flight implies in altering our normal conceptions of time and space.

