

Rhetorics of power: the propaganda poster of Fascist Germany, Spain, Italy and the Soviet Union

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The visual impact of out door advertising as seen in the poster, "cut out" and bill board has been subjected to multidisciplinary research in recent times. Especially in Germany, comprehensive exhibitions have been focusing on the aesthetics of Fascist Regimes of Germany, Italy, Spain and the Soviet Union.

Posters of the early 20th century have not only been marketing products or dreams but also being manipulating Utopias varying from a range of communist, socialist, monarchist, democratic and fascist ideologies.

The objective of the research are:

1. Establishing the special iconography common to all dictators.
2. Establishing emblems and symbols of power appropriated from Imperial Rome and Nordic Myths.
3. Establishing how the images of "worker", "farmer" and "mother" become agents in hailing Socialism/ Marxism.
4. Establishing the visual markers and slogans of propaganda common to all Fascist Regimes.

Using primarily the propaganda posters from 1930 to 1945, the paper will outline how the Fascist rulers Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Franco and Josef Stalin used the medium of poster to create the Myth of the "Leader of the People" turning away from the aesthetics of the progressive avant-garde art movements of the 20th century.

In Sri Lanka large sums of money (public and private) are spent for propaganda. With the advent of digital technology a higher visual pollution is noticed in the urban landscape: In this context the analysis of propaganda becomes inevitable.

Walter Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936)

Posters can show the shift of ideologies and the rhetorics of the political leader. In the same country one can observe the shift from "extreme left" or socialist-Marxist to "extreme right" or fascist – authoritarian depending on the leader's will to demonstrate power and address hopes and fears of the viewer.

Key words: Fascism, Political indoctrination, Demonstration of power, History of commercial art, Posters

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