

THE ART OF ROCK AND ROLL

by

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On February 26, 2009, Southern New Hampshire University's McIninch Art Gallery hosted its first ever student-curated exhibition, "The Art of Rock & Roll." I am proud to say that I was the curator. Art has always played a huge part in my life. Starting at a young age, from drawing to photography, I could never get enough. In high school I could always be found in the art room, even during my free periods. Upon reaching college, I attempted to take every Fine Arts class available and by the end of senior year I have accomplished ninety-five percent of that goal. I love looking at art, gauging my reactions to it, as well as the reaction of those around me; the gasps of disgust or the murmurs of appreciation. I enjoy the historical evolution of art, where it began, how it change and how it continues to change. I also like how curious art makes me. I want to know about the artists, their inspirations and influences. I think that by looking at art someone can learn a lot about the artist, society at the time the work was created, and about one's own self.

I believe that music captures us in the same way. Music is another large part of my life. Although I don't play an instrument, I have the highest admiration for those dedicated and talented enough to do so. Any moment I can, I listen to music. I think that watching music performed live is one of the most powerful feelings someone can experience, no matter what genre the person enjoys. Music is one of the strongest ways we understand ourselves, as individuals and as a culture.

The exhibition, “The Art of Rock & Roll” combined two of my favorite art forms: music and the visual arts. Together they make a powerful subject. Many of the bands featured on the posters are still listened to today and it helped connect the generations of people who may have viewed the show. What I really wanted people to take from the show, especially my peers, was that art is not boring; it can be playful, fun, and most importantly, something to be appreciated.

To understand the art, the music, and the designers, it’s vital to look back at United States history during the 1960s, the influences from art history that played a role in poster design, and the life of the designers.

Grateful Dead band member Jerry Garcia once said, “For me, the lame part of the Sixties was the political part, the social part. The real part was the spiritual part.”<sup>1</sup> It’s hard to not agree with him when looking back at the history of the 1960s. For someone who wasn’t a part of the era or generation, I admire the free spirits, musical talents and artistic experimentation that came from that decade. But to understand the generation, and more importantly the artists who were designing the posters included in the exhibit, it’s essential to look at the historical and social aspects of that famous decade.

In the 1960s the Civil Rights movement became a serious factor in the American way of life as people once again began to focus on the importance of rights for African-Americans. The Civil Rights movement was an effort by activist groups and national

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<sup>1</sup> *Jerry Garcia* [Web site] (2009); available from [http://brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/jerry\\_garcia.html](http://brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/jerry_garcia.html); Internet; accessed 22 April 2009.

leaders to gain voting rights for African-Americans.<sup>2</sup> It also led to the desire for equality in other parts of society, such as education and careers. The early Sixties gave way to new ideas and practices when it came to protesting. One of the most popular forms of resistance was called a sit-in. The protesters of these sit ins, usually college students or other young adults, would enter a “whites only” restaurant, sit at a table or counter and politely asked to be served. The African-Americans who participated in these sit-ins demanded equal service and treatment.<sup>3</sup> Although the protests were peaceful, they were met by angry white mobs.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 helped to prohibit the kind of discrimination blacks in the sit-ins were protesting. It enforced equal treatment for African-Americans in public places. This was followed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which banned discrimination during voting registration for African-American voters.<sup>4</sup>

During the same time, African-Americans also started to be recognized and appreciated for their talents. Examples included writers, artists and athletes like the boxer Muhammad Ali. While white Americans could appreciate African-Americans on the playing field, it wasn't enough to correct the problems of a racist society.<sup>5</sup>

By the mid-Sixties, young African-Americans became progressively radicalized with their ideas and actions as they grew more impatient with the slow process of change in equality. Violent protests and riots erupted across the United States, particularly in the

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley I. Kutler, ed., *Dictionary of American History*, vol. 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003), 200.

<sup>3</sup> Allan M. Winkler, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Post War United States, 1946-1968*, Vol. IX (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Winkler, ed., 331.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

East. In the late 1960s however, a few urban riots happened in Oakland and in the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles across the Bay from San Francisco. These were probably caused by the Black Panthers, a group of African-American men created for the protection of the African-American community. They called for violence if necessary to protect their communities from police cruelty.<sup>6</sup> Malcolm X was a powerful African-American Muslim who took part in groups such as the Nation of Islam; a religious sect who wanted change in the African-American rights.<sup>7</sup> He was the cause for many other African-American rights group who believed in radical ideas instead of the peaceful actions taken by the followers of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who is now considered one of the most influential leaders in American history.<sup>8</sup>

The leaders of the Civil Rights movement represented different versions of “black power”. Gradual support broke down the non-violent attempts for equality made by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. especially after his assassination in 1968.

African-Americans were not the only group asserting their rights in the 1960s. Women yearned for the right to have the same opportunities as white men.<sup>9</sup> The idea of feminism rocked the traditional idea of women in the home. Betty Friedan’s book *The Feminine Mystique* popularized feminism. Friedan wanted women to realize their potential and not settle for the domestic life-style society portrayed as appropriate. The

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<sup>6</sup> Allan M. Winkler, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Post War United States, 1946-1968*, Vol. IX (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Nation of Islam* [Web site] (2006); available from <http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/groupProfile.asp?grpId=6600>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Allan M. Winkler, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Post War United States, 1946-1968*, Vol. IX (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley I. Kutler, ed., *Dictionary of American History*, vol. 8, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2003), 515.

Women's Liberation Movement challenged the stereotypes society created for women. They held public demonstrations; the most famous example was when the protestors threw their bras in trash cans. They also protested at the 1968 Miss America Pageant, because it exploited the contestants' bodies rather than appreciated their minds.<sup>10</sup> Society began to recognize the change as more women got divorces, entered the work force, and went on to higher education - taking control of their own lives.<sup>11</sup> Many women formed female support groups such as rape and abuse hotlines, art galleries, and health clinics. This gave a chance for women to escape the stereotypical life in the home and create an identity for themselves, independent from the men in their lives.<sup>12</sup>

There were two different types of feminists at this time; "difference" and "equality" feminists. The difference feminists believed that men and women were completely different, both anatomically and emotionally. This helped spur medical practices created specifically for women, such as the birth control pill. Equality feminists believed that men and women were equal despite anatomical differences and therefore should be treated equally, which helped women, for instance, get equal treatment in the workplace.<sup>13</sup>

Another source of controversy at this time was the war in Vietnam. After President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, Lyndon B. Johnson took office and doing

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<sup>10</sup>Donald T. Critchlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Contemporary United States, 1969-Present*, vol. X (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 114.

<sup>11</sup> Stanley I. Kutler, ed., *Dictionary of American History*, vol. 8, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003), 515.

<sup>12</sup> Kutler, ed., vol. 8, 516.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 518.

so, inherited the United States participation in the conflict.<sup>14</sup> At first Americans were in Vietnam to keep peace but after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, America became fully involved in the war. The reasoning was to prevent more attacks and violence. The sudden active involvement in the war resulted in the United States reinstating the draft. By 1968 the number of American soldiers sent to Vietnam had increased to about 40,000 a month; almost all were young men under the age of twenty-five.<sup>15</sup> The soldiers being sent overseas were sons, brothers and friends, and because of this, anti-war movements started happening across the country, many of them on college campuses. This included riots between students and police, the most famous being the Kent State University demonstration where four students were killed by National Guardsmen. The men who hadn't been called to war yet began to protest too, burning their draft cards and even fleeing to Canada.<sup>16</sup>

Other changes were happening in all areas of life in the United States as well, affecting society almost as much as the political battles. The 1960s were about the “individual's quest, not only for physical pleasure, but for intellectual, emotional, spiritual and material fulfillment.”<sup>17</sup> It was a time for change. In art, new trends began happening like Post-Painterly Abstraction which sprouted from Abstract Expressionism. Some artists involved with the movement were Ray Parker, Gene Davis and Morris Lewis. Unlike the work of Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko, Post-Painterly Abstraction artists carried out their work in a less dense way; the images were more crisp and light.

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<sup>14</sup> Allan M. Winkler, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Post War United States, 1946-1968*, vol. IX (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 308.

<sup>15</sup> Winkler, ed., 309

<sup>16</sup> Donald T. Critchlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Contemporary United States, 1969-Present*, vol. X (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 24.

<sup>17</sup> Critchlow, ed., 109.

Intense colors, patterns and shapes took over while traditional portraits became a thing of the past.<sup>18</sup> De Kooning kept abstraction in the spotlight while Jasper Johns dabbled in mixed media. Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein created Pop Art and wanted to express the idea of Americanism through their work.<sup>19</sup> Fine arts weren't the only area that began to shock people. Movies started to get more risqué, using crude language and allowing nudity, an influence that has carried over to present day generations of movie makers.<sup>20</sup> The sudden ease of the things that used to be taboo in past generation became popular with the '60s lifestyle. The first oral contraceptive was approved by the U.S Food and Drug Administration in 1960, thereby helping to promote the idea of pre-marital sex and free sexual exploration.<sup>21</sup>

The elder members of the population in the 1960s were dismayed by some of the changes but not all can be blamed on the time period. Many ideas and practices followed in the 1960s started with the Beat Generation (Beatniks) of the 1950s. The Beatniks were seen as the precursors to the "hippies". They included people like writers Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg and psychologist Timothy Leary. They later befriended people like Ken Kesey and Neal Cassady who pushed the Beatnik beliefs into the '60s, creating the counterculture, better known as the "hippies".<sup>22</sup> This counterculture represented America's youth's loss of faith in the United States. Most of these "hippies" were young

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<sup>18</sup> *Post-painterly Abstraction* [Web site] (2009); available from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-painterly\\_Abstraction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-painterly_Abstraction); Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Allan M. Winkler, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Post War United States, 1946-1968*, vol. IX (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 20.

<sup>20</sup> Donald T. Critchlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Contemporary United States, 1969-Present*, vol. X (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 239.

<sup>21</sup> Allan M. Winkler, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Post War United States, 1946-1968*, vol. IX (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 332.

<sup>22</sup> Winkler, ed., 35.



white, educated citizens who experimented freely with sex and drugs. Kerouac's novel *On the Road* was a large influence to the hippies' way of life. In 1967 thousands of hippies flooded the San Francisco area. Filled with marijuana, hallucinogens, nudism, long hair and rock 'n' roll, the summer months of '67 became known as the Summer of Love.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most significant things during the '60s and the counterculture was the heightened use of drugs, specifically hallucinogens like LSD. It was Beatniks like Ginsberg and Leary who helped start the trend and newer influences like Kesey who popularized it. Leary, who had been a Harvard psychologist, was fired because he and Ginsberg performed hallucinogen research with students, but calling them drug parties would be a more accurate description. In California Kesey experimented with LSD as well. He and his band the "Merry Pranksters" held LSD events called "Acid Tests". Bands like the Grateful Dead got their start at the "Acid Tests", jamming on their instruments for hours, creating new music and songs to go along with how the drugs made them feel. These events became the center of the new psychedelic movement. The Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in San Francisco became the unofficial hippie capital. Everyone, from college students to musicians, was taking LSD. By the end of '66 however, LSD became illegal after the startling number of "bad trips" that sent experimenting Americans to emergency rooms. It became known as the "LSD Epidemic". Even though the drug was illegal, this didn't stop people from selling or using

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<sup>23</sup> Allan M. Winkler, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Post War United States, 1946-1968*, vol. IX (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 71-2.

it.<sup>24</sup> Many bands had enough influence in the 60s to promote drug use. Jefferson Airplane, one of the most famous psychedelic rock bands, mixed music and hallucinogenic drugs. Their song “White Rabbit” seems to be an obvious tribute to the drugs they experimented with.<sup>25</sup>

When thinking of the 1960s it’s hard for a modern reader not to associate the decade to music. Bands particularly popular at the time included the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, The Grateful Dead and Jimi Hendrix. Lyrics were often filled with political messages about controversial problems like race, gender and anti-war movements.<sup>26</sup> One of the greatest events to take place was in August of ’69, the biggest “hippie” gathering of its time, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair, better known simply as “Woodstock”. The event included musicians from all over, like the Who, the Grateful Dead and Creedence Clearwater Revival. The concert was only expected to have a certain number of people attending but because no boundaries were built around the farm where Woodstock was held, the number of attendees exploded; many got to watch the show for free. The concert was advertised as “Three Days of Peace and Music” to link it to the anti-war movement. Although there was a shocking amount of people there, surprisingly no violence was reported.<sup>27</sup>

During the 1960s rock and roll poster art began to appear, especially on the West Coast. These posters worked during their time period. The lifestyle in the 1960s in San

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<sup>24</sup> Allan M. Winkler, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Post War United States, 1946-1968*, vol. IX (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 183-4.

<sup>25</sup> Winkler, ed., 218.

<sup>26</sup> Donald T. Critchlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History: Contemporary United States, 1969-Present*, vol. X (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 201-2.

<sup>27</sup> Critchlow, ed., 321.

Francisco was laidback and slow-paced. The brightly colored images and intense designs easily caught the attention of most pedestrians. The illicit drug use of people in those days, particularly those involved in the music scene, helped heighten the appreciation of the posters. One of the artists included in my exhibition, Alton Kelley, once said, “It couldn’t have happened in L.A.” The reason? There was a difference in cultures. San Francisco was the yin to L.A.’s yang. While people in San Francisco strolled the streets, taking in the sights and sounds, L.A.’s citizens were always in a rush, caught up in the hustle and bustle of the city, driving in their cars instead of traveling by foot.<sup>28</sup>

The three men featured in the exhibition who really began to influence artists and designers, not only with their inventive ways of advertising but also with their appreciation of music and the lifestyle of the 1960s and beyond, were Alton Kelley, Stanley Mouse and Rick Griffin. Their efforts, whether combined or individual, helped define a generation.

Alton Kelley grew up far from the warmth and crowds of California. He was born in Houlton, Maine in 1940. Although he did attend art school for a while in Connecticut, majoring in industrial design, he eventually dropped out to move west. Kelley traveled to many states before he made San Francisco his permanent residence in 1971. During 1970, Kelley began to use repetitive colors, mainly yellow, blue, black and red, showing a possible influence from artist Piet Mondrian who typically worked only with those same colors. Kelley was the founder of Family Dog, along with three other friends. It was a group which organized the first rock and roll dances. After some of his partners left,

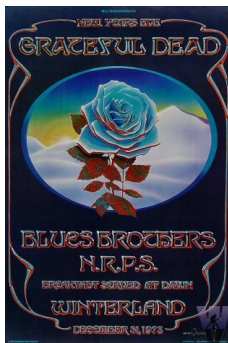
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<sup>28</sup>Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley, *Mouse & Kelley* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), 8.

Stanley Mouse joined in the group. Kelley at first was the art director while Mouse would finish the works. The two met Rick Griffin in 1968 when they were asked to display their work in the famous “Joint Show” at the Moore Gallery. They also made the poster advertising the show. Curiously enough, Kelley’s name is spelled wrong on the poster. Most likely this was done for fun by Kelley and Mouse, as they like to add inside jokes and humor to their work. After the show, Family Dog began to get commissions for album art, the most well known being the Grateful Dead album from 1978.<sup>29</sup>

Stanley Mouse was born in California in 1940. He moved away from the Golden State to Detroit in 1942 where he spent the rest of his childhood. He also went to art school, majoring in the Fine Arts, but he dropped out in 1964 and in 1965 moved back to California. He, like Kelley, also traveled a lot, including to London, before settling down for good in the San Francisco Bay area. He continued to work alongside Kelley for the majority of his career.<sup>30</sup>

Kelley and Mouse, who met in 1966, found much inspiration in early works of



Art Nouveau, often using earthy colors, flowing lines and free forms. The more experienced they got however, the more diverse their designs became. Some of the design they used in their art were images from past artists, old movies and comic books. They didn’t consider it plagiarism, instead thinking of it more as creating a sense

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<sup>29</sup> Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley, *Mouse & Kelley* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), 8-13.

<sup>30</sup> Mouse and Kelley, 8-13.

\*Image: *Grateful Dead Poster (Winterland)* [Web site] (1978); available from <http://www.wolfgangsvault.com/dt/grateful-dead-poster/WIN781231-PO.html>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2009.

of nostalgia. The two men also took time to create art for themselves. Kelley was a big fan of making collages while Mouse would sell painted t-shirts and also airbrushed designs on cars.<sup>31</sup>

The works of art done by Kelley and Mouse were always attention grabbing. The fonts and lettering they used were usually intense so that people would have to stop and take time to decipher and read them. The designs were also intricate. It's easy to see the artistic qualities in their work, such as shading used in some pieces and also the use of lights and darks. In some posters they used primitive images, such as plain shapes, to create a more complicated design. Most of the work the two made included the Family Dog logo. Although they made ads for a lot of different projects, a majority of those were at the Avalon Ballroom, which was very famous at the time for holding rock and roll dances.<sup>32</sup>

The collaboration and workmanship of Mouse and Kelley influenced another famous poster artist, Rick Griffin. Griffin was born in California in 1944. As a teenager he caught surf fever and throughout high school he would draw surf scenes and cartoons. After high school, he followed his passion and began working at a surf magazine producing comic strips. Later on he would contribute a large amount of work to the underground comic culture. He also had a passion for music and belonged to a group called the Jook Savages. Griffin and the band were one of the many acts at Ken Kesey's "Acid Test" events, getting them involved in the Haight-Ashbury lifestyle.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley, *Mouse & Kelley* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), 8-13.

<sup>32</sup> Mouse and Kelley, 8-13.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon McClelland, *Rick Griffin* (Surry: Paper Tiger, 1980), 4-5.

After moving to San Francisco with the band and discovering poster art done by Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley, Griffin decided to give designing a shot. His talent and posters caught the attention of music promoter, Billy Graham and the members of Family Dog (where he met Kelley and Mouse). Griffin began to get commissioned for his work.<sup>34</sup> Not only did he create iconic designs, many for the Grateful Dead and other



bands, but he continued to work on his comics and other art. The original magazine title head and logo for the notorious “Rolling Stone” magazine is probably his most well known design.<sup>35</sup>

Later in his life Griffin re-discovered his faith and created some religious images along with his other work.<sup>36</sup> He continued to dabble in the arts until 1991, when he was killed in a tragic motorcycle accident.<sup>37</sup>

Although Kelley, Mouse, and even Griffin, are considered to be the icons of the psychedelic poster art movement, they weren’t the only ones creating beautiful and exciting works of art. Their influences blazed the trail for many others that followed like, Randy Tuten, Bob Masse, Gary Houston, Mark Arminski and Michael Everett, to name just a few.

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<sup>34</sup> *Rick Griffin: Biography* [Web site] (2007); available from <http://www.rickgriffinink.com/rickgriffinink.php?title=biography>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.

\*Image: *Rolling Stone Magazine Handbill* [Web site] (1967); available from <http://www.wolfgangsvault.com/dt/rolling-stone-magazine-handbill/ZZZ007372-HB.html>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Gordon McClelland, *Rick Griffin* (Surry: Paper Tiger, 1980), 16.

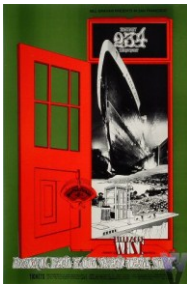
<sup>36</sup> McClelland, 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Rick Griffin: Biography* [Web site] (2007); available from <http://www.rickgriffinink.com/rickgriffinink.php?title=biography>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.

Randy Tuten was born and raised in California. As a teenager he dabbled in the arts, doodling during class and catching the attention of his teachers. In the mid-Sixties he would hitchhike between Los Angeles and San Francisco, experimenting with drugs along the way. In his visits to San Francisco he saw the work done by Alton Kelley, Stanley Mouse and Rick Griffin. Tuten said the work by those three men was the reason he moved to San Francisco. Although he thought that Kelley and Mouse's posters were visually pleasing and artistically skillful, Griffin's influenced him the most.<sup>38</sup>

Tuten didn't get his break until Bill Graham gave him the chance in 1969. At this time, he had already been turned down by the Avalon Ballroom so when Graham gave Tuten an opportunity, his career swung into gear. He lived and worked in San Francisco until 1980 when he moved to Northern California. Tuten moved back to the San Francisco Bay area however in 1989 where he still lives to this day.<sup>39</sup>

Unlike many other poster artists of his time, Tuten didn't try to include hidden messages or emotions into his work. He said, "There really isn't any heavy meaning in my posters. What I did graphically was a combination of what I liked and what fit." He worked heavily with fonts and experimenting with typography. Many of his posters showed influence from the Art Deco era.<sup>40</sup>



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<sup>38</sup> *Artist Profile: R. Tuten* [Web site] (2005); available from <http://www.randytuten.com/>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.

<sup>39</sup> *Artist Profile: R. Tuten*

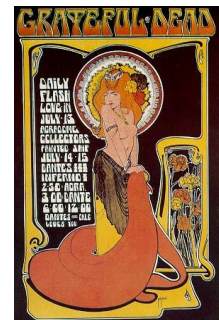
\*Image: *Grateful Dead (Fillmore West)* [Web site] (1969); available from <http://www.wolfgangsvault.com/dt/grateful-dead-poster/BG154-PO.html>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2009.

<sup>40</sup> *Artist Profile: R. Tuten* [Web site] (2005); available from <http://www.randytuten.com/>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.

Tuten worked with Bill Graham and The Fillmore for five decades. It is impossible to think of the history of San Francisco poster art without including Randy Tuten. He is still working on poster art to this day creating advertisements for musicians such as Death Cab for Cutie, James Taylor, My Morning Jacket and Slightly Stoopid.<sup>41</sup>

Another notable artist during the 1960s was Canadian Bob Masse. He began creating poster art while at art school in Vancouver. He would barter his artistic skills with musical acts that came into town, asking in return for the posters free tickets to the show and a chance to meet the musicians, amongst other things.<sup>42</sup>

He was not only influenced by the art and music scene of California in the 1960s, but also by a deeper art historical period and style, Art Nouveau. Like other poster greats, he would incorporate many themes used by Art Nouveau artists, especially Alphonse Mucha, into his work. Masse, however, added his own personal touches such as using brighter and bolder colors. He is still creating posters for modern artists like Alanis Morissette and Hootie and the Blowfish.<sup>43</sup>



A more contemporary poster artist is Mark Arminski. He became interested in the arts at a young age when his mother would bring him to the Detroit Institute of Art. He followed his passion throughout all of his academic years.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Artist Profile: R. Tuten* [Web site] (2005); available from <http://www.randytuten.com/>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.

<sup>42</sup> *Bob Masse: A Brief Bio* [Web site] (2008); available from <http://bmasse.com/who.html>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.

\*Image: *Grateful Dead (Handbill)* [Web site] (1967); available from <http://bmasse.com/Images/dead.jpg>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2009.

<sup>43</sup> *Bob Masse: A Brief Bio* [Web site] (2008); available from <http://bmasse.com/who.html>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.



In the 1980s Arminski started working with printmaking for the first time and by the 1990s he was designing posters for musical acts and other events. Currently he is still working. Arminski isn't limited to posters however; he also worked on CD covers, paintings and even commercials.<sup>45</sup>

Michael Everett is the newest artist featured in the "Art of Rock & Roll" exhibition. He attended his first rock concert in 1984. He wondered if he could combine his artistic talent with the music industry. In 1995 he got his answer. He was commissioned to design a Grateful Dead tour poster. It was eventually reprinted and hung in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Sadly, one of the posters he designed for the 1995 tour was never officially used because of the death of Grateful Dead band member Jerry Garcia.<sup>46</sup>



Everett also worked with festival posters, album covers and designs for t-shirts but he is most well-known for his posters. Besides the Grateful Dead, he has designed work for many other artists such as Ziggy Marley and Steely Dan. Everett is still working as an artist to this day in San Francisco.<sup>47</sup>

Gary Houston was another talented designer included in the exhibit. His work also showed a lot of influence from Art Nouveau. He is still creating posters for artists

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<sup>44</sup> *Mark Arminski Biography* [Web site] available from <http://arminski.com/bio/index.php>; Internet; accessed 30 March 2009.

<sup>45</sup> *Mark Arminski Biography*

\*Image: *The Other Ones Poster* [Web site] (2003); available from <http://www.wolfgangsvault.com/dt/the-other-ones-poster/ZZZ006593-PO.html>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2009.

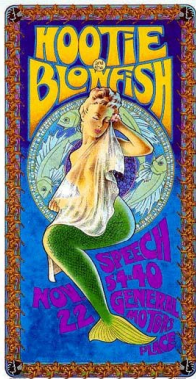
<sup>46</sup> *Supporters – Artists* [Web site] (2007); available from <http://www.consciousalliance.org/supporters.artists.htm>; Internet; accessed 13 April 2009.

<sup>47</sup> *Supporters – Artists*

today. It is this group of second generation artists who have kept the tradition of rock and roll art going and continue to follow it to this day.

To truly appreciate the art these designers created it's important to look at past art movements which sparked their influence. Although it's easy to see that the posters from contemporary times range in variety of inspirations, the most important to pay attention to is Art Nouveau which truly popularized the poster as a fine art medium. This trend was followed by Art Deco, who has ties with poster art as well.

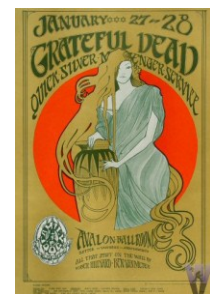
Art Nouveau (French for "new art") first appeared near the beginning of the



1900s. Its concern was mostly with architecture and design. Within Art Nouveau works, one could see organic themes, erotic tones, looping forms, natural colors, extravagant text and swirling lines. The posters seen in the exhibit "The Art of Rock & Roll" inherit many of Art Nouveau's themes only using brighter, bolder colors, such as Bob

Masse's Hootie and the Blowfish poster from the 1990s.<sup>48</sup>

Some of the favored motifs of the movement were sensual forms of women, flowers and foliage. Common used flowers included but were not limited to; Lilies, Ferns and Irises. Vines were also popular because of their twisting, flowing visual style. Since the lines



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\*Image: *Hootie & the Blowfish* [Web site] (1990s); available from <http://bmasse.com/Images/hootie.jpg>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2009.

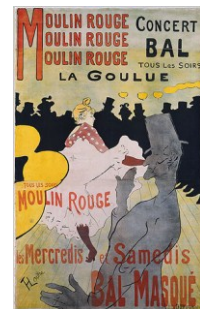
<sup>48</sup> Bevis Hillier, *The Style of the Century: 1900-1980* (New York: E.P. Dutton, INC., 1983), 206.

\*Image: *Grateful Dead (Avalon Ballroom)* [Web site] (1967); available from <http://www.wolfgangsvault.com/dt/grateful-dead-poster/FD045-PO.html>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2009.

of the vines were so aesthetically pleasing, most of the women depicted in the posters had long flowing hair, imitating the natural look of the foliage. Again, this connection can be seen with the posters from the 1960s in the Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley collaboration from 1967 called the “Red Lady” (seen on the previous page).<sup>49</sup>

Because of the nature themes seen in Art Nouveau style, many people tried to make connections between that and the style of Impressionistic work. While both movements dealt with nature and its beauty, Impressionism was more about light, landscapes and the way nature affect the artist while he or she was in it. Art Nouveau artists and designers were dubbed “Abstract Naturalists.” They found their inspiration from nature and tried to incorporate its natural themes into their work.<sup>50</sup>

In France during the late 1800s, artist Pierre Bonnard began experimenting with lithography and started developing posters. Although Bonnard preceded Henri Marie Raymond De Toulouse-Lautrec, it was Toulouse-Lautrec who formalized posters as a major art form. Toulouse-Lautrec was inspired by Edgar Degas and also by the similar things that inspired Degas, like society’s lower class for instance. Other influences seen in his work came from eastern cultures like Japan. Toulouse-Lautrec is probably



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<sup>49</sup> Bernard Champigneulle, *Art Nouveau*, trans. Benita Eisler (Woodbury, NY: Barron’s Educational Series, 1976), 90.

<sup>50</sup> Champigneulle, 19.

\*Image: *Moulin Rouge: La Goulue* [Web site] (1891); available from [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/images/h2/h2\\_32.88.12.jpg](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/images/h2/h2_32.88.12.jpg); Internet; accessed 20 April 2009.

the greatest designer to this day. One example of his most notorious work is the poster “Moulin-Rouge La Goulue” (seen on the previous page).<sup>51</sup>

Another influential designer during the Art Nouveau movement was Alphonse Mucha. Bob Masse of the 1960s class of designers openly calls Mucha one of his biggest influences as I’m sure many other contemporary designers would as well. Mucha started



out his career as a history painter. He got into the medium of posters when he was commissioned by chance to design a poster to advertise a play.<sup>52</sup> He is most famous for his advertisements, especially those for Job cigarettes.

Art Nouveau became a popular movement in America thanks to Louis Comfort Tiffany. He worked with Bonnard and Toulouse-Lautrec who both made designs for him, which he turned into his famous stained glass-ware such as lamps, bowls, and windows.<sup>53</sup> However, it was Will Bradley and Louis Reed who were the first designers to make use of Art Nouveau posters in America. They both were influenced by the work of the European artist like Mucha, using such trends as thick, bold outlines to catch the viewer’s eye.<sup>54</sup>

The Art Nouveau posters’ goal was to attract the attention of passersby, much like the goal of the rock ‘n’ roll poster of the 1960s and ‘70s. It was because of Art Nouveau

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<sup>51</sup> David Piper, *The Illustrated History of Art* (London: Bounty Books, 2004), 369.

<sup>52</sup> Bernard Champigneulle, *Art Nouveau*, trans. Benita Eisler (Woodbury, NY: Barron’s Educational Series, 1976), 253.

\*Image: *Job Cigarette Advertisement* [Web site] (1896); available from [www.artinthepicture.com/.../Alphonse\\_Mucha/Job/](http://www.artinthepicture.com/.../Alphonse_Mucha/Job/); Internet; accessed 29 April 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Amy Dempsey, *Art in the Modern Era* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), 36-7.

<sup>54</sup> Roberta Wong, “Introduction,” introduction in *American Poster of the Nineties* (Lunenburg, VT: Stinehour Press, 1974), 72.

that artists immediately accepted posters as a worthy way to create art. The artists responded to the Art Nouveau movement much better than critics who were more judgmental. Besides just being a respectable art form, the posters were discovered to be an effective way of marketing, showing fashion and new attitudes toward society.<sup>55</sup>

While doing research on the Art Nouveau movement, I saw many people claim that Art Nouveau was short lived. While I agree the period of Art Nouveau style may have been short, its influences can still be seen to this day. The rise in Art Nouveau influence during the 1960s may have begun in 1963 when a few Art Nouveau exhibitions, including one focusing on Mucha, were held in London.<sup>56</sup>

Although it was not as influential, Art Deco played a role in some of the posters history. At times it was considered to be the antithesis of Art Nouveau but it really had some similarities to the other style. For example, both had an appreciation for simple, geometric forms. Art Deco used bold, brighter, metallic colors than Art Nouveau however and inspiration was found from ancient civilizations and tribal art, like Egyptian and Mexican art. The movement began in France and when it began to decline there in popularity, it spread to the United States. It was a trendy architectural style and can still be admired today in buildings like New York City's Chrysler building. When it came to visual arts, Art Deco's most famous poster designer was Adolphe Jean Marie Mouron who was also known as Cassandre.<sup>57</sup> Although it wasn't as prominently found in the posters feature in "The Art of Rock & Roll", Art Deco had some influence in the

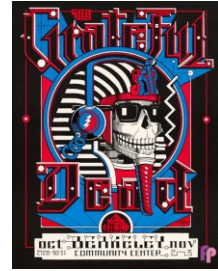
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<sup>55</sup> Bernard Champigneulle, *Art Nouveau*, trans. Benita Eisler (Woodbury, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 1976), 247-50.

<sup>56</sup> Bevis Hillier, *The Style of the Century: 1900-1980* (New York: E.P. Dutton, INC., 1983), 209

<sup>57</sup> Amy Dempsey, *Art in the Modern Era* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), 136-9.

designers. There are hints of the style in Rick Griffin's Egyptian themed poster for the 1984 Grateful Dead show at Berkley Community. During the 1980s Art Deco began to make a comeback, especially in the graphic arts.<sup>58</sup>



Because poster art is so adaptable to change, it has evolved with the times and continues to be a part of today's culture. Although printing and designing technique have become more modernized, there is a heightened appreciation of the artwork done in the past. Luckily poster art is still popular and accessible today. This was one of the reasons I took the opportunity to curate an exhibition using rock and roll posters. And also, as previously mentioned, the visual arts have always played a large part in my life. I've known since a very young age that I needed to be in very close contact to art for the rest of my life.

It was for this reason that I applied for a job at the McIninch Art Gallery the fall of 2005, my freshman year here at Southern New Hampshire University. Not only did the job sound enjoyable but I was also excited about the opportunity to be exposed to all sorts of artists and mediums. At this same time, I was adjusting to my life as a college student, trying to figure out a major and what I wanted to do. After considering transferring, I decided to stay in Manchester and luckily was informed by my advisor at the time, Richard Colfer, of a way I could continue to study art and also graduate with a Bachelor's

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<sup>58</sup> *Art Deco* [Web site] (2009); available from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art\\_Deco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Deco); Internet. accessed 27 April 2009.

\*Image: *Grateful Dead (Berkley College)* [Web site] (1984); accessed from <http://www.fillmoreposter.com/description.php?id=7&catnum=BCT.1984.10.27>; Internet; accessed 28 April 2009.

Degree. Deep within the depths of the Southern New Hampshire University's course catalog was a fairly unknown and untouched major described as an Individually Designed Major in Liberal Arts. With the combined efforts of both Richard Colfer and my new advisor, Nicholas Hunt-Bull, I began to put together a perfect major designed specifically for my interests while also satisfying all the university's requirements. By the end of my sophomore year, I felt things were beginning to fall into place.

My happiness with the major quickly subsided when I learned that I'd have to write a forty to sixty page thesis paper. Where would I find, I wondered, a topic that I would find that interesting and informative?

Meanwhile, changes were happening at the art gallery as well. Debbie Disston was hired as the new director of McIninch Art Gallery. Her goal was to try and get the students who worked at the gallery more involved with the process of setting up exhibitions. Through discussions with Richard Colfer, she learned of his impressive collection of rock and roll concert posters. After some conversations with Debbie and discussing my major with her, she and Richard approached me with an idea; I should use Richard's posters and with Debbie's help, curate an exhibition in the gallery. This would also act as a type of senior project for me and my thesis paper would be written to go along with it. Since my interests in art and music would both be touched upon, I immediately became interested. The idea didn't become definite however, until spring semester of my junior year. The first official meeting we had regarding the exhibition was March 18, 2008. Richard, Debbie and I discussed the steps I'd need to take, topics to research, and artists to focus on, just some basic ideas for me to get the ball rolling.

Although I was very excited by the opportunity, I was also extremely nervous. Since I would be the first student to curate an exhibition, I felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility to create the perfect show. I felt as if it were a make or break situation; either I would successfully demonstrate the beauty and talent that the posters possessed or I would fail and the exhibition would not get the appreciation I hoped. I often thought of backing out of the project and trying to find an easier way to fulfill the graduation requirements for my major but in the end I was determined to succeed in creating a well-thought and visually pleasing exposition. Since I was so uneasy with the process and anxious, it took a while for me to feel passionate about it.

At the end of the 2008 school year, I saw Richard Colfer's collection for the first time. This helped spark my excitement. The posters were beautiful, bold and impressive. Originally I was presented with thirty-four pieces of work to choose from, ranging from hand bills to posters to backstage passes. Over the months before the exhibition opened, Richard brought in more of his collection. The first day I saw the work however, I spent a few tedious hours with the collection, taking photographs of all the pieces, measuring them, and documenting the dates and artists.

Over the summer between junior and senior year I began to read a little about the artists, focusing mostly on Alton Kelley, Stanley Mouse and Rick Griffin. I took notes, made connections between their past and more recent work, and tried to get a feel for what I'd be working with when it came to writing my thesis paper. From the start I felt a kinship to Kelley because, like me, he spent his childhood in central Maine. In a sad coincidence, Kelley passed away the summer of 2008, when I was just beginning my



research about him. At this same time I was also reading a book by Grateful Dead musician, Phil Lesh. Since the band was a central part of the psychedelic rock movement and had a connection to the poster designers, I thought reading about the band and its journey to popularity would give me a sense of what was happening during the 1960s on the West Coast. It became fun for me to make connections between Lesh's life in the San Francisco Bay area and the things I was finding out about the designers like Rick Griffin during my research.

On October 14, 2008, during the first semester of my senior and final year at Southern New Hampshire University, I had another meeting with gallery director Debbie Disston and collection owner, Richard Colfer. This meeting brought up the seriousness of the exhibition. I needed to decide what my main purpose of showing the poster art was, which posters I was going to include and why, and what direction I wanted to take my paper in. Needless to say, I only felt more overwhelmed after the meeting. One aspect of the meeting however really helped organize my thought and plans. With Debbie's help, I created a timeline for when things needed to be done.

- 7 weeks before: postcards designed by the Marketing department need to be sent out
- Five weeks before: press release must be written
- Four weeks before: make final selections of posters and bring them to the framers (E.W. Poore in Manchester). At this time I should also be thinking about the layout of the posters in the gallery and what I want the text panels to say.
- One week before: lay out the show, hang the posters and text panels

It seemed to me that so much needed to be done in such a short time, along with finishing my thesis paper and attending regular classes. Working at the art gallery allowed me to get a lot of work done for the show. The postcards were created by the Marketing department and came out beautifully. The gallery assistants, including myself, were in charge of labeling and preparing the postcards to be mailed. The next step for me was writing the press release. It took me a few tries to get it right and on February 2, 2009, the press release was published. The following is the document that appeared on the university website:

Southern New Hampshire University will present “The Art of Rock and Roll,” from February 26<sup>th</sup> through April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009. An opening reception will be held from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, in Robert Frost Hall. Music will be provided by three bands organized by Professor, Rick Cook.

Posters, concert programs and record albums elevated the electric creativity of rock ‘n’ roll in the 1960s. Graphic designers from the San Francisco Bay area and Detroit dominated the design market of that time. A private collection from the period’s most notable artists, Stanley Mouse, Rick Griffin, Randy Tuten and Mark Arminski are some who will be represented in this exhibition. Others included will be Bob Masse, Gary Houston and Michael Everett. Curated by Susan Kovach, SNHU senior.

The lifestyle and music of the 1960s in the San Francisco Bay area was portrayed with skill and dedication by some of the decade’s most talented artists. People like Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley forever changed the way advertisements would be made. They reached back into the depths of art history, borrowing designs from movements such as art nouveau and art deco, also using influences from Egypt, Asia, and even other artists such as Mondrian. Not only were the posters made to advertise upcoming events and musicians on the rise, they also popularized the use of graphic design.

Susan Kovach is an independent major with a concentration in art history. She is one of the first with this major and also the first SNHU student to curate an exhibition for the McIninch Art Gallery.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Press Release: The Art of Rock and Roll* [Web site] (2009); available from <http://www.snhu.edu/8417.asp>; Internet; accessed 2 February 2009.

Shortly after the press release was made public, I was contacted through Debbie by a reporter, Heidi, from the Hippo Press of Southern New Hampshire who wanted to do a short interview with me about the exhibition. I was very excited about her interest in the exhibition because I've always enjoyed reading the Hippo when I had the opportunity to pick it up. I was also nervous however, because it was my first interview of this kind and I didn't want to say the wrong thing. Luckily it went smoothly and the article ran on February 26<sup>th</sup>, the same day as the opening reception.

On the January 27, Debbie and I went to E.W. Poore, the framing business in



Manchester to drop off the works of art I had selected. I decided the best way to hang the posters would be by hanging the posters with “L” hooks in between glass and foam board.<sup>60</sup> Not only would it look aesthetically pleasing, it was also less expensive

than other methods. Some of the posters Richard Colfer had loaned me were already in attractive wood frames and those were left that way for the show. Debbie and I started to hang the exhibition a week before it opened to the public. The first day we attempted to work on it, I had a fever and wasn't able to continue to work. The following day I was feeling much healthier and more motivated to get started. After each poster was hung, I felt a burden was being lifted from my shoulders. We finished hanging all the art work on

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<sup>60</sup> Hanging the piece of work 2/23/09 (personal photograph)

Monday, February 23. On the same day I also had to set up the backstage passes I was using from Grateful Dead shows on a variety of pedestals. Three of these pedestals were included in the exhibition, each holding numerous tickets or passes. This was my favorite part of the process. Not only was it stress-relieving to finish, but it was also fulfilling to see the outcome of all my hard work.

Two days before the opening reception I concentrated on writing informative text panels for the exhibition and wall tags for certain pieces. Although both may sound simple to do, they actually took a lot of work. Many of the posters were unsigned or not dated so I had to research who create the posters and when. For this task I used a few websites, like Wolfgang's Vault, the official Grateful Dead site (since many of the posters were created for the band), and from some of the designers homepages. After finding all the information I needed, I broke the exhibition down into seven text panels. The first was describing the whole show; what I was attempting to do with the show and a little background of the 1960s. Another text panel was hung near a selection of other media styles like handbills, backstage passes and record covers. This described how the art wasn't limited to only the poster-sized advertisements. A few artists in the exhibition got their own text panels such as Rick Griffin, Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley, and Randy Tuten. Another text panel was dedicated to those posters who found their influence in the Art Nouveau style. The last touched upon the influence the first poster designers of the 1960s had on up and coming designers. I also wanted to think of something to say if I was asked to speak during the opening reception, which I was hoping I wouldn't have to do since I was anxious enough about the exhibition already.

The opening reception went better than I could have hoped.<sup>61</sup> Three student bands played, food and drinks were offered and a large crowd of people attended. I also got a lot of positive feedback from those who saw the show, just not the opening night, but also during the many weeks it was displayed. I was overwhelmed and extremely proud by the success of the show.



The exhibition was displayed until April 4, 2009. Sad to say, it was a lot easier and quicker to take down than it was to hang the show. After each piece was removed I became a little more emotional. I had grown attached to my exhibition and enjoyed being connected to such a great opportunity.

While in the process of writing this, it has become interesting for me to look back upon the whole journey I've had to get to this point; from changing majors, to beginning the research, to the actual opening reception of the show. I've learned a lot from the experience, not just about art but also about the work that goes into curating an exhibition, even one for a small gallery like the McIninch. I admire those curators who plan out large events at famous museums such as the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, or even the Louvre. A lot of time, dedication and patience goes into the preparation and set up. It's ironic, right now, at the same time that my exhibition, "the Art of Rock and Roll" was being shown, a similar and much larger exhibition was being shown at the Denver Museum of Art, "The Psychedelic Experience: Rock Posters from the San Francisco Bay Area, 1965-71". It makes me happy that other people recognize the talent and skill it

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<sup>61</sup> Richard Colfer (center) and viewers at the opening reception 02/26/09 (personal photograph)

takes to create one of the fabulous posters created by the likes of Stanley Mouse or Randy Tuten. It's also important to note that many of the designers featured in the exhibitions are still creating art to this day and they should be honored for their gift of design. There are also many companies that create posters for musicians to this day. Although many of the practices have changed since the 1960s, instead of using a lithograph designers use computers, the same design elements and dedication are there. I hope that people who saw my exhibition, and even the one that's being shown in Denver, become aware of how close-knit art can be to our everyday lives and found a sense of appreciation for it. For the younger audience who may have seen the show, I hope it gives them an idea about the type of world their parents lived in and the impact the poster designers from the past have on the designers who created posters for bands my generation listens to. I also hope that the show gives the more mature audience who saw it a reminder of their youth and the music from their generation. I guess in a small way I was hoping the exhibition would bridge the generation gap when it came to the understanding and appreciating art and music. It's obvious to me that although at the time the rock and roll posters were being created, they almost seemed valueless because of the way they were carelessly hung all over cities and handed out to pedestrians. Now they have become a valuable and much sought after art form.

As my time as a student at Southern New Hampshire University comes to a close, I can't help but think about where the future might take me. I hope that whatever path I may choose after graduation, it will be a path that will always lead me back to art. My goal is to find a career where I can help others find an appreciation and understanding of art whether it be a painting in a museum or a poster hanging on a city street corner.

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