

The artworks in the traditional calendars used a combination of Western-style sketching and water-color techniques. The artists first drew the outlines of the subjects, then laid a light layer of translucent water colors, used dried color to create texture, and applied a final coat of water color over the entire painting, which gave the painting its final lifelike results. This water-color technique was first used by Man-tuo Zheng, an artist in Anhui province, in 1914. This method yielded results similar to that of a photograph, which compared with previous techniques produced brighter and more lifelike pictures. Based on the popular reaction to the new painting style, the new style of painting quickly replaced the old painting system used in the old calendars. The range of subjects portrayed in the monthly calendars was not broad. There were mainly five categories: traditional Chinese paintings of beautiful women, dolls, historical legends, characters from operas, and historical sites. Pictures of beautiful women in modern and historical dress and of dolls dominated the calendars. Although novelties like cars and airplanes appeared in the calendars, there was almost no depiction of men in any of the calendar paintings. The calendars were printed on two types of paper: cardboard paper or copper paper. In the early days, most of the calendars were printed on smaller-sized cardboard papers with the text printed on the back. The larger-sized calendars printed on copper paper became popular later.

A Last Look

Publishers reinforced the top of the calendars with foil and used this to make it easier to hang up the calendars. This style of assembling calendars was popular even to the 1980s. The people in those days depicted the scenes in the calendars on with water colors, which created bright-toned and realistic images. The calendars were surrounded by colorful illustrations of various styles, including slogans or product names. In the corner of the picture, there usually was a small illustration of a product. The product was usually drawn small but tastefully and with great care, since the product was the true main character of the calendar. Various types of products were depicted in the calendars, including household items, clothing, and food.

Monthly Calendars from the Era

最后一瞥

老月份牌年畫

Monthly Calendars from the Era



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A Last Look

By Ming Deng

Calendars in China were commercial products widely distributed by companies before the 1970. These calendars, produced in Shanghai, gained their reputation and popularity because of the artworks featured in them. Chinese folk custom for New Year celebrations included pasting calendars of the upcoming year on walls, as a symbol for good luck. Capitalizing on this tradition, companies gave away free calendars that contained advertisements of their products. These monthly calendars provided an invaluable publicity opportunity for companies and that was the reason why for a long time, monthly calendars were given away for free.

Compared with the traditional calendars on wooden boards, the monthly calendars have three main features. First, the monthly calendars contain both dates from the lunar and the solar calendars, which was a characteristic carried over from the wooden calendars. Second, the monthly calendars were designed to be aesthetically pleasing, which was a feature previous calendars had overlooked. The monthly calendars were produced using the newest lithograph and printing technologies, and the artworks presented were lifelike and three-dimensional which surpassed the simple line drawings of the former calendars. Third, the monthly calendars contained advertisements of commercial products, which was an innovation and the reason why these calendars were created and produced. The widespread popularity of these calendars followed the footsteps of the infiltration of commercial products throughout China. Combined with the decreased popularity of Chinese lunar calendars and the increased emphasis on aesthetics and advertising, by the 1920's, monthly calendars dominated the New Year paintings market.





The artworks in the traditional calendars used a combination of Western-style sketching and water-color techniques. The artists first drew the outlines of the subjects, then laid a light layer of translucent water colors, used dried color to create texture, and applied a final coat of water color over the entire painting, which gave the painting its final lifelike results. This water-color technique was first used by Man-tuo Zheng, an artist in Anhui province, in 1914. This method yielded results similar to that of a photograph, which compared with previous techniques produced brighter and more lifelike pictures. Based on the popular reaction to the new painting style, the new style of painting quickly replaced the old painting system used in the old calendars.

The range of subjects portrayed in the monthly calendars was not broad. There were mainly five categories: traditional Chinese paintings of beautiful women, dolls, historical legends, characters from operas, and historical sites. Pictures of beautiful women in modern and historical dress and of dolls dominated the calendars. Although novelties like cars and airplanes appeared in the calendars, there was almost no depiction of men in any of the calendar paintings. The calendars were printed on two types of paper: cardboard paper or copper paper. In the earlier days, most of the calendars were printed on smaller-sized cardboard papers with the dates printed on the back. The larger-sized calendars printed on copper paper became the prototype later. Publishers reinforced the top of the calendars with foil and used thicker cardboard paper to make it easier to hang up these calendars. This style of assembling calendars continued to be popular even to the 1980's. The people and scenery depicted in the calendars were directly drawn on with water colors, which created bright-toned and realistic images. Each image in the calendar is surrounded by a border, which could be simplistic or complex in design or even featuring slogans or product names. In the corner of the picture, there usually was a picture of the featured product. The product was usually drawn small but tastefully and with great accuracy and details, since the product was the true main character of the calendar. Various types of products were advertised in the calendars, ranging from cigarettes, kerosene, soap, mosquito-repellent incense, textiles, cosmetics, household products, alcohol, medicine to even fertilizer.

Since Shanghai was the place where the calendars were created and produced, a group of professional calendar artists gathered there. Notable artists included Man-tuo Zheng, Mu-qiao Zhou, Yong-qing Xu, Yun-xian Ding, Bai-sheng Zhou, Geng-ye Ni, Ding-ming Liang, Zhi-ying Hang, Mei-sheng Jin, Xue-chen Jin, and Mu-bai Li. These artists worked for not only Chinese and foreign companies but also started their own studios where they provided commercial services and trained apprentices. Numerous works were produced by these artists and workshops. The Chinese and foreign companies that valued the marketing potential of the monthly calendars were predominantly British and American cigarette companies, Nanyang Brothers Cigarette Company, Commercial Publishers, and Xinyi Medicine Company. Some of these companies also created their own market department which created different calendars for various products.

Entering the 1950's era of planned economy, the monthly calendars quickly lost their value as marketing tools. However, because people still enjoyed the aesthetic appeal of the calendars and because the government supported and promoted the production of these monthly calendars, they continued to thrive. The new monthly calendars used not only new techniques of production but also had new contents. They evolved into purely artwork, where the sale of the most popular works numbered several million copies. In our subsequent book, we will closely examine the calendars of the planned economy era.



月份牌

年畫是20世紀70年代以前產于上海、風行全國城鄉的一種商業繪畫，因畫面附有年月曆表而得名。中國民間素有過年時張貼年畫以祈佑福的習俗，附印二十四節氣曆表以便利人們生產、生活的木版年畫通常會在老百姓家裏一年一換。正是這種持久的視覺樣式，為商品的推廣提供了無與倫比的宣傳機會，在一個相當長的時間段裏，月份牌年畫是隨商品免費贈送的。

與傳統木版年畫相比，月份牌年畫通常有三個特點：一、配有中西對照曆表，這是后者對前者的保留與發展；二、令人愉悅的審美功能，這是后者對前者的超越，採用新式石印或膠印技術，豐滿逼真的彩圖總是比單線平塗的版畫更為生動感人；三、商品廣告，這是后者對前者的補充，也是它生存的動力與依據。隨着商品經濟在全國範圍的滲透，月份牌年畫也在大江南北迅速普及，約在20年代以後取得年畫市場的絕對優勢，與此同時，曆表淡出，審美與廣告功能進一步彰顯，而稱呼則沿用下來。

典型的月份牌表現手法是一種基于西洋擦筆素描加水彩的混合畫法，畫家在確定人物輪廓后，先以扎住大部分筆毫的毛筆鋒穎蘸些許炭精粉擦出淡淡的體積感，然後罩以透明的水彩色，使之產生豐潤明淨的肌膚效果與幾可亂真的衣飾質感。1914年，這種擦筆水彩由來滬發展的安徽畫家鄭曼陀率先採用后，以類似于平光照片“甜、糯、嗲、嫩”的特色迅速取代勾線設色的舊法而成為月份牌畫法的主流，深受讀者的歡迎。

月 份牌年畫的題材並不廣泛，主要有仕女、娃娃、歷史故事、戲曲人物、名勝古迹五類，而以時裝、古裝仕女與娃娃為大宗，盡管也出現過一些反映汽車、飛機等時事新知的作品，但基本上沒有男士的位置。月份牌年畫的用紙有卡紙與銅版紙兩種，早期多用尺幅較小的硬卡紙印刷，將曆表印在背面，大尺幅的銅版紙成為主流以後，有的又在上端包壓金屬薄皮，以利張挂，而硬卡紙則以日曆板的形式繼續流行，80年代還時有所見。月份牌的人物配景主要採用干畫法，直接用水彩色畫出，色調明麗，透視準確，具有較強的真實感。月份牌畫面周邊通常畫有圖案式的邊框，或繁或簡，印有廣告文字或廠商名稱。處于畫面一隅的商品圖像往往畫得小而精緻，質感強烈，耐人品味，是月份牌的“畫眼”所在和真正的主角。這些商品大多為香煙，也有火油、肥皂、蚊香、布料、化妝品等日用百貨以及酒類、藥品甚至肥田粉等等，林林總總，不一而足。



作 為月份牌發源地與主要產地，上海曾聚集了一大批月份牌的職業畫家，除鄭曼陀外，知名的還有周慕橋、徐詠青、丁雲先、周柏生、倪耕野、梁鼎銘、杭穉英、金梅生、金雪塵、李慕白等等，他們或受雇於中外廠商，或自營畫室，以畫件為廠商服務並培訓學徒，都有大量作品行世。重視月份牌宣傳功能的中外廠商則首推英美煙公司、南洋兄弟煙公司、商務印書館、信誼製藥廠等也曾專設廣告部，為不同門類的商品繪制形形色色的月份牌。



進 入50年代，隨着計劃經濟的實施，月份牌在商品宣傳方面的功能迅速消失，而審美功能卻因群眾的喜聞樂見與政府的扶持提倡而保留下來。在新月份牌年畫在題材與技法上獲得了長足進步，演進成一種純粹的年畫藝術畫種，一些優秀作品甚至累計印數達到數百萬張。關於新月份牌年畫，我們將在另一本書中介紹。



如
果說形形色色的咖啡館，以及數不清的酒吧、舞廳、老房子，是上海這個國際化大都市的客廳，那麼月份牌美女，在20世紀二三十年代的上海就如同客廳中醒目的裝飾畫，吸收着所有來訪者的視線。她們的衣香鬢影、秋波淺笑，構成無數市民心中甜蜜的回憶，也成為上海城市發展史中的一段華彩。

有人說，翻看已略微泛黃的月份牌，印象最深的除了佳人們的明眸和笑靨，那一襲襲包裹玉體的衫裙也是如此難忘。衣是最流行的款式和紋樣，人是最時尚的面孔和身形，衣與人相互映襯，水乳般和諧。所以，請允許我們冒昧地引領您走近身着別樣華衣的月份牌美女們，走進她們青蔥水嫩的流金歲月。

Beautiful Clothes and Beautiful Women

留連別樣華衣

If one were to compare the numerous cafes, bars, dance halls and historical landmarks in the 1920's Shanghai to a livingroom, then the girls depicted in calendars would be the centerpiece of that room. These so-called calendar girls with their ethereal appearance and coy smiles bring back sweet memories of the past for Shanghai residents. These girls played an important role in the development of Shanghai into a cosmopolitan city.

Through the yellowed pages of the monthly calendars, what they remember most - aside from the bright eyes and the smiles of the calendar girls - were the figure-hugging, flattering dresses on the women. The clothing on the women displayed the style of the time, while the women themselves were the epitome of beauty. Clothing and person not only complemented each other but were also in harmony with each other. Therefore, let us lead you to a closer examination of these calendar beauties in their resplendent dress and back to their halcyon days of youth.

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1922年成書的《中華全國風俗志》談及女士吸烟：“大家婦女爭試焉，咸以此為時髦。一烟之微，必盛以金盒，配以金斗，蘭房粉閣間，幾以吸烟為正課。”

香烟是地道的舶來品，烟霧繚繞中，女人仿佛又平添了幾分性感。月份牌畫家抓住這一社會時尚，創作了許多幅香烟美女圖。

Published in 1922, *A Study of Local Customs in China* addressed the issue of women and smoking in the following way: All the women are smoking because it is in vogue. Having one cigarette is considered not enough, so to be fashionable, you must have a gold box full of cigarettes with a gold-tipped cigarette holder. Smoking should be the main preoccupation.

Cigarettes were the quintessential imported goods. Women seemed to be even more sensual enveloped in cigarette smoke. Calendar artists tried to capture the social trend of smoking and created many a picture of cigarette beauties.

■ 倪耕野 1930's初作 三獅牌布料廣告
By Geng-ye Ni, circa early 1930's.
Three Lion Brand Textile advertisement.





■ 杭穉英 1920's末1930's初作

哈德門香烟廣告

By Zhi-ying Hang, circa late 1920's
and early 1930's. Hatamen
Cigarettes advertisement.

烟兒靦靦染脂香

綉盒輕托請君嚐

*The smoke delicately
permeates the air; won't
you try a cigarette from this
silk box?*



潔白的花兒伴你粉嫩的容顏，
秋波弄這卷曲的雲鬟撩動着愛慕
者的情思。朱唇共那纖纖的十
指，享受香烟的氣息。

Pale flowers set off the
tenderness of your face, your
expressional eyes and your curled
locks of hair stir up feelings of
love; the piece of cigarette must be
fortunate enough to be in your
lips and fingers.

■ 楊耀英 1930's 哈德門香烟廣告
By Zhi-ying Yang, circa 1930's.
Hatamen Cigarettes advertisement.





有美皆備

無麗不臻

■ 麗牌香烟的這句廣告語家喻戶曉。

"Every beauty's possession"
goes the popular slogan of Beauty
Cigarettes.

■ 倪耕野 1920's 作 哈德門香烟廣告
By Geng-ye Ni, circa 1920's.
Hatamen Cigarettes advertisement.