Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Achille Lucien MAUZAN (Gap 1883 - Gap 1952)

Sir: Primo ed Unico Registratore Italiano

Gouache, pen and green, black and red ink, painted on the reverse of a glass plate.

Signed and dated Mauzan 925 at the right centre.

534 x 385 mm. (21 x 15 1/4 in.)

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Achille Mauzan produced designs for some 2,000 postcards and around a thousand advertising and theatre posters. His distinctive style combined bright colours with witty caricatures, jaunty imagery and a bold sense of design. As one scholar has noted, 'For Mauzan, a sensualist, a craftsman, advertising was a carnival of exotic imagery in rebellion against the rhetoric of restraint and reasonable consensus called for by corporate business advertising. The poster, like a circus barker, clamored for attention.' Mauzan acted as both designer and lithographer, and his process usually consisted of drawing directly on to stone or zinc, so he could turn out press-ready posters which were worked in four colours and typically measured 140 x 140 centimetres.

Reverse-painted on a sheet of glass, the present work is a design for an advertisement for Sir, an Italian manufacturer of cash registers, which was printed in 1925 as a lithographic poster in colours. The bold typography announces the 'Primo ed Unico Registratore Italiano' ('the first and only Italian cash register'), while the image adds a humorous touch wholly characteristic of the artist, depicting a shop owner contentedly enjoying his new register while letting it do the accounting for him. The text further highlights the native origins of the Sir machine, claiming that 'Italiani date la preferenza al prodotto

italiano' ('Italians give preference to Italian products').

The same advertising image also appeared as one of a series of small decorative postcards produced by Mauzan.

Artist description:

Active as a painter, sculptor and printmaker, but first and foremost an illustrator and poster designer, Achille-Lucien Mauzan enjoyed a highly successful career as a commercial artist, working between Paris, Milan and Argentina. Born in southeastern France, Mauzan displayed a proficiency in drawing from a young age. Upon finishing his studies in Lyon in 1905, he moved to Milan and opened a typography and graphic design shop, contracting his services to several small companies. Mauzan also produced a large number of posters for the nascent Italian film industry in Turin, as well as for the music publishing company Ricordi in Milan. In 1919 the Italian printers and publishers Maga engaged Mauzan as an artist with a contract to both of the company's showrooms in Paris and Milan. In its prime, Maga was home to many of the leading French and Italian illustrators of the day, including Leonetto Cappiello, Mario and Severo Pozzati and Marcello Nizzoli. Mauzan became integral to Maga's international prestige, though the relationship broke down after a few years, with the artist terminating their contract in 1923.

Mauzan then started up a new publishing house, Mauzan Morzenti, with Angelo Morzenti as a partner. After a very successful tenure in Italy, where he produced a series of vibrant and striking movie, theatre and advertising posters, books and postcards, Mauzan moved to Buenos Aires in 1927. In Argentina he established the firm of Affiches Mauzan, and continued to work with much success as a graphic artist, particularly in the field of advertising posters, where he enjoyed a contract with the Cosmos agency, the largest in South America. The hundreds of posters Mauzan produced during his five years in Argentina were to have a lasting influence on the graphic arts in the country. In 1932 Mauzan returned to France, where he was under contract with the Société Générale Publicité and Paris-Affiche, and spent the last few years of his life working as a painter.