

Classic Posters - The Art of Victor Moscoso

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by Michael Erlewine

The work of no artist of the psychedelic period is as immediately approachable for the general public as that of artist Victor Moscoso. In fact, I am told that he was the first artist of that period to be shown in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. There are a number of reasons why this may be so.

First and foremost, Moscoso successfully incorporates the essential elements of the psychedelic imagery of that time into his work, but without using either images or color combinations that the uninitiated public would find weird or challenging. People love Moscoso's work, and at first glance.

Even in my own case, this is true. While I sometimes find myself explaining to my wife why I am collecting these psychedelic posters, on seeing some of the Neon Rose series, she immediately grasped my reasoning and approved of Moscoso's work. It was obvious to her that these pieces of art were just beautiful. End of story.

Another reason may be the fact that, of the original group of San Francisco, artists, only Moscoso had formal art school training to the level of completing a masters program. His extensive training at Yale and later at the San Francisco Art Institute may have provided Moscoso with a more traditional approach to his work than, let's say, an artist like Rick Griffin.

Whatever the reasons may be, the work of Victor Moscoso is much loved and eagerly collected. His Neon Rose series of posters is one of the crown jewels of the psychedelic poster era.

Born in Spain in 1936, Moscoso was brought up in Brooklyn, New York, where he studied art at Cooper Union Art School before attending the Yale School of Art. In 1959, he relocated to San Francisco, where he studied and took a degree at the prestigious Art Institute. He taught lithography at the Art Institute for five years after he graduated and was also involved in other commercial art projects.



Family Dog Poster #3 by Wes Wilson

Influenced by seeing Wes Wilson's poster work [Family Dog #3] around town, Moscoso first became active doing concert posters in the fall of 1966, with work for the Family Dog at the Avalon Ballroom. His Neon Rose series for The Matrix, a local rock music club, remains one of the high-water marks of the '60s poster era.

Around 1968, Moscoso and Rick Griffin also became active in the underground comix scene, working with artists like R. Crumb and his Zap Comix. Over the years, he has continued to produce comix art, posters, and a string of fine album covers for performers like Jerry Garcia and others.

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Moscoso lives in Woodacre, California, where he is still very active in graphic design.

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