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Vintage Postcards From Vanity Fair: One Hundred Classic Covers, 1913-1936



Synopsis

VANITY FAIR A TALE OF SOPHISTICATION In 1913, publisher Condé Nast launched Vanity Fair, a magazine that would celebrate the culture, politics, lifestyle and humour of the world's 'smart set'. In the publication's mission statement, editor Frank Crowninshield clearly revelled in that world: 'Young men and young women, full of courage, originality, and genius, are everywhere to be met with.' The magazine discovered or lent invaluable support to such varied names as Dorothy Parker, E. E. Cummings, Noël Coward, Gertrude Stein, P. G. Wodehouse, Cecil Beaton and Man Ray, and frequently reproduced works by the likes of Matisse and Picasso long before anyone in the mainstream press would dare. Vanity Fair's famous philosophy of mixing up classes, races and sexes - as long as they were innovative, gorgeous or talented - was reflected in the dazzling and elegant magazine covers from such hugely influential designers as Paolo Garretto, William Cotton and Eduardo Garcia Benito. These covers are now a memorial to a world of glamour and excitement, gone - but not forgotten. Selected by Graydon Carter

Book Information

Cards: 100 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Pos edition (October 19, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1846144671

ISBN-13: 978-1846144677

Product Dimensions: 2.8 x 4.2 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

From before World War I to the middle of the New Deal, the covers of Condé Nast's magazine VANITY FAIR offered a running commentary on contemporary art, style and politics, much like today's NEW YORKER covers but perhaps a little "artier" in tone. Fashionably attired nymphs cavort near backyard gazebos -- the "Smart Set" sets out in evening clothes to do the town red -- a surrealistic mortarboard and spectacles draped over the Capitol dome symbolize the marriage of

"brains and government" under F.D.R.: such cards are a delight just to look at and a regular education in the significance of the times. I am sure my friends will enjoy receiving these, old-school, bearing a stamp, courtesy of the USPS' snail mail. The cards are not really undersized but the size of standard picture postcards until about 15 years ago, and a little larger than the prepaid P.O. jobs even today. As with any good picture postcard, it is indicated where to write, where to address, and where to put the stamp, but an extra measure of visual style figures in because even the instructions are printed in appropriately archaic typefaces. The card surface is ideal for writing: off-white, stiff and not at all "slick"; that is, very porous whether you're writing in pencil, gel, ballpoint or fountain pen. The reproductions are not as crisp as we moderns are used to, probably the drawback of a printing style that so well mimics the rotogravure/lithographic techniques of the interwar period. (Also true to the era, no borderless "bleeds" and of course, no photos.) At less than a quarter apiece, these art cards are a good deal cheaper than the kind that come in books of a dozen or two.

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