1. Introduction

In 1920 the annual publication *The Empire Annual for Girls* printed an interview with the artist Gladys Peto, in which she described the potential for girls ‘not only of making a living, but of making a very good living’ through poster design.¹

Published at a time of increasing poster production, this interview marked the starting point of a movement in female poster art within Britain, during which 152 women produced poster designs.

However, despite the significant achievements of these female poster artists, their successes have yet to be discussed within academic accounts.

My research aims to rectify this omission, shedding light on the works, careers, and legacies of female poster artists and exploring their position within the art world of the interwar.

2. Methodology

My research uses methods of feminist art history to consider the impact of female artists on the wider movement of British poster art.

It does not aim to simply recognise the existence of these women, but is instead intended to demonstrate their significance and importance to twentieth century British art.

Primary sources reveal that female artists were highly valued during the interwar, with a number of newspapers claiming that ‘many of the best poster artists of the day are women.’²

This makes women’s absence from poster history an issue of historiographic omission rather than it being a symptom of a lack of female success in this area.

3. Sources

A lack of interest in female artists has meant that often archives on their lives have not been preserved. This makes primary research into these figures more complex, and perpetuates historiography which ignores women’s work.

To navigate this I will be using alternative sources in my research.

These include...

- Company Archives - Meeting minutes, letters, contracts, records of payment
- Online databases - Museum collections, Ancestry UK
- Contemporary Accounts - Newspaper reports, interviews, trade journals

4. Impact

As the first academic analysis of female poster artists this research raises the profile of undervalued works of art.

By highlighting the existence and successes of female poster artists I am able to dispute established historiographic ignorance of women’s contributions to 20th century British art.

My use of alternative archives and sources provides a framework for further analysis of overlooked artists or figures through primary source research.

My research contributes to a number of wider debates and areas of research including, histories of women’s work and leisure during the interwar, feminist art history and the value and importance of mass culture.

¹ George Wade, ‘Poster-Art Work for Girls’ *The Empire Annual for Girls*, 1920;
² Elizabeth D’Oyley, Yorkshire Post, Monday 18th July 1927