



ARTS

Writing on the Wall

A Hampden gallery proves hippie posters are works of art.

BY MIKE UNGER

Mesmerized, Glen Trosch gazed at—and on some level into—a Grateful Dead concert poster.

To Trosch, then a 20-year-old Baltimorean in San Francisco to see his favorite band perform on New Year's Eve 1983, it was an artistic revelation, a two-dimensional window into the three-dimensional world of psychedelic drugs and rock and roll.

He was blown away.

"The design, the color, the visualization—it turned me on," says Trosch, now 48 with a

touch of gray in his black hair. "It still does."

The next day, he bought one of his own, paying \$30 for a poster (advertising a Dead show in Hawaii) now worth \$200, and the collecting never stopped.

Twenty-four years later, Trosch and his childhood friend, renowned coin and stamp collector Scott Tilson, started Psychedelic Art Exchange in Hampden. The company is now one of the largest dealers of '60s concert posters, an admittedly small field.

"This stuff has been traded by record store guys and guys in T-shirts," says

Trosch, *pictured*. "It's always been treated as underground hippie sh*t. It's like, no man. It's so deep and rich. These are works of art."

Psychedelic Art Exchange targets sophisticated collectors with deep pockets. Posters sell for \$50 to \$15,000 at its online auctions, and the rarest of its own inventory carries a price tag of \$75,000 (a Grateful Dead poster from a cancelled concert, *pictured below*). By certifying and grading their merchandise, Trosch and Tilson believe they've created a business model built to last.

Tilson, who has bought and sold more than \$200 million in collectibles, became intrigued by concert posters after reconnecting with his Park School classmate.

"The Doors, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, almost none of these posters still exist 45 years later in mint condition," he says from his Utah home. "Compared to other collectibles of similar rarity, I believe they're extremely undervalued."

Talking posters can drive Trosch into a conversational jam session not unlike the style of music played by the bands they tout. Passion for the posters and the era from which they were born ripples through his veins. In one long breath he calls Rick Griffin the genre's "Michelangelo," hails Jerry Garcia's genius, knocks the government's drug policies, warns of the entrapments of marriage, and praises fatherhood.

Like the posters, he's a trip.

"I think this material is just as important to the fabric of America as a Mickey Mantle rookie card or a Superman No. 1 comic," he said. "It's over-the-top beautiful."

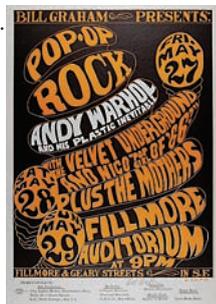
POSTER PICKS

Glen Trosch talks about three of the most fascinating posters in his gallery.



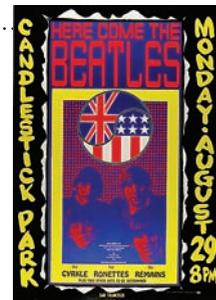
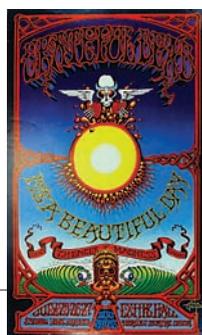
Fillmore Auditorium by Wes Wilson

"Andy Warhol brought his groundbreaking multimedia performance art show named *The Plastic Inevitable* to the newly opened Fillmore."



Hawaii Aoxomoxoa uncut sheet

"These sheets are very rare because they were produced for a cancelled concert. The printer never got paid and destroyed all but a handful of copies."



Beatles Candlestick Park

"From August 29, 1966, this poster advertised the last [official] time The Beatles would ever play live together as a group in public."