Beginner's Guide To Collecting Movie Posters
**Introduction**

So, you’re looking at becoming a member of the greatest collector club EVER. Good for you. It’s a great club. Our members range from all over the spectrum of art appreciation. There’s the regular Joe movie fan who goes to see his favorite movies at the movie theater and just ‘has’ to have the poster hanging on his man cave wall. There’s also the ‘fan girl’ who has a favorite cutie pie actor and loves EVERYTHING he does, so she plasters her bedroom in his posters. You will also see the ‘serious’ collector in your midst, as they peruse the online auctions and vintage sellers for that one rare lobby card or half sheet to go with their already substantial collection. Then there’s the artsy types, who frequent museums and have a deep appreciation for many different fine art formats, not the least of which is the artwork of the movie poster; with renown artists like

Drew Struzan  
Saul Bass  
John Alvin  
Tom Jung

and so many more. This is the club you are joining, and we welcome you with open arms.
A SHORT HISTORY OF MOVIE POSTERS

Promotional movie posters go back to when movies started, in the 19th century! Often produced in-house by the major studios, many movie posters have also been designed by famous graphic artists and illustrators such as Saul Bass, Robert McGinnis, Drew Struzan, Bob Peak, and Richard Amsel.

Before the mid-1980s, these promotional materials, like one sheets, lobby cards, stills, inserts, window cards, half sheets, 30 x 40s, 3-sheets, and 6-sheets, were lent or rented out by the major Hollywood movie studios to local movie theaters through exchanges, or distributors. An exchange bundled the original movie posters and sent them out to a local theater for showings of the film. After the local movie theater screened the film, all the posters were returned to the exchange, to be re-used by the next movie theater. This role of the exchange was key to the survival of many of the original posters from the heydays of Hollywood films. And that’s also why original movie posters show evidence of handling, like pinholes or tape marks and censor stickers.

In the mid-1980s, the major studios took complete control of providing films, posters, and all promotional materials directly to local movie theaters. The exchanges disappeared. The original movie posters for films made after 1985 are generally either 27 x 40in or slightly smaller, and many of these posters and collectibles can be found in unused, mint condition.
STEP ONE:

APPROACH #1

Figure out what you like!

The first thing you can do is lay the groundwork by doing a bit of research. Visit your local library or bookstore. There are quite a few excellent pictorial, fully illustrated books on this art form. *A century of Movie Posters* by Emily King is an excellent resource. Beyond that, the simplest thing you can do is look at your DVD collection. How many of those movies are ones you adore and would watch a million times over and over again? Odds are that these are the same movies where you would want to collect the poster. Something you love and adore and displayed on your wall for all to see. So during those hours when you can’t actually watch the movie, you still have a reminder to appreciate and discuss hanging on your wall.

Another great source for inspiration is the internet, not just movieposter.com (although we house over 60,000 amazing images to look through). Use Google images to search the web for those awesome images that you love. Maybe there is a poster out there for you that you never knew existed!

There are literally tens of thousands of images posted of movie posters, so we encourage you to look before you start buying. See what’s out there!

You have advance posters, regular posters, half sheets, one sheets, inserts, Quads...there’s a lot to learn but we hope you stick with us and it will all be explained.

Now, after you’ve gotten a taste of the varied styles, the next step is to cut the mass down to size.
STEP TWO:

APPROACH #2

There are definitely those newbie collectors who would rather be guided and edified as to what original movie posters are going to be a greater investment than just buying their favorite film posters.

Sure things:

1. Disney/Star Wars. Virtually all of the animated Disney films and Star Wars posters are good investments. (Appreciation value approx.. $25 per year)
2. Popular Directors. Quentin Tarantino, Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorcese, Chris Nolan, Peter Jackson. All of these directors are so popular and admired that their films inevitably win awards and have incredible longevity. So these posters are great investments as well. (Appreciation value approximation $10-$15 per year)
3. James Bond. From the early days of Sean Connery and Roger Moore, the Bond films have gone through some awesome incarnations. And will continue to be great investments as the franchise grows and changes.
4. Unfortunate Circumstances. Death of an actor/director will increase values.
STEP THREE:

After you decide on the subject of your original movie poster collection, you should keep in mind some other factors as well.

1. Advance vs regular? What does that mean and which one should I buy?

An advance poster is one that has been released weeks or months ahead of the film’s theatrical release. Usually it will have **Coming Soon** or the release date at the bottom of the poster. Typically it will not have any cast/crew credits on the poster. Whereas a Regular poster is one which is released by the studios closer to the film’s release and will typically have the cast/crew credits at the bottom.

Which one to buy? Well, mostly it just depends on the collector’s personal style. The value for both will be virtually the same although advance posters are typically printed in smaller numbers than the regular (or final) posters; so they tend to not be as widely available.
2. **Double sided** vs **Single Sided**? What does that mean and which one should I buy?

A double sided poster basically has an image printed on the front side and the mirror image printed on the reverse side. These posters are made specifically for the light boxes you see at your local movie theatre. When these posters are lit from behind, the light shining through will project the image on the poster much more vibrantly. A single sided poster is just plain white on the back.

Which one to buy? If you consider that double sided posters are virtually a new phenomenon (introduced in the 1990s) then it isn’t hard to guess that there are far more single sided posters in existence. However, the collector of today tends to choose double sided more often because of the quality and effect of the images. Light boxes are becoming more and more popular in personal home theaters so double sided posters are continually in high demand.
STEP FOUR:

Learn. Learn. Learn.

WHAT IS AN “ORIGINAL MOVIE POSTER”?
An “original movie poster” is a poster designed and printed by a film studio or film distributor, in limited quantity, for display in movie theaters to promote the film. For films dating back to the 1980s and earlier, understandably, those original movie posters are rare, hard to find, and often show evidence of wear and tear.

WHY ARE SOME ORIGINAL MOVIE POSTERS SO EXPENSIVE?
Over time, original movie posters can become highly valued, prized collector items. Many reasons come into play—the movie becomes highly acclaimed or wins awards; the poster design itself becomes a stunning image in its own right; the colors and visual impact become instantly memorable.

WHAT SIZE ARE ORIGINAL MOVIE POSTERS TODAY?
Original movie posters now come mostly in one size, 27 x 40in (69 x 102 cm). It was not always that way. From the beginning of movies, there have been many kinds of print material used to promote the film to movie-going audiences—posters in different sizes, lobby cards and stills.

DO I HAVE TO SPEND A LOT OF MONEY TO COLLECT ORIGINAL MOVIE POSTERS?
Collecting and investing in movie posters is a fun hobby, and it does not have to cost a lot of money to get started. You can buy great original movie posters today for under $25, which will increase in value. The thrilling dream of a poster collector is to know that your time and investment will pay off in the end. As was the case in 2005 when a 1927’s METROPOLIS sold at auction for more than $650,000. A lofty result but well worth the investment.
STEP FIVE:

Once I buy my posters, how do I store or display them, to maintain the value?

For Display:

Custom framing will always be your number one option when it comes to professionally framing your poster and ensuring that it will be kept protected and preserved, while also be able to show it off in a wonderful frame.

We recommend plexi-glass (high grade) as the preferred covering of the poster and frame as real glass tends to be breakable and could entrap moisture as well. As for the backing, standard cardboard is fine for shorter periods, but one should understand that a prolonged exposure to cardboard could leach acid onto the poster. You can request acid free foam core or backing for the frame if you wish to preserve the poster’s integrity for the long run.

As for the location of the frame in your home, try not to put it in direct sunlight and make sure that the environment is dry and cool most of the time.

For Storage:

Acid free tubes are great for keeping your posters protected and rolled up. Again, we recommend that a dry, cool spot for the tubes is best. Although you are also able to put the poster into a plastic sleeve first, which will protect the poster from the acids of any cardboard tube or box you may have kicking around.

Plastic Sleeve

Cardboard Tube
CONCLUSION:

There are a lot of movie poster dealers out there so we just want to take a little time now to introduce you to us, and how we got started.

Shelly Candel, President and owner, started out, like many of our customers, an avid movie poster fan; a fan with an appreciation of movies, art and design. A strong devotion to the art of movie posters led her to buy-out a Theater Exchange*, which garnered a collection of thousands of movie posters from the 1940s to the 1990s. Friends and family encouraged her to grow her business which resulted in the opening of the original Movie Poster Warehouse in Toronto in 1993. With a skeleton staff of only herself and one other, Shelly established a store front with hundreds of posters on display through which customers were able to browse. She also created a mail-in catalog of her entire inventory which she would then mail out to interested customers.

This catalog was the primary source of mail orders until 1996 when, by the suggestion of a University student, Shelly decided to take her catalog to the World Wide Web. At the time, there were only a few other poster vendors online, and certainly none with the breadth of original material offered by Movieposter.com.

The initial online site was merely a place where Shelly could easily have a form for customers to fill out in order to receive the mailing catalog. With Shelly’s growing poster collection, it quickly became a redundancy issue as the catalog was virtually out of date as soon as it was mailed. It wasn’t until 2000 that our current hallowed Tech. Dept arrived and created our online database where we were able to create a shopping base for people to purchase directly on the site. The staff soon grew to a whopping 7 people (small companies rule!) and with a few location changes, the store is running better than ever at our current Leslie st office. It’s been a long road for Shelly, but it was surely worth it for the movie poster fan at heart!

*Theater exchanges were companies who supplied local movie theaters with their posters for display.

We hope that this guide has been helpful in educating you on the finer points of how to start your movie poster collection. Take it from us, it’s totally worth it!