



FACTSHEET

GILROY AND ANIMALS

John Gilroy

John Gilroy (1898-1985) was one of this century's most versatile, gifted and imaginative artists. He is best known for producing some of the most memorable and attractive images in British advertising, but was also a respected and successful landscape and portrait painter of royalty and celebrities.

Gilroy was recruited in 1925 by the advertising agency S.H.Benson's. In 1928 Benson's began work on the first advertising campaign for GUINNESS® beer and from then until the early 1960s Gilroy was above all associated with advertising of GUINNESS®.

Gilroy is particularly associated with two campaigns for GUINNESS®, which ran simultaneously for nearly thirty years from the 1930s. The first involved the slogan "Guinness for strength" showing people performing incredible feats of strength empowered by GUINNESS®. The most popular posters in this series were the "Girder"(1934) depicting a workman effortlessly carrying a massive girder on his head and the horse and cart with the farmer pulling the cart (1949).

The second campaign featured zoo-animals. At the time Benson's had been trying unsuccessfully to develop a human "Guinness family" for its advertising. The idea of using animals to advertise GUINNESS® occurred to Gilroy after visiting the circus. While watching a performing sealion he entertained the curious thought that the animal would be smart enough to balance a glass of GUINNESS® on its nose! It became the concept for one of the world's longest running advertising campaigns "My Goodness, MY GUINNESS". The hapless zookeeper, a caricature of Gilroy himself, watched over the family of animals which included an ostrich swallowing a GUINNESS®, glass and all, a pelican with a beak full of bottles, a tortoise, a lion, bear, crocodile, kangaroo, giraffe, polar bear, gnu, kinkajou, penguin

(particularly associated with Draught GUINNESS® to emphasise its coolness) and, of course, most famous of all, the toucan. The last major Gilroy poster was 1961 showing the animals at the seaside.

GILROY ANIMALS

Toucan/ Pelican

The toucan (which actually started out as a pelican) was the first of the 'Guinness Menagerie' to appear in poster form. The theme of the ad was "Guinness -a- day", and it showed a pelican with seven pints of GUINNESS® balanced on its beak. It carried the rhyme: "A Wonderful bird is the Pelican, Its bill can hold more than its belly can, It can hold in its beak, Enough for a Week, I simply don't know how the hell he can"

This became altered by Dorothy L. Sayers who changed the bird (to a toucan) and the number of glasses of beer (to two) so that the actual ad. which appeared was as follows: "If he can say as you can, Guinness is Good for You, How grand to be a Toucan, Just think what Toucan do"

Sealion

1935. Gilroy claimed he got the idea for the sealion, the first of his animal designs, from seeing a sealion doing tricks at Bertram Mills' circus. Twenty years later, on the first night of commercial television in Britain (22 September 1955) the first beer commercial shown was one for GUINNESS® featuring a real live sea lion waddling off with its keeper's GUINNESS® - Gilroy's poster had come to life!

Zookeeper

The harassed little zookeeper was actually a self-caricature of Gilroy himself. To support the animals advertising theme for many years Guinness sponsored real life circus and zoo-animals similar to those in their posters.

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If you have any further questions about the history of Guinness, please contact the Guinness Archive, Guinness Storehouse, St. James's Gate, Dublin 8. Email: Guinness.archives@diageo.com