

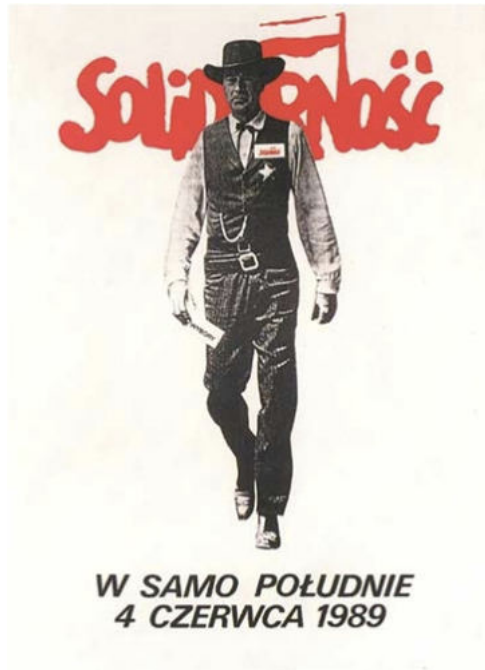
MoMA

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A MoMA/MoMA PS1 BLOG

OCTOBER 15, 2010 | COLLECTION & EXHIBITIONS, DESIGN

New Polish Posters

Posted by [Pamela Popeson](#), Department Preparator, Department of Architecture and Design

Tomasz Sarnecki. Solidarność (Solidarity). 1989

design, and it really doesn't require interpretation.

But having said that, I'd like to at least point out that nowhere on these election posters are there names of any candidates. (Not the point, is it?) And I really can't imagine a better illustration of the power of "one person, one vote." One man alone doesn't do it; it takes one man alone along with one other lone man and then a lone woman and so on to make all the difference in the world. The enigma of how life works—when it's working, that is.

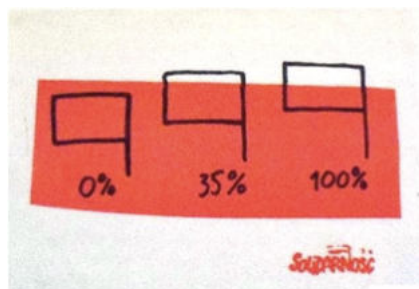
The work of the [Polish Poster School](#), long recognized as an art form in its own right, can be seen as a kind of chronicle of Poland's social, political, and cultural climate for the past fifty years. So it's no surprise that a poster program attached to the political campaign of [Solidarność](#), the Solidarity Party of the 1980s, played a pivotal role in the movement.



The Solidarność party logo

[Noon](#). With a Solidarność logo behind him and one next to his heart, over his badge, Gary Cooper closes in on election time noted before him, "High Noon, June 4, 1989" armed with an ballot in place of his six-shooter.

In the "Voting Rights" street poster, the unknown designer used the logo like a signature. It's placed below and off to the side of the graphic results of getting out the Solidarity vote: 0% seats to the Solidarity party equals rule under the Soviet Red Flag; 35% equals majority Soviet rule; but 100% Solidarity candidates elected means the Polish red-and-white flag will fly again, restoring Polish sovereignty.



I was raised on Westerns—*The Rifleman*, *Hondo*, *Wyatt Earp*, *Cheyenne*, and *Lawman*, with plenty of [John Ford](#) and [Sergio Leone](#) thrown in, and I just adored those cowboys. In truth, I loved the whole Wild West thing, but I was particularly fond of the smart, silent, stoic lone cowboy turned smart, silent, stoic lone lawman. I'll fall under the spell of "right makes might" every time.

Another thing I loved was flags. We had a flag holder attached to the wall by our front door where we hung our family flag. That ritual was possibly my favorite part of holidays, although being out on the street with it hanging out there was also a wonderful moment too. I'm also a complete sucker for nationalistic egalitarian symbolism.

Pair the two, and you can imagine how excited I was when we acquired these Polish [Solidarity](#) Independent Trade Union election posters. Not enough can be said about these posters, and honestly I don't know where or how to begin talking about them. No matter, they speak for themselves—beautifully, elegantly, intelligently, and in volumes. They smooth operate on so many levels. This is art, not just great graphic

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Designer unknown. Solidarność (Solidarity). 1989



Installation view of *Polish Posters: 1945–89* at The Museum of Modern Art, May 6–November 30, 2009. Photo by Thomas Griesel

I hope you were able to catch the recent exhibition [Polish Posters: 1945–89](#) here at MoMA, but if not, do what you can to catch [Freedom on the Fence](#), Andrea Marks's wonderful documentary film about Polish posters.

Tags: [graphic design](#), [Polish Poster School](#), [Polish Posters: 1945–89](#), [Solidarity](#), [Tomasz Sarnecki](#)

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