



The First Issue of the iconic map of the London Underground

BECK, Henry C.  
Map of London's Underground Railways. A new design for an old map.

London: The Underground Group, 1933. Colour-printed map on paper, 155 x 255mm, folded twice as issued.

£2,600

The first version of the diagrammatic map of London's tube network, which, despite being eighty years old, would be instantly recognisable to any commuter today. Beck's revolutionary new 'electrical circuit' design dispensed with scale, bearing and surface landmarks other than the Thames, making the stations equidistant and limiting the curves to either 45 or 90°. Beck submitted two proposals to the Publicity manager before his idea was accepted, and was paid only 10 guineas (today £380) for the artwork of this card, and 5 guineas more for the poster. The Publicity Manager knew he was talking a chance with public opinion: the cover text continues 'We should welcome your comments', but his gamble paid off and Beck's innovation has been in use ever since. Although there are new lines and different colours the only significant design change on the map is the use of rings rather than diamonds for interchanges.

GARLAND: Mr Beck's Underground Map.

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