

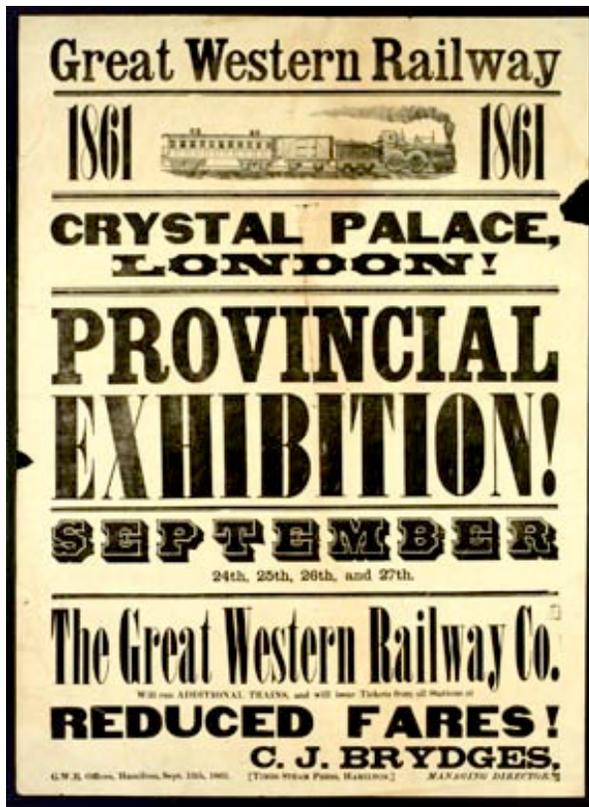
Advertising

Throughout the twentieth century, America did not run, aesthetically, on avant-garde art. America ran on the art of advertising.

Though advertising probably has existed to a certain extent in all cultures, it took on a qualitatively new existence and power in the modern era: accelerating rapidly during the 19th century, advertising became a major social force in the 20th century. We will look at print ads in this chapter, and at television ads or commercials in Chapter 11.

Early Broadsides & Posters

Advertisements, as we know them, were anticipated by printed sheets of paper called broadsheets or broadsides (9.1). Since the Renaissance invention of moveable type, broadsides have been used to publicize and promote events and products. Advertising historian Ellen Gartrell traces their evolution, noting that although the broadsides were initially text only, “stock” woodcut illustrations of the product or service were soon added. “Broadsides were posted prominently where they would be seen by many people. They served a role of spreading information, especially before newspapers and other mass media became affordable and widely available...American ones appeared by the middle of the 17th century, once a printing industry began to be established in the colonies. After the American Civil War, with advances in printing technologies and color lithography, as well as the increased competition among the brand-named products, many advertising signs that were displayed outdoors began to become larger and more colorful than the one- or two-color small broadside.”¹



9.1 A Broadside.

French artist **Henri de Toulouse Lautrec** (1864-1901) created some of the most visually arresting posters of the late nineteenth century. Physically handicapped by a congenital disease, Lautrec was ostracized from the aristocratic realm of his forebears. He exiled himself to the Parisian demimonde, spending his evenings with the prostitutes and entertainers of working class bars like the Moulin Rouge. Lautrec's lithographic posters for the Moulin Rouge, especially those featuring the can-can dancer known as La Goulue ("the greedy one"), employed the same angular compositions explored by his avant-garde contemporaries in the Impressionist and Post Impressionist movements (9.2). The curving contours of Lautrec's figures, echoed in the sinuous letters of his poster texts, reflect the Art Nouveau style that dominated European graphic arts at the end of the nineteenth century.

Larger, more colorful posters and billboards began to supplant broadsides in the nineteenth century. The development of color lithography in 1870 allowed for more—and more captivating—images to be pasted on every available surface. Wooden billboards ("boards for posting bills") were erected along railroad lines, bringing advertising messages to train passengers. Circuses and theaters used posters extensively, their entertainment images becoming the ancestors of later film posters.



9.2 Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril*.

Published Advertisements

The first American newspaper ad, which solicited a buyer for a Long Island Estate, was published in 1704, in the *Boston News-Letter*. By 1729, Benjamin Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette* newspaper included several pages of "new advertisements." A few years later, Franklin's *General Magazine* printed the first US magazine ads.

The early power of ads was demonstrated in Phineas T. Barnum's efforts to promote his entertainments. In 1850, he brought Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," from Europe for a tour of the US. He used newspaper ads, handbills, and broadsides to drum up interest in the singer, who went from relative obscurity to national fame. Her ship was met on arrival by 30,000 New Yorkers, all attracted by Barnum's advertising campaign.

The first US advertising agency was opened in Philadelphia in 1841. The industry grew so rapidly that by 1861, there were twenty ad agencies in New York City. The growing commitment to advertising can be gauged by the fact that throughout the 1870s, a million dollars annually was spent for ads for Lydia Pinkham's Pink Pills (9.3).



9.3 Lydia Pinkham, logo, packaging, and advertisement.

The first book on advertising published in America was George P. Rowell's *The Men Who Advertise: An Account of Successful Advertisers, Together with Hints on the Methods of Advertising*. A handful of other manuals were published later in the 1870s; even more how-to's came out in the 1880s.

Early Advertising Images

The early development of pictorial ads can be traced in the pages of *Harper's Weekly*. An ancestor of *Time* and *Newsweek*, it was a popular illustrated publication throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. It carried the story of the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson, was instrumental in the 1871 campaign to defeat Boss William M. Tweed in New York City, and the Civil War was documented—and illustrated--on its pages.

Harper's Weekly ads were initially text only. One example is a sewing machine ad from 1858, which is comprised of the lyrics of a catchy song. In the mid-nineteenth century, people used to *read* ads; the fact that we now say *see* an ad indicates that ads have become predominantly visual.

Advertising's informative texts were augmented with black and white woodcut illustrations in the 1860s and 1870s. The invention of the linotype machine in 1874 advanced the possibilities of color printing.

Some early ads simply reproduced product labels, as the 1868 *Harper's Weekly* ad for Colgate & Co. Toilet Soaps. Other ads included illustrations generated solely for the advertising campaign.

Humor was deployed in early ads, and with it ethnic stereotypes and the articulation of class differences (9.4). Both were shown visually and reinforced textually. An 1865 *Harper's*

Weekly ad for Taylor & Young Pioneer Yeast Powder depicts an elegantly dressed upper-class woman in the kitchen with her plump, plain Irish cook. The text of the ad reads:

MISTRESS. “Why, Bridget, what are you doing—nailing those biscuits down to the tray?”

COOK. “Yes, faith, Mum, or they’d be afther liftin’ the tops off you oven, Mum—this Yaste Powdher’s so moity powerful.”

The class differences of the two women are visually coded, with the mistress portrayed as much younger and more attractive than her maid. Their ethnic differences are inscribed in their use of language, particularly the Irish woman’s poor grammar and pronunciation.



9.4 1865 *Harper’s Weekly* ad for Taylor & Young Pioneer Yeast Powder.

Calvin Coolidge: Advertising & the Civilization of Desire

The modern role of advertising stemmed from the nineteenth-century divisions that caused Western culture's social and artistic crisis of realism. Karl Marx had predicted in the nineteenth century that workers in capitalist countries would eventually revolt because of continuing conditions of poverty and exploitation. Two steps significantly cut off such a revolution in twentieth-century America. One was the decision by industrialists--pioneered by Henry Ford--to raise wages to the point that the worker could become a consumer. (Marx had predicted a cycle of increasingly lower wages.) The second was the magnification of advertising to the point that it could motivate workers to increased productivity--and to increased consumption.

The possibilities of consuming as a way of life were spread by the increasingly pictorial ads in photo-based newspapers and magazines.

By 1926, advertising had reached sufficient importance to merit a major address by US president Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933). According to Coolidge, the basic function of advertising was education.

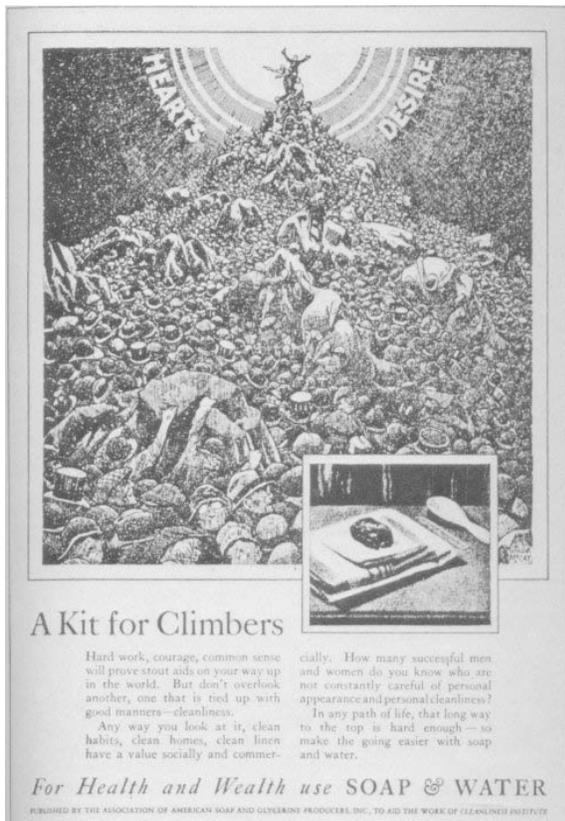
“As we turn through the pages of the press and the periodicals, as we catch the flash of billboards along the railroads and the highways, all of which have become enormous vehicles of the advertising art, I doubt if we realize at all the impressive part that these displays are coming more and more to play in modern life...

“We see that basically it is that of education...It makes new thoughts, new desires, new actions...Rightfully applied, it is the method by which desire is created for better things.”

Desire, in turn, is the crucial element separating the civilized from the uncivilized:

“The uncivilized make little progress because they have few desires. The inhabitants of our country are stimulated to new wants in all directions. In order to satisfy their constantly increasing desires, they necessarily expand their productive powers. They create more wealth because it is only by that method that they can satisfy their wants. It is this constantly enlarging circle that represents the increasing circle of civilization.”²

President Coolidge saw the importance of advertising images in the modern economy, in which need must keep up with industrial output--even if need itself has to be artificially stimulated by the new industry of advertising. Advertising images became icons that began to open up a new dimension of the myth of the autonomous individual, an economic dimension that increasingly identified freedom to choose and the satisfaction of desires with consumption. The linking of desire with products has led some theorists to call our culture “The Culture of Desire.”



Desire is clearly the subject of the 1928 soap ad “Heart’s Desire” (9.5). The ad was aimed at the people who were the underlying subject of President Coolidge’s speech--the largely immigrant working class, who were the potential equivalent, in America, of Europe’s nineteenth-century proletariat. The image contains all the elements of Coolidge’s speech: the circle of civilization, desire, productivity, and progress. It also shows the trodden-down bodies of those who do not quite make the grade in such a competitive system. The civilization of desire can also become a civilization of greed.

Advertising: Icons against Marxism

Just as President Coolidge's description of advertising implied its central and political role, American corporations were aware of its power to undercut the appeal of Marxism, especially during the labor unrest of the period. This dimension of America advertising is the literal content of an early Chevrolet advertisement:

“Every owner is in effect a railroad president...

“The once poor laborer and mechanic now drives to the building operation or construction job in his own car. He is now a capitalist...His wages have been increased from \$1.50 or \$3.00 a day to \$5.00 or \$15.00 a day...

“He has become somebody!...How can Bolshevism flourish in a motorized country...?”³

Bolshevism could not, as American political and business leaders both knew. Karl Marx had no idea of the power of advertising.

The importance of advertising art was not in its artistic merit but in its radically new culture-building effect. Rather than present visual or ideological challenges—as avant-garde artists tried to do—advertiser sought to link their products with what consumers already desired. Because they were so effective in doing so, advertising images, regardless of their artistic merit, emerged as the decisively new icons of the modern era.

We will first explore how ads make ostensibly neutral products so desirable, that is, the strategies used by advertisers to convince us to buy. Then we will analyze the images and ideas in many late-twentieth century print ads.

Strategies of Persuasion

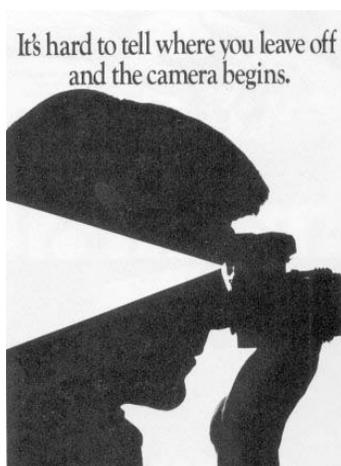
Market research began as early as 1891 when Nathan Fowler analyzed consumer patterns and recommended in *Advertising Age* that because women make most of the purchasing

decisions of their household, manufacturers would do well to direct their advertising messages to them. Since then, ads were increasingly targeted to specific audiences.

Advertisers have deployed a range of strategies to reach these audiences. Increasingly, they have emphasized experience over information. Rather than present us with specific detail about their products—specifics we might think about and compare with the specifics of other products—most ads present us with emotional appeals, seducing us with images of desirable people, places and experiences. Advertisers deploy various strategies to do so. They seek to give power and personality to technological products and to corporations. They also use role models and celebrity endorsements; images of glamour and sex appeal; all kinds of humor; appeals to our longings for stronger bonds of family, friendship and community; as well as promises of leisure, self-improvement, and success. Advertisers integrate catchy popular music and rope us in with contests and special promotions. They also attract our attention by manipulating the visual elements from color to composition to compelling graphics.

Power & Personality for Technological Products

The way advertisers use personal experience rather than information about their products can be seen in ads that give power and personality to technological products.



A Minolta camera ad perfectly illustrates this process. First, the camera is pictured as an extension of the eye: the caption reads: “It’s hard to tell where you leave off and the camera begins.” Second, the caption identifies the camera with the person: “Minolta—When you are the camera and the camera is you” (9.6).

A 1983 advertisement for Saab automobiles takes a slightly different approach. This image accomplishes the first phase of the advertising process by directly fusing the car (the technology) with the personality of the individual. The approach is obviously meant to be humorous, but it is only funny because it dramatizes in a blatant way what we all expect from ads in more subtle terms: “This car (an object) is an extension of you (a person)” (9.7).

IF A CAR IS REALLY AN EXTENSION OF ONE'S PERSONALITY, WHAT KIND OF PERSON WOULD DRIVE A SAAB?

Not long ago, a leading car magazine called Saab owners "the loneliest fringe of the American car-buying public."

Yet according to our statistics, the average Saab owner is male, age 38, college-educated, works in a managerial job, and earns over \$40,000 a year. He is married and has 1.2 children.

The fact is, both descriptions are accurate.

The fringe.

Some people call this person a driving enthusiast; others call him a car nut.

Whatever you call him, he buys a car for one reason: Economy? Who cares. Luggage space? Who needs it. His attitude is if a car doesn't give you goose bumps when you drive it, what's the point of owning it.

For him, even a drive to the supermarket should be exhilarating.

For that, Saab's front-wheel drive and anti-suspension give him the cornering ability of a sports car.

And every time Saab's new APC turbocharger kicks in, he feels like he's just engaged warp drive.

Engineering philosophy doesn't interest him. Results do. Often, he belongs to a car club.

Not the kind with leather jackets and secret handshakes that every month or so,

they sponsor an event called an Autocross. Much to the dismay of the local innkeeper, club members rent their Saabs against the clock through staid suburban parking lots.

Beyond the fringe.

At the other end of the spectrum is the Saab owner who is largely responsible for the respectable statistics that auto club confer.

He bristles at Saab's cult car reputation. He thinks of car clubs in the same light as motorcycle gangs.

Nonetheless, he does realize that many of Saab's "radical" innovations like turbo-charging, front-wheel drive, and aerodynamic design have broader applications than just blowing your neighbor's BMW off the road.

He sees the safety in high performance every time he merges onto a crowded freeway or passes a truck on a two-lane highway.

And, in a Saab APC Turbo, this performance is obtained without sacrificing fuel economy. In fact, the APC system actually improves gas mileage.

He sees the age of Saab's front-wheel drive and four-wheel disc brakes, especially after the first snowfall. Or the last rainfall.

Even Saab's handback design, which some find unconventional, he finds practical, considering that it gives his

Saab the carrying capacity of a station wagon.

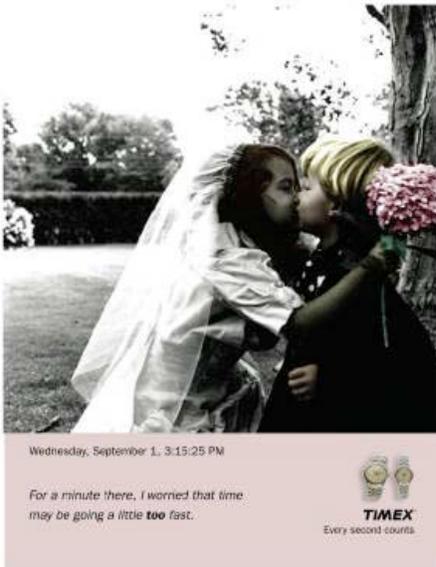
And not only does his Saab have plenty of room for luggage, it also has plenty of room for people. More, in fact, than many other cars.

For those who insist on luxury for luxury's sake, Saab has made one concession. Some turbo models are now equipped with an Exclusive Appointment Group that includes leather-upholstered seats and electric sunroofs. (That's really two concessions, isn't it?)

9.7 Saab advertisement.

This shrewd image is calculated to have a powerful appeal to people who enjoy seeing the structure of advertising ridiculed in its mythic and psychological pretensions. The ad nevertheless does the same thing that it parodies: it connects a certain type of personality (sophisticated, intelligent) with a particular product of technology (the Saab automobile). Its underlying message is: People with superior knowledge of advertising and automobiles choose Saab.

Even if we as individuals actually purchase very few objects or products because of ads like these, they still function as icons for technology in general. They keep us fine-tuned to what is out there, just waiting for our mythic response. The theme of the Timex ads expressed it very well: “We make technology beautiful” (9.8).



9.8 Timex advertisements.

Power & Personality for Organizations

Organizations do more than advertise their products and services; they also use advertising art to counteract any negative effects of the way they must use people to achieve their particular goals (making automobiles, extracting oil, etc.) These advertisements also have a two-stage process: first, they present images that portray the organization as a single “big person”; second, they portray its concern for the welfare, happiness, and freedom of each “little person”—you—as primary.

America’s giant oil companies have been severely criticized for the negative ecological and economic impact of some of their policies; they have used advertising icons to correct this negative impression. A 1980s ARCO ad shows us that the giant hands of the corporation are

gently restoring our environment to its unspoiled condition. Meanwhile, we can relax at home while ARCO brings educational television programs like *Cosmos* into our living rooms.

Texaco ads from the 1980s announced “good news for all living things on this earth” (9.10). The term “good news” is another name for the Christian gospel message. The distinctly messianic tone of this advertising icon becomes even more clear when it is compared with Edward Hicks’ 1846 painting that, through Currier and Ives lithograph copies, became immensely popular. Hicks’ painting presented virtually the same scene as the Texaco ad (9.11). Its title, *Peaceable Kingdom*, refers to the biblical description of the messianic kingdom when “the lion will lie down with the lamb.” Texaco, evidently, is an even bigger and better “person” than ARCO.



9.10 Texaco ad.



9.11 Hicks, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 1835.

Notice, however, that neither of these big persons has yet said anything about selling oil.

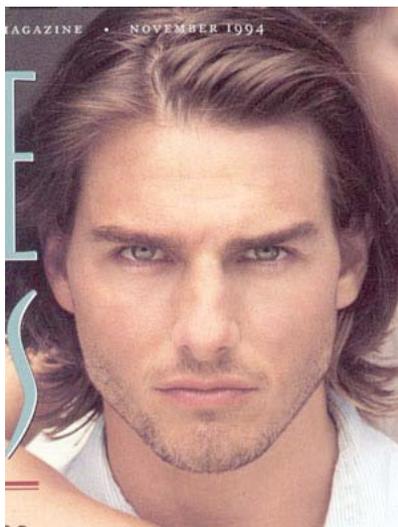
Advertising art’s icons for organizations strive to present them as benign people, large but lovable, pursuing on a gigantic scale what we each pursue as individuals: individual freedom.

Famous personalities, such as Kathryn Zeta-Jones for Cingular cell phones, increase this mythic sense of corporate personality. And what is the mythic bond or feeling these icons would like us to experience in relation to these organizations? One ad puts it quite nicely: “You’re in good hands...”

Like the Texaco ad that visually echoes Hicks’ *Peaceable Kingdom*, many print ads reference art works, art styles, and artists.

John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*

British art historian John Berger was one of the first scholars to examine the relationship between fine arts and advertising. He did so in a video entitled “Fine Arts & Commerce,” the fourth program in the BBC television series that was later summarized the series in his book *Ways of Seeing*. Berger observed that in ads (which he termed “publicity images”), we are surrounded by images of an alternative way of life, images that stimulate our imagination. Advertising persuades us that by buying certain things, our lives will be transformed, that we will become--like the enviable models in advertising images--glamorous. Glamour is the state of being envied.



Berger noted that social envy is a relatively new phenomenon. Until the revolutionary period that initiated the modern world, birth determined where you were on the social scale. In a culture where everyone’s social standing is more or less fixed at birth, social envy does not exist. Social envy occurs in a society which offers dreams of wealth and power to all its members, but actually only allows certain people access to them. Celebrities like Tom Cruise (9.12), Julia Roberts, and Arnold Schwarzenegger are the glamorous or enviable personalities of our society.

Since they both portray the powerful ideals of society, historic oil paintings and contemporary ads have much in common. But oil paintings portrayed the lives of their subjects as they already were. Ads, in contrast, portray our lives as we would like them to be. They portray the lives we desire to have. In doing so, ads play on our fears that we are not desirable, that we are inadequate as we are. There is a big gap between the ideal presented in the ads and who we are. Ads suggest we can fill that gap with a magical purchase.

Ads add up to a philosophical system. As Berger says, advertising “is not merely an assembly of competing messages; it is a language itself which is always being used to make the same general proposal ... It proposes to each of us that we transform ourselves, or our lives, by buying something more. This more, it proposes, will make us in some way richer—even though we will be poorer by having spent our money.”⁴

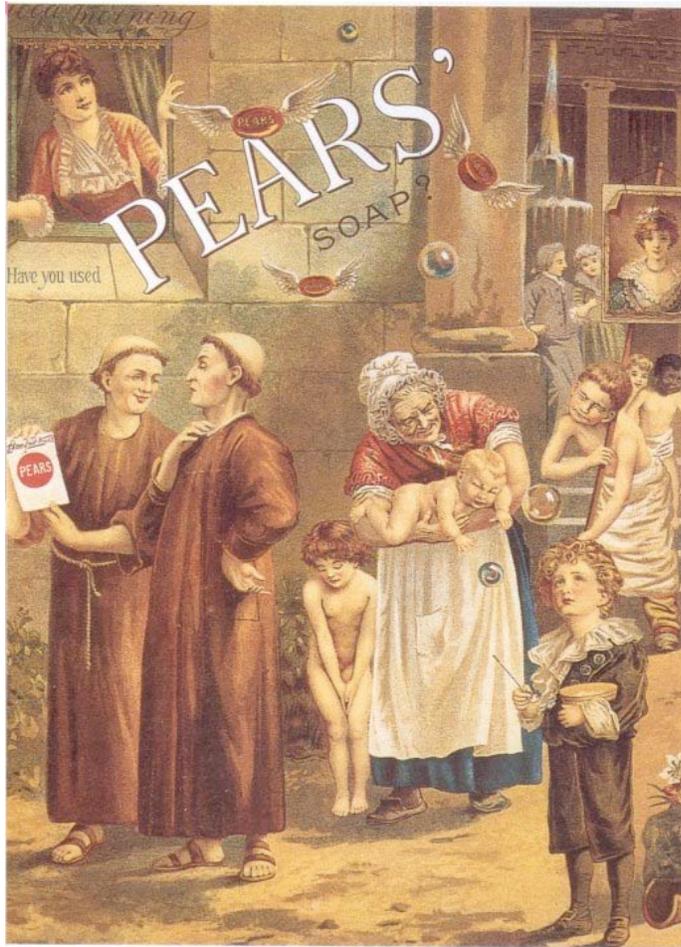
In focusing on ideal bodies, celebrating individualism, and integrating the human and technological worlds, advertising images embody the same cultural values we have seen in the Western art historical tradition from the time of the Renaissance.

Berger argued that ads have a symbiotic relationship with Western culture’s fine arts. The visual language developed during Renaissance is still the model for our ads. Indeed, as we will see below, Renaissance art icons often appear in ads.

During the Renaissance, oil painting was especially invented to render a tangible, real quality. Today photography is used in the same way in ads. In addition, ads echo the devices used in painting: devices of atmosphere, settings, pleasures, objects, poses, symbols of prestige.

In many ways, the development of advertising paralleled that of the fine arts tradition in western culture. In the nineteenth century, academic realism was the dominant visual mode and the first widely distributed advertising images were based on academic paintings. Advertising

copywriter Barry Hoffman notes that *A Child's World* by British academician Sir John Everett Millais (9.13) was “the first museum-quality painting to be used in advertising.”⁵ Thomas J. Barratt, whom Hoffman calls “the father of modern advertising,” used the Millais painting in a wildly popular 1880s advertising campaign for Pears’ Soap.



9.13 Advertisement for Pears’ Soap.

Advertising has appropriated various avant-garde styles, stripping them of their transgressive intentions and re-contextualizing them to promote commodities. Usually the art styles or images in the ads have little or nothing to do with the commodities. Instead, they are deployed to make positive associations between the commodities and the fine arts tradition, and to generate visual appeal in the ad itself. For example, when advertisers used Russian

As advertising entered the twentieth century, it began to reflect avant-garde visual modes. From the light-infused color of Impressionism to the geometric abstraction of Russian Revolutionary graphics to the rebellious and anti-establishment approach of Dada to the dream- and fantasy-based imagery of Surrealism to the expressive abstraction of American action painting, all of the early avant-garde styles have been employed to sell commodities.

Revolutionary art to promote Stolichnaya Vodka, images originally generated to promote a communist regime were used in the service of capitalist profit.

***Mona Lisa* as Advertising Icon**



9.14 Advertisement for Sony Beta Cassettes.

beautiful woman who is now unique for being common.”⁶ He reproduces ads for spaghetti sauces, video cameras, art galleries, milk, corporate conglomerates and cars, all based on Leonardo’s masterpiece. An early 1980s ad for Sony Beta-Cassettes (the forerunner of videotape cartridges) used the image of the *Mona Lisa* (9.14) to visually establish a parallel between the perfection of Leonardo’s masterwork and the high quality of the “picture-perfect pictures” that consumers could expect from the Sony product.

Advertising, Freud & Surrealism

Sometimes advertising artists don’t use specific art historical icons. Instead, they allude to art historical styles. One of the most popular styles in advertising is Surrealism, the avant-

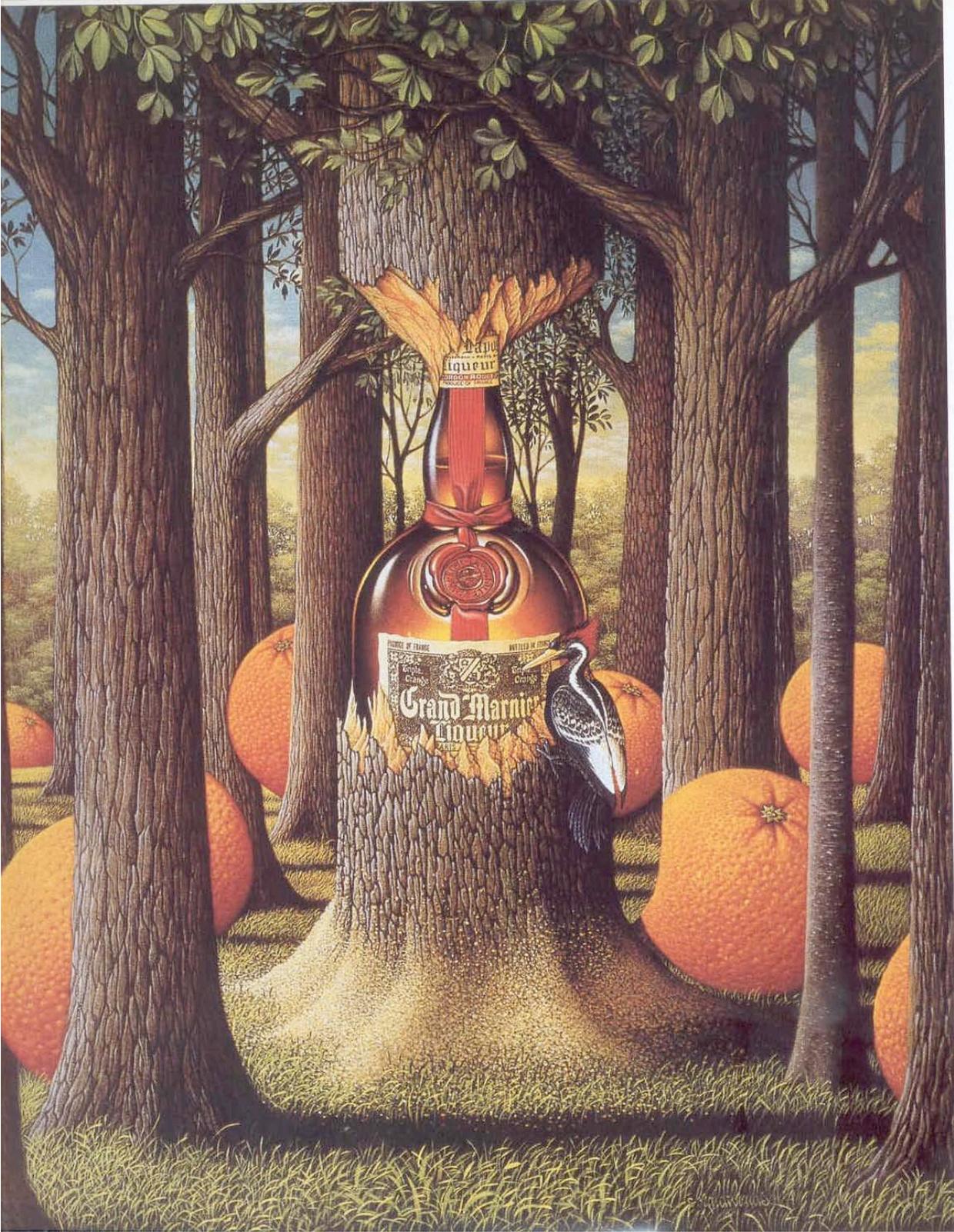
We have already seen that Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* is one of the most important icons of western culture, so it comes as no surprise that the painting has been used in numerous ad campaigns. Hoffman calls *Mona Lisa* “The Queen of All Media” and discusses how “the most used, most revered, most overdone, most frequently evoked image in all of fine art is looked at again and again, revealing an enigmatically

garde style based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theories. As Hoffman notes, "Dali and other surrealists manipulate and distort the mundane actuality of the world we live in to reveal the imagined world of our hidden desires. With different goals and different motives, this is exactly the conceptual space where advertising is most often at home."⁷

The relationship between Surrealism and advertising has an interesting history. Several of the Surrealists were involved in advertising in one way or another. In addition to being a fashion model in her youth, Surrealist photographer **Lee Miller** supported herself as a product photographer for several years. Spanish Surrealist painter **Remedios Varo** did illustrations for Bayer pharmaceuticals ads. Salvador Dali created an ad for Datsun, showing the car driving across one of his signature rubbery clocks. He was hired by New York City department stores to design window displays, using psychologically charged images to entice people to buy. Later, a photograph of Dali himself was used in a campaign for Gap khakis.

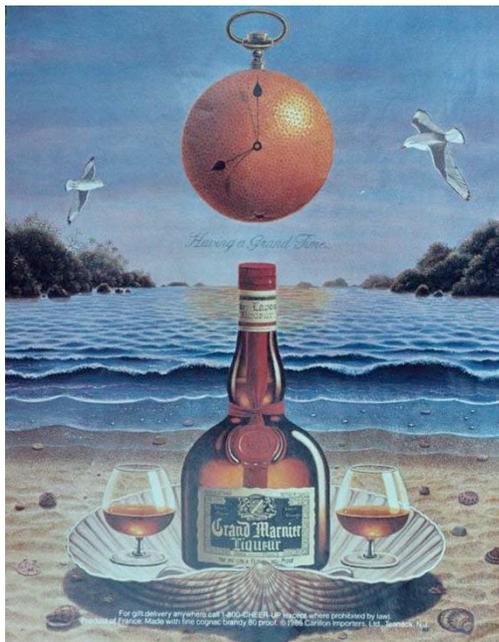
The link between advertising and Freud's ideas is not limited to Surrealist imagery, however. Freud's nephew **Edward Bernays** (1891-1995) went from overseeing a campaign to popularize Freud's theories in the US to working for the American Tobacco Company, where he developed a campaign to encourage women to think of cigarettes as "Torches of Freedom." Using Freud's ideas as tools to convince people to "buy" both products and ideas, Bernays was a founder of modern public relations.

Bernays' work has been used for widely divergent ends. During World War II, German propagandist Joseph Goebbels used techniques from Bernays' book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* in the Nazi campaign against the Jews. Today, Bernays' mix of Freudian psychological insight and public relations helps advertisers manipulate viewers cumulatively and largely unconsciously.



9.16 Grand Marnier Liqueur advertisement.

Grand Marnier Liqueur has developed an ongoing campaign around Surrealist-inspired paintings that include images of the Grand Marnier bottle (9.16). One ad shows a forest of tall trees interspersed with gigantic oranges. A redheaded woodpecker pecks at the trunk of the central tree, revealing the Grand Marnier bottle inside the wood. Another ad uses a painting that echoes the pictorial devices of Salvador Dali. The clock is an orange, recalling not only Dali's *Persistence of Memory* painting, but also a statement by Dali's friend, Surrealist poet Federico Garcia Lorca: "One must begin to express the inexpressible. The sea fits within an orange."⁸ In the Dali-related Grand Marnier ad, the vertical bottle flanked by two round glasses would certainly function as a Freudian phallic symbol. The bottle and glasses are placed inside a large shell, Freudian symbol for female genitalia. What is symbolically implied, then, is sex on the beach. Of course the advertisers don't verbally state, "Drink Grand Mariner and you will have great sex on the beach." Instead, they say it visually, employing Freudian dream symbols to telegraph that message to the viewer's unconscious.



Advertisers know that most of us don't spend much time examining ads. They know that most of us don't even read the text in ads. Instead, we flip through ads rapidly as we scan the content of magazines. Advertisers hope that the visuals they generate will affect us on a subconscious level. Which is why so many ads use Surrealist imagery, precisely the imagery created to depict the unconscious world of dreams and fantasies.

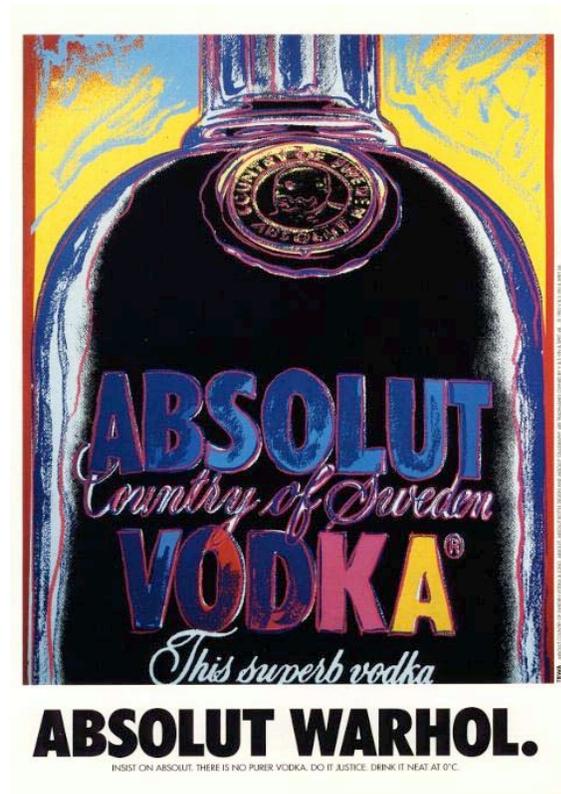
Paepcke & CCA Ads

Since the late nineteenth century, advertisers have hired well-known artists to create advertising images. In the 1940s and 1950s, Walter Paepcke turned Container Corporation of America into a virtual patron of the arts. He hired artists from Surrealist **Rene Magritte** to Abstract Expressionist **Willem de Kooning** to Pop painter **James Rosenquist** to create ads for his company. Paepcke was an idealist. In words echoing those of French utopian philosopher Saint Simon, Paepcke wrote, “The artist and the businessman should cultivate every opportunity to teach and supplement one another, to cooperate with one another, just as the nations of the world must do. Only in such a fusion of talents, abilities, and philosophies can there be even a modest hope for the future, a partial alleviation of the chaos and misunderstandings of today.”⁹

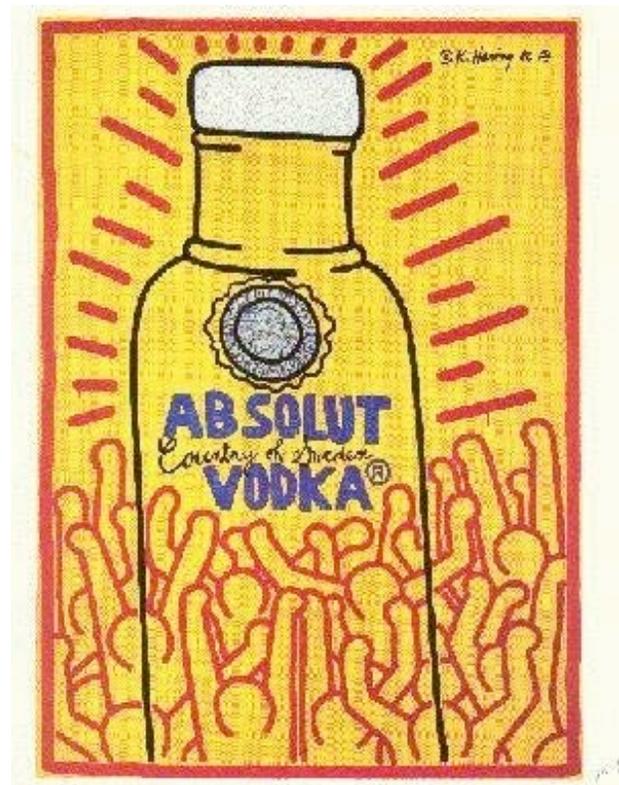
Whatever their visions for the future, many other corporate heads began to follow Paepcke’s lead in using artists for advertisements. Dole Pineapple hired American painter **Georgia O’Keeffe**, and De Beers commissioned **Picasso** and others to equate the lasting values of art with their diamonds. The most celebrated advertising campaign based on avant-garde artists’ work is that for Absolut Vodka.

Alcohol as Art: The Absolut Vodka Campaign

In the early 1980s, Absolut ads pictured the bottle of vodka with a halo around its neck and a headline that read: “Absolut Perfection.” Then, in 1985, Michel Roux asked Pop artist **Andy Warhol** (discussed in Chapter 12) to paint the Absolut bottle (**9.17**). The company was continuing a long tradition of alcohol ads. As Barry Hoffman notes. “From the outset the campaign followed a ruling convention of liquor advertising: make the bottle the hero. Getting Warhol to paint the hero, however, was anything but conventional and earned unconventional success. There is no better example of the symbiosis between high art and advertising.”¹⁰



9.17 Andy Warhol, *Absolut Warhol*.



9.18 Keith Haring, *Absolut Haring*.

Absolut markets its vodka as an elite product unusual for its purity. When other vodka producers also began to produce high-end “designer” vodka, Absolut introduced its art campaign in hopes of winning back its market share. (The Absolut strategy recalls the Catholic Church’s decision to use art to win back congregants who were abandoning the Church during the Protestant Reformation.) After Warhol, California Pop artist **Ed Ruscha** and New York graffiti artist **Keith Haring** were among the many artists to add their images to the hundreds of Absolut vodka ads (9.18).

In order to convince its customers to associate its product with the rarefied world of the fine arts, Absolute has sponsored many fine arts events, offering artists and patrons unlimited free vodka drinks during exhibition openings and other artistic celebrations. Several times during the 1990s, Absolut sponsored receptions, fundraisers and other art events throughout Southern

California, donating untold dozens of cases of flavored vodka in the hopes that wealthy art patrons would consume and enjoy their drinks.

On December 14, 2003, Absolut vodka paid the *Los Angeles Times* to insert an ad entitled “Absolut Wonder” into newspapers distributed to select areas of the city. Sealed in a clear plastic envelope was a large foil cutout that could be opened to make a snowflake decoration. The Absolut bottle shape was the central “spine” of the snowflake and was repeated in each of the many branches of the cutout form. Consumers were urged to “Cozy up to an ABSOLUT WONDER this winter. Created especially for the holidays, this unique drink embodies the wonderful characteristics of the season. Show your spirit and give your ABSOLUT WONDER a twirl. As a party favorite or as a gift, nothing complements a warm gathering of friends during the holidays like a chilled bottle of ABSOLUT.” After detailing the recipe for an Absolut Wonder holiday drink, consumers were told to “Set your snowflake free at absolut.com/wonder.” At tremendous expense, the Absolut advertisers endeavored to connect their product with both the gift giving and creativity of the holiday season. If such a link was established in the minds of consumers, however consciously or unconsciously, Absolut could count on higher sales throughout December.

Alcohol Advertising

Many ads promote ostensibly neutral products that do little or no damage to consumers or to the environment. Alcohol is not, however, a neutral product. It is an addictive drug that is responsible for many of the ongoing health problems of the Western World. At first a stimulant, then a depressant, alcohol impairs judgment and, when consumed in excess, brings on a lingering malaise.

Alcoholism is one of the most deadly and wide spread diseases in America. Companies that produce hard liquor like vodka have been prevented by the Federal Communications Commission from creating television commercials that show people drinking. Undaunted, they have turned their time, energy, and considerable financial wherewithal to print ads. Since the 1890s, when alcohol ads first appeared in popular national magazines such as *Harper's Weekly*, they have provided a significant percentage of advertising income for US publications.

Gordon's Gin: Woman Artist as Ad Character

Sometimes alcohol advertisers present figures who play the role of artists. A print ad for Gordon's Gin presents what appears to be a woman artist painting on the beach (9.19). She wears an entirely white outfit and her male companion tugs at it to reveal the side of her large breasts. Of course this is not really a serious woman artist. If she were, she wouldn't be painting in all white clothes, nor would she want her boyfriend to be pulling her clothes off as she worked. Instead, the advertisers are using the image of an artist to mask their real intention: linking their product with the fantasy of a sexual encounter on the beach.

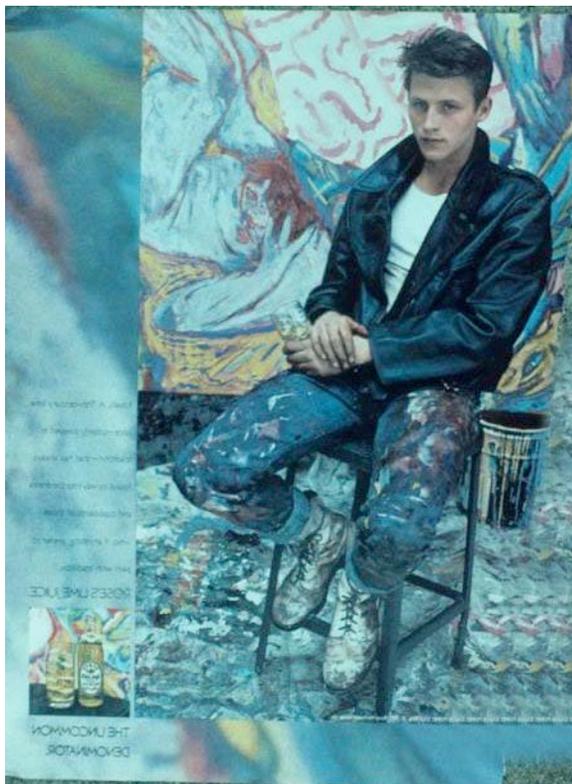


9.19 Advertisement for Gordon's Gin.

Advertisers often use compositional devices developed by painters to direct the viewer's gaze. Notice that the Gordon's Gin bottle is placed in the lower right hand corner of the ad. Viewers scan the ad as they do pages of written text: left to right, top to bottom. After scanning the glamorous image of two young people playing flirtatiously on the beach, the last thing the viewer sees is the product image. Sex and romance are visually linked to the commodity.

Karl Marx used the term "reification" to refer to the capitalist process of representing a human being as a physical thing deprived of agency or individuality. Certainly ads like this one, which links sexuality with alcoholic beverages, contribute to reification as they represent human interactions in relation to physical objects.

Rose's Lime Juice: Artist as Rebel



A 1980s ad for Rose's Lime Juice presents a young, blonde man in his studio (9.20). Behind him is a large painting characterized by wild, gestural, brushstrokes. Apparently, he is heir to the avant-garde style of Abstract Expressionism. Only on second viewing does the reclining nude woman in the painting become visible. Her raised, spread legs are seen immediately to the right of the man's torso.

From the waist down, it is apparent that the young man has been painting in an avant-garde, action painting manner: his jeans are splattered with paint. But from the waist up, his clothes are stain-free. He wears a white

T-shirt and a black leather jacket. Combined with his short, swept-back hair, his clothes make him look like James Dean, the young star of Hollywood cult film *Rebel without a Cause* (1955, US, Nicholas Ray). That the advertisers want viewers to see the figure and interpret it as rebellious James Dean-cum-avant-garde artist is confirmed by the text that addresses itself to those who “prefer to part with tradition.” Rose’s Lime Juice, a product once associated with older men who drank old-fashioned cocktails, uses advertising visuals to attract the young and rebellious in order to expand its market share.

The Rose’s Lime Juice bottle is, like the Gordon’s Gin bottle in the previous ad, in the lower right hand corner--the last thing a viewer would see when scanning the page, the image closest to their right hand as they flip the page of the magazine.

Cutty Sark: Drink to Enter the Upper Class



A 1980s ad for Cutty Sark pairs a colored image of the product (once again, in the lower right hand corner) with an elegant black and white photograph of people who drink the scotch--

or, more accurately, actors portraying the glamorous life the advertisers want consumers to link with their product (9.21). The text line, “When you live a Cutty above” leads the viewer’s eye to the central male figure. Tall, handsome, with striking gray hair, he stands holding his drink and wearing an elegant tuxedo. He appears to be giving advice to a younger, also tuxedoed man, who reaches down to hold the hand of a seated woman one presumes to be his wife. The beautiful woman’s hair, face and attire recall Jackie Kennedy, who was first wife of American president John F. Kennedy, then wife of the wealthiest man on earth, Aristotle Onassis. The composition pivots on her gaze, first towards the dog she pets, then up to two other well-attired men who appear to be discussing something from the newspaper one holds. The ad clearly envisions the world of wealth, power, and high finance. Cutty Sark advertisers can’t SAY that you will enter this glamorous world if you purchase and consume their product. But they certainly imply it visually.

“Still Killing Us Softly”: The Ideal Image of Woman

The woman in the Cutty Sark ad, like the woman in the Gordon’s Gin ad discussed above, is beautiful, slender and white. Both conform to the ideal image of woman that dominates mass culture; both are portrayed as the objects of the male gaze. In the widely distributed educational video “Still Killing Us Softly,” Jean Kilbourne argues that the objectification of women in advertising images is linked to violence against women.¹¹

Kilbourne observes that ads sell not only products, but also attitudes and concepts. Ads are the propaganda of American society. They teach us all to be consumers. Ads also contribute to the cultural constructions of sexual difference. In ads, men are equated with dominance and brutality, women with passiveness and powerlessness.

Ads surround us with images of ideal female beauty. The ideal look is totally flawless, totally artificial, and it is the only standard of beauty presented. Ads tell women that their beauty depends on learning how to buy the right products. The underlying message is: You're ugly, you're disgusting, buy something to change the way you are.

[SIDEBAR: Images of ideal women's bodies have had increasing impact on American women. 8.7 million cosmetic plastic surgeries were performed in 2003—up an astonishing 33% from 2002—and 7.2 of the 8.7 million were women. In addition to ads, television dramas like “Nip/Tuck” (9.22) as well as the reality programs “The Swan,” “Extreme Makeover,” and “I Want a Celebrity Face” certainly make cosmetic surgery seem more desirable and more acceptable.]



9.22 production still from Nip/Tuck.

Ads dehumanize, objectify and fragment women's bodies. Ads often present women's bodies as another piece of merchandise--not just a thing, a thing to be sold. Turning a human into

a thing is the first step to doing violence against that human. Kilbourne says that advertising images do not cause violence towards women, but they contribute to a climate in which violence against women is possible.

Kilbourne discusses other serious consequences to the objectification of women in ads. The widespread contempt for women who are overweight has led 80% of American women to think they're fat and one out of five women has an eating disorder. Ads of idealized women's bodies may contribute to eating disorders.

Two contemporary artists have responded to the ads and to eating disorders with an artwork that draws people together in multi-faceted ways.

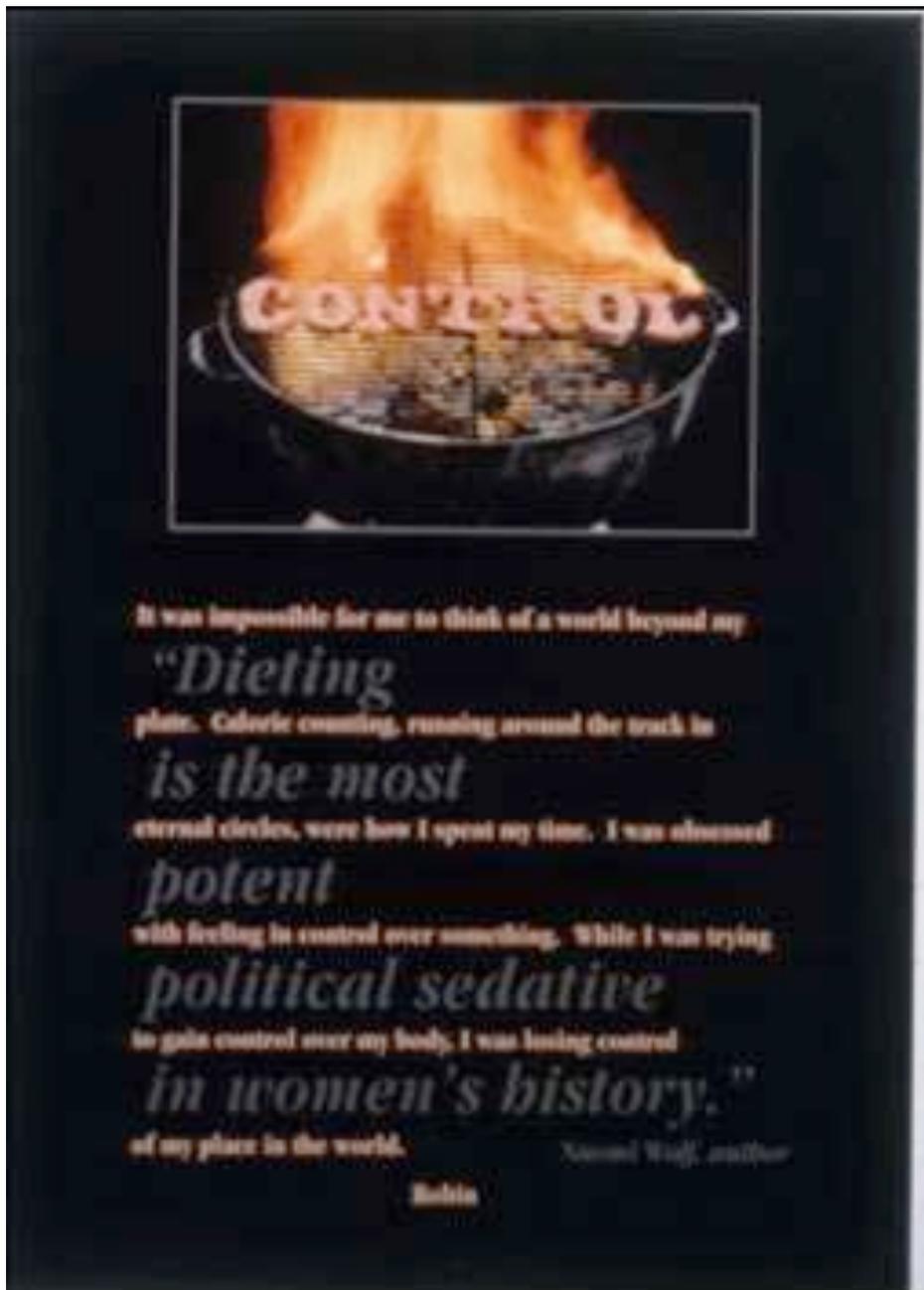
Eating Disorders, Ads & Art

Five to eight million Americans suffer from eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia and compulsive overeating. Even as the news media warn us about such diseases, ads inundate us with impossibly idealized body images for both sexes. In order to address these issues artistically, California artists **Robin Lasser** and **Kathryn Sylva** have created *Eating Disorders in a Disordered Culture*, a visual research project designed for gallery and museum exhibitions, public art spaces such as billboards and bus shelters, and the Web (www.eating.ucdavis.edu).

The beautifully designed interactive exhibition centers on a large dining table set with plates that are incised with brief testimonies. Viewers sit at the table and use earphones to hear personal stories of eating disorder survivors.

The exhibition walls are lined with powerful images that combine photographs of words sculpted out of hamburger meat, burning on the grill of a flaming barbecue. Over the photographs are texts. The piece titled *Control* presents a quote from Naomi Wolf: "Dieting is the most potent political sedative in women's history." Interspersed with that text is a testimony

from a woman with an eating disorder: “It was impossible for me to think of a world beyond my plate. Calorie counting and running around the track in eternal circles, were how I spent my time. I was obsessed with feeling in control over something. While I was trying to gain control over my body, I was losing control of my place in the world” (9.23).



9.23 Robin Lasser and Kathryn Sylva, “Control,” *Eating Disorders in a Disordered Culture*.

Lasser and Sylva's *Eating Disorders in a Disordered Culture* is an artistic nexus of ritual and cognitive enhancement presented as personal narratives in resonant aesthetic form. The work not only informs but also builds community between people with eating disorders and those who have been affected by people with eating disorders—which includes a lot of us. Shifting the creative focus from artist to audience and emphasizing the importance of direct engagement with communities through shared authorship and collaboration, Lasser and Sylva's art is precisely the kind of project that art historian Suzi Gablik argues can heal the societal scars that separate and alienate us. It is art that Gablik says can build community amongst diverse people. "Community, as it is being enacted here, is the ability to touch others in ways that matter to them—to give them a voice... Community is the starting point for new modes of relatedness, in which the paradigm of social conscience replaces that of the individual genius...[This is] art which speaks to the power of connectedness and establishes bonds, art that calls us into relationship."¹² To build community is to work against the power of ads, which are intended to address each of us as individual consumers.

One strategy that advertisers use to address us as individuals—rather than as members of a larger community—is to appeal to our sexual desires.

Sex Sells

We have all heard that "sex sells." But few of use have analyzed why sex sells. One way to begin thinking about it is to realize that as human animals, we need several basic things to survive. First is air. Without pausing to comment on the quality of air we breathe, it is safe to say that few of us has ever had the experience of worrying about where the next breath will come from. Second on the list of things necessary for survival is water. Like air, few of us have been out of reach of water. Third is food. Although there are, tragically, thousands of hungry people in

this country and throughout the world, advertisers are not targeting them. Advertisers want to appeal to people who have money for and access to all the food they need. Fourth is shelter. Again, there are tragically thousands of homeless here and abroad, but they are, as John Berger asserted, on the other side of the advertising horizon. Ads are not meant for the homeless; they are meant for people who have homes to return to each night.

Fifth on the list of things necessary for human survival is reproduction, which is usually accomplished by sexual intercourse, a physical action associated with powerful emotional desires. For a thousand years now, one of the most compelling myths of western culture has been the romantic myth. Originating in the middle ages, the romantic myth surrounds the biological process of sexual reproduction with complex layers of desire. Today, advertising is one of the primary venues for images of romantic desire. As President Coolidge said, advertising is “the method by which desire is created.”

Romantic desire is so complicated today that few people in our culture are able to sustain sexually satisfying relationships throughout their adulthood. Surveys among American college students--young, vital, healthy people--indicate that fewer than one third of them are actively involved in sexually satisfying relationships at any time.

In other words, one of the things that our culture spends much of its time presenting as desirable--and this happens in all the mass media, from books to film to magazines to television--is at the same time constructed as so complex as to be difficult to achieve. There is, as Berger noted, a tremendous gap between what we desire and what we actually have. Advertisers promise, visually, that through the magical purchase, this gap will be filled. Indeed, one of the most successful clothing companies in the country is named The Gap.

Selling Sexuality: The 2003 Abercrombie & Fitch Catalogue

One of The Gap's biggest competitors is the Abercrombie & Fitch clothing company. Along with individual print ads, Abercrombie & Fitch markets also its products through the *A&F Quarterly* publication. The Christmas 2003 issue (sold in the stores for seven dollars) was 280 pages of photographs of breathtakingly beautiful young people, only some of whom were wearing Abercrombie & Fitch clothes. Many of the young people were absolutely naked. In one layout, for example, four beautiful blonde women pulled flannel underpants of a reclining young man (9.24). On the next page, they fondled his perfectly "buff" body.



The overt sexuality of the Abercrombie & Fitch catalogues has made them quite controversial. The introductory text of the advertisement-cum-magazine reads: "...we'd like to ask forgiveness from some of the people we've offended over the years...If you'd be so kind,

please offer our apologies to the following: the Catholic League, former Lt. Governor Corrine Wood of Illinois, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Stanford University Asian American Association, N.O.W., M.A.D.D., thong-wearing teens, Starr Jones, Jonathan Taylor Thomas, vegans, Mrs. Claus, and the impotent. Thanks!” Coy apologies aside, the Abercrombie & Fitch catalogue is intended to provoke.

No doubt provocation was one of the intentions of the two-page layout that depicted eleven nude people and was labeled, “Group Sex.” This layout was followed by eight pages of beautiful nude people frolicking and embracing in an Adirondack river. Group sex has not been so enticingly visualized since Thomas Couture’s *Romans of the Decadence*. Echoing erotic devices established in Academic paintings, the Abercrombie & Fitch images suggest that young people should desire to be flawlessly beautiful, always sexual, and always sexually available. To achieve their desires, all they have to do is purchase the clothes illustrated in the catalogue-advertisement.

John Lahr could have been talking about the Abercrombie & Fitch catalogue when he said, “Society drives people crazy with lust and calls it advertising.”¹³

Cruise Line Ads & Sex

A 1987 ad for a cruise line from the *Los Angeles Times* was equally egregious in its use of sexual imagery to sell a product (9.25). The ad shows a slim, attractive woman in a white bathing suit. She stands in thigh-deep water holding a mask and snorkel in her right hand. She lifts her left arm to her head as if to push her hair back. She wears an expression that can be best described as orgasmic. And between her legs slides a small cruise ship, its tall smokestack rising vertically, aimed directly at the woman’s genitals. The ship itself becomes a phallus, and the

cruise a promise for sexual fulfillment. Again, the advertisers don't *write* come on this cruise and you'll have a lot of great sex. But they certainly say so visually.

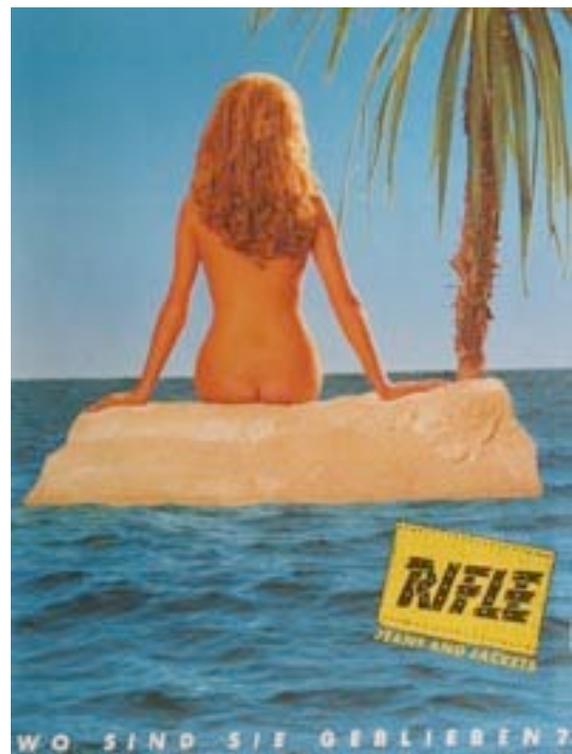
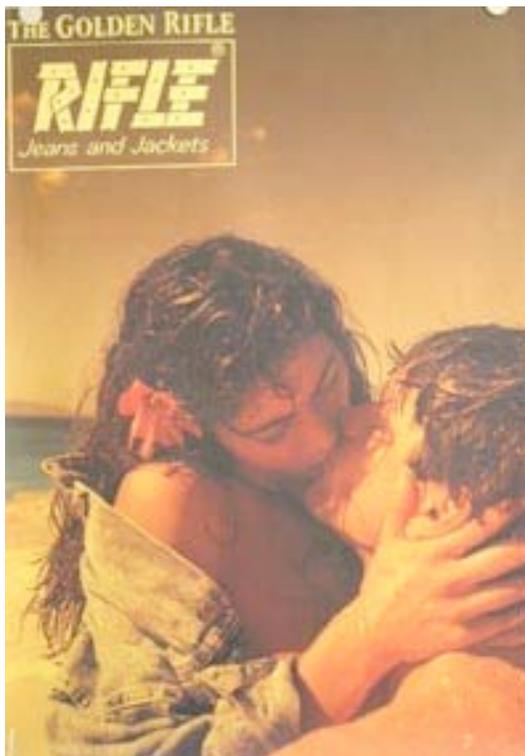


Hair Products & Sexual Bondage

A 1992 ad for Oggi hair-care products takes the sexual references even farther. A beautiful nude woman reclines, her eyes closed and her mouth open in a moan of sexual pleasure. Her long hair wraps around her body like bondage straps. The name of the product? “The Moist Penetrator”(9.26).



Bondage allusions are more explicit in 1990s ads for Golden Rifle. A partially clad woman stands on the beach, rope wrapped around her slim body. To her right is a young man, crawling beast-like towards her. She becomes his sexual prey, he her predator. But there is no indication of the nature of the product in this ad. The advertisers want you to associate a certain kind of sexuality with their product name, so that however unconsciously, you will be compelled to purchase a Golden Rifle when you see their label (9.27).

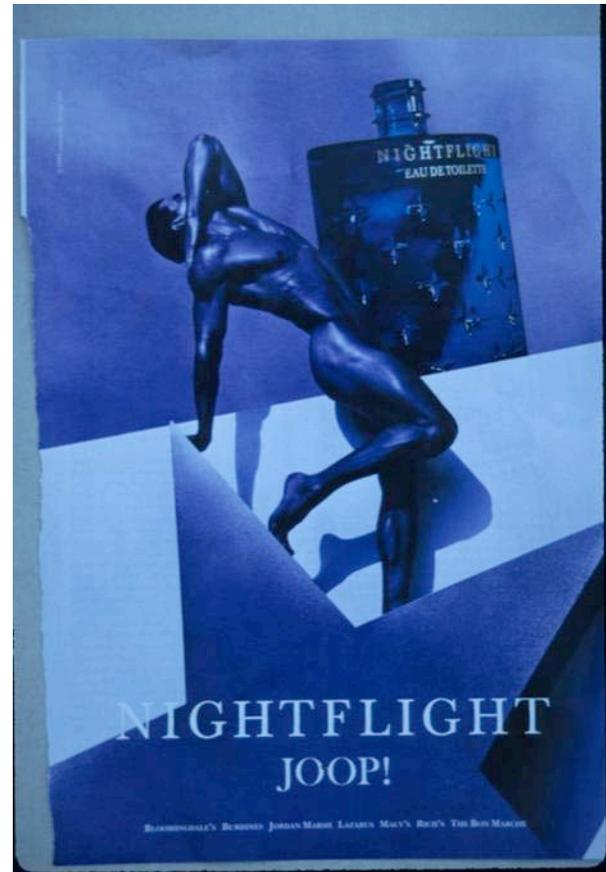


Joop! & Priapus

Sexuality can be associated with all manner of products, from cell phones (tanned onto a model's stomach in one ad) to wristwatches (worn by a gorgeous nude woman in another). Often, sexuality is associated with perfume and cologne ads.

Several ads for Night Flight cologne by Joop! depict an idealized athletic male posed on an angular platform next to a large bottle of the perfume (9.28). A shadow in the bottle arches

away from his torso, like an immense phallus. However unconsciously, viewers of the Joop! ad see the man as a modern Priapus, the Greek God of procreation, who was portrayed in ancient times with a large erect penis. The ad presents the ideal male body as a sculptural object, with a “hard body” and an enormous sex organ. This is the only male ideal offered in advertising, and similar figures appear everywhere from the Abercrombie & Fitch catalogue to the sometimes controversial Calvin Klein ads.



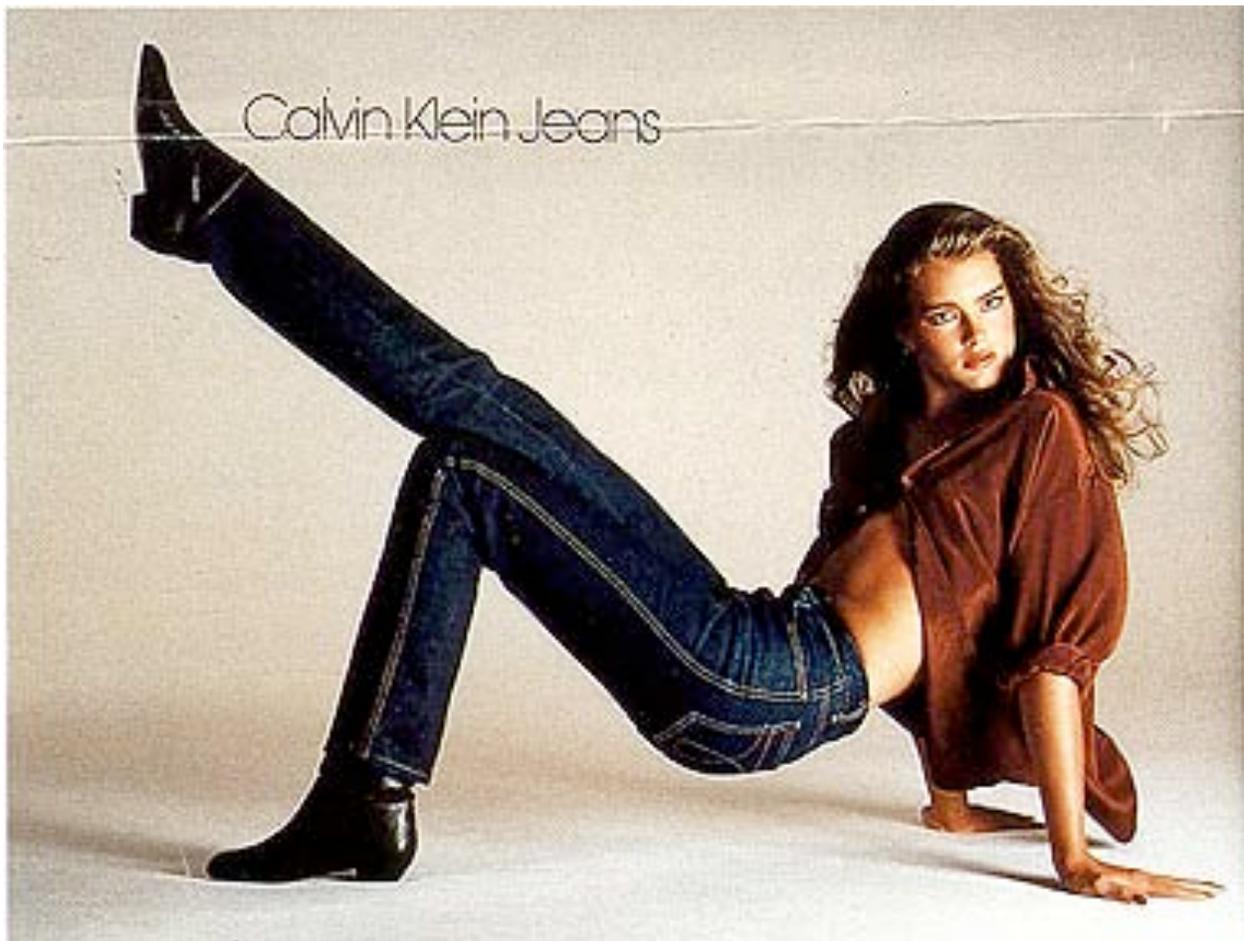
Calvin Klein Ads: Objectifying The Bodies of the Young & Low Class

Calvin Klein ads are notorious for objectifying men as well men as women. Their ads for Obsession perfume depict young, well-tanned, athletic models in erotic embrace. When the idealized, sculpture-like figures of the models are posed in front of architectural structures, the images recall the idealization of the human form employed for propaganda purposes by the Nazis.

In the 1990s, some of the Calvin Klein models were portrayed in tacky interiors resembling trailer parks, so that they were coded as low class. Art historian Richard Martin observes that Klein’s transgression in such “tawdry” images comes from exposing the class distinctions in a country that pretends to be classless.¹⁴ Like the low class prostitutes in

nineteenth century avant-garde paintings, the “trailer trash” youths were sexually available but stripped of their human dignity.

Calvin Klein ads are also notorious for objectifying and sexualizing very young models. The company used a **Richard Avedon** photograph of Brooke Shields for a 1980 ad. The 15-year old model was paired with what Martin terms a “provocative declaration”: “Nothing comes between me and my Calvins” (9.29).¹⁵



9.29 Richard Avedon, advertisement for Calvin Klein Jeans.

In the summer of 1995, Calvin Klein ran an advertising campaign that was so transgressive that the FBI considered prosecuting the company for violating child pornography laws. Magazine ads showed apparently pre-teenage models in semi-nude provocative poses. One

ad, for example, featured an upskirt crotch shot of a young girl. Another parallel ad showed a boy with cut-off jeans so short that his underwear was visible. Radio spots aired at the same time employed a middle-aged man's voice telling a young girl how attractive she was in the "Calvin Kleins."

The synergy of the magazine and radio ads suggested—at a minimum—a precocious level of sexual awareness in what appeared to be preteen models. The direct glance of the young girls in the ad referred to above reproduced the precise shock effect of Manet's *Olympia*, who disturbed 19th century Parisians by locking her gaze with theirs in a moment of mutual recognition. *Olympia*, however—in the painting and in real life—was herself an adult, and was clearly represented in an adult sexual context.

Calvin Klein, of course, knew from avant-garde examples like Manet's that public outrage evoked by provocative images could give him invaluable free publicity and the reputation—among those hungry for ways to prove their unconventional uniqueness—for being avant-garde, cutting edge. Most of all, the emotional kick of outraging middle class values could then be transferred to any commodity bearing the CK label: underwear, glasses or perfume.

Calvin Klein is a leading exploiter of sex-as-shock, but advertising's appropriation of the avant-garde tradition is that ANY shocking emotion can be conjured up and laminated onto a product...and then transferred to the buyer, who feels more "cool" or avant-garde, without going through the avant-garde creative process.

Advertisers and corporation have learned that they can use any powerful emotion to create an ersatz form of avant-garde shock or "cool" to connect their commodities with the emotional lives of consumers. Another example is Benetton's "The United Colors of Benetton" campaign.

“The United Colors of Benetton”: Avant-Garde Shock to Sell

The Benetton ads have used a truly astonishing array of photographs, including scenes of incredible human suffering—none of which have any relationship to their products—in order to give their label a sense of transgressive avant-garde cool. Photos of child laborers in the Third World, of a young man dying of AIDS (who looks like Christ), or a bloody scene after a terrorist explosion have all been used as ads whose only text has been “United Colors of Benetton” (9.30). Unlike the aborted FBI prosecution of Calvin Klein in America, however, the German government in 1995 successfully prosecuted its case against three Benetton “Shock” advertisements and had them banned in Germany. The legal language of the German court summarized the immorality that can underlie advertising’s practice of “avant-garde” shock:

“Benetton is trying, through its depiction of the intense suffering of living things, to evoke a feeling of compassion on the part of the consumer and to suggest that it is sympathetic. In this way, Benetton tries to enhance its name and its business in the mind of the consumer.”



9.30 Advertisement for United Colors of Benetton.

The defense of the ads by a Benetton spokesperson makes the avant-garde shock strategy even more evident. After accurately noting that the very nature of advertising is to make intense emotional appeals, Marina Galanti concluded: “The idea behind our advertising works...” She added that other companies “just use different emotions—greed, lust, whatever.”¹⁶

Galanti explicitly stated that any emotion would do, as long as it is strong enough to enter the emotional inner world of the viewer. She went on to comment that Benetton regularly visits European art schools to pick up on emerging avant-garde styles.

[SIDEBAR: Advertising attempt to link and commerce is most obvious in a two-page ad in *Vogue* magazine from May 2004. On the right hand page is a photograph of the Infiniti G35 Sport Coupe. The entire left-hand page is filled with the names of avant-garde art movements from Impressionism to Fauvism to Surrealism. Scanning left to right, readers see all the labels for artistic creativity, then visually link them with the image of the car (9.31).]

For most of its history, advertising was primarily directed at European and Euro-American consumers. Benetton’s ads of global suffering were placed in magazines primarily marketed to comfortably middle class white readers.

Historically, people outside advertising’s intended audience have been visually presented as “Other.” In other words, ads have continued to self/other bipolar opposition of Western culture, visually communicating to their intended audiences a sense of dominance and superiority over those on the other side of the “advertising horizon.”

Advertisements & the “Other”

Anthropologist William O’Barr has studied the representation of people considered “Other” by the Euro-Americans who have dominated the US advertising industry. He argues “that the representations of foreigners and other categories of outsiders who appear in

advertisements provide paradigms for relations between members of advertising's intended audience and those defined as outside it. These paradigms constitute an ideological guide for relations between the self and others, between us and them. The most frequently depicted qualities of such relationships are hierarchy, dominance, and subordination."¹⁷ According to O'Barr, in order to understand such images, we must ask three questions. First, how are the people in a certain cultural category ideally portrayed? Second, how do the people in that category relate to others? And third, how are these relationships depicted?



In the 1920s, US railroads promoted their services by offering trips through the great American West. One Santa Fe railroad ad from 1929 shows three smiling white children leaning out the window of a train car. The text reads, “Gee! We are going to see real, live Indians. Here is a real Out West Outing—the Indian Detour, Grand Canyon, Colorado Rockies, California”¹⁸ (9.32). The “Indian Detour” is offered as one of six possible selections for summer train trips, alongside the natural wonders

of the Grand Canyon and California. To equate Native Americans with physical spectacles is to treat them like objects and thereby de-humanize them.

The same approach can be seen in a Kodak ad that O'Barr reproduces (9.33). The ad features a photograph of Arizona's Canyon de Chelly. An “All-American” family of mother, father, and two kids is seen on the left. The father points his camera to the scene unfolding to the right. In the center of the photograph, framed by the towering stone spires of the canyon, a Navajo woman in traditional attire watches over her sheep. The text of the ad refers to the “grandeur” of the scenery—but does not acknowledge the people who own and live on the land.

The Native American residents are subsumed by the spectacle, as fodder for the camera's mechanized gaze.

The grandeur comes home with you — in pictures on Kodak film!

How would you describe a magnificent sight like this, since you came back home? With words alone, it would be difficult. But when you take along a Kodak camera and Kodak film, it's easy to bring back all the beauty and grandeur—exactly as you saw it.

This is because all Kodak films are created for uniform high quality and dependable performance. A good example is KODACHROME II film, the new, better color film for movies and slides.

After Kodak scientists had tested and produced KODACHROME II film in laboratory, Kodak test-manufactured this film to span the United States was tested in every conceivable light color situation, tried out in every

region, exposed to Arctic cold and jungle heat, measured and rated its every point of color quality, stability, consistency, and dependability.

And early when it had met every Kodak test—only when it had proved itself dependable—did they ready—see, KODACHROME II put on the market for you.

That Kodak testing really never ends—KODACHROME II or any other Kodak film, in the daily course of manufacture, all Kodak films are endlessly checked, tested, re-tested, re-checked, and refined. This is the big reason why you can always depend on Kodak film—any roll, anywhere—and on any other product that bears the Kodak name.

EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY
Rochester 4, N.Y.

You can depend on the name K

O'Barr discusses what he calls “photographic colonialism,” which parallels economic and political colonialism. Taking photographs of the Other, making their image one’s personal property, is a form of exploiting others to satisfy one’s own desires. Ads both practice and encourage this activity.

A recent ad for the Bahamas Islands practices the same kind of objectification of the Other. A beautiful black woman reclines in shallow ocean water, contentedly resting her chin on her left hand and looking seductively at the camera (9.34). The text reads: “Let’s assume I’m an Island. I’ve got the bluest waters in the world. Beaches like cream colored silk. Great big romantic hotels. And all around me, I’ve got sleek white yachts with rich men inside.”¹⁹

Sexualized and sexually available, the woman-cum-island is an object offered up for tourist consumption.



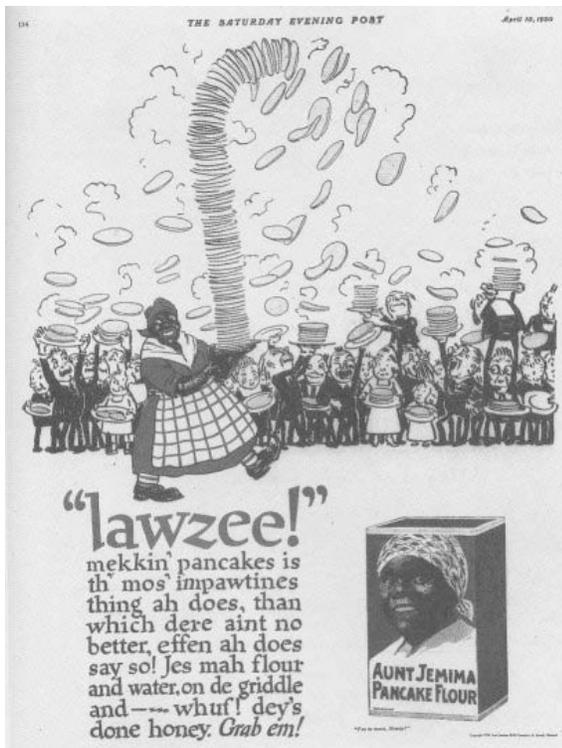
I've got the bluest waters in the world.
Beaches like cream colored silk.
Great big romantic hotels.
And all around me, I've got sleek white yachts with rich men inside.
I'm New Providence Island, Nassau.
Just 35 minutes from Miami and that's what I call conveniently located.

Let's assume I'm an Island.

700 Bahama Islands
BAHAMA ISLANDS TOURIST OFFICE, 100 SOUTH BISCAYNE BOULEVARD, MIAMI, FLORIDA

The Bahamas Island woman is constructed as sexual and content to be so. Earlier in advertising history, images of Africans and African-Americans pictured them as non-sexual but as very, very happy to serve their white masters and matrons. Hotels, railroads, alcohol, even business machines--all used ads that featured images of black male servants with wide smiles of pleasure. This continued into the middle of the twentieth century when the Civil Rights Movement challenged advertisers to think beyond such stereotypes.

Similarly, images of happy female servants appeared in US advertising from the late nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth. The most frequently deployed stereotype was the happy mammy, best known as the advertising mascot for Aunt Jemima pancake flour, maple syrup and other breakfast commodities. The Aunt Jemima character is plump and dark-skinned. She wears a scarf on her head, a shawl around her shoulders, and a white apron over her long skirt. She always has a big grin and wide open eyes.



In an ad for Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour that ran April 10, 1920 in *The Saturday Evening Post*, Aunt Jemima is drawn as a humorous cartoon character holding a tall plate of pancakes (9.35). Behind her is a crowd of white people whose plates are being filled with her pancakes. The only text of the ad is what Aunt Jemima is saying: “Lawzee! mekkin’ pancakes is th’ mos’ impawtines thing ah does, than which dere aint no better, effen ah does say so!”

Jes mah flour and water, on de griddle an—whuf! dey’s done honey. *Grab em!*” Like the 1865 Taylor & Young Yeast Powder ad we discussed, the Aunt Jemima ad depicts class differences visually by portraying the upper class white people as well dressed and Aunt Jemima as poorly attired. Also like the Taylor & Young ad, the Aunt Jemima ad reinscribes class differences with text, assigning the lower class subject very poor language skills. In the Aunt Jemima ad, racial differences coincide with class distinctions, reinforcing the superiority of the white people over their happy servant. (As we will see in Chapter 12, US artist Betye Saar deconstructed the Aunt Jemima stereotype in an iconic artwork of the 1970s.)

Cigarette Ads

The first ads for tobacco appeared in 1789, when the Lorillard brothers advertised snuff, cigars and smoking tobacco in a New York newspaper. By 1889, James B. Duke was spending twenty percent of the profits on his cigarette sales on ads.

One of the first brand names for tobacco was the Bull Durham brand. During the American Civil War, both Confederate and Union soldiers raided farmer John Green’s tobacco crop outside Durham, North Carolina. After the war, many of the survivors wrote him, requesting more of his tobacco. Green named his product Bull Durham in 1868. It soon became the largest selling tobacco brand in the world (9.36).

In 1907, Bull Durham tobacco ads on New York City Fifth Avenue buses and trolleys caused a commotion due to the “male-obvious” depiction of the bull in the ads. (The term “male-obvious” was a “proper” early twentieth century reference to the fact that the bull’s genitals were depicted.) The drivers were arrested and the pictures confiscated due to the “offensive nature” of the illustrations. The legal case eventually went all the way to the Supreme Court.



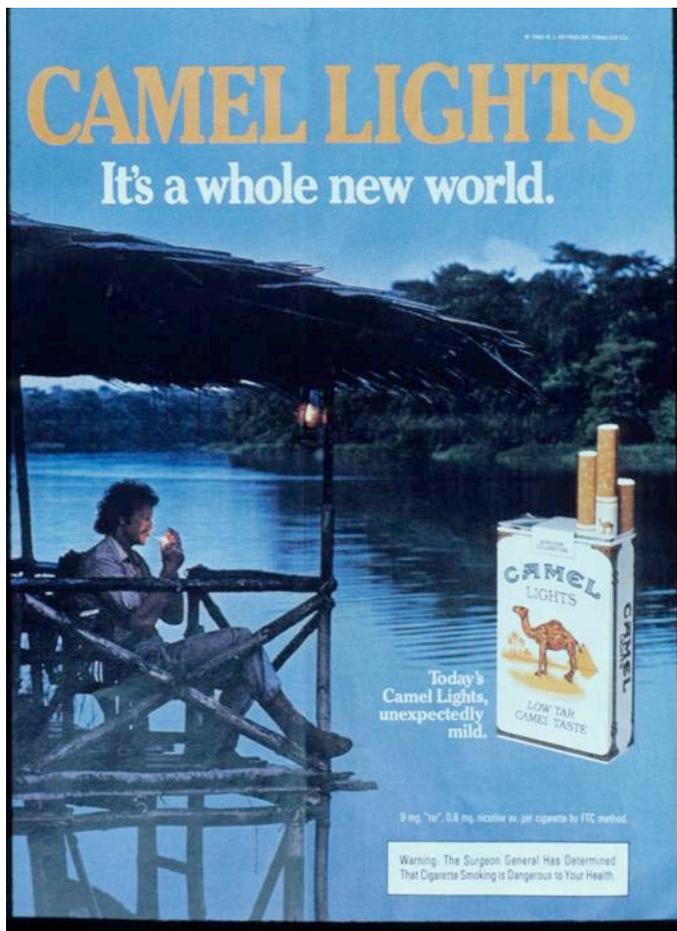
9.36 Advertisement for Bull Durham and late nineteenth century product packaging.

But the controversy did hurt tobacco sales. In 1918--the final year of World War I--the US War Department purchased the entire output of Bull Durham tobacco. That year, the American Tobacco Company advertised, "When our boys light up, the Huns [i.e., the Germans] will light out."

Controversies over cigarette advertising continued throughout the twentieth century. In 1974, U.S. Representative Henry Waxman released a secret office memo from the R.J. Reynolds Company documenting their efforts to develop an advertising campaign that would entice the youth of America to begin smoking. (R. J. Reynolds produced Camel, Winston, Salem, and Doral cigarettes, among other products.) Waxman and other anti-smoking activists instigated

more rigorous control of cigarette advertisement. Their efforts also led to the national movement to ban smoking in public places. (College students may be amazed to learn that smoking in the college classroom was not only permitted, but a common occurrence, when many of their parents and grandparents were young.)

Cigarette advertisers often associate smoking with freedom and with healthy, outdoor activities. A February 1987 ad for Camel cigarettes shows a white man in outdoors attire seated on a rustic balcony that juts out over a wide, calm river. Apparently exhausted from exploring the surrounding jungle, he lights a cigarette and prepares to smoke as his reward after a hard day. Pristine nature, healthy and athletic work—these are hardly the logical outcomes of tobacco smoking. Yet the image says they are.



The text of the Camel ad reads, “It’s a whole new world,” eliding the “new” taste of the cigarette with the European discovery and conquest of what they called the New World, and its Native American inhabitants. This elision is reinforced by the visuals of the ad: the man’s clothing which identifies him as an explorer or possible discoverer of the “untamed”; the “untouched” nature that surrounds him; and the wide, jungle-lined river that recalls the Amazon (9.37).

Virginia Slims

As early as 1919, a writer in *Printer's Ink* magazine had already commented on advertising portrayals of women with cigarettes in “smart social settings.” He interpreted such images as “an insidious campaign to create women smokers.” Not much has changed since then.

The Virginia Slims ads of the 1970s are outstanding examples of successful advertising art. The series portrays women’s liberation through episodes that illustrate the historical record of male domination (9.38).

We make Virginia Slims especially for women because they are biologically superior to men.

That's right, *superior*. Women are more resistant to starvation, fatigue, exposure, shock, and illness than men are.

Women have two "X" chromosomes in their sex cells, while men have only one "X" chromosome and a "Y" chromosome... which some experts consider to be the inferior chromosome.

They are also less inclined than men to consensual behavior, Absence of the eyes, improperly developed nose chords, color blindness of

the red-green test, der blind-nas, defective hair follicles, defective iris, defective tooth enamel, double eyelashes, slit cuts,

shortsightedness, night blindness, rosacitis, retinal detachment, and white occipital lobe of hair.

In view of these and other facts, the makers of Virginia Slims feel it highly inappropriate that women continue to use the fat, stubby cigarettes designed for men's men.

Virginia Slims.
Remember the last cigarette you smoke. We had Virginia Slims for women.

You've come a long way, baby.

Almost every Virginia Slims ad shows a “before” and an “after” scene. One ad presented the theme of work this way: the photograph showing “his work” featured a paunchy middle-aged man relaxing with a cigar in his mouth and his feet on the desk. The adjacent photograph showing “her work” pictured a woman bending over a mop and bucket. The bucket, in turn, was surrounded by a dozen or so other objects: a pot, a broom, a feather duster, and so on. These objects, presumably, would still be there long after “his work” with the cigar was finished.

These “before” and “after” snapshots were done in monochrome color of very old photographs. They represented yesteryear.

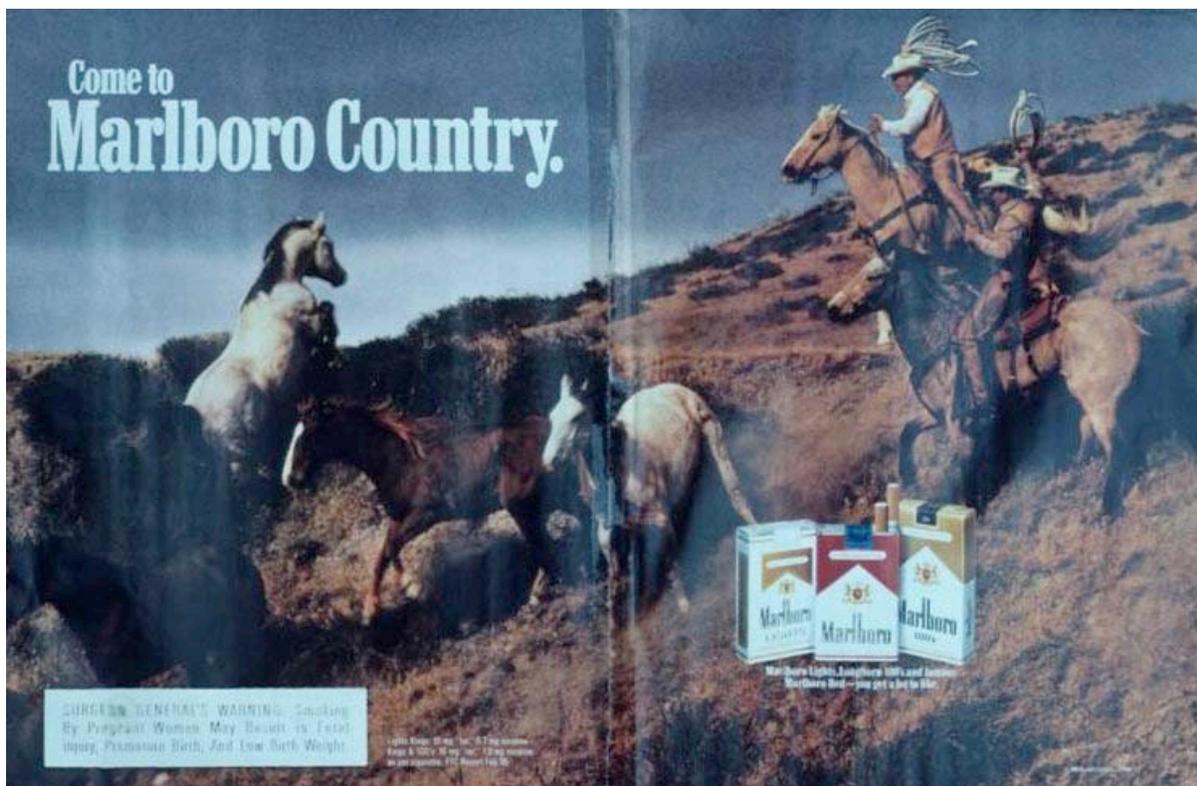
“Today’s woman” appeared in the large, white open space below the drab-colored photographs. She was shown--as she is always shown in the Virginia Slims ads--as energetic and happy: she was smiling and, as always, dressed in high-fashion clothes (the name of the designer is usually on the side of the ad). She was also smoking.

This series of ads is crafted with remarkable skill to appeal to any woman who is sensitive to women’s grievances against men. The ads not only document women’s monochrome, victimized past, they show with ritually reinforced precision how to achieve a liberated present: through high fashion, the right cosmetics, and, of course, the right cigarette. All it takes is money and the right commodities. The series hints that smoking itself just might be the best revenge against male-dominated history.

This ad exemplifies the mythic process underlying advertising art: the image first links a product to a personality within the advertisement; second, the experience of the image links the product-personality to the intended viewers (a woman who smokes and is sympathetic to the theme of women’s liberation).

The Marlboro Man

The male icon found in Marlboro ads has been as successful and widely distributed as the Virginia Slims females. The Marlboro Man is an American cowboy (9.39). Handsome and athletic, he is descendant of the mythic figures who conquered the American West. A rugged individual, he still rides horses on the open range, still wears a glamorous cowboy hat and still wears guns in his hip holsters. One two-page Marlboro ad portrays two cowboys riding from the upper right towards the three horses in the lower left. They raise their lassoes, about to capture the wild mustangs they've trapped between large boulders. They perform these strenuous and daring deeds outdoors, where no sign of human habitation is visible. For actual men, chained to desks in urban offices, the text "Come to Marlboro Country" must have great appeal.



The virility of the Marlboro appeal is underscored in another ad, a close-up of the cowboy's lower torso. The Marlboro man holds a carton of cigarettes right where his gun or

holster would be. The carton functions as a large phallic symbol. The advertisers can't *say* in words that smoking Marlboro will make you sexier, but the image deliberately links Marlboros and virility, in a visual appeal to unconscious desire.

In late 2004, Malboro augmented its print ads with a series of mailings. One included a *Cook Like A Man Cookbook*. The barbecue recipes were touted as "The last male art form." Readers were told that "Man is at the top of the food chain." Clearly, Marlboro was continuing to link its product with a powerful sense of masculinity.

Throughout the 1980s, US artist **Richard Prince** re-photographed images from the Marlboro Man ads, isolating the depictions of rugged male individualism and separating them from their contexts in the media (9.40). In doing so, he performed a critical deconstruction, compelling viewers to consider how such advertising images serve to generate what Prince has called "wishful thinking." In an ironic essay titled "The Perfect Tense," Prince discussed the media's pervasive affect on creating one's sense of reality.

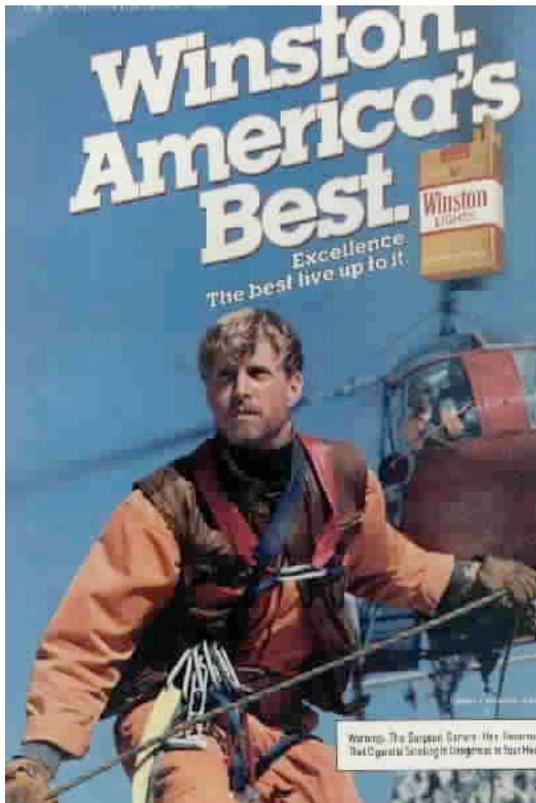


9.40 Richard Prince, *Untitled (Cowboy)*, 1991-92.

“Magazines, movies, TV, and records...He had already accepted all these conditions and built out of their givens, and to him what was given was anything public and what was public was always real.”²⁰

Prince was one of many late twentieth-century artists whose work addressed the impact of advertising and the mass media. We will discuss others in Chapter 12.

Winston Ads, Protested



In February 1986, Winston cigarettes embarked on a campaign that appeared to link their product with patriotic heroism. One ad shows a handsome man leaning out of a helicopter. He wears a life jacket and points down towards what must be a situation requiring his (heroic) rescue (9.41). The text proclaims that Winston is “America’s Best.”

A version of this same ad was placed on a large billboard near the beach in

Venice, California. In March of that year, some guerilla artists repainted the image to protest both the ad itself and US intervention in Latin America. The central “hero” was transformed into a Marine holding a large gun. The text was changed to read “Contras, America’s Beast” and the cigarette box was reconfigured as a crate of missiles. Over the red and white Winston label the guerilla artists painted “100 Million,” their estimate of the cost of the American intrusion into Central America.

Anonymous artists protested the Winston ads. Why don't more consumers protest?



Adbusters & Culture Jamming

One strategy of protest is “culture jamming”--the insertion of oppositional material into the same mass media that produce dominant cultural messages. Mark Dery writes that culture jamming is “artistic terrorism directed against a media culture that manipulates information to manufacture consent. ‘Jamming’ is CB slang for the illegal practice of interrupting radio broadcasts or conversations between fellow hams; ‘culture jamming’ intrudes on the intruders, investing ads, newscasts, and other media artifacts with revolutionary meaning.”²¹

With its culture jamming images and essays, *Adbusters Magazine* is, in fact, a form of published protest. The magazine staff researches and exposes the relationship between advertising and pressing social issues. The controversial July/August 2004 issue, for example, posited a relationship between the mass consumption promoted by ads and world terrorism, suggesting that both lead to global destruction. The issue was introduced with a provocative text: “It isn’t just bombs, police raids on TV and ‘sleeper cells’: terrorism also comes wrapped in

plastic. The embrace of consumer society inflicts a different brand of terror upon the world. The monster ego is born uncontrolled, uninhibited, wanting more and more and more...”

Other pages juxtaposed photographs of little boys playing with toy guns and mock testimonials by little girls who manipulated their parents to get them to buy toys and clothes. One such “testimonial” read: “My dad is so dumb, I can make him do anything. Like we were shopping last night and we went past the toy store and I said I wanted to go in so we did. I saw the Powerpuff Girls Pj backback in yellow and there was one left so I asked him to buy it and he said no. I screamed until I went all wobbly and I had to sit down and told him he didn’t love me. He looked sad and said I was his little girl and he loved me very much, and he bought it for me. He always does.”

Later in the issue, an image of Islamic children (recognizable as such because one little girl was wearing a black chador garment) who were playing marbles on the street was contrasted with a photograph of a chubby US boy seated in front of a television, eating potato chips and playing with the remote control. Another image of Islamic children on a swing set was paired with an apparently anorexic US girl instant messaging on her computer. In a final photographic pairing, a chubby US family reclining passively on a wide white leather couch while watching television was placed opposite a stark black and white image of two Arab men. The caption read: “watch the war; live the war” (9.42).

The culture jamming that *Adbusters* performs highlights the bipolar opposition of gender issues in children’s advertising, calling our attention to how ads teach little boys to play at war and little girls to be manipulative in order to get what they want. It also exposes the we/they opposition that is fundamental to wartime ideologies. In doing so, *Adbusters* underscores the

basic premise of ads, which is to make us desire more and more commodities—and to connect our accelerating consumption with emotional satisfaction.

Why aren't there more critical voices? Have ads undermined the critical process? One answer is that ads have appropriated the strategies of rebellion and protest that once characterized the avant-garde challenge to traditional cultural values.

Why Johnny Can't Dissent

Thomas Frank, in his essay "Why Johnny Can't Dissent," argues that ads have appropriated rebellion, protest, and nonconformity, thereby absorbing the strategies that previously would have been used to criticize them. According to Frank, the countercultural ideal "holds that the paramount idea of our society is conformity, [the kind of conformity that is] most conveniently summarized with images of 1950s suburban correctness. You know, that land of sedate music, sexual repression, deference to authority, Red Scares, and smiling white people standing politely in line to go to church. Constantly appearing as a symbol of arch-backwardness in advertising and movies, it is an image we find easy to evoke."²² The countercultural ideal, originally developed in protest of such conformity, is now capitalist orthodoxy.

Frank argues that "[t]he problem comes in how easily any idea, deed, or image can become part of sponsored world."²³ He observes, "With its reorganization around information, capitalism has developed a new mythology... according to which the breaking of rules and the elimination of rigid corporate structure have become the central article of faith for millions of aspiring executives." Business execs "envision themselves as part of the great avant-garde tradition of edge-livers... *hip is their official ideology*."²⁴ Frank goes on to list several advertising slogans that purport to celebrate hip nonconformity, but in actuality reinscribe conformity to the philosophy of advertising, which is, that we are what we consume.

Some of the slogans he lists are:

Burger King: Sometimes You Gotta Break the Rules.

WXRT-FM: If You Don't Like the Rules, Change Them.

Dodge: The Rules Have Changed.

Swatch: The Art of Changing.

Arby's: This is different. Different is good.

Hugo Ball: Innovate Don't Imitate.

Each of these slogans espouses the kind of counter-cultural rebellion that was once exclusive to the avant-garde. Thomas Frank's incisive article invites readers to ask some profoundly important questions. How can artists maintain an avant-garde position in the face of the advertising industry's appropriation of once transgressive artistic practices? More importantly, how can viewers resist the seductive messages of advertisements in our Culture of Desire? How can individuals construct identities outside the parameters of the market?

In Chapters 12 and 13, we will look at some art created by people who grapple with these questions.

¹ Ellen Gartrell, "More About R. C. Maxwell Company Outdoor Advertising"
<<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu>>

² Calvin Coolidge, quoted in Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1961) 619.

³ Quoted in Jane Stern and Michael Stern, *Auto Ads* (New York: David Obst Books, Random House, 1978) 21.

⁴ Berger 131.

⁵ Barry Hoffman, *The Fine Art of Advertising* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2002) 14.

⁶ Hoffman 54.

⁷ Hoffman 70.

⁸ Janet A. Kaplan, *Unexpected Journeys, The Art and Life of Remedios Varo* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988) 30.

⁹ Quoted in Hoffman 86.

¹⁰ Hoffman 112-13.

¹¹ Jean Kilbourne, "Still Killing Us Softly" (educational video).

¹² Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991).

¹³ Quoted in Hoffman 39.

¹⁴ Richard Martin, "A Matter of Class: The Ultimate Fashion Taboo" *New York Times*, September 1995.

¹⁵ Martin, "Class."

¹⁶ Mary Williams Walsh, "German Court Bans Shocking Benetton Ads; Panel labels as 'immoral' the clothier's campaign on HIV, oil slicks & child laborers" *Los Angeles Times*, Friday, July 7, 1995. See <<http://www.aegis.com/news/lt/1995/LT950705.html>>

¹⁷ William H. O'Barr, *Culture and the Ad, Exploring Otherness in the World of Advertising* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994) 2.

¹⁸ O'Barr, figure 3.9.

¹⁹ O'Barr, figure 3.8.

²⁰ Richard Prince, quoted in Irving Sandler, *Art of the Postmodern Era, From the Late 1960s to the Early 1990s* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998) 326.

²¹ Mark Dery, "Oppositional Cultures, A conversation with Stuart Ewen on culture jammers, social activism and the new iconography" *Adbusters*, Volume 2, Number 2, 59-60.

²² Thomas Frank, "Why Johnny Can't Dissent" Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland, eds. *The Business of Culture in the New Gilded Age, Commodify Your Dissent, Salvos from the Baffle* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997) 32.

²³ Frank 36.

²⁴ Frank 36-44.