REPORT
PRESENTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
MASTER OF VISUAL ARTS
Abstract

PERCEPTION / DECEPTION: research into the nature of the advertising image in photography. The works deconstruct advertising by exploring the seductive nature of the advertising image, while challenging the viewer with deceptive qualities of the advertisement. A study taking the form of an exhibition of photographs will be exhibited at the Canberra School of Art Gallery from February 24 to March 2, 2000, comprising the outcomes of the Studio Practice project, together with the Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken and an analysis of the advertising image in relation to fine art.
I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Martyn Jolly for his honesty and dedication, to Matthew Holt for his provoking art theory and to Nigel Lendon for giving me sound advice at the right time. I am especially grateful to Tracey Ryan, Julian Stevenson, Trevor Creighton and Sheila Hughes who were excellent at providing an honest assessment of my work before reviews and for supporting me in my endeavours. And a special thank you to Pippa, Tara, Grant, Sylvia, Steve, Marzena, Alice, Georgina, Maggie and Naomi for making Thursday afternoons enjoyable, entertaining and enlightening. I acknowledge with thanks all the hard work Brad Shaw does to ensure the smooth running of the Photomedia Department. I would like to especially thank John McDougall and my two children Andrew and Madelaine, for their patience, love and assistance.
## Contents

**Abstract** 3  
**Acknowledgements** 4  
**Introduction** 6

### Part One

1. **Advertising** 7  
   1.1 Brand Loyalty 8  
   1.2 Selling Nothing 9  
   1.3 Thinking and Feeling 9  
   1.4 Repetition 11  
   1.5 Transformation 11  
   1.6 Product Placement and Promotion 12  
   1.7 Virtual Advertising 12  
   1.8 Controversy 13

2. **Decoding the Advertising Image** 16

3. **Can Advertising Photography be seen as Art?** 24

4. **Public/Private Fears** 33

5. **Conclusion** 40

### Part Two

1. **Artistic Working Method** 42

   **Bibliography** 52

### Addenda

   **Approved study program** 55  
   **Curriculum Vitae** 58  

   **Appendix 1** 60  
   **Appendix 2** 61  
   **Appendix 2** 62
You have to learn how to look. You have to open yourself to the data. TV offers incredible amounts of psychic data. It opens ancient memories of weird birth, it welcomes us into the grid, the network of buzzing dots that make up the picture pattern. There is light, there is sound. I ask my students, ‘What more do you want?’ Look at the wealth of data concealed in the grid, in the bright packaging, the jingles, the slice-of-life commercials, the products hurtling out of darkness, the coded messages and the endless repetitions, like chants, like mantras. ‘Coke is it, Coke is it, Coke is it: Don Deillo, White Noise, London 1984, p.51.

This report appears in two parts. The first part, divided into four sections, is an analysis of the advertising industry and the techniques applied to increase sales, the visual aesthetics of the advertising image and how it is coded, the question of whether an advertising image can be viewed as art, and the public and private fears that surround the advertising industry. The second part is a record of my photographic development, an examination of the artistic influences which moulded the work and a description of the exhibited work. The two parts are separate; the first part is a dissertation, while the second part is more personal and descriptive in nature concerning the evolution and influences of the photographic artwork.

The title of this paper ‘Perception / Deception – The Visual Aesthetics of the Advertising image’ needs some explanation. ‘Perception’, as far as this report is concerned, is the intuitive recognition or insight into a moral or aesthetic quality and not the science of how we see. Perception is understanding the advertising image in terms of the semiotics, the grammar, the culture, the syntax as well as understanding the general public’s perception of an advertisement. Advertising has a double structure, it can either encourage or discourage the purchase of a product or service. This depends on the objective of the corporation or government body. This double structure in advertising can deceive the intended audience by not revealing the pros and cons of the product. In each section I will delve into the possibilities of any deception.

Advertising is an extremely extensive field of study and as Martin Mayer said in 1958 “only the brave or the very ignorant (preferably both) can say exactly what it is that advertising does in the market place.” The aim of the first part of the report is to summarise my own thoughts on advertising in the context of art theory. Advertising, to me, can be invasive, humorous, annoying, moving or just an irritating background noise. Not a day does goes by without being confronted with TV, radio, newspaper, or magazine, or billboard advertisements. I cannot watch a sporting event without an advertisement catching my attention. I drive to Melbourne or Sydney and billboards litter the highway promoting how many minutes until the next fast food chain. I try to ignore the onslaught, but at the same time wonder why I am sitting with my children eating McDonalds, drinking Diet Coke and reading a glossy magazine. Is it for pleasure, I wonder? I do not like the hamburger, the drink is tasteless and the magazine I skim to assess the latest fashion look. How superficial. Perhaps I am just ignorant, going with the flow of the culture. I need to take a step back and assess. On a day to day basis I teach photography to students who will one day produce these commercial / advertising images that are used to “sell products”. Am I influencing our society? Or am I a cog in the consumerism machine?

PART ONE

Advertising

Perception / Deception: Advertising is an announcement to bring to the public's attention the existence of a product or service. Advertising is the richest and most powerful form of communication in the world. To analyse the advertising image an analysis of advertising is required. What is advertising? Advertising "has been associated with the selling of goods for more than two centuries." According to Agres advertising should "make a member of the target audience want to use or buy the product or service; be viewed as an investment rather than merely as a cost of current sales, in that it should help build brand loyalty, and it should also help build resistance to competitive attack in the marketplace." Advertising originated as an announcement to bring to the publics' attention the existence of a product or service. Today advertising is designed to entice people into purchasing a product or service and ensure their loyalty over time. Advertising does not encourage critical examination to open our minds for discourse on the subject, rather it brings the target audience to only one possible conclusion: the conclusion the sponsor desired. Could advertising be a form of propaganda or a form of education? Alex Carey compares 'propaganda' with 'education', defining propaganda as "communications were the form and content is selected with the single-minded purpose of bringing some target audience to adopt attitudes and beliefs chosen in advance by the sponsors of the communications," contrasting this with education: "the purpose is to encourage critical enquiry and to open minds to arguments for and against any particular conclusion, rather than close them to the possibility of any conclusion but one." On this reading advertising is more closely associated with propaganda rather than education. Advertising campaigns such as 'stop smoking', 'stop speeding', 'don't drink and drive', are used to 'educate' our community, but they are just another form of propaganda where the sponsors aim is to target audiences to adopt the attitude of the advertisement. Although potential good does come from this type of advertising, it is still propaganda.

The sentiment of Kevin O'Leary, president of the Learning Company Corporation, is: "If you can 'get' children by the age of two and target them incessantly between the ages of three and eight, they become lifelong consumers of your product." Advertising is a tool used by companies, corporations, governments and individuals to either inform, seduce or entice people to change in favour of the advertisement. This change can take place in a number of ways, either a change of brand purchase, habit, type of service, viewpoint or product. Advertising comes in many forms from a single word on a page to a high budget video clip. Magazines rely so heavily on the advertising dollar for their profits that without the advertising dollar there would be no magazine. A survey of eighteen magazines (Appendix 1, 2 and 3) of fashion, lifestyle

---

2 Toscani on advertising [http://www.benetton.com], 8 July 1999.
and beauty showed eleven of the eighteen magazines had over 95% advertising. Six of the magazines had over 84% advertising while only one magazine had 66% advertising. The advertisements counted in the survey took the following forms: the standard advertisements, easily identifiable by the linguistic and visual signs; the fashion advertisement spread, easily recognised by bold images and small text of brands and prices; the promotion for a product, easily identifiable by logo; the product placement within the article, difficult to recognise at first viewing; the competition by a company, usually company logo inserted; and the advertisements advertising the magazine within the magazine itself. In a magazine it is difficult at times to recognise an advertisement it is so embedded within the editorial. This embedding of an advertisement within an editorial is know as an advertorial. To gain the advertising dollar the advertising staff may suggest the client buy an advertisement in a magazine and then they will ensure an editorial is written on their product / service. This advertorial is a prime example where the business is asked to promote themselves under the guise of a editorial. The business is happy as it receives double exposure in advertising with only one outlay in cost. The advertising staff are happy, as their ad quota has been met, therefore paying their wages, and the editorial staff are happy, as the article is usually written by the business requiring only minor editorial scrutiny before publication. This appears to be a win-win situation for the magazine and the business. But what about the reader? The reader does not enter the equation. The reader is not always aware that the editorial is an advertisement. This brings up the question of deception. Are the public being deceived by this style of advertising? This style of advertising is prevalent on television and radio as infomercials and on the internet as interactive games. For example the radio station 2UE’s presenters, John Laws and Ian Jones have been accused of receiving large sums of money from corporations to comment favourably on corporations, thereby deceiving the public into thinking it was their own thoughts and not that of the corporation. The case known as ‘cash for comment’ is currently being argued in the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.

What is occurring is that the general public or ‘target groups’ are themselves becoming a commodity for the mass media. The target group is being sold to the advertisers by the magazine/ television station / newspaper / internet / radio / and governments. The content of this media guarantees the target audience. Therefore the media sells ‘us’ to the companies producing the product or service. An advertiser buys target audiences.

1.1 Brand Loyalty
Advertising is creating brand loyalty and promoting the “interests and ideology of its corporate sponsors”. One company has created brand loyalty to the younger generation through its continuous bombardment of advertisements. The advertisements are on billboards, bold and simple. Drive anywhere in the world and the bright yellow and red logo of the company is contrasted with the green, blue and grey of the environment. The continual advertisements during prime time children’s television make it impossible for children not to miss the advertising, as children in western societies spend more time watching television than any other activity except sleeping. The advertisement in teen magazines and the corporate sponsorship of sporting events and education facilities again are a reminder of the company. Product promotion - through competition is also explored by this company. This company is

---

7 Appendix 1: Data collected on Australian fashion/ beauty magazines February to April 1999.
proud of its world wide success. The marketing and advertising campaign is acknowledged as the best in its field. Advertising is successful at creating brand loyalty.

1.2 Selling Nothing
Advertising can sell nothing. In 1997 artist Fiona Jack proved this fact by advertising ‘Nothing’ (Figure 1). Jack said “I was thinking about advertising and all it’s strangeness. It’s coercive ability to sell most completely bizarre things to people who usually don’t need them. I realised that the ultimate non-existent product would be nothing. To actually call a product nothing and market it.”[^11] Jack approached The Outdoor Advertising Association of News Zealand (OAANZ) with the concept of the product Nothing™. The OAANZ decided to use the idea as a research campaign.

![Nothing](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 1 Fiona Jack’s Nothing Campaign**

Jack was given twenty-seven billboards around Auckland at no cost. She did not accept payment for the research campaign, ensuring her neutrality. The majority of the billboards were used for up to two months on the campaign, but one billboard, advertising Nothing™, still remains in a remote area of Auckland.[^12] The campaign was seen as a great success to both parties. The statistics of OAANZ suggested a third of the people in Auckland viewed ‘Nothing™’. Some viewers of the billboard contacted OAANZ asking where they could purchase Nothing™. They were aware of a brand but unaware of a product, yet were still inquisitive. Jack said, "I think the Nothing™ campaign proved the point that you can market anything if there’s enough money behind it, that money is basically the main thing that’s required to convince the public of something these days".[^13] Fiona Jack’s billboards were a hoax, a ‘subadvertisement’, but had all the elements of an advertisement such as the seductive graphic image, creating desire, the slogan, enticing a conclusion, the repetition of the trade name, and suggesting a serious advertising campaign.

1.3 Thinking and Feeling
Advertisements use an emotional content[^14] to stimulate the consumer to react, therefore achieving the desired outcome of the advertiser; to make the consumer

[^12]: Discussion on telephone to Fiona Jack 30 June 1999.
aware of the product, service or company. Puto and Hoyer in Agres propose that "‘thinking’ ads can produce a rapid transformation effect while ‘feeling’ ads usually will require multiple exposures over time before producing a transformation effect." Puto and Hoyer say "it is not necessary for the consumer to recall exposure to a specific ad for transformation to occur." The Benetton company uses emotional and intellectual advertising to market their fashion garments. The Benetton photographer Toscani states:

"our advertising is a Rorschach test of what you bring to the image. You can see a news photo of the fighting in Sarajevo and it’s in context; it conforms to your expectations. Shocking violence in the news is normal. But when you take the same photo out of the news and put a Benetton logo on it, people pause and reflect on their position on the problem. When they can’t come to terms with it, they get mad at us."

Figure 2 Benetton advertisement, marie claire, April 1999, p69.

Getting mad and making people think about life today is the main objective to ensure the consumer remembers Benetton, thereby the company gains a commercial advantage. The company also appears to demonstrate a social conscience which enables the buyer to feel justified in purchasing the garment, for example, Benetton's latest Life Today campaign reflects on the mentally challenged people within our society (Figure 2). These advertisements strike an emotional cord and at the same time you think about our society.

According to Smith, Frankenberger, and Kahle “emotion attribution theory postulates that arousal resulting from ads is generic, or non-specific, and the attributions the consumer has about the arousal determine the quality and quantity of the resulting emotion.”\(^{17}\) The more controversial the advertisement the more likely the emotional and intellectual response. Raising ethical questions enables the advertiser to increase the awareness of the company. As McKenzie Wark puts it, “Silence = Death for both social issue campaigns and corporate advertising. The purpose is different but the communicational mechanisms are exactly the same.”\(^{18}\) According to Wark, Benetton’s aim in pursuing commercial gain is no different from newspapers or TV news or artists depicting political atrocities to advance their careers, therefore “one cannot convict Benetton of any moral wrong of which politically engaged artists are not equally guilty.”\(^{19}\) The spectacle of death is acceptable on the TV News and in the art galleries, but not in advertising. Advertising is traditionally upbeat. But by reversing the positive elements of traditional advertisements Benetton gains a reaction. Benetton does not particularly care whether the Life Today series amuses or offends the audience, just so long as the company is noticed and the product purchased. If you have the intelligence to ponder about the advertisement then you probably have the means to purchase the garments. Although I do not agree with Benetton’s approach to advertising, as I feel the underlying agenda is the sale of the products, the campaigns have been extremely successful.

1.4 Repetition
Repetition of an advertisement is effective in guaranteeing the audience remembers the advertisement, but the mood you are in when viewing the advertisement has as much consequence. The research revolves around the feeling of warmth in advertising. A humorous advertisement may give a feeling of warmth. Using repetition is initially effective in maintaining the feeling of warmth, but too much repetition (over 12 exposures) generates irritation. As Scrull puts it, “the ultimate effect of ad exposure would be a function of both the information conveyed in the ad and the consumer's affective state. In other words, the affective state of the consumer modulates the effect of the ad.”\(^{20}\) Benetton is aware of this phenomenon and do not include the controversial advertisements in their stores – therefore not discouraging the buyer who is only interested in buying the clothing, not the corporate image.

1.5 Transformation
The aim of advertising is to target a group of people to relate to the product through an experience. This is know as transformation advertising. It links the brand with an experience not associated with the brand. Williamson refers this technique as ‘transference’ (which will be covered in more depth in the next section). Agres states that, “it is the advertisement itself that links the brand with the capacity to provide the

---


\(^{19}\) Ibid., p.33.

consumer with an experience that is different from the consumption experience that would normally be expected to occur without exposure to the advertisement." In other words a Benetton jumper can be 'transformed', wearing it "protects you from looking tacky on the information landscape of today's information-rich urban streets." Transformation can occur through observation or word of mouth. What is the difference between transformation and persuasion? Transformation and persuasion are similar. "Persuasion is typically viewed as moving an individual to acknowledge a new set of beliefs and behaviours as a result of some form of communication." This form of persuasion may not alter the person's psychological response to the object or behaviour. Deighton hypothesises that persuasion through advertising first occurs by creating an expectation and then by the conformation of the expectation by objective information, such as evidence or experience. "An ad which does not lead to a change in the consumer's experience with the advertised brand will not be effective as a persuasive medium" states Agres.

Advertising creates an illusion designed to target both our rational and emotional needs. Advertisers believe by targeting both the rational and psychological benefits in a two pronged attack consumers have two ways of associating with that product or brand, therefore securing commitment to the product or brand. This does not mean that the advertisement will make you "feel" good but it may mean psychological benefits are attractive. For example a product that has an extra safety protection device could sway your decision to purchase, giving you peace of mind, especially if the advertisement had a publicly trusted expert in the field discussing the safety issues. The technique of using scientists, doctors or university professors to influence an audience 'to believe' is highly successful in advertising. According to Stauber and Rampton "a whole genre of TV commercials has evolved featuring actors dressed in white coats who announce that 'research proves' their brand is the best product on the market." The advertisers have created the 'illusion' of scientific research.

1.6 Product Placement and Promotion

According to Myers, beginning in the 1960's, advertisements saturated the market and consumers became jaded. Advertisers try to acknowledge this problem with "ironies, parodies, ads on ads, puns, and juxtaposition of competing discourses in both text and image." Within the last decade a new advertising phenomenon has occurred: product placement and product promotion. Their role is to increase sales by demonstrating the continual use of the product in society and establishing an advantage of the product over another product. Promotional companies are now an adjunct to the advertising firm, helping the advertising firm to increase sales for the client. As consumers if there is a similar product that appears to have no difference in quality or price to another product, then, the temptation to choose the product which gives the chance to win a prize becomes the sale factor. Win a holiday, a new car, or maybe merchandise. Purchasing a product with a chance to win is more attractive. Product placement is another form of advertising (placing a product in a situation where it can be seen by the media). An interview at the end of a tennis competition may

---

22 McKenzie Wark, "Still Life Today" - The Benetton Campaign, Photofile. No 36, August, 1992, p.34.
26 Ibid., p.3.
have the sponsor's drink appropriately placed while the interview proceeds. The product name is at all times visible to the viewer. It was reported in the Age that Michael Schumacher 'sold' the space on his cap for $12.1 million.

1.7 Virtual Advertising
Virtual advertising and virtual product placement in film and television is here. James MacKinnon writes that CBS and Warner Bros. are using virtual advertising to place a product in a sit-com or movie. Computer editing can change the drink from a no-brand product to Pepsi or Coca Cola or any other company willing to pay for inclusion into the film or sit-com or TV program (Figure 3). The nostalgia behind separating an ad from an editorial has gone. Every product or space that appears on film has the potential for commercial gain. Wilkinson, the president of Princeton Video Image, says,

On one hand, TV shows are striving for realism, so that viewers can form affinity with the characters and the situations in which they find themselves. All too often, though, these characters are seen using no-name products, whether it’s food, drink, clothing, or other consumable or durable goods. That’s not realism in the eyes of today’s TV audience. Today’s viewers are brand-orientated consumers. Far from compromising creativity and content, postproduction insertion supports them and may even make programs more saleable to sponsors and more appealing to viewers.\(^{31}\)

According to Wilkinson the public does not complain about the inclusion of the advertised product. This could be because, first, they watch the program for character and plot content and not necessarily for detail. Second, the viewer cannot tell what is real and what is an illusion and third, the ubiquity of advertisements in our surroundings make it unlikely that we will notice these subtle product placements.

According to Agres, Fox and Myers argue that advertisements are not as effective in persuading people to purchase a product / service as they use to be: “the environment contains many different stimuli, all of which compete for the consumer’s attention capacity.” Stephen Fox in The Mirror Makers said, “according to one study by the AAAA (American Association of Advertising Agencies), an average consumer was exposed


\(^{31}\) Ibid., p.28.
to 1,600 ads a day; of these 80 were consciously noticed, and only 12 provoked some reaction.”  

Agres and Fox suggests that consumers are overloaded with advertising stimuli and the majority of people show indifference or a lack of interest in advertisements in general, and yet, Fiona Jack can manage to advertise nothing and get a response. And advertisers are still in business, creating new ways to influence the target audience.

Even if they fail to sell a particular product, they sell consumerism itself by ceaselessly reiterating the idea that there is a product to solve each of life’s problems, indeed that existence would be satisfying and complete if only we bought the right things. Advertiser thus cultivate need by hitching their wares to the infinite existential yearnings of the human soul. 

Does consumerism increase our happiness? Or are we too overworked trying to possess the products that advertisers persuade us to buy? According to Sharon Beder in her book Global Spin, there is “no evidence that either Britons or Americans are any happier now than they were forty years ago when consumption levels were much lower.” She says, according to a Gallop poll, most Americans would be happier spending more time with family and friends and about a third would be prepared to take a twenty percent cut in income if they could have more free time.

Stauber and Rampton in their book Toxic Sludge is good for you! Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry and Sharon Beder comment on the extensive use of public relations firms by corporations. The public relations industry is another arm of the advertising industry. In both these books the authors describe how multinational corporations and governments spend hundreds of billions promoting themselves through advertising, at times to the detriment of society.

Advertising exploits individual insecurities, creates false needs and offers counterfeit solutions. It fosters dissatisfaction that leads to consumption: ‘Consumers are taught personal incompetence and dependence on mass-market producers.’ They are taught that being a citizen ‘means no more that being a consumer.’

Durning says:

Stripped to its essentials, contemporary advertising has three salient characteristics. It preys on the weaknesses of its host. It creates an insatiable hunger. And it leads to debilitating over-consumption. In the biological realm, things of that nature are called parasites.

Advertising is complex, it subsidises entertainment, sport, and education. The general perception on advertising is that it is an announcement to the public of available goods and services. Advertising does announce the sale of a product and service. It is harmless according to Stephen Fox in The Mirror Makers, as consumers make the final decision on purchase.

But, are we being deceived? “Advertisers spend hundreds of billions of dollars a year worldwide encouraging, persuading and manipulating people into a consumer lifestyle

35 Ibid., p.162.
that has devastating consequences for the environment through its extravagance and wastefulness." Advertising is the most powerful tool in changing global societies to conform. Indeed "advertising is the richest and most powerful form of communication in the world."

1.9 Conclusion
In this section I have established that advertisers use different techniques to gain our attention, such as; repetition, where the advertisement is repeated over and over again; thinking and feeling ads, where the viewer becomes involved in an emotional issue and/or requires some mental gymnastics to establish the intent of the advertiser, and; transformation ads, where the viewer links a brand with an experience. These techniques are used across all forms of advertising from the magazine to the television advertisements. Media outlets such as newspaper, television and radio stations then sell us as ‘target groups’ for a substantial fee. Yet we have no control in being sold.

Advertising is propaganda.

It is used world-wide to change and manipulate people to the mindset of the company or organisation. To underrate it is naïve. It is not just as simple as a marketing tool used to sell a product or service, rather advertising creates a ‘consumer mentality’ where we become complacent in our throwaway society. We like our lifestyle, I know I do; I like buying a new car, a new fridge, a new camera and a better home. Unfortunately we have to face reality and realise that if every single person on the planet consumed at the same rate as people in the west we would require three planet earth’s to sustain the consumption. Ask yourself, ‘do I understand the effect my consumption is having on my environment?’ Chances are, only a few in every ten people would really be able to answer ‘yes’.

How do we get off this merry-go-round? Some groups in America are offering solutions to the consumer society. The Positive Futures Network is just one group that is offering solutions. They describe themselves as a “nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting people’s active engagement in creating a more just, sustainable, and compassionate world.” High ideals, but grassroots groups like this are needed to raise the consciousness of society that this is an issue, and for change to take place.

[Beder, Global Spin, Scribe, Melbourne, 1997, p.161.]
[http://wwwbenetton.com/ 8 July 1999.]
[www.futurenet.org/ 29 January 2000.]
Decoding the Advertisement

Perception / Deception: The linguistic code is of greater value than the visual code / The visual code is supplanting the linguistic code.

Advertising is dispatched in many forms but for this section I will concentrate on analysing the magazine advertisement. The magazine advertisement is traditionally text only. Illustrations and photographs were slowly introduced as the technology in mechanical reproduction improved. The text was seen as the most important factor in the advertisement and only recently has the importance of the image been recognised.

To make more sense of the magazine advertisement, or to 'decode' the advertisement, a basic analysis of semiotics (science of signs and meanings) and visual 'grammar' is required. Ferdinand De Saussure in *The Course in General Linguistics*, published in 1916, postulated a general science of signs, or semiology. Semiology aims to take in any system of signs, be it gestures, linguistics, images or musical sound and analyse them in terms of a 'system of signification'.

In Saussurean terminology, and those that followed (Barthes, Jakobson, Metz, Williamson, O'Toole, Kress, Halliday, van Leeuwen et al.), the key notion of any semiotics is the 'sign', whether it be object, word or picture. The sign consists of two components: the signifier, the material object, and the signified, the meaning. The role of the signifier in creating meaning can be shown in Figure 4. The apparent meaning of the advertisement is "the handbag is precious". There is a symbol of a cat (signifier) in the corner of the image and Felinity Leatherwear (signifier) is written underneath the symbol. Looking at the image, the woman (signifier) is leaning over the handbag (signifier). All the signifiers have become the signified. Felinity Leatherwear insinuates a brand name that is cat-like. The representation of the cat symbol refers back to 'Fenity' in case the connection was missed. The woman is no longer a woman, but a cat protecting her young or food (the handbag). The 'cat's eyes' looking at us imply: stay away 'its mine'; protecting what it owns. This implies the handbag is precious and desirable. We, the viewer, give the meaning to the product, on the basis of visual clues in the advertisement, her makeup, hair, fingernails, colour and pose - thus the visual is rich as a 'text' without words.

Myers analysed the linguistic signs of advertising discourse and derived five main points. First, irregular patterns of language play an important role in attracting the audiences attention. Second, linguistic features are intertextualized with allusions to subcultures and/or to different periods in time. Third, most advertisers tend to use the language of everyday life, referring to everyday talk as a more reliable source of information. Fourth, the construction of the sentence gives the clues to the relationship between the speaker of the ad to the reader. Fifth, advertisers require the audience to be active participants in deciphering the story constructed with the slogan.

---

42 Ibid., p.4.
43 Ibid., p.118.
Text in advertising is changing. Traditionally the text was bold with simple fonts, today the text is more visual, with the typography relating to the subject matter. For example the word 'cold' may be designed with icicles off the letters in a cool blue colour. The visual clues relate to the text, supporting the word and creating a play on the word.

Figure 4 Felinity Advertisement, She, April 1999, p.147.
Williamson's theory outlines that advertisements work by “an exchange of signs, and an enmeshing of the subject in that exchange; a process concealed by the participation of the ‘active subject’.” According to Williamson, advertisements cannot be criticised because they are “devoid of content”. The meaning of the advertisements always points back to the signifier, the product itself, which itself is both generated by and disappears into the chain of signifiers that orbit it. Therefore advertising will always ‘bounce back’ from any criticism or any restriction law. This can be explained further through Figure 5. The implied meaning of the advertisement is that the body spray is different, with a basic animal allure. The woman (signifier) attracts our attention, she looks directly at us (‘the active subject’) ensuring our attention. The Instinct body spray is designed as jewellery around her neck. Hence the linguistic play of ‘wearable’. The jewellery implies the product is different, distinct and unique. There are animal patterns on the cans of spray. The women’s cleavage, makeup, hair style and smile suggest naughtiness, wildness and freedom. The text, ‘instinct. wildly wearable body sprays’ is ambiguous and vague. What is the product? Is it a deodorant or a perfume? ‘Instinct’ suggests basic animal desires. ‘Wildly’ has numerous connotations from anger to excitement to extravagance to recklessness. ‘Wearable’ refers to clothing and fashion accessories while ‘body sprays’ has sexual undertones. The overall meaning of this advertisement has been concocted by the viewer and each viewer will have their own interpretation to the meaning of this ad.

According to Williamson three points can be made about this type of advertisement. First, the meaning of the signifier involves the linking of two things; the ‘significance’ of one (the jewellery) ‘transferred’ to the other (being different). Second, this linking requires the viewer to make the link. Nowhere in the advertisement is it written that this product is different, therefore this meaning does not exist until the viewer ‘completes the transference’. The person could not make this transference or transformation, as Agres states, unless the person came to it with a certain cultural awareness. Third, the ‘transference’ is founded on the fact that “object has a significance to be transferred”: the advertisement invites the person to make the connection. Therefore, as Williamson says, there must be a system of meaning for the audience to make the connection. Williamson calls this system the ‘Referent System’. The referent system can collapse if no transference is made; the meaning (the signified) does not exist and only the signifier (the product) remains. In fact the advertisement is not reaching the target audience unless ‘transference’ has taken place. This advertisement in B magazine would not have the same meaning in a magazine for mercenary soldiers.

Pierce is the founder of the American tradition of semiotics and introduces another element to the semiotic critique. Pierce introduces the ‘sign’, the ‘object’ and the ‘Interpretant’. The sign is related to the object, which in turn is related to the interpretant which relates back to the sign. Pierce divided the sign into three types – icon, index, and symbol. The icon resembles its object – a photograph of John Howard, or me, or my son are all classified as an icon. An index is a sign with a direct connection with the object. Steam is an index of heat, or smoke is an index of fire and if a person’s identity is know by glasses and a grey beard, then the glasses and beard are an index of that person. The symbol is a sign whose connection to its object is seen as the rule, agreement or convention. A word, number or red cross can be seen as a symbol.

---

Figure 5  Instinct Advertisement, B, April 1999, p49.
As you can see J.P. our environmental cleanup is working!

Figure 6 Eyewire Advertisement, Communications Arts, Vol. 41 No.2, p29
Figure 6, an advertisement for an image library, demonstrates use of the icon, index and symbol. The photograph, the folder, the post-it note, the paper clip and the paper inside the folder can be seen as icons, while the oily finger marks are the index of the oil spill. The finger marks suggest the oil spill has not been cleaned up, which is in direct conflict with the pristine waterfall photograph and the symbols of text - ‘As you can see J.P our environmental cleanup is working!’ The use of the exclamation mark in the text, as Myers suggests, is an “attempt to recreate the intonation and facial expression that go with face to face interaction.” The explanation mark at the end of the sentence implies emphasis, maybe a fabrication, also an intimacy with the subject. We have transformed into J.P. We are now J.P reading the message. The text, ‘West Coast Oil Spill #367’ symbolises numerous oil spills on the West Coast of America. This is an index for an overwhelming workload. We, as J.P, are overseeing this workload. Below this the overall layering of the text states, ‘We supply the image. You decide how to use it.” Now we are transformed to the user. We have arranged the photograph for the boss. We are now the one who is being crafty and cunning. The advertisement is successful, we have become complicit in the scam, but enjoyed the experience. The advertisement’s overall meaning is that a photograph can be used for any reason – maybe to lie about the clean-up of an oil spill. The referent association, or connotation, has arisen from today’s social attitudes and we thus become complicit, too, in the ‘deceit’ interest in the advertising, per se.

Kress and van Leeuwen’s book Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design disagree with Roland Barthes theory that the meaning of the image is always dependent on the verbal text. Barthes felt images were too open to numerous interpretations and they required the text to arrive at the definitive meaning. Kress and van Leeuwen argue that there is a ”move today away from the need to ‘anchor’ the image with text. The visual component of a text is an independently organised and structured message – connected with the verbal text, but in no way dependent on it: and similarly the other way around.”

---

Figure 7 demonstrates Kress and van Leeuwen’s argument: the image is independent of the text. The image does not require the text to define its meaning. Viewing the series of objects, the black mobile phone stands out in contrast to the colourful vibrators. What is the connection? Conclusion: the mobile phone must vibrate and give pleasure. Tenets of ‘self pleasure’ is inherent in the image i.e. the phone will be pleasurable. No text is required to decipher the image, it just verifies the conclusion.

Barbara Kruger’s photographs juxtapose laconic texts on found images. Kruger’s art “hammers home” her messages exposing the stereotype of mass-culture imagery, so that hidden ideological agendas are exposed.\textsuperscript{50} The text is applied to the image to support the image, but is this necessary? Barbara Kruger’s photograph “Perfect” (Figure 8) has the word PERFECT superimposed over the woman’s forearms. The word itself has numerous meanings such as, accomplished, complete, pure, precise, and faultless. Remove the word perfect and analyse the image. The image has the same visual meaning as the word. The woman’s hands are folded as if in prayer, her clothes indicate a demure attitude, she appears pure, even religious, precise, due to the symmetrical formality and faultless, due to the lack of adornment. Kruger’s enforced meaning tends to place more emphasis on the text than the visual, but in this case the text is ‘ironic’ challenging the very nature of the ‘perfect woman’ being submissive.

Figure 8 Barbara Kruger “Perfect” \textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} Craig Owens, The Medusa effect or, The Spectacular Ruse, Barbara Kruger - We won’t play nature to your culture. Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1983, pp.5-11.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p.18.
Today the visual language is playing a far more important role in advertising. I feel at this stage the visual language is understudied, although there are a few books that delve into the issue - for example, Kress and van Leeuwen’s book *Reading Images*, *The Grammar of Visual Design*, Bonnici and Proud’s book *Designing with Photographs* and Judith Williamson’s book on *Decoding Advertisements*. The complexity of the visual language is overwhelming. According to Andy McKay, Head of Art for advertising giants M&C Saatchi, the requirement for the advertising image is to be concept led and evocative enough to attract the viewer’s attention without overshadowing the concept. But as Williamson said, the meaning of advertisement requires a link to be made between the product and the concept by the viewer and the viewer requiring a certain cultural awareness to make that link. Without the link the advertisers have failed. With the link the advertisement becomes highly successful and more successful than the written text because the viewer has made the connection and having made this connection the viewer is more inclined to remember the image rather than text.

Can an Advertisement be seen as Art?

Perception / Deception: An advertisement is not art / Advertisers are exploiting the indistinct boundaries between art and advertising

Fine art and advertising are usually perceived by society as being two separate entities. I believe the boundaries between these two establishments is eroding. The perception is that an advertisement is not art and that art is not advertising. Further, an artist should not criticise the corporate sponsor of their work. This section will establish that these boundaries are blurring to the degree where, at times, it is difficult to tell whether the advertiser and the artist is or is not exploiting these indistinct boundaries. Throughout the art world the artists and the corporate advertisers seem to be involved in an eternal pact which makes it more and more difficult for artists to produce art for art’s sake.

‘Glossy’ was an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra of contemporary celebrity portraits, photographed by eight Australian photographers (2 July - 31 October 1999). The photographers where either born in Australia or have long-term residency. They are Polly Borland, Bleddyn Butcher, Derek Henderson, Montalbetti + Campbell, Bob Oliver, Sage, Andrew Southam and Hugh Stewart. The ‘artist’s’, as Andrew Sayers, the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, is calling them, are all practicing commercial / advertising photographers. These photographers are financially successful. They have no apparent problem seeing their photographs either in a magazine or on a gallery wall. These photographs have been made into art by the very nature of their collection, presentation and the discourse that surrounds them.

According to art theorist Leo Steinberg any given work is art if the work is: “a) accommodated in art galleries and art books; b) taken no notice of by anyone on the outside; c) addressed to questions hotly discussed by insiders.” Any definition of ‘art’ which rests almost entirely on who is, or isn’t, talking about it is sure to fail. Without a prior definition of ‘art’, who are ‘insiders’ [artists] and who are ‘outsiders’ [general public]?

In the final paragraph on her appraisal of the exhibition, the curator, Magdalene Keaney, comments, “if Glossy says nothing else, it says that portraiture continues to flourish, be it outside the bounds of accepted fine art practice. But is it? Is this not a disclaimer, hoping not to offend? The National Portrait Gallery’s Director referred to the photographers as ‘artist’s’ and in all his wisdom decided to hold the exhibition. Let us assume the photographs were taken for the sole intention of presenting them in the National Portrait Gallery. There would be no contention; this would be accepted as fine art practice. But because the photographs were first commissioned by a magazine for commercial purposes and then portrayed in the Gallery, the photographs are not to be considered as art work. Yet the photographs now are considered art work, according to Steinberg’s definition.

55 Magdalene Keaney, Glossy, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra 1999, p.3.
Walter Benjamin makes this point: "Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out: with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work." The stone age man portrayed animals on wall of caves to appease the spirits, the emphasis being on the cult value, where only a few individuals would see these works of art. Today, the stone age portrayal of animals on walls of caves is viewed by millions of people through photo reproduction and through this reproduction the accent has changed from cult value to exhibition value. Similarly today a commercial image, with exhibition value, may serve its purpose as a portrait in a magazine, but can be transformed into an image having cult value.

Andrew Sayers said that "in the newsagents we are surrounded by magazines – confronted on all sides by faces and facades. Magazines represent a significant phenomenon of contemporary culture which deserves our scrutiny, and the exhibition Glossy is an examination of the way magazines create a contemporary iconography." There is a generalisation that says celebrities see any form of publicity in magazines, good or bad, as advertising. Therefore, are the images in Glossy advertising images? Yes, when they were presented in a magazine and no, when they are viewed on a gallery wall? The image remains relatively the same but the treatment - size, surface and presentation of the work - changes the character of the image from a mass-culture advertising image, with exhibition value, to a single piece of artwork in an art gallery, with cult value.

Recent changes to Copyright law have also changed the playing field of this debate. Photographers now have default copyright of their images unless otherwise negotiated. Therefore the photographers can exhibit their work in a forum which we associate with 'art'. This means that the artistic decision of the work is respected in law and law has decreed that it is the very 'art' that is now a commodity which editors have to pay for. This law must reflect a desire in the community for this shift.

This is not the first time commercial / advertising images have transcended the advertising world into the galleries. In Australia we have examples of photographers like Max Dupain, Olive Cotton, Athol Shmith, and David Moore, to name a few. These photographers were all commercial / advertising photographers at some stage and yet their advertising photographs are now held in Galleries around Australia as fine art photographs. Athol Shmith’s photograph 'Triple Spinner 1954' (Figure 9) is now in the National Gallery of Australia’s photographic collection and yet was originally a commissioned as an advertising photograph for the Ford Motor Company. Olive Cotton’s advertising image ‘Glasses’ 1937 is now held by the National Library of Australia as part of it’s photographic art collection (Figure 10). ‘Fresh as morning’ (Figure 11) Athol Shmith’s advertisement for Dew deodorant in the 1940s and is now held at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Figure 9 Athol Shmith, *Triple Spinner* 1954

Figure 10 Olive Cotton, *Glasses* 1937

---

Figure 11 Athol Shmith’s Dew Advertisement, Fresh as The Morning. 

Benetton ads have also ‘transcended’ the bounds of advertising to enter the realm of artistic expression. "Exhibitions of Benetton ads have been mounted by museums and cultural institutions throughout the world, including the Old England Museum in Brussels, the Corporate Art Museum in Tokyo, the Biennial in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and the Cable Factory in Helsinki." Toscani’s images themselves have now become a focus for debate and discussion demonstrating again that an advertising image can transform into a work of art.

John Heartfield began his career in the advertising. He never worried whether the mass media was perceived as sacrilege to artists. Heartfield declared photomontage to be the most modern and creative of artistic media and instead of exhibiting his work in a museum preferred the "triviality of the mass media." Heartfield used the mass media to publicise his work (Figure 12). Later this was defined as ‘operative art’ - "to turn the stimulating and suggestive methods of the bourgeois mass media in a way calculated to irritate and enlighten". Avant-garde artists of the time felt confined by the bourgeois art world. The intention behind ‘operative art’ was for the avant-garde artists to startle the normally passive, lethargic observer into becoming an active participant. Heartfield enticed the observer to confront ‘reality’ in his photomontages. The montages were full of contradictions and conflict. The idea behind the Heartfield’s montage was “to provoke, to unmask, to get to the bottom of the beautiful masquerade of the ‘drama in which stupidity, brutality, and rottenness play the major roles’.” Heartfield blurred the distinction between critical analysis and subversive advertising.

Hans Haacke is another artist to challenge the definition of art and fine art practice. In 1971 Haacke’s exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum was cancelled due to it’s controversial nature. Although at the time anything could be seen as art, such as Duchamp’s ready-mades of store bought goods or Roy Lichtenstein’s comic book images, Haacke’s images challenged the very sponsors of art, the corporations and the government (Figure 13). Art institutions and artists still compete for this money today. Haacke used the advertising format of text and image to subvert the whole paradigm of advertising and art (Figure 14 & 15). He made it clear that there was no single defined line separating art from advertising, decrying the veracity of any statement which seeks to say, ‘that is advertising, therefore it is not art’.

In 1969 Haacke became involved in the Art Workers Coalition (1969-72), a professional group of fine artists who wanted collective control over social and economic policy within their field. The Arts Workers Coalition “generated a great deal of rhetoric but very little in the way of concrete accomplishments.” Although the Coalition was short lived Haacke continued his socially concerned art but refrained from proclaiming a theory of the social, political and economic organisations of the contemporary art world. Haacke’s theory, although not explicit, is implied through his work in the evidence of plaques (Figure 12), graphs and posters. The theory analyses the contemporary art world and the processes by which it is maintained. Haacke’s enforced cancellation of the Guggenheim and the Manet exhibitions demonstrate the function of the contemporary art institutions in that there is “an endemic conflict between the interests of those who produce the art and the broader public which

---

supports them ideologically on the one hand, and the interests of the much smaller
group of wealthy people and politicians who provide the big money supporting the
system.”

Figure 12 John Heartfield, Hurray, Butter is Everything. Germany 1935, Additional text: Goering, in
his Hamburg speech: “Iron has always made a country strong, butter and lard only make people fat”

---

67 Howard Becker & John Walton, Social Science and the Work of Hans Haacke, Hans Haacke, Framing and Being
Framed, Halifax, New York, 1975, p.150.
From an economic standpoint, such involvement in the arts can mean direct and tangible benefits. It can provide a company with extensive publicity and advertising, a brighter public reputation, and an improved corporate image. It can build better customer relations, a reader acceptance of company products, and a superior appraisal of their quality. Promotion of the arts can improve the morale of employees and help attract qualified personnel.

David Rockefeller

Figure 13  Hans Haacke, David Rockefeller, Museum of Modern Art, Vice Chairman, Business Committee for the Arts, Co-founder and Director. Chase Manhattan Bank Corp, Chairman, Chief executive Officer. Quoted from David Rockefeller “Culture and the Corporation’s Support of the Arts”, speech to National Industrial Conference Board, September 20, 1966

Figure 14  Hans Haacke, A Breed Apart, 1978

AMERICAN CYANAMID is the parent of BRECK® Inc., maker of the shampoo which keeps the Breck Girl's hair clean, shining and beautiful. AMERICAN CYANAMID does more for women. It knows: "We really don't run a health spa." And therefore those of its female employees of child-bearing age who are exposed to toxic substances are now given a choice. They can be reassigned to a possibly lower paying job within the company. They can leave if there is no opening. Or they can have themselves sterilized and stay in their old job.

Four West Virginia women chose sterilization. AMERICAN CYANAMID...

Where Women have a Choice

Figure 15  Hans Haacke, The Right to Life, 1979

---

More recently Masato Nakamura, a Japanese artist, challenged "the existing framework and the value of art" according to Hitoshi Dehara the curator of the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art. Nakamura uses visual signs from cities as his material for producing work. In his latest work the yellow light of the McDonalds M's installation attracts the viewer through a small door (Figure 16), but once you have enter the room of the mm's your visual perception is changed and upon leaving, the outside world appears purple. The work is powerful in its message yet Nakamura has managed to get "support "and "co-operation" of McDonalds in Japan and Australia to produce the work and at the same time is challenging the system. Nakamura is similar to Haacke, questioning the very framework of the established system but at the same time manipulating the system for their own artistic gain. Another feature is marketing and advertising has itself become a major iconography of modern art movements.

![Figure 16 Masato Nakamura, mm, 1998, Installation comprising paint, reconstruction of 2 McDonalds M signs.](image)

The boundaries between advertising and art are blurring. The National Portrait Gallery, now exhibits commercial portrait photography. The Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art exhibits the McDonalds Logo. Where is this all heading? Advertisers are exploring the indistinct boundaries between art and advertising and are eager to give support to the use of logos in art work and to employ the artist to produce advertising. The artists, meanwhile, are exploring the advertising world and creating art work concerning advertising. If this trend continues then maybe art and advertising will merge into a new era of 'artvertising'. Heaven forbid.

---

70 Hitoshi Dehara, Masato Nakamura, Beyond the Future the third Asia-pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, 1999, p.76.
Perception / Deception: Consumer society is pleasurable / The short-term pleasure of consumerism entails a long-term detriment to our future as a race.

What an advertisement 'says' is merely what it claims to say; it is part of the deceptive mythology of advertising to believe that an advertisement is simply a transparent vehicle for a 'message' behind it. Certainly a large part of any advertisement is the message: we are told something about the product, and asked to buy it. The information that we are given is frequently untrue, we are often being persuaded to buy products which are unnecessary; products manufactured at the cost of damaging the environment and sold to make a profit at the expense of the people who made them.71

Williamson is not the only person to criticise advertising on these grounds. According to Benetton, "all commercial images have a social meaning and an impact. Nobody has done an analysis of the harm done by stupid advertising and its twisted value system. A lot of insecurities are caused by the stereotypes in those images, and advertising is very influential in the education of our young."72 In Japan, Michael Fitzpatrick reports, schoolgirls are prostituting themselves for money to purchase high-image products. The desire to possess imported brand-named products, amongst the school girls, has become an obsession.73 Professor Shinji Miyadai, at the Tokyo Metropolitan University, is the author of The Choice of Uniformed Schoolgirls. He believes enjo kosai (roughly translated means - compensated dating) is an indication of a sick society, where Japanese people today are more interested in money and high-image products. According to Fitzpatrick, Japan "still can't decide whether its schoolgirls are victims of a manipulative media or wanton handmaidens of consumerism gone mad."74 Consumerism is the culture. In The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer relate the culture industry to that of the advertising industry:

Culture is a paradoxical commodity. So completely is it subject to the law of exchange that it is no longer exchanged; it is so blindly consumed in use that it no longer can be used. Therefore it amalgamates with advertising. The more meaningless that the latter seems to be under a monopoly, the more omnipotent it becomes. The motives are markedly economic. One could certainly live without the culture industry, therefore it necessarily creates too much satiation and apathy. In itself, it has few resources itself to correct this. Advertising is its elixir of life. But as its product never fails to reduce to a mere promise the enjoyment which it promises as a commodity.75

The object of advertising is to inform the public of the unknown efficient supplier and the product available. Supposedly advertising is performing a social service to the community by making it easier to make a choice through the information provided in the advertisement. Unfortunately the motive of advertising is economics. Therefore those who have the money can buy the advertising. According to Adorno and

74 ibid.
Horkheimer “the free market is coming to an end and those who control the system are entrenching themselves in it.”\textsuperscript{76} The large corporations are firming their bonds with the consumers and using advertising to block out the smaller companies. The smaller companies appear less financially viable if the advertising campaign is inferior and yet feel obliged to advertise. Advertisements are plastered to a vacant wall and others layered on top until the “advertising becomes art and nothing else” \textsuperscript{77} except maybe visual pollution. This squeezing of smaller corporations out of existence will have a detrimental effect on society by homogenising the market and reducing it to the lowest common denominator.

Small and large corporations are at battle in the marketplace and all are attempting to gain the advantage. One way is to sponsor schools or government activities. Australian schools and tertiary institutions are receiving less funds due to the cutbacks in educational funding, therefore “sponsorship is being actively sought as a replacement for government funding and support.”\textsuperscript{78} The advertising promotions in the schools include:

- Apple providing schools with computers in exchange for numbers of receipts from the Coles supermarket chain. This turned the children into promoter for Coles and resulted in harassing shoppers for their dockets in the stores and their car parks: “We are making beggars of our children”, noted an official of the NSW Teachers Federation. Nevertheless this scheme was so successful for Coles sales(with over 6,000 schools taking part) that five other Australian companies have introduced similar schemes.
- McDonald’s and Domino’s Pizzas giving schools a portion of profits from fast food sales thereby encouraging students to coerce parents and others to buy pizzas or hamburgers in order to raise money for their schools
- Pizza Hut’s ‘Book It’ program where free pizzas are provided as learning incentives. Winning a free pizza usually means the whole family has to go to Pizza Hut and buy pizzas to keep the child company. Moreover instead of teaching children the joy of reading they are being bribed to read: “Perhaps we are giving a subliminal message to children that these things are not worth doing for their own sakes...?” (In 1992 over 400,000 primary school students took part in this scheme in Australia; 58,000 schools in the US also participated in this scheme, and it also operates in Canada.\textsuperscript{79}

There are numerous fears of these campaigns. Young people are being targeted by corporations to create brand loyalty.\textsuperscript{80} Yet questions must be asked about the ability of children to understand advertising and its intent to persuade, deceive and manipulate. According to Richard Mizerski, an Australian professor of marketing, children are more sensitive to external influences as their cognitive structures are forming.\textsuperscript{81} The problem is students will be influenced by the advertising media, especially as the school is endorsing the product and being supplied with ‘educational material’ supplied by corporations. As a community we should also question the seeming philanthropy of these companies. The underfunding in schools enables the advertiser better access to this target market, which could be part of the overall

\textsuperscript{76} Theodor & Horkheimer \textit{The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception}, \textit{The Culture Industry: London: Verso, 1997, pp.161-162.}
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p.163.
\textsuperscript{78} Teachers Federation quoted in Sunderland 1994, p.25.
\textsuperscript{79} Beder, Global Spin, Scribe, Melbourne, 1997, p.162
corporate plan or as Beder says “at the very least, corporate sponsorship of school resources enables the underfunding of schools by government to continue.”

Another arena for deception is the cosmetic industry. This industry is booming with newspapers, Yellow pages and glossy magazines across the country advertising the ‘before’ and ‘after’ photograph. Rarely is the negative side of cosmetic surgery shown to the public. Tim Bauer states, “100 per cent of the ads show only the good news: excellent results, ugly ducklings being transformed into swans, thrilled customers who profess happiness and enhanced self-esteem with their new look.” The advertisement encourages the viewer to compare between the two close-up photographs. These photographs appear to seductively portray an easy quick fix solution with risk free results. The comparison between the two photographs of the woman face in Figure 17 is enticing. In both photographs her eyes are fixed onto the viewer, but in the ‘before’ image she looks blank or slightly annoyed. The marks are clearly seen on her face and heavy circles under her eyes create a feeling of being tired. The photographic lighting is not flattering, neither is the closer composition emphasising the facial marks. While in comparison the ‘after’ photograph she appears smaller in size and has different lighting to flatter her appearance. The eyes are still focused on the viewer and although she is not really smiling, the feeling is more positive than the ‘before’ photograph. These subtle differences entice people to accept this as reality. Cosmetic surgery appears simple and easy, seducing people into a false reality by playing on their vanity and insecurities.

Tim Bauer exposes the ugly side of cosmetic surgery in his article *The truth about nips and tucks* by talking to Merrilyn Walton, who is chairing a NSW inquiry into cosmetic surgery. She says:

Cosmetic surgery is being marketed as a commercial product and, in my view, this creates an enormous conflict of ethics for the doctor in terms of the traditional doctor-patient relationship. The doctor is meant to put the patient’s welfare first and not his own economic interests. But if the patient willingly comes along wanting cosmetic surgery, it is clearly in the doctor’s financial interest to encourage it – not discourage it. The ethical conflict grows, with the cosmetic practitioner operating under the privileged mantle of doctor, and the patient trustingly thinking, ‘This is my doctor so he will look after me.’

The photographs in Figure 18 could not be used for an advertising campaign advertising cosmetic surgery because of the unflattering nature of the images, but they could be used for an advertising campaign to promote the awareness of problems that may be encountered while under the surgeon’s knife. Advertising can produce this duality within an issue where both sides of the coin can be advertised. The ultimate winner in these campaigns appears to be the issue with the biggest financial backing.

---

85 Ibid., pp.17-18.
The bigger money, the more likely the issue will hold sway in the culture, as Fiona Jack observed.

Nike is a corporation that has successfully utilised the advertising juggernaut. "Nike has managed to transform their mass-produced canvas & rubber product into something that has a personality - something that is cool." Reed, an advertiser, suggests advertisers follow Nike's lead by, "creating a unique brand personality with intelligent, entertaining ads instead of sterile, fact-filled communication." Reed does not mention that Nike is known to underpay and overwork their employees to produce these "cool" mass produced items. Nike is seen as a successful business because of the profits it can provide the shareholders. The shareholders do not appear to be interested in whether the company has a poor reputation in the third world for underpaying and overworking the employees, as long as the profits roll in.

Ron Harris, an American Fashion photographer, has decided to make his fortune by advertising the sale of fashion models' ovum. The models provide the ovum for fertilisation to anyone who is willing to pay the price. Harris says:

> Beauty is its own reward. This is the first society to truly comprehend how important beautiful genes are to our evolution. Just watch television and you will see that we are only interested in looking at beautiful people. From the network anchors, to supermodels that appear in most advertisements, our society is obsessed with youth and beauty. As our society grows older, we inevitably look to youth and beauty. The billion dollar cosmetic industry, including cosmetic surgery is proof of our obsession with beauty.

The ethical issues involved in this campaign are manifold. Harris, as a fashion photographer, is one of the perpetrators of these misconceptions, that society is only interested in beautiful people. Advertising has promoted and is still promoting the 'beautiful person'. These 'beautiful people' also change depending on the latest vogue look. Marilyn Monroe would be considered overweight by today's standards and not really a suitable model for the advertising agencies, yet in her day she was considered a sex symbol. Advertising can change the stereotypical mindset of the day.

According to Fox, the cultural impact of advertising does not have the power to create and shape mass tastes and behaviours. To Fox, advertising is a mere mirror to society, and to blame advertising for the American culture, that is money-mad, hedonistic, superficial, is to miss the point. Fox argues that the people who create modern advertising are "not hidden persuaders pushing our buttons in the service of some malevolent purpose. They are just producing an especially visible manifestation, good or bad, of the American way of life." In Papua New Guinea, for example, advertising does have the power to create and shape mass tastes and behaviours. Advertising is not a reflection of the Papuan culture but of capitalist culture. An advertising show visits a Papuan village to demonstrate the potential of western washing powder and the pleasure of drinking American Coca Cola. It is imposing a capitalist culture onto the village. Fox would argue that the customer has

---

87 Ibid. p.48.
88 *The Cutting Edge*, SBS, Tuesday 22 June 1999.
the last word. The customer has a ‘free’ choice so it seems. Unfortunately the image or illusion of being ‘cool’ and relating to the wealth of western society is more enticing than their own culture. They will covert the product.

Williamson says we are trapped in the illusion of ‘free’ choice. ‘Freedom’ is a basic ideology of advertising and is used to justify advertising. The manufacturers have the freedom to compete, and we have the freedom to ‘choose’ between products and services. According to Williamson “advertisements work by a process in which we are completely enmeshed, they invite us ‘freely’ to create ourselves in accordance with the way in which they have already created us.”® Paul Foss challenges our view of Australia saying it is “…pure invention. There is no such country there are no such people. Perhaps an illusion to which we are all so close as to be blind to it, to the power of its destiny.”® Advertising is an illusion, designers and art directors create the reality, we live in the illusion. But this is not always the case, we do return to reality when the illusion is shattered.

Advertising needn’t necessarily be seen as pejorative, however advertisers are not perceived to have the highest ethical standards in the wider community. The Bulletin, on June 29 1999, ran a Bulletin Morgan Poll on ‘The professions we trust the most’. Only 9% of people felt they could trust advertising people. A Gallup Poll in America, in 1976, asked Americans to rate the honesty and ethical standards in eleven fields of work. Advertising executives were last on the list.® Basically the majority of people feel advertising is dishonest and advertising people are untrustworthy. The deception of some advertising campaigns is slowly cracking; beauty creams cannot stop the ravages of time, cigarette smoking is a health risk, cosmetic surgery can go horribly wrong, pesticides are not safe, etc. Unfortunately the time that it takes to be aware of some of these deceptions can cause irreversible damage to society and individuals.

Figure 19 The Age, 7 July 1999

---

92 Paul Foss, Theatrum Nondum Cognitum, What is Appropriation? An anthology of critical writings on Australian art in the ‘80’s and 90’s, Power, 1996, p.120.
A group calling themselves The Media Foundation have set up an international organisation to tackle the problem of deception within the mass media. The Media Foundation is "a global network of artists, writers, students, educators and entrepreneurs who want to launch the new social activist movement of the information age." Their goal is to: "galvanize resistance against those who would destroy the environment, pollute our minds and diminish our lives."94 The Media Foundation publishes ‘Adbusters’ magazine, operates a website and offers an advocacy advertising agency. This group of individuals feels strongly about changing our consumer culture by giving avenues for concerned citizens to respond to the corporate bombardment. This is one way of challenging the advertising industry.

Consumer society is pleasurable to the majority of people in the community. The real issue is that corporations and certain individuals are shaping the perceptions of people and government through advertising.95 Essentially the corporation’s and individual’s objective is that of economic gain without consideration to the wider society. As Sharon Beder says:

Corporations use their economic power and resources to shape public opinion through the think-tanks, public relations and propaganda. But this shaping is designed to go unnoticed, "to alter perception, reshape reality and manufacture consent" without their targets being aware that it is happening.96

The short-term pleasure of consumerism entails a long-term detriment to our future as a race, with dangerous implications to our environment and our psyche.

94 www.adbusters.org 21 November 1999
95 Beder, Global Spin, Scribe, Melbourne, 1997, p.239.
96 Ibid., p.240.
Conclusion

When we talk about advertising our perception of it is to sell things and increase profits for the individual or company, but essentially this is only a small part of the story. Advertising is complex. Advertisements can entertain, annoy and subvert. Advertisements are a form of propaganda. Corporations and governments spend billions of dollars a year on advertising to attract our attention so as to change or influence our mindset, producing an overwhelming bombardment of advertising. The traditional advertisement of text and image still exists but now there are numerous advertising methods being explored such as, virtual advertising, advertorials, infomercials, public relations, product placement, product promotion, interactive advertising using games and advertising in the form of public rallies: all aimed at attracting and keeping the viewer's attention. Money can buy advertising, therefore the more affluent the corporation the more intensive the advertising campaigns, which in turn influences consumer spending toward the company. Advertising campaigns have been known to fail, but if the company has the financial resources they tend to employ the best in the advertising field to guarantee their success. Advertising is a powerful form of communication that should never be underrated.

When observing a magazine advertisement you will notice the trend is for the visual language to dominate over the linguistic message and the linguistic message to be complimentary or contradictory (adding humour) to the visual language. Today the visual language is playing a far more important role in advertising. In section two I discussed Williamson outlining the complexity of the visual language in that the meaning of the signifier involves a link to be made by the viewer. Without a certain cultural awareness this link may not take place and the visual message, initially intended, will be lost. For an advertisement to be successful the object has to have a significance to be transferred to the viewer and the viewer has to have the cultural awareness to make the connection. Once the connection is made the advertisement has succeeded.

In section three I analysed art and advertising and established that the boundaries between advertising and art are blurring, to a point where the National Portrait Gallery now exhibits commercial portrait photography and the Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art exhibits the McDonalds Logo. Corporations are eager to give support to artwork as they see it as an extension of their publicity and advertising campaign, with advantages being an improvement in their corporate image, therefore a readier acceptance by customers of their products. Advertisers are eager to support artists in advertising campaigns and artists find themselves in a moral and financial dilemma. Art is used in advertising and advertising used in art, the barriers becoming indistinct.

In the final section I investigated the public and private fears of advertising. Our perception is that consumerism is pleasurable, but I argue that the short-term pleasure of consumerism entails a long-term detriment to our future as a race. The real issue being that certain corporations and certain individuals are shaping the perceptions of people and government through advertising. Essentially, these corporations' and individuals' objective is that of economic gain without consideration of the wider society. For example, in China, the Disney corporation manufactures Disney toys to

97 Beder, Global Spin, Scribe, Melbourne, 1997, p.239.
the detriment of its workers. The mostly-female workers are paid minimal wages, treated like criminals, work long hours and sleep in appalling conditions, with two to a bed. Razor wire and metal bars surround the plant making it impossible for anyone to get in or out without permission.\(^9\) As a society we should be aware of how the corporations treat their workers and if the corporation demonstrates poor trade practices then we should refrain from purchasing their products until they improve their performance. I have shown in this dissertation that there are many examples of advertisers creating glossy images - which need to be shattered!

Initially I asked the question, whether I was influencing our society or whether I was just cog in the consumerism machine. As a teacher I feel now I can educate students in the moral and ethical dilemmas of advertising and give them photographic skills to equip them in any field they wish to endeavour. They will carry their skills laden with the ethical equipment to pursue their careers in creating the images which are creating our society. I wish them godspeed.

\(^9\) www.wtowatch.org/multimedia/index.cfm?c_id=5 4 December 1999
PART TWO

Artistic Working Method

This section will elaborate on my artistic working method, analysing the contextual grounding for the photographs, the theoretical influences on these works and the thought processes to achieve the final outcome.

Photography has been my passion since I was seven when I was given my first camera, a Mamiya 645. My first photographs were of caged animals, taken at Taronga Park Zoo in Sydney. Looking back on these images the animals look oppressed, surrounded by concrete and metal bars. I remember at the time being very proud of the photographs and simultaneously feeling sorry for the animals. These photographs changed my impression of the zoo experience and I hate all zoos that cage their animals in hideous conditions.

Photography was not seen as a suitable profession in my family. While I was growing up I was advised to study architecture, as this would satisfy my artistic expression. I studied architecture for three years before I realised I did not want to be an architect. I applied for work in the photographic industry and found myself studying a commercial photographic course and working in a government department. The part-time photographic course was an exhausting course with little time for artistic expression. I also had no time to consider the theoretical issues involved in the commercial industry that I was launching myself into. After finishing the photographic course in Sydney I moved to Canberra and worked as the Technical Officer in Photography at Canberra Institute of Technology. Again being busy with small children, work left no time or inclination to consider the commercial/advertising industry, but I did make time to exhibit photographs regularly. It was only after teaching commercial photography that I really started to wonder what advertising was all about. Feeling this drive to question and wishing to continue with my own photographic work and to further my career I felt the Master of Visual Arts by research was the ideal course of study.

The approved study program is on page 54. My proposal was two fold: first, to write a dissertation on contemporary advertising imagery, therefore establishing a sound theoretical grounding for my art work, and; second, to crystallise my findings in a photographic exhibition. My initial proposal for the exhibition was to produce black & white prints and colour transparencies framed within television sets. The television sets were to represent the mass media while inside the television sets would be digitally manipulated photographs demonstrating the before and after effects of digital manipulation in advertising. I had a firm commitment to this concept and could visualise television sets throughout a gallery space. There was one major flaw in this concept; I did not really understand what I was communicating and therefore for the life of me could not visualise any images on the television sets! All I could conceive of was the box and a venetian blind rotating internally. I realised then that I needed to take a different tack. I needed to research my topic in great depth to really understand the concepts involved and to start photographing advertising in the environment. I was still exploring technique when I investigated lenticular imagery, the image can change depending on your angle of view. I had seen a photograph by Tracey Moffat
in the NSW Art gallery and was inspired by the seductive nature of the technique. Upon further investigation I found the cost to be prohibitive. The set up fee alone for each image was $3,000 dollars without the cost per print. This may be acceptable for a commercial venture producing thousands of the same image, or a person on a scholarship, but unfortunately for me it was out of my league as I planned to produce numerous images for exhibition. That idea was quickly discarded and the real issue of communicating with images was seen as a priority.

Early in my research I happened upon an internet site by ‘The Media Foundation’. I was excited to see they produced a magazine called ‘Adbusters’. The magazine has articles on the effects of consumerism and what designers and artists can do to subvert the advertising industry. Kalle Lasn, a journalist from ‘Adbusters’ magazine, discussed a new movement in art, ‘détournment’ - "the art of training our consumer culture to bite its own tail." According to Lasn, détournment has it’s roots in the art and politics of Dada, Surrealism, and Lettrism. Détournment is basically subversive advertising, for example Chris Woods’, ‘McDonald’s Nation’ (Figure 20).

Figure 20 Chris Woods, *McDonald’s Nation*, Canada 1997

---

I subscribed to 'Adbusters' and discovered Fiona Jack (further information in Part One, page 9 of this report), an artist from Auckland in New Zealand who managed to create the illusory product called 'Nothing'. Jack felt the ultimate non-product would be nothing at all and therefore why not call the product 'Nothing', as it was no-thing. She wanted to experiment and see the public's response, so she organised billboards to advertise 'Nothing'. The response was incredible; people were trying to establish where they could purchase 'Nothing'. Jack found it humorous and enlightening that people were seduced by her art work. She believes that all you need is money behind you to attract people into a marketing campaign. I was impressed by Fiona Jack's simple, effective and elegant work. She challenged the system with the backing of the New Zealand Billboard Association to discover that people are influenced by the advertising on billboards. Unfortunately her art demonstrated that advertising does work. Therefore more billboards will be littering Auckland.

The more research I did on the subject of advertising, the more despondent I became. I felt and still feel that, through advertising, the consumer-culture is devouring our planet and producing vast wastelands of rubbish under the guise of it being our right to have fun and consume. The advertising industry is glossy; but it has a black heart.

For my mid year assessment I produced samples of the photographic work that I visualised similar to a billboard construction. This work had vertical bands of fashion photographs juxtaposed with vertical bands of rubbish. The fashion photographs represented the ultimate in advertising, a walking advertisement, and the rubbish the state of the whole planet if we don't reassess consumerism. Visually placed on top of the fashion and rubbish were soft focus bars, implying that we, as a society, are trapped within the system (Figure 21). These images were rejected soon after assessment, not by my assessors, but by me. I felt all the preliminary images were overt, leaving little to the imagination. I also felt the viewer would not be engaged by the images and would be quickly turned off, rather than be seduced into the images and slowly drawing conclusions for themselves.
Test 1: Diffusion bars over work, final print to be 7 x 2 m.

Test 2: Bars toned, change of imagery, final size 7 x 2 m.

Test 3: No bars, fashion images to be torn along edges. Final size 7 x 2 m.

Figure 21

Test samples for mid year assessment. All tests were rejected by me. I felt the imagery was blatant, leaving little to the imagination.
I was left feeling flat, but determined to produce quality photographs that communicated, probably a little more subtly, messages for society to rethink consumerism. I chose three different tracks to go down and finally produced three different series of photographs; *Invading Spaces*, *Consumption*, and *Fused Futures*. I will explain each series:

*Invading Spaces*

This was the first series. I decided to return to basics and photograph billboards in the environment. This led me to take numerous trips to Sydney, Melbourne, and the South coast. Canberra lacks the billboard mentality, so I ventured as far as Brisbane to document billboards. Why billboards you may ask? Billboards annoy me, I hate the way they intrude into the environment, but the more I photographed them the more humour and absurdity appeared. In addition, I became aware of the environment surrounding the billboards and how it had been changed through human habitation. I noticed the erosion, the degradation, the power lines, the buildings and the fences more than I had noticed them previously. Depression was starting to set in. But I can take some solace in the fact that all billboards are placed in high traffic areas so as to be seen by the most amount of people and therefore would be engulfed in signs of habitation. I feel billboards invade spaces in the environment, they appear to be placed in positions to divert the attention of the driver or passenger/s from the monotony of the drive/ride. In this series I chose five of the fifty billboards I photographed and produced 16" x 20" colour prints. The billboard series, called *Invading Spaces* (Figure 22, 23, 24) started to become repetitious and I felt there was more that was needed to be said about advertising. I took the *Invading Spaces* series into another direction; *Fused Futures*, the future of advertising.

*Figure 22* Penny Boyer, *Have*, 1999, Colour LED print 16" x 20"
Figure 23 Penny Boyer, *Welcomes*, 1999, Colour LED print 16" x 20"

Figure 24 Penny Boyer, *Seeks*, 1999, Colour LED print 16" x 20"
Consumption

In this second series I was determined to investigate what advertising meant to me. I thought about the essence of advertising and started to deconstruct the industry. First, the advertising industry is a propaganda machine. Advertisers want us to consume their message. We are a society of consumers and the message is to consume, no matter what the cost to our physical or mental health, or the cost to the environment or society. You and I are required to consume to keep the economy moving. Second, the imagery used in advertising is designed to be seductive and/or amusing, to entice us into acceptance, then submission. Third, after we have partaken of the spoils of consumerism we are left feeling unsated as there is always something else bigger, brighter and better to consume. Our appetite for consuming is insatiable, leaving an aftertaste of disgust.

The photographs in this series are black and white fibre base prints. I intentionally chose black and white to eliminate the distraction of colour and isolate texture and form. I am delighted with the results. One of the fourteen images (Figure 25) is pictured on the next page. This image shows a sophistication that was not previously seen in my early work.

The photographs in the series are close-ups of men, women and children’s mouths consuming products with high sugar, drug, chemical or salt content. All the goodies people like to consume for pleasure without any physical gain to their health. The psychological gain is given to us by the advertisers; you will “feel good” if you consume this. We oblige and consume, feel satisfied for a short period of time then feel unsatisfied and repeat the process incessantly. We have become addicted to the taste, the physical sensation and the psychological high. I had no problem in acquiring models as subjects. I would ask them to consume their favourite junk food or drink and some would have trouble deciding what they liked the most. Children were especially willing to eat any lolly placed in front of them. An interesting phenomenon occurred where I found most of the photographs were of the people eating lollies; was this my underlying bias? I had thought I had a savoury tooth!

I admire the artist Barbara Kruger (further information in Part One, page 22 of this report) as she goes beyond the boundaries of the gallery wall to public places in her endeavours to provoke questions about power and to shatter the illusion of the stereotype. To Kruger, the stereotype “is an apotrope, a gesture performed with the express purpose of intimidating the enemy into submission.” Advertising creates stereotypes. The “Marlboro Man” has the image of masculinity and rebelliousness, “Joe Camel” has a carefree, young rebel attitude that attracts school children into the stereotype, and “Coke” has a fun, happy, carefree, young image. In this Consumption series of photographs, as well as through investigating the advertising industry, I would like to crack the illusion of the stereotype in a way that makes the viewer seduced by the imagery then disgusted by the connotations. If the audience feels compelled to look, yet repulsed at the same time, I will feel like I have succeeded in my endeavours.

Fused Futures

In the third series I expanded on photographing the billboards and photographed sections of television advertisements. I matched the television advertisement with the billboards advertisement on two of the three images and contemplated the future of advertising. Where will the advertisement be placed next? We have a vast canvas of sky that has yet to be plastered. Could it be that the future of advertising is to laser the sky with images. I’m sure the advertising agencies are contemplating far more outlandish schemes to attract our attention.

I produce three large coloured inkjet prints 1.2 m x 1.7 m. The first image (Figure 26) is a straight photograph with no manipulation and yet the colour of the sky matches the colour on the billboard. It looks for all intents and purposes as if I have manipulated the billboard into the environment to match the sky. Or have I ink dropped the Pantone colour of the reflected sky on the bonnet and inserted it into the sky palette. This quandary begs for answers? Although no manipulation has taken place we somehow feel that the truth is not always as it seems. As Pablo Picasso said, "Art is a lie that permits us to state the truth." Manipulation of truth is not only an artist’s tool but an advertiser’s tool. Joan Fontcuberta’s comment in Pedro Meyer: Truths, Fictions, and Reasonable Doubts says:

All photographs are manipulated. Framing is a manipulation, focusing is a manipulation, choosing the moment to snap the picture is a manipulation. ... No human action exists that does not imply manipulation. Therefore,
manipulation is exempt from moral value *per se*, and the fact that it carries negative connotations is a judgement that should be avoided. What is subject to critical judgement is its effectiveness. \(^{103}\)

![Figure 26 Penny Boyer, *Manipulation No.1*, 1999, Inkjet colour print 1.2m x 1.7m](image)

I agree with Fontcuberta that all photography is manipulated and therefore we should get over the negative image it evokes. If we are looking at its effectiveness then we can see it succeeds through advertising and through artistic expression. But the downside is that advertising goes a little further in its deception.

The second and third images in this series are digitally manipulated combinations of billboards and television stills. This combination questions the future of advertising. A McDonalds sign (Figure 27) is combined with a McDonalds television advertisement (Figure 28) to produce Manipulation No. 2 (Figure 29). The billboard construction is easily identified exhibiting the ravages of time, while the translucent television image displaying the textured dot pattern penetrates the sky portraying an electronic future. Do we want our future environment be surrounded by commercial images? Or should we be lobbying the government for fewer commercials? Is it not a travesty when society exists on a economic base and morality seems consumed by economics? I am inspired by Masato Nakamura\(^{104}\) (further information in Part One, page 32 of this report) in his brazen manner to receive approval by McDonalds to exhibit the McDonalds Logo and at the same time challenge McDonalds through his art work.


\(^{104}\) Hitoshi Dehara, Masato Nakamura, *Beyond the Future the third Asia-pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, 1999, p.76.
I feel humbled and yet excited, as I know there is a ground swell of people who are no longer being deceived by advertising and are now spreading the word that we do not need to be consumed by consumerism.

In conclusion, I am delighted with the outcome of both my dissertation and studio practice. The art work has been crystallised through my studies and it is a strong argument against the path of consumerism.

Figure 27 Image prior to manipulation

Figure 28 Image prior to manipulation

Figure 29 Penny Boyer, Manipulation No.2, 1999, Inkjet colour print 1.2m x 1.7m


Grasskamp, "Obra Social" / Hans Haacke, Fundacio Antoni Tapiés, Barcelona, 1995


Lewis, Grosz/Heartfield: The artist as Social Critic, Holmes and Meier, New York, 1980


McKinnon, James, *What is Reality?*, Adbusters, Autumn 1999, No.27, p28


Robbins Bruce, *The Phantom Public Sphere*, University of Minnesota Press, 1993


Sunderland, Kerry, *Corporate Sponsorship in the Classroom*, Youth Studies Australia, Autumn, p24-28

Sunderland, Kerry, *Corporate Sponsorship in the Classroom*, Youth Studies Australia, Autumn, p24-28


Websites

www.burstmedia.com/targeted.htm 8 July 1999

www.adbusters.org 21 November 1999


www.wtowatch.org/multimedia/index.cfm?c_id=5 4 December 1999

Title: Perception / Deception: Contemporary Advertising Imagery in Australia

Subject area: Advertising Imagery in Australia in 1999

Focus of Study: The focus of this research paper will be on contemporary advertising in Australia in 1999 by analysing magazine, newspaper [advertisements and advertorials], television [advertisements and infotainment]. Resources will include extensive texts relating to the topic. The exploration will examine whether advertising is a creative "artistic" tool to inform a buyer of the product; or does it deceive / entice / seduce / tempt the public into buying [often overpriced, poor quality items] for 'fashion'. Or is it a combination of elements, depending on the type of advertisement. Perhaps the advertisements are only targeting the most lucrative markets?

The research will investigate whether advertising images mirror our society, playing an innocent role of reflection, or create our society; or both? And if the advertising images are creating society, who are creating the images? Conceptually, are art directors, graphic designers and photographers shaping our desires and ideology? If they are creating our ideology, what trends have emerged in the representation of gender, age, race, sexuality and class equality in the last ten years of advertisements?

Artists that have stimulated my interest in advertising imagery include Andy Warhol, Athol Shmith, Cecil Beaton, Horst-P-Horst, Andre Kertesz, Helmut Newton, Irving Penn, Victor Burgin and Barbara Kruger. Andy Warhol started out as a graphic artist in advertising becoming an artist in the 1960's concentrating on the world of consumerism. Warhol's can/s of Campbell's soup made the brand iconic and probably did more for the advertising of Campbell's soup than their own traditional advertising methods. Victor Burgin [1973-76] deconstructed the ideological division between the advertising image and that of art by appropriating advertising images and 'reproducing the rhetoric of advertising copy' e.g. an advertising image of a man and woman cuddling - text above 'What does possession mean to you?' - text below '7% of our population own 84% of our wealth'. In 1979 Barbara Kruger created large "unsettling" photographs with text that compelled the viewer to question "how we are controlled and motivated by photographic advertising.

Aims: The aims are twofold: to investigate contemporary visual 

---

107 Ibid, p.14
communication within the context of advertising to alert the viewer / reader to the manipulations and distortions of the creation of their social context; and to bring this understanding to bear in my professional capacity as a teacher, so my students will understand these mechanisms in their own creation of successful commercial photographs and visual images.

**Studio Practice**

**Supervisor:** Martyn Jolly

**Visual Investigation:** I intend to explore the advertising image aesthetics and create quality black & white and colour transparency images. Television sets will be used to frame each individual pieces of work. Two images will be in each television. The first image will be a black and white image printed onto a venetian blind which, when opened, will reveal a colour transparency. The images may be amusing (e.g. group of well toned, chiselled, men with 'the look' [a black and white print] opening to variety of normal, average, men [colour transparency]) and deceptive (e.g. model type, being photographed, sees her reflection as being overweight and unattractive, yet to others they see her as being desirable [black and white] open Venetian blind and colour image has a underweight woman seeing her reflection as being healthy).

The images created in this visual investigation will inform, persuade and seduce the viewer, analogous to the tools used for advertising.

**Research Paper**

**Supervisor:** Matthew Holt

**Size of paper:** 10,000 - 15,000 words

**Collection of Data:** During month of April collect magazines and newspaper, tape and watch television at all different times of day on different channels.

**Contents of report:**
1. Introduction
2. Imagery
   2.1 Ideology of Advertising Imagery
   2.2 Mirror to Society
   2.3 Public Fears
   2.4 ..but...sex sells
3. Analysis
4. Conclusion
   Bibliography

**Time Frame (Subject to change):**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Research Paper</th>
<th>Studio Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Program approval / Research text &amp; websites</td>
<td>Initial concepts # Complete Skin Exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Research/writing</td>
<td>Photographing / digital manipulation / reviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(minimum of two concepts) one mock installation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Research/writing</td>
<td>Photographing / digital manipulation / reviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(minimum of two concepts) Collection of TV sets and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>materials eg light box, venetian blinds, small motors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Research/writing</td>
<td>Photographing / digital manipulation / reviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(minimum of two concepts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Research Paper completed by 30 July</td>
<td>Photographing / digital manipulation / reviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(minimum of two concepts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td></td>
<td>Photographing / digital manipulation / reviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(minimum of two concepts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td></td>
<td>Photographing / digital manipulation / reviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(minimum of two concepts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finalising installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finalise organisation for exhibition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Research Resources & Bibliography


**Communication Arts Photography.** Annual 39, August 1998


Edgar, Patricia and McPhee, Hilary, *Media She*. Melbourne, Heinemann, 1974


Robbins Bruce, *The Phantom Public Sphere*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993


Websites

www.burstmedia.com/targeted.htm

www.beneton.com
Curriculum Vitae

Education
1999-00 Candidate for Master of Visual Arts
Canberra School of Art, Institute of the Arts

1992-94 Graduate Diploma in Adult Education
University of South Australia

1990-91 Bachelor of Environmental Design
University of Canberra

1982-85 Certificate in Photography
Sydney Technical College

Group exhibitions
1999 Skin, Stills Gallery, Sydney

1998 Women on Women, State Theatre, Sydney
Women on Women, Stills Gallery, Sydney

1996 Women on Women, FAD Gallery, Melbourne
Tasmania 10 days, 12 views, Foyer Gallery, Canberra Institute of Technology, Canberra

1995 Drawing in Light, Drawing on memories, Link Gallery, Canberra

1994 Dreaming Civic: Transformation of Place, Link Gallery, Canberra
Souvenirs, Contemporary Art Space, Manuka, Canberra

1993 Scene at Night, Tilley Devine's Cafe, Lyneham, Canberra
AIPP Awards, Link Gallery, Canberra

1992 Photo Bizarre, Pavilion Hotel, Canberra

1991 Photo Bizarre, National Press Club, Canberra

1990 Photo Bizarre, National Press Club, Canberra
The Group, PhotoAccess, Canberra

1989 Photo Bizarre, Graphix Brasserie, Canberra

Collections
Skin, Equitylink, Merchant Bank, New York

Publications
Canberra Arts Anthology 1999
Commissions

1999
Cox, Humphries & Moss Architects, Competition entry
Nyree Smith, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions

1998
George Ingram, Catalogue
Anna Huenke, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions
Paige Gordon Production Group, *Raising the Standard*, Promotions

1997
Ian Guthridge, Catalogue
Robert Foster, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions
Paige Gordon Production Group, *Raising the Standard*, Promotions

1996
Robert Foster, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions
Paige Gordon Production Group: *Party, Party, Party, The Shed; Aves; Promotions*
Walkabout Fashion Label, Promotions

1995
Glenn Dunn, Catalogue
Robert Foster, Catalogue
Rachael Bowak, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions
Walkabout Fashion Label, Promotions

1994
Robert Foster, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions
Walkabout Fashion Label, Promotions

1993
Robert Foster, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions
Walkabout Fashion Label, Promotions

1992
Skylark Theatre, Promotions
Robert Foster, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions
Walkabout Fashion Label, Promotions

1991
Skylark Theatre, Promotions
Robert Foster, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions

1990
Royal Institute of Architects, Measured Drawing Book
Australian Medical Association, AMA Magazine
Skylark Theatre, Promotions
Robert Foster, Catalogue
Alibi Designer Fashions, Promotions
Appendix 1

% Advertisements in Magazines

Magazines
March/April 1999

- Marie Claire
- Girlfriend
- Pavement
- Vogue Living
- Elle
- New Idea
- That’s Life
- Woman’s Weekly
- Woman’s Day
- B
- Who
- Good Medicine
- Vanity Fair
- Vogue
- Dolly
- Cosmopolitan
- She
- Ministry

% Ads
Appendix 2
Price of the Magazines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marie Claire</td>
<td>$14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
<td>$12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavement</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vogue Living</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elle</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Idea</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman's Weekly</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman's Day</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Medicine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanity Fair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3
Total Pages Vs Non-advertising articles

March/April 1999

Magazines

- Marie Claire
- Girlfriend
- Pavement
- Vogue Living
- Elle
- New Idea
- That's Life
- Woman's Weekly
- Woman's Day
- B
- Who
- Good Medicine
- Vanity Fair
- Vogue
- Dolly
- Cosmopolitan
- She
- Ministry