# THE ART OF ADVERTISING

### LARGE PRINT CAPTIONS



#### **PRINTING PROCESSES**

#### 1. Woodcut

Woodcutting is the oldest process for printing images. Parts of the surface of a wooden block are removed with sharp tools, leaving the areas to be printed standing in relief to be inked and printed under pressure, usually on a press. By the early 19th century it was mainly used for relatively crude popular work.

#### 2. Copper engraving and etching

In copper engraving and etching the print is taken from hollowed-out marks on a copper plate. To take a print, ink is forced into the recessed lines, and the surface cleaned of ink. A sheet of paper is laid onto the plate, and pressure from the printing press forces the ink out of the hollows and onto the paper.

#### 3. Wood-engraving

Wood-engraving, developed in the late 18th century, was a way of working on blocks of wood cut across the grain. Using a variety of steel tools, skilled engravers could simulate a range of tones by creating very much finer lines than was possible in woodcutting.

#### 4. Lithography

Lithography emerged in the final years of the 18th century and rests on the principle that water and grease do not mix. Designs are drawn with greasy materials on a flat, porous stone (later grained metal) and prepared chemically with a gum-etch for printing. Taking a print involves two procedures: dampening the stone and then rolling up its surface with greasy ink. The ink sticks to the greasy drawn marks, but not to the damp stone.

#### 5. Colour wood-engraving

Colour printing began to be widely used for commercial work in the second half of the 1830s. One approach, as here, was to print from a set of engraved wood blocks, each one dedicated to a particular colour. When printed one after the other the colours blended visually. In this example, just four blocks – red, yellow, blue and black – create a range of colours, shades and tones.

#### 6. Chromolithography

An alternative to colour wood-engraving, increasingly from the 1860s, was chromolithography. A design was allocated to a set of lithographic stones, each one devoted to a particular colour and distinct part of the image. These were printed sequentially. The variety of mark-making and the far greater number of colours used meant that the end-product could be richer and more subtle than a colour woodengraving.

#### 7. Hand colouring

The practice of colouring prints by hand did not end with the advent of colour printing: the two went hand-in-hand until print runs grew so large that it became impractical. In this advert of the 1820s, all the colours have been added by hand.

## 8. Photomechanical printing in monochrome

Photographic methods began to influence commercial printing at the end of the 19th century. In relief printing this meant two things: finding ways of breaking down the continuous tones of an image into binary dots of various sizes (small ones in light areas, larger ones in dark areas) and improving ways of controlling the etching of a metal plate so that it stood sufficiently high to print.

#### 9. Photomechanical printing in colour

In the 1890s colour and photography came together as photomechanical printing in colour. The hues of the original were separated using colour filters (red for cyan, green for magenta, and blue for yellow). Sometimes the printer added black, but a combination of just three colours often produced an acceptable printed image.

#### THE ART OF DESCRIPTION

Pictures always speak louder than words, and increasingly adverts and catalogues proliferated with illustrations of everything from hats to buckets. Accurate depictions not only enticed the buyer to part with their money, but helped to ensure that customers knew exactly what they were purchasing. When it came to selling clothes, drawings could suggest not only the character of the consumer but also their class. The images in Fred. Watts & Co.'s catalogue of boys' clothes provided accurate product information, and were aimed firmly at the middle-class consumer.

Traditionally, printers used jobbing artists whose drawings were then engraved on wood or copper, or transferred to lithographic stone. Although skilful, this illustrative work lacked imagination, was rarely signed, and was certainly not considered to be art. However, sometimes the artist's imagination would emerge, as in the large Daniel Collins trade card and the much later 'wheel of hosiery' from 1898, which prefigures the 1930s notion of graphic design.

Wood-engraving continued well into the 20th century for this sort of work, eventually to be replaced by photomechanical processes. As well as a greater level of accuracy and detail for consumers, these processes created a new type of artist and designer able to take advantage of the new challenges and possibilities of this superrealistic medium.

#### **ART BECOMES COMMERCIAL**

Colour printing is now so commonplace that it is difficult to imagine the impact it made on the poster hoardings of London in the 1880s. The technology to print in colour and at large sizes took not one, but two directions in Britain: the first married advertising with fine art; the second created a new style of art entirely – commercial art.

A. & F. Pears led the way in appropriating fine art to promote their brand. After the first success in 1878 with 'You Dirty Boy', a campaign based on a sculpture commissioned from Giovanni Focardi, Pears embarked on a path that was to outrage the art world. By adding a bar of soap, the brand name and a new title ('Bubbles') to John Everett Millais's painting, 'A child's world', Pears called into question notions of copyright and integrity in reproductions of existing paintings. Pears had Millais's permission, but when Sunlight used a painting by William Frith without permission soon afterwards the debate reached new heights. A new approach can be seen in H. Stacy Marks's 'Cleanliness is next to godliness', commissioned for Pears' Soap, but it wasn't until 1893 that the British 'artistic poster' was born. Dudley Hardy's poster for *To-day* magazine was a sensation and widely praised by art critics. The English commercial style became characterized by thick dark outlines, flat bold colours and a gentle humour.

#### INVENTIVENESS

#### Spreading the word

Advertisers used any means at their disposal to reach the buying public. Nothing was off-limits – from insertions in the columns of newspapers (where advertising often eclipsed actual news) to dropping adverts from balloons.

Posters promoted branded products nationally, while provincial newspapers, listings of local tradesmen, and even theatre programmes provided effective channels for specific geographic areas. Specialist journals were a good way to reach groups with particular interests or hobbies, enabling more subtle targeting. Here, the advertising pages often included black and white versions of well-known posters, as well as handbills, which might be sewn, stapled or pasted down inside.

Advertisers used the postal service to spread the word about their products: nineteenthcentury junk mail might include promotional postcards and poster stamps (miniature posters which could be stuck onto envelopes). Slogans are useful too. A successful catchphrase, which crosses into popular culture, will advertise your product far and wide – as happened in the case of Pears's grasping baby, 'He wont be happy 'till he gets it!'.

#### **Attracting attention**

The purpose of an advert was to attract and retain attention – even when the format was small. To do this, advertisers used text, typographic ornament and bold images, or a combination of all three. Shop window displays (such as that illustrated in the Raphael Tuck advert) and hanging cards of products provided an opportunity to grab the attention of the customer. Shopkeepers also commissioned their own stationery, such as bill headings and price lists.

#### **Gimmicks and giveaways**

Gimmicks took many forms – from images of shaving on horseback ('Hunting Razors') to Perring's large hat on wheels that sped around the streets of London, or the magical effect of revealing hidden text by holding an advertisement to the light. In 1884 Pears stamped 10-centime coins with their brand name: the resulting outcry proved that there is no such thing as bad publicity. They were able to re-use this marketing ploy more than three decades later, when the coins were 'discovered' in the trenches in France.

As cutting and folding of paper and card became mechanized, a wide range of flat and threedimensional novelties emerged. Some, like the Express Dairy pop-up, borrowed techniques from greetings cards.

# Free difts that would be kept and used by

Free gifts that would be kept and used by customers were a perfect way of ensuring that brand names were kept in sight and therefore in mind. Calendars were popular as they would be retained for a whole year, and most giveaways for adults had practical uses such as blotters, bookmarks and recipe books. Playing cards, sheet music and booklets of jingles were also effective – advertising the brands while simultaneously enhancing leisure hours.

Toys, both educational and recreational, brought children into the competitive world of brand loyalty. Developments in packaging enabled the distribution of collectable cards. Children, as much as adults, were the target audience for cards distributed with adult products such as cigarettes.

#### POSTERMANIA

In 1893, Dudley Hardy's 'Yellow Girl' poster for *To-day* magazine burst onto London's streets to critical acclaim. It led to a rush of creativity in this new British 'artistic' style and to Britain's acceptance into the international poster scene, already well-established by this time. British posters were included in international exhibitions, specialist books and journals – and in *Les Maîtres de l'Affiche*. This landmark part-work, overseen by Jules Chéret, ran from 1895 to 1900. The best international posters were meticulously reproduced (and preserved for posterity) at a small, domestic scale. The 'Yellow Girl' shown here was plate 216. The original was nearly three metres high.

In Britain, posters appeared in places other than billboards. The British style was characterized by heavy black borders and flat colours, ideally suited to reproduction at smaller scales for commercial purposes. This was exemplified by Maurice Greiffenhagen's iconic poster for the *Pall Mall Budget*, shown here repurposed as a prospectus. The Czech artist Alphonse Mucha's more complex poster for *The West End Review* was reproduced as the journal cover. Other posters, such as Aubrey Beardsley's for *The Yellow Book*, were intentionally small as they were created for display in shop windows.

'Postermania' gripped Britain in the 1890s, and additional posters were printed for the collecting market. But it was short-lived. The specialist journal *The Poster* ran only from 1898 to 1901, and *The Poster Collectors' Circular* was published for just five months in 1899.

#### **A NEW BEGINNING**

A changed Britain emerged from the aftermath of the Great War. Advertisements with bright colours and bold designs mirrored the country's fresh optimism and determination to enjoy life. There was a sense of *joie de vivre* in the air. Kynoch's trademark Scottish terrier and vibrant checks, and Fortnum & Mason's much-admired series of 'commentaries', were designed to appeal to those who could afford (or at least aspire to) these new, exciting lifestyles. Art Deco influenced the style of some adverts, although there was also a more sombre, minimalist form of commercial art as seen in Edward McKnight Kauffer's 'Come On the Telephone'.

Advertisements reflected not just the new short hairstyles and hemlines, but women's changed expectations. Both women and men practised an increasing range of sports, all with specially adapted clothing to be advertised and sold. By 1937 swimwear was practical and glamorous and no longer constrained by outmoded ideas of propriety.

But it was emerging technology that was to have the longest-lasting impact on lifestyles – and on graphic design. The General Electric Company's 'Pavilion of Light' in the Ideal Home Exhibition of 1930 displayed a wonderland of labour-saving domestic appliances. Radios (shown in the Hall's distemper advert), telephones and television expanded horizons within modern homes as much as bicycles, motor cars, cinema and foreign travel did outside them.

#### SHOPPING

Until the advent of cheap marts in the 1840s and large department stores in the 1870s, only exclusive emporia such as S. & I. Fuller's 'Temple of Fancy' offered their affluent customers (usually women) an opportunity to browse the merchandise. Instead, tradesmen such as the perfumer William Roberts circulated tantalising lists of luxury goods, or advertised them in the pages of journals.

Before department stores, shops in large towns specialized in particular goods. It was a competitive market: shopkeepers went to great lengths to ensure that customers went to the 'right' shop, and manufacturers encouraged brand loyalty ('Mother <u>will</u> have Jones").

Many shopkeepers offered a delivery service but, as postal and rail services improved in the second half of the 19th century, manufacturers were also able to sell directly to the customer at home. Without the expense of retail stores, they could offer cheaper goods delivered to the doorstep. Department stores (including Derry & Toms, founded in 1862) grew by taking over adjacent premises, but in 1877, with the opening of the Brixton Bon Marché, something new happened – the first purpose-built department store in Britain. These stores could offer convenience, choice and first-class customer service. Shoppers visiting the department stores of the 1930s would hardly believe that they would be in decline today.

#### **SELLING HEALTH**

Health was big business. Patent medicines were uncontrolled and quacks abounded. Some manufacturers advertised cures for an alarming range of illnesses; others preyed on fear – of the plague, typhoid, cholera, diseases of the lungs and, in the case of Blackham's Vegetable Tonic, of death itself. On the back of many advertisements are graphic descriptions of symptoms, accompanied by testimonials from former sufferers. Many medicines were ineffective, some were dangerous and a few were deadly. The satirical cartoon portrays a sailor saved by the box rather than the pills themselves. Others in the business preferred to portray the beneficial effect of their products. Women and

children smile out from advertisements for tooth powder, magnetic corsets, tonics or sanitary towels. Unusually, in the case of Mother Seigel's Syrup, we see the before and after treatment, although a modern viewer might doubt the healthiness of such a ruddy complexion and large waistline.

In a market alive to the threat of counterfeit medicines, brand confidence was a powerful selling point. Packaging was a way to frustrate the forgers, and we can see the girl's evident relief that she has bought the 'right' product in the Angier's Emulsion advert.

Certain foods and beverages were also marketed for their health-giving and nutritional properties. Rather than a sweet treat, Cadbury's Cocoa is advertised as being both 'flesh-forming' and 'heat-giving', to be compared favourably with raw beef and mutton, eggs and white bread, and with a rival foodstuff: meat extract.

#### POSTERS

The essential elements of a poster – being 'posted up' and left in place – are both present in the small Caxton item of *c*. 1477 shown here. The phrase 'supplico stet cedula' (please leave this notice in place) arguably makes it the first poster as well as the first British printed advertisement. Later, the ability to be read or viewed at a distance became an intrinsic component of posters. The Lottery poster displayed in the first case makes its strong visual impact through its large woodcut lettering and image.

By the age of the 'artistic' poster, the advertising message was usually conveyed by strong images integrated with minimal text. The small ornamental poster shown here for Hau & Co. Champagne by the illustrator Walter Crane, although attractive, was less visually successful than the Beggarstaffs' iconic poster for Rowntree's Cocoa.

The anonymous poster for the new Morris-Oxford Six (c. 1930) is fizzing with the optimism of the Jazz Age, while the abstraction of Edward McKnight Kauffer's 1933 poster for Shell exemplifies his more sombre modernist style.

#### **MILITARY MARKETING**

War provided an opportunity for advertisers to associate their products with patriotism, catching the popular feeling associated with a particular military campaign. The mood of the country might be brimming with confidence and bravado, or with something more sombre. Military heroes were celebrated around the time of the Second Boer War (1899-1902), as we see in the Bovril novelty advertisement which shows Admiral Lord Walter Kerr, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, Prime Minister Lord Salisbury and Field Marshal Roberts. There is a single phrase on the reverse side: 'Bovril, a factor in our Empire's strength'.

Campaigns during World War I tended to focus on the war effort at home and the bravery of the ordinary 'Tommies' at the Front. The paper bag with artwork by John Hassall was issued by the National War Savings Committee to encourage the public to support the war effort financially. Paper shortages also affected advertising, and there was a change from lavish chromolithography to smaller, black and white adverts in the press. The modest Harrods leaflet of 1917 features practical styles and shorter lengths for women's clothing and is peppered with masculine references: 'man-tailored', 'military', 'cavalry cut' as well as the chilling name of the style 'Somme'.

#### WAR, WORDS AND ADVERTISING

Andrew Clark (1866-1922), a historian and Church of England rector, was a keen collector of day-today information that he thought might be lost and forgotten. By 1914, he had filled almost 300 manuscript notebooks with information of this kind, all of which were placed in the Bodleian for safe keeping. As World War I began in 1914, however, he began a new project, looking at language and language change across the war, using popular sources, especially newspapers, advertisements and ephemera as evidence. He gathered examples of these and by 1919 had

created another extensive series of annotated scrapbooks which preserve a detailed archive of words in war-time use, many unrecorded elsewhere. In these examples, Clark was interested in the war-time punning on germs and Germans, and the targeted use of germ-killer in relation to Jack, the iconic British sailor. The language of a motorized war, as Clark stressed, was another significant aspect of modern warfare. Here, Michelin tyres illustrate not only war-time economy, another catchphrase of the day, but also the modernity of a motor-powered field ambulance rather than a horse ambulance.

#### A MATTER OF CLASS

The British class structure often underpins advertising, with manufacturers seeking to associate their products with certain (usually wealthy) social groups. The elderly lady, away from the comfort of her home, signals her class as officials inspect her essential supplies of Fry's Cocoa and Milk Chocolate. In the domestic environment, even humdrum products such as cleaning materials were elevated by association with elegant interiors, beautiful women and smiling well-fed servants (who often look healthier than their pale, heavilycorseted mistresses).

The small Lutticke's Soap poster is unusual in going 'below stairs' to show the 'Misery' of laundries not equipped with cold water soap. Rarer still is the depiction of true poverty in F. Allen & Sons' handbill, albeit with the implication that it could be reversed by drinking cocoa instead of liquor.

The children in both the Huntley & Palmers and B.T.H. Edison advertisements radiate entitlement and an unquestioning expectation that the class system would continue unchanged. Many (but not all) of these assumptions were swept away in the aftermath of World War I.

#### **BUY BRITISH!**

British firms often used national symbols as a marketing tool. As well as images of royalty, patriotic iconography included the Union Flag, the Royal Standard, John Bull, Britannia and a range of quintessentially British uniformed officials, including policemen, yeomen of the guard and naval officers. The Provost Oats advertisement shows a Chelsea Pensioner with a Scots Guards drummer boy. The Canadian firm Deering used the Red Ensign with the proud boast 'I'm British Too!'

Scotland was evoked by the kilt or full Highland dress, Ireland by the shamrock or just the colour green. But England is clearly the dominant partner in the adverts for Ross's Royal Belfast Aerated Table Waters and the United Kingdom Tea Company's Teas, where Wales is omitted altogether and the 'English rose' and John Bull take centre stage.

Attempts in the early 1900s to sell products from the colonies, such as Australian 'Orion' wine with its government certificate, culminated in the establishment of the Empire Marketing Board in 1926.

#### KINGS, QUEENS AND COMMERCE

Images of royalty boosted sales, especially at times of national celebration. Even those manufacturers who didn't hold royal warrants still wanted to gain some commercial advantage through connection with royalty.

Sometimes the use of royal images was merely decorative, while at other times advertisers went much further. In the past the royal family was used quite boldly to market or endorse products, particularly for jubilees and coronations. Can you imagine the present Queen appearing in an advert for porridge or metal polish?

Of course these advertisers had their fingers firmly on the pulse of popular opinion. The plight of Queen Caroline, hated by her husband George IV, and barred from the coronation, aroused public sympathy. Her name would attract custom, whether or not she actually bought her bread from the Cheap Bread Manufactory.

But who can predict how things will turn out? The General Electric Company's lavish lighting brochure to celebrate the coronation of Edward VIII planned for 1937 became redundant on his abdication. Osram must have rushed to assemble their own leaflet for the coronation of George VI in the same year.

#### **GREAT EXHIBITION**

The Great Exhibition of 1851 symbolized optimism, pride and nationalism, yet was coupled with unprecedented internationalism. From all over the world enormous crowds visited Joseph Paxton's iconic Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. Exhibition souvenirs were produced, including the japanned papier mâché blotter with mother of pearl inlay shown here together with the official commemorative medal, a season ticket and an admission ticket.

Opportunists, such as Folkard the grocer or Samuel Brothers the tailors, created adverts that capitalized on the popularity of the Exhibition to draw people to their London shops. The impact of the Exhibition on advertising came later: illustrations of medals awarded at this and subsequent exhibitions began to proliferate on trade cards and advertisements alike. Wotherspoon's large two-tone wood-engraving is a striking example.

#### **BREAKING THE MOULD**

New possibilities gradually opened up for women even before World War I. The 'New Woman' of the 1890s cycled and engaged in energetic sports, such as tennis, rowing and golf. But if hemlines began to rise a little to facilitate these activities, there were few other concessions: the rowers and their cox wear the mutton sleeve blouses of the time, dyed with the latest Maypole colours.

As the century turned, women continued to push towards more independence, challenging ideas of respectability. Advertisers were quick to reflect this and boost sales. The increasing acceptance of women smoking in public, for example, was an irresistible opportunity to promote 'Ladies Cigarettes'. Surprisingly, few advertisers showed support for the suffrage movement: Nixey's Boot Polish was an exception.

World War I radically changed women's place in society. When women took over men's work on the land or in factories, clothing became more practical, hemlines rose a bit further, and short hairstyles became popular. These wartime necessities became permanent, liberating trends in post-war fashions. The Vote followed the war, and women, epitomized by Miss Remington, entered the job market – a route to independence.

#### THE IDEAL WOMAN

Images of women predominate in advertising and usually show the (male) advertiser's vision of the ideal woman, often with a small waist, long hair, and flawless complexion. Importantly for advertisers, the woman of the household usually controlled the domestic budget, and so represented an important target market.

The adverts in this case chronicle the pressures placed on women to follow the dictates of fashion, as the Granville Sharp advert for crinolines makes clear with evidence from the French press. They were expected to have their bodies moulded by crinolines and corsets, while the little girl and her mother in the 1890s don't think to question the desire for 'beautiful long hair'. The manipulative 1907 advert for Figuroids, a 'scientific' cure for obesity, appeals to common sense and reason in persuading women to conform to the body shape of the time.

#### **OXFORD IN ADVERTS**

Advertisements are a mine of information for any historian, and provide a snapshot of moments in the past in a way more formal publications often don't. These trade cards and circulars, advertisements and paper bags may incorporate an invaluable representation of a building long since demolished (e.g. the fruiterer E.F. Greenwood's, knocked down to accommodate the extension to the Taylor Institution), premises before alterations, or records of addresses that no longer exist (e.g. Lincoln Lane). They also give us insights into what was sold locally and into the social, commercial and cultural lives of past generations.

#### CELEBRITY

Celebrity culture is nothing new. By the 1880s the public were familiar with the famous through theatrical and military prints, ballads and popular music. At the same time there was a well-established practice of using testimonials in adverts. Combining these was the master stroke which created celebrity endorsement. Pears led the trend by using Lillie Langtry, actress and mistress of the future King Edward VII, and the opera singer Adelina Patti to endorse their products. The actress Ellen Terry had a long association with 'Koko for the Hair'. Mennen's Toilet Powder claimed endorsements from no fewer than eight famous actresses and singers.

The association of the personality to the product could be tenuous. Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, politicians Gladstone and Disraeli, musicians Jenny Lind and Arthur Sullivan, artist Frederick Leighton and nurse Florence Nightingale are among those named in Sunlight's 'Grammar of Graphology'. This advert of 1894 uses the popular device of handwriting to attribute positive character traits to celebrities and link these to Sunlight Soap products.

Military heroes, living and dead, were also fair game, adding cachet and gravitas to brand names, while the smoking Craven "A" aviator was a more generic symbol of heroism.

#### POLITICS

In peacetime, politics rarely intruded openly into advertising. However, several adverts shown here capitalize on discontent, hardship or political events to grab public attention and engage sympathy before proceeding to promote their wares. Eno's might appear to favour reform, but is taking advantage of interest in the Boer War to market Fruit Salt on the recommendation of a sapper (a private soldier in the Corps of Royal Engineers). The Home Rule advert of Fred Thomas' Cheap Shoe Shop in Dublin reveals itself to be as much about the prevention of corns as about the Irish politician and nationalist William O'Brien. Pears' Politicoptical Illusion from the late 1880s, by contrast, claims not to be making any political point while slyly implying that the leader of the Liberal Party, William Gladstone, is a greater man than the Tory radical, Randolph Churchill.

Another political issue which surfaced in adverts was the Free Trade debate of the early 20th century. Then as now, the choice between free versus protected trade divided the public and manufacturers. The Daily News aspired to educate its readers in favour of Free Trade, and Bovril celebrates Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, another Free Trade advocate, who became Prime Minister in 1905. For the Felt Hatters and Trimmers' Union it is the protection of trade that matters. The plea by the Canning Town and Plaistow Hairdressers' Association 'Don't Shave After Five on Thursdays!' shows support for the early closing movement, which campaigned to reduce the 84-hour week the average shop worker endured by the mid-1880s (that's 14 hours a day, 6 days a week!).

**JOHN DE MONINS JOHNSON** (1882–1956) was Printer to the University and a collector of printed ephemera – the adverts, greetings cards, tickets, menus, election leaflets, postcards, catalogues, theatre programmes and 'junk mail' which we all handle each day.

It was Johnson's early work as a papyrologist that inspired him to collect the 'waste paper' of the more immediate past. While other collectors specialised in particular categories, Johnson collected them all! He created one of the world's greatest collections of printed ephemera, with 1.5 million mainly British items, organised into around 1,000 subject headings.

His aims were ambitious. He wanted to document both social and printing history – and he challenged people to suggest a subject that was not represented in his collection:

'I had conceived the idea of starting a little museum of common printed things, to illustrate at one and the same time the historical development of our social life and the development of printing. It was to be the museum of what is commonly thrown away or is too often thrown away: all the ordinary printed paraphernalia of our day-to-day lives ...'

The Collection was transferred to the Bodleian from Oxford University Press in 1968. It is one of the treasures of the library. Nearly all the adverts in this exhibition are drawn from it.

Portrait of John Johnson surrounded by his collection at Oxford University Press in 1956

Watercolour by H. Andrew Freeth (1912–1986) [ JL 789]

A leaflet about the collection is available on request from the Information Desk

The exhibition has been curated by Julie Anne Lambert, Librarian of the John Johnson Collection

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