

ADVERTISING VISUALS

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Advertising A paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future.

Art Works embodying human expression, in which a main feature of the work is the manner of its creation and/or execution rather than just a concept, idea, or message underlying it or conveyed by it, and in which this manner is not primarily driven by any other function.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. What is Advertising?

Numerous definitions of advertising exist. Some are broad, like the definition provided by James Laver who proposed that “Advertising is as old as Humanity: indeed, much older; for what are the flaunting colours of the flowers but so many invitations to the bees to come and “buy our product”. Everything is already there: the striking forms, the brilliant hues, even the “conditioning of the customer”.... Advertising might be defined as any device which first arrests the attention of the passer-by and then induces him to accept a mutually advantageous exchange.” A more narrow definition was presented by Raymond Williams in his classic essay entitled “Advertising: The Magic System” in which he described advertising as “the official art of capitalist society.”

In the opening paragraph of his book *Ogilvy on Advertising*, advertising legend David Ogilvy, wrote “I do not regard advertising as entertainment or art form, but as a medium of information. When I write an advertisement, I don’t want you to tell me that you find it ‘creative.’ I want you to find it so interesting that you buy the product. When Aeschines spoke, they said, ‘How well he speaks.’ But when Demosthenes spoke, they said, ‘Let us march against Philip.’” Leo Burnett, another advertising legend, describes advertising from a competitive standpoint as “selling corn flakes to people who are eating Cheerios.”

When advertising and marketing experts were brought together by researchers Jef Richards and Catherine Curran and asked to collectively decide what advertising was, they arrived at the following definition “Advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future.”

B. Why Advertise?

Advertising has many different uses: to create and promote the image of a corporation, product, or brand, to make an announcement, to make a sale, or to support a cause. The primary goal of advertising is persuasion. It is extensively relied upon to promote products and services, charitable causes, individuals like politicians and celebrities, and even ideas. As a marketing communications tool, advertising is a critical element of the integrated marketing communication mix.

Russell and Lane propose that advertising is an institution, not merely a means of disseminating information about a product. They argue that advertising impacts consumers, businesses, and society. Advertising provides information to consumers that allows them to discriminate between products. It allows businesses to bring new products to the attention of enough consumers so as to enable them to stay in business. In this manner, it fuels the economic engine of society.

The money businesses spend on advertising has increased dramatically in recent years. In 2007, spending on advertising has been estimated at over \$150 billion in the United States and \$385 billion worldwide, and the latter to exceed \$450 billion by 2010.

II. THE VISUAL ELEMENT IN ADVERTISING

The effectiveness of an ad is a function of what is said and how it is said. Several creative elements – the visual, the copy, the music – come together to create a successful advertisement. Although a lot of research has been done on these individual elements to determine what works and what does not work, there are no formulas for success and few ways to measure truly creative advertising ideas. According to a handbook published by Ogilvy and Mather, to get an ad right you need two things: 1) a simple, inspiring, insightful strategy and brief, and 2) the time in which to do the work right.

A great deal of literature has discussed how the different elements of advertising work. In this chapter, we focus on the visual element of advertising. Investigations regarding how the visual element can help enhance the effectiveness of the advertisement have been undertaken since marketers began to adopt full-scale marketing activities in the late nineteenth century. In this chapter, we will review some findings from this literature and then narrow our focus to a special category of visual images, namely, visual art.

A. Importance of Visual Images in Advertising: Evidence from Academic Research

Kosslyn et al. report that two thirds of all stimuli reach the brain through the visual system, and it might be argued that although human thought is neither words nor visual images, it seems closer to the latter than the former. This finding is poignantly reflected in Cahners Advertising Performance Studies which find that 98% of the top scoring ads in advertising effectiveness contain some visual element, either a photograph or an illustration. This visual element occupies between 25% and 63% of the layout space. Of the top-scoring ads in this study, 65% had a visual that occupied between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the advertisement.

Visual imagery is used to attract attention, stimulate curiosity, illustrate product features and benefits, create and develop a personality for a product, associate the product with certain symbols and lifestyles, and establish a brand's identity in the minds of the target audience. Research findings suggest that the content or what is depicted in a visual image is an obvious influence in the overall evaluation of the brand. For instance, advertisers use visual imagery to enhance or strengthen the message about their product. When something neutral (the product) is paired with something that elicits a positive affective reaction (a visual), the positive qualities of the visual may be interpreted by the consumer as also belonging to the advertised product.

Eye-tracking studies have been used to show that consumers focus first on the dominant picture in a print ad before attending to verbal information. The attention a viewer pays is facilitated by a) the size of the image, where larger pictures work better than small ones, b) the color of the image, where a color image works better than one in black and white, and c) the vividness of the image, where a greater number of colors works better to attract attention.

Rossiter and Percy divided visual communication in advertising into two categories of stimuli – static and dynamic. The three elements that determine static stimuli are picture size, exposure duration, and number of exposures. An increase in any of these variables has been shown to increase recognition, encoding of details, and development of denotative images among viewers. Although the attributes of static stimuli do not fit perfectly in measuring dynamic stimuli, this latter type also has resulted in high viewer response.

A “picture-superiority effect” has been established in the literature. This implies that images in ads a) facilitate memory of ad content, b) favorably influences beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral intent, and c) increases involvement with the product.

B. How the Visual Component of Advertising Works

It is relatively well established that visual images have an influence on the effectiveness of advertising and the evaluation of the products being advertised, but it is less clear how this influence is exerted. It has been suggested that the visual component of advertising performs two key functions - literal and symbolic. Literal visuals provide factual information about products or services (e.g. a photograph of the product itself), and symbolic visuals perform an indirect role to connect the images of products or services with the meanings that are appropriately assigned to them (e.g. a fluffy kitten to connote softness).

A great deal of research appears to be based on the assumption of a relatively effortless comprehension of nonverbal ad elements. Mitchell and Olson illustrate that brand attitudes arise from a classical conditioning effect using a valenced visual image, rather than from a more elaborate interpretation of the image. Miniard et al. investigate the influence of emotional appeals on brand attitudes by utilizing affect-laden or emotion-filled images that they argue are devoid of product-relevant information. Hagtvedt and Patrick demonstrate that although the content of a visual image is a source of interpretable information, art images have a general influence on consumer evaluations, regardless of the specific content of the images. Previous research has also demonstrated that perceptual fluency (or the ease with which an image is processed) results in enhanced consumer judgments.

Some research has relied on theoretical domains such as semiotics and rhetoric to explain how consumers extract information from a visual image. Semiotics refers to the communication of information via “signs” that combine to form a meaningful “text,” the interpretation of which includes the decoding of these signs according to culturally based decoding rules. A sign may be iconic and thus have a physical resemblance to its meaning (e.g., a photograph of the advertised product). Otherwise it may be symbolic and thus relate to its meaning by arbitrary convention. This type of sign is not an obvious, physical representation of its meaning.

Hagtvedt and Patrick assert that visual images are characterized by two key components: 1) content (*what* is depicted) and 2) manner (*how* it is depicted). These authors present a theoretical framework to understand the impact that visual images have on persuasion. This dual-process model proposes that when the content of an image is salient, the image is processed analytically as a product-relevant illustration, but when the manner is salient, the image is processed heuristically as an aesthetic stimulus. For instance, one might imagine two individuals looking at an ad for a beach resort in which the visual image in the ad is a painting of a woman on a beach. One individual looks at this image and sees a woman on the beach, while the other individual looks at the image and sees a painting. In other words, these two individuals look at the same image but focus on two different components of it. The first focuses on the content of the image (*what* is depicted) while the other focuses on the manner (*how* it is depicted). This differential focus may lead to vastly different influences on the consumers’ perception of the beach resort. Thus, this dual process model represents a means by which to systematically disentangle the influence that the two components of content and manner have on consumer evaluations of advertising and products associated with the advertising images.

C. Individual Differences in Response to Visual Images

The effects of the visual element of the ad may be different depending on an individual's response to visual (versus verbal) elements and/or the consumer's ability to generate vivid mental images. The visualizer/verbalizer cognitive style describes individual preferences for attending to and processing visual versus verbal information. In general, visualizers are characterized as those individuals who have high imagery ability and vivid daydreams, who like illustrations, diagrams, and charts, who prefer to be shown how to do something, and who tend to be more subjective about what they are learning. In contrast, verbalizers have lower imagery ability, like reading text or listening, prefer to read about how to do something, and tend to be more objective about what they are learning.

Several scales have been developed to measure dispositional imagery abilities. The Betts Questionnaire Upon Mental Imagery (QMI) is designed to assess individual differences in imagery vividness in regard to visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, and organic modalities. The Vividness of Visual Imagery Questionnaire – VVIQ assesses imagery abilities in regard to only visual images. Notably, dispositional differences in response to visual elements have been demonstrated to have a significant effect on creativity and information processing. Bone and Ellen demonstrate that participants' ability to imagine/visualize had an effect on (1) the reported vividness of the image of consuming the advertised brand and (2) the subjectively perceived ease of imagining experiencing the product. These two variables in turn had a significant impact on the attitudes toward the advertised brand.

III. VISUAL ART: A SPECIAL CASE OF VISUALS IN ADVERTISING

Visual art is used extensively in advertising. Indeed, Hoffman reports that “reproductions of high-culture images reach more people more often through advertising than through any other medium.” However, although the use of art is widespread in advertising, the various manners in which it may be used have not been systematically studied. It therefore seems instructive to provide an overview of how visual art is incorporated into advertising, as well as to pose questions about how this use of art influences consumers. Increased knowledge in this area should also assist advertisers in using art strategically and systematically rather than in an ad hoc manner based predominantly on intuition and experience.

Depending on definitions, one might argue that advertising is about selling, while art is about revealing; advertising is commerce, while art is culture. Advertising is usually intended to get a specific reaction from consumers, while works of art are often ambiguous, inviting multiple interpretations and meanings. Such suppositions notwithstanding, art has been used to influence people in specific ways throughout history.

Leaders like the Egyptian pharaohs, Roman emperors, and the popes used art for various purposes such as selling religion, promoting their own image and prestige, and enhancing their positions of power (Figure 1). Similarly, the Medici of Florence used art to promote a philosophy of enlightened humanism, as well as to impress their clients and business connections. In the current era, the use of art in such promotional endeavors is perhaps more prevalent than ever, for two main reasons: first, art is affordable and available to a larger number of people now than it was in earlier times; and second, the popular use of imagery is facilitated by modern media and channels of distribution. Perhaps the difference between high art and popular culture has also

gradually eroded in our consumption society, or perhaps it is a lingering distinction that still makes art useful in advertising. Either way, before we can speak sensibly about the effect of art in advertising, we must first specify what constitutes art in the current context.

A. What Is Art?

The notion of art as a special category is itself a relatively modern idea. For instance, not before the mid-eighteenth century did Abbé Batteux present the separate classification of fine arts made up of music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and dance. A distinguishing mark of these disciplines was that they had pleasure rather than utility as their goal. Today the notion of art as a separate category still remains, along with a belief that the perception of art differs from the perception of other objects. However, although a great deal of research has been focused on this perception, different definitions abound, and it seems doubtful that scholars will ever agree on any particular one. When speaking of art in connection with advertising, however, it seems appropriate to define art from the consumers' perspective: that art is that which is categorized by the viewers as such. Further, we will here restrict ourselves to visual art.

Even with this definition, it seems reasonable that differences in opinion will exist as to what distinguishes something as a work of art. On average, however, consumers do appear to possess some consistent views of what does or does not constitute art. Research conducted by the authors has indicated that the average viewer is able to recognize certain characteristics that distinguish artworks from other human creations. Indeed, consumers consistently report that art images are expressive, that the manner of creation or execution is itself a central feature of an artwork, while just trying to say something or express an emotion without a "special" manner is not enough to constitute art. Based on these self-reports and on a thorough review of art history, the authors have proposed that art may be identified as that which is perceived as a work embodying human expression, in which a main feature of the work is the manner of its creation and/or execution rather than just a concept, idea, or message underlying it or conveyed by it, and in which this manner is not primarily driven by any other function. Therefore, typical conceptual works such as animals in formaldehyde (Figure 2), human feces in hermetically sealed cans (Figure 3), or even Marcel Duchamp's famous urinal "Fountain" (Figure 4) (considered in a survey by CNN to be the world's most influential piece of modern art) may not spontaneously be recognized as works of art, unless they have already been marketed as such. These works typically depend on a context, such as being placed in a gallery, for their impact, and the cultural implications of, for instance, an institutional theory of art would detract from the focus of the current discussion. Further, works generally recognized as art, whether they are presented in a gallery or not, seem more useful for advertising purposes.

B. The Influence of Art in Advertising

Some research provides an understanding of the role of products with a salient aesthetic purpose, but the amount of extant research that illuminates the influence of art in the current capacity is quite limited. There is a need to further develop our understanding of how art images differ from other visual stimuli, and to map out how the presence of art influences consumer perceptions of products and brands.

Research conducted by the authors establishes the phenomenon of *art infusion*, broadly defined as the general influence of art on consumer perceptions and evaluations of products

associated with the art. General properties of art, tied to a special kind of quest for excellence inherent in the creation of artworks, spill over onto the products with which the art is associated. These properties cause perceptions of luxury, sophistication, and high culture to be associated with the product in question, leading to enhanced product evaluation. Further, although visual images are usually found to affect viewers in an affectively congruent manner, the art infusion effect does not depend on the content of the image and occurs whether the valence of emotion elicited by the artwork is negative or positive. This distinguishes visual art from other sensory stimuli used in advertising, such as music, in which the valence of the stimuli has a congruent impact on evaluations.

In further research, visual art is also shown to have a favorable impact on evaluations of brand extensions. First, the art infusion effect leads to enhanced brand image. Second, appreciation of visual art appears to cause enhanced cognitive flexibility, thus increasing perceptions of fit between the brand extension and the parent brand category.

C. The Ambiguous Language of Visual Art

Recent research in the emerging field of neuroaesthetics aims to understand the biological underpinnings of the human fascination with art. It may be argued that there are limits to how rich the information stemming from neuroscientific research can be on its own, but it may provide interpretable evidence when analyzed in combination with other experimental research, as well as with qualitative studies with converging evidence from fields such as art theory, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and marketing. Artworks are often ambiguous in nature, and research in neuroscience has found that this ambiguity is one of the fundamental reasons why a work of art engages the brain in the first place. Although the general insights given by the experience of an artwork may constitute a particularly interesting aspect of that work, openness to interpretation allows the viewer's brain to "complete" the artwork for itself, and thus the commonalities in artistic expression will be found by each individual viewer in a unique way. Indeed, Dewey argues that when viewing an artwork a spectator may experience creative processes similar to the ones of the artist who created the work. Does the open ended nature which often characterizes great art therefore contribute positively to the impact that art has on advertised products? How does this fit with the conception among advertising professionals that the best commercials leave something to the viewer's imagination?

IV. A TYPOLOGY OF THE USE OF VISUAL ART IN ADVERTISING

O'Barr provides a review of the history of art in advertising. He outlines some of the earliest uses of art like Cruikshank's 1820 illustrations used in posters for Warren's blacking company, or the famous 1887 Pears ad with the "Bubbles" painting by John Everett Millais. Today the use of art in advertising is widespread, and in the section that follows we will attempt to provide a typology for how visual art is being used in advertising. There are several ways in which categories for the use of art in advertising may be specified. Here they are specified by type of artwork, by the advertising appeal, or by the application of the artwork.

With these guidelines in mind, we perused a great deal of literature containing advertising, including books and journal articles on the subject, as well as a full year's (2005 – 2006) issues of various magazines, including Architectural Digest, Businessweek, Cosmopolitan,

Fortune, GQ (Gentlemen's Quarterly), New Yorker, Newsweek, Readers' Digest, Time, and Vogue. After thus collecting a large quantity of advertisements with art, we attempted to identify general categories for the current use of art in advertising.

A. Type of Artwork

Figurative versus Abstract. The majority of advertisements with art seem to use figurative art, in other words art which represents physical objects, people, or elements of nature. This may be because the majority of non-expert viewers prefer representational images to abstract works.

Classical versus Modern. In this categorization, classical may be thought of as most styles ranging from the Classical Greek sculpture of Pheidias or Myron to the Neo-Classicistic paintings of Jacques-Louis David. Modern may be thought of as later movements such as Surrealism or Abstract Expressionism. Some movements, such as Impressionism, would represent a grey area, and classifications would have to be made on a piece by piece basis. In general, classical art seems to have found more popular use in advertising than modern art has, and Hetsroni and Tukachinsky argue that the use of Renaissance artworks has been particularly prevalent. Indeed, Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa", Michelangelo's "David" (Figure 5), and Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus" (Figure 6) are among the most popular images of all.

Famous versus Unknown. The level of fame of the artwork may depend on the function the artwork is intended to have. For instance, if recognition value is the goal, then fame is obviously desirable. However, sometimes other criteria may guide the choice of artwork, for instance if the advertisers want one that fits particularly well with a slogan or tells a specific story. In this case, a work of art may even be commissioned for the occasion.

B. Advertising Appeal

Serious versus Humorous. Many advertisements with art have a serious approach. The aim may for instance be to convey an air of high culture or timelessness. In this manner, Rodin's "Thinker" lends the gravity of art and philosophy to an ad for Dewar's (Figure 7), implying that this whiskey is more sophisticated than other drinks. Ads for Courvoisier often display paintings of Napoleon Bonaparte, underscoring the idea that this is the "Cognac of Napoleon," thus evoking both an imperial heritage and the timeless allure of French culture.

On the other side of the spectrum are the ads which use art for the purpose of humor. One ad features a painting by Fra Angelico, where the angel Gabriel informs the Virgin Mary that she will bear forth a child. Mary responds: "Thanks, but I already know." It is an ad for Clear Blue pregnancy tests (Figure 8).

Art-Inspired versus Product-Inspired. There are popular conceptions about art itself which advertisers may wish to exploit. In an ad for Tabu perfume, artist and model are caught in a sudden, passionate embrace, thus linking the perfume to the emotional freedom and creative personality of artists.

Other times, art enables an advertiser to say something about product attributes which would otherwise be difficult to formulate. In an ad for Sungard, a painting of Hercules is explicitly used to symbolize the power of their systems. This also matches perfectly with the slogan: "Rely on our strength."

Nudity. Nudity and sex are employed in a variety of advertising contexts, but there are circumstances under which such a use would be considered improper, especially in a relatively puritanical country such as the United States. Here art comes to the rescue. One can often “get away with” nudity if it is used in the context of art. For instance, Michelangelo’s “David” is the classic protagonist where full-frontal male nudity is concerned (Figure 9). The bare breasts of the “Venus de Milo” seem harmless, even in a family friendly commercial for Kellogg’s brand corn flakes, while Rest Assured mattresses emphasize comfort and user-friendliness by displaying sexual scenes from the Kama Sutra.

C. Application of Artwork

Mere Presence versus Integrated Presence. Often a work of art plays a somewhat passive role in an advertisement. An ad for Pulsar displays the painting “Spring” by Botticelli, tying Pulsar watches to the golden age of the Renaissance.

Other times the artwork is not merely displayed alongside the product. In an ad for Ikea, a naked old lady sits on a chair on her lawn, sipping refreshments. “The Birth of Venus” by Botticelli is painted on the house wall behind her, seeming almost modest in comparison (Figure 10). In a Levi’s commercial, Michelangelo’s “David” wears a pair of torn Levi’s jeans (Figure 5). In a Fiat ad, Leonardo’s “Mona Lisa” is driving the car.

Telling a Story with the Artwork versus Creating an Artwork for the Story. Sometimes an artwork is used to resonate with or underscore a story told by the advertisement. In an ad for the St. Regis, Dega’s painting of dancers viewed from the orchestra implies that guests may enjoy refined entertainment here. In an ad for Mercedes-Benz, Whistler’s mother is implied to drive off in a fancy car (Figure 11).

Other times, a work of art is specially made to fit the product or a specific story. An advertisement for Pears’ soap may be said to have started this tradition, with the first museum-quality painting used in modern advertising. The painting was just barely altered in that a bar of Pears’ soap was discreetly placed at the bottom of a scene with a child blowing soap bubbles. Following this, many companies have employed artists to custom make artworks for their advertising campaign. The most famous of all is perhaps the enduring Absolut Vodka campaign.

Mimicking the Original Artwork: Reminding versus Parodying. It may sometimes be difficult to make the distinction between an image that was created to remind us of an artwork and an image that was created to parody an artwork. For instance, in an ad for Tela paper napkins, Leonardo’s “Last Supper” is imitated by a photograph with 13 young women at the table, arranged in a similar manner as Jesus and the disciples of the original fresco. Is it an irreverent parody, or is it a stylish photograph inspired by a masterpiece? Perhaps the answer depends on the intent of the advertiser or on the interpretation of the viewers.

Sometimes, however, the distinction is clearer. An example of an ad reminding us of a specific artwork may be a commercial for Campari, where a picture very similar to the painting of the “Bar at the Folies-Bergère” by Manet displays bottles of Campari, rather than the indistinct bottles of the original painting (Figure 12). Beneath the ad are written the words “Campari. Reflection on art.” The ad is serious, and the picture with the bargirl is clearly meant to mirror the original painting in an elegant and respectable manner.

In an advertisement for Prince sauce, the Mona Lisa appears in two versions side by side. In the first, she is very similar to the original painting, except that she is now holding a jar of

original Prince sauce. In the second, she is obese, and she is holding a jar of chunky Prince sauce. The distortion of the original painting clearly identifies this ad as a parody.

Symbolic Connection versus Substantive Connection. An ad for Shell features “The Birth of Venus” by Botticelli, simply because she is standing on a giant sea-shell (Figure 6). Here, the representation of the shell is the only connection between the advertisement and the artwork.

In a different approach, several ads for De Beers display paintings from their collection, conveying the idea that diamonds, like paintings, are unique works of art. The ownership of the paintings establishes an intimate connection between the firm and the artwork, as well as highlighting De Beers as a collector and sponsor of the arts in general.

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FIGURES

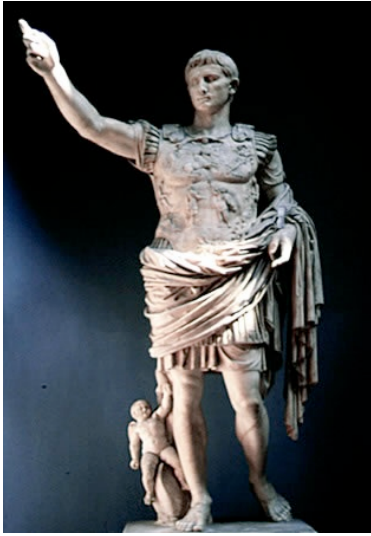


Figure 1. Augustus of Prima Porta

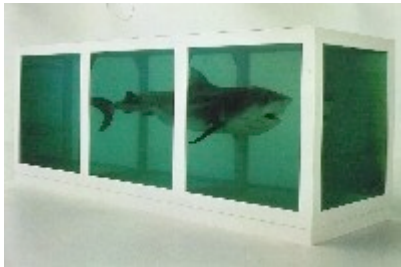


Figure 2. The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living (1991) by Damien Hirst



Figure 3. Merda d'Artista (1961) by Piero Manzoni



Figure 4. Fountain (1917) by Marcel Duchamp

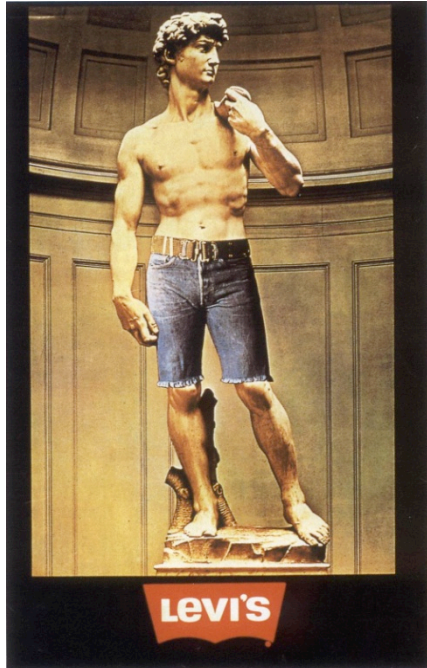


Figure 5. Levi's ad with David (1504) by Michelangelo

ONE IN A SERIES OF SEASHELL-INSPIRED ART TREASURES
PRESENTED BY SHELL OIL COMPANY

The artist turns to nature to inspire his craftsmanship

Botticelli chose the mythical birth of Venus as a subject worthy of his brush and produced a masterpiece. Before then and since then most art has shown a preoccupation with the things of nature and the legends surrounding them. The seashell has for long held a fascination for the artist and served as his inspiration. But inspiration alone is not enough; it must be coupled with skilled craftsmanship to achieve perfection.

Scientists, as well as painters, know this problem, for it is their task to equate the inspiration and the offerings of nature with the things man can use.

At Shell, hundreds of scientists are engaged in the task of turning ideas inspired by nature's hidden petroleum stores into substances useful to man. This imaginative research results in products that perform better, last longer and cost less. Millions know these products by the sign of the familiar shell.

Figure 6. Shell ad with Birth of Venus (1478) by Sandro Botticelli

One does not solve the world's problems over a glass of white wine.

Dewar's

Figure 7. Dewar's ad with Thinker (1881) by Auguste Rodin

Thanks, but I already know.

The most efficient pregnancy test.

Figure 8. Clear Blue ad with Annunciation (1432) by Fra Angelico

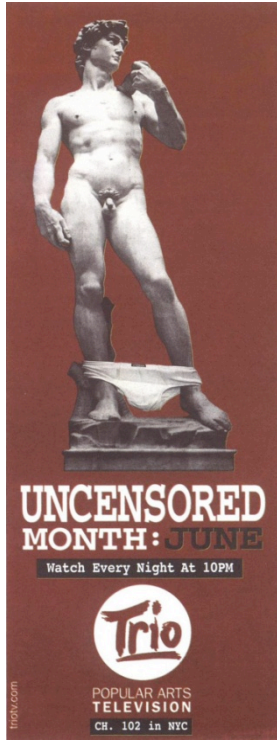


Figure 9. Trio ad with David (1504) by Michelangelo



Figure 10. Ikea ad with Birth of Venus (1478) by Sandro Botticelli



Figure 11. Mercedes-Benz ad with Arrangement in Black and Grey No. 1: The Artist's Mother (1871) by James Abbott McNeill Whistler



Figure 12. A Campari ad is reminiscent of a painting by Edouard Manet