FASHION ADVERTISING

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Fashion advertisements have their own stylistic modes and spheres of production and consumption, involving the interrelationship of word and image among other things. Yet, technological and social changes in clothing and retailing, and the impact of class, gender, and race politics, also have to be taken into account. Early forms of fashion promotion that originated in the eighteenth century, for example, overlapped with the rise of urban culture and shopping and embraced diverse forms of promotion, some of which we might not strictly recognize today as advertising. In the first instance, the majority of retailers regarded the creation of an enticing shop façade and interior as sufficient means for attracting and establishing a suitable clientele. This would subsequently be complemented by the circulation of handbills and trade cards, and to a lesser extent by press advertising, all of which were used to reinforce the reputation of the shop in question rather than to publicize the sale of particular wares. In the *London Evening Post* for 24 April 1741, for example, the haberdasher John Stanton placed an advertisement, not to tell the public about the goods he sold but to inform them of a change of trading address. Otherwise, newspaper advertisements were occasionally used by large-scale retailers and manufacturers to promote both new and secondhand goods at fixed prices, and from the 1760s tailors also began to advertise different items of male and female clothing. The emphasis of such publicity was the printed word and the general format was the list, enumerating the items on offer and how much they cost. By contrast, more alluring pictorial representations of the latest fashions were available as engraved or etched plates, displayed for sale in print sellers' windows and also incorporated into such volumes as Heidelhoff's *Gallery of Fashion* (1794–1802) and intermittently in magazines like the *Lady's Magazine*.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the nexus between what Roland Barthes refers to as image-clothing and written clothing in *The Fashion System* became more evident in French and British publications, such as the *Cabinet des Modes, La Belle Assemblée*, and Ackermann's *Repository of Arts*, where illustrations were accompanied by captions and editorials concerning changes in the styles of fashion. These titles were the fore-runners of such popular illustrated weeklies as the *Illustrated London News (ILN), Graphic, Lady's Pictorial*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*, which had sprung up by the mid-nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic to cater to middle-class readers and in which the first distinctly recognizable alpha-pictorial advertisements for clothing retailers appeared. Many of these promotions, however, were similar in approach to the "reason why" format of their antecedents since they consisted of straightforward wood-engraved illustrations of women—and men—wearing the garments

alongside text that relates the cost of the clothing represented and where it could be purchased. Occasionally more suggestive or atmospheric forms of advertising, in which the product appeared in a situational context, cropped up. Thus press promotions during the 1880s and 1890s in *Lady's Pictorial* and *Graphic* for “My Queen" Vel-Vel, a velvet for dressmaking, resorted to the trope of Queen Victoria as consumer. In them, she is embodied in a domestic setting as a saleswoman unfurls the fabric before her. Yet, Victoria's detached gaze and demeanor transcend the material situation, and it is rather her majestic aura that symbolically bestows favor on the fabric and invests it with value.

By the turn of the century, the color lithographic poster, pioneered by Jules Chéret in France, had also become a popular form of advertising internationally, although there are few extant examples relating directly or exclusively to fashion promotion. In 1900, for instance, H. G. Gray produced a poster to publicize the latest fashions on sale at the Parisian department store Prix Unique. Publicity for some manufacturers also tended to a form of double symbolism; hence an 1885 poster for the American company New Home Sewing Machine, representing a mother painting and a daughter playing with a cat in their new clothes, not only represented the products that such domestic technologies enabled but the leisure time that they also afforded middle-class women.

The seeds for a modern, atmospheric form of fashion advertising, therefore, were sown by the late nineteenth century. Not until the twentieth century, and especially the interwar period, did an evident quantitative and qualitative shift take place in the promotion of fashion and clothing for women and men. This was due in no small measure to the expansion of the ready-to-wear and bespoke markets, as well as the professionalization of the advertising industry itself, which had begun to get involved more systematically with market segmentation and to probe what made different types of consumers tick in terms of sex, age, and class. At the same time, the impact of modernist aesthetics, the role of the copywriter, and the deployment of avant-garde designers and photographers also greatly transformed fashion advertising.

Prussian-born Hans Schleger (alias Zéró) was probably the most renowned of this new breed of commercial artists, and he worked both in Europe and America. Between 1925 and 1929, he was hired by outfitters Weber and Heilbroner of New York to transform their advertising campaigns. To this end he devised press advertisements that dynamically conveyed a sense of rhythm and proportion, such that the layout of asymmetric or expressive typeforms into wave or wedge formations was complemented by the shape and directional thrust of the illustrations or photographs. In 1929, he struck up an association with the pioneering British advertising agency W. S. Crawford (founded 1914), which held accounts for Wolsey hosiery and Jaeger amongst others. Working in collaboration with the copywriter G. H. Saxon Mills, he created imaginative promotions for Charnaux corsets that appeared in *Vogue* during the 1930s and that used sporting metaphors to emphasize the idea of health and freedom in the design and wearing of undergarments.

America took the lead in pioneering the evolution of photographic advertising during the early 1920s, with Clarence White, who had founded a school of photography in New York in his own name in 1914 and the Art Center in 1921, becoming one of the first apologists for its application. The modern style he advocated was based on sharp focus, simple geometry, and oblique perspectives, and manifested itself in the photography of the school's most well-known graduates, Edward Steichen and Paul Outerbridge. The former promulgated the idea of straight photography in advertising campaigns for Realsilk hosiery in *Ladies' Home Journal* between 1927 and 1937, and the former in his campaign for the Ide Shirt Collar, which was photographed in stark isolation against a checkerboard and published in *Vanity Fair* in November 1922. In Europe, similar ideas had taken root during the 1920s with the advent of the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity). Thus, László Moholy-Nagy, in “How Photography Revolutionizes Vision” (1933), espoused a battery of different techniques, including photomontage and the photogram, and a range of different stylistic approaches to the object, such as the introduction of the greatest contrasts, the use of texture and structure, and the use of different or unfamiliar perspectives that offered “new experiences of space.” All of these formal concerns are evident in an advertisement in *Punch* in 1933 for Austin Reed shirts featuring a color photograph of bales of material, which invites us to contemplate everyday objects from a fresh vantage point.

The photographic forms of fashion advertising that had begun to supplant the use of hand-drawn illustrations during the 1930s continued unabated after World War II. By the mid-1950s the market for teenage and youth fashions had also influenced the sexual iconography of many advertisements. A common motif in press promotions during the 1960s for designers as diverse as Mary Quant and Dior, and garments from miniskirts to coats and trousers to tights, was the woman-child, represented clowning in playful poses or pouting provocatively. Between 1961 and 1963, photographs by David Olins of "the girl" wearing a man's shirt were also deployed in poster and press ads to promote the Tootal brand. At the same time, the male consumer was drawn into this ornamental realm of desire and in promotions for Newman Clothing during the 1960s was depicted as the object of the adoring female admirers who surrounded him. But it would be erroneous to argue that men had not been objectified in this way before; in poster advertisements for Pope and Bradley in 1911–1912 and in many of those by Tom Purvis for Austin Reed during the 1930s, as well as press advertisements for multiple tailors like the Fifty Shilling Tailors, the fashionable peacock was connoted as someone who could turn women's heads.

Since the 1960s it is probably more casual forms of dress, and jeans in particular, that have made an appeal on television and in the press to both men and women in terms of sexual desire. As competition between brands and designer labels heated up in the late 1970s and early 1980s, advertisers began to fetishize the contour-hugging nature of denim. Thus press ads for Calvin Klein, featuring Brooke Shields, and for Jordache traded on closeups of pert buttocks clad in jeans. In this vein, the retro British television campaign for Levi 501's (masterminded by Bartle, Bogle and Hegarty and screened in 1985– 1986), which featured Nick Kamen stripping down to his boxer shorts in a launderette, initiated a more subtle and ambiguous form of sexual objectification.

Interestingly, although Levi's are sold across the world, publicity for the brand has not been orchestrated on a multinational basis. In comparison with the retrostyled British television and press campaigns of the 1980s, for instance, in America the "501 Blues" television advertisements traded on the idea of nonconformity by associating the product with contemporary street-smart individuals and blues music, while press advertisements tended to foreground the idea of jeans as leisure wear on a more conventional or "reason-why" level with images of men playing pool or dressing down for the weekend. At the same time, in Japan, the retro association of Levi's and the 1950s was symbolized by images of James Dean.

One company that has promoted itself on a multinational basis is Benetton, and in doing so, it has transformed the way that clothing can be publicized. Under the banner "United Colors of Benetton," the company's artistic director Oliviero Toscani mobilized fashion advertising to promote historical and ideological consciousness of issues as wide as race and national identities, religion, and HIV/AIDS. Between 1985 and 1991, he juxtaposed young people of disparate ethnic origins in the hope of encouraging racial tolerance, and since that time he has manipulated existing news photographs, such as a man shot dead by the Mafia, or created politicized images, such as his photograph of blood-stained garments worn by a dead militant in the Serbo-Croat conflict, to connote a similar message of national and international harmony. Such events have little or nothing to do with Benetton per se, whose exploitative production methods have themselves been subject to moral scrutiny, and it is debatable whether they draw more attention to the company rather than raising awareness of the issues with which they purport to be concerned. Nonetheless Benetton advertising remains at the cutting edge artistically and ideologically, and not least in the way that it has encouraged other fashion advertisers to deal with the ambiguities of sexual and racial identities.

The leitmotiv of many promotions for clothing at the turn of the millennium, therefore, has been the queering of femininities and masculinities, such that the normative dynamics of spectatorial pleasure and the gaze are leitmotiv problematized (much as they had been earlier in the twentieth century in the homoerotic advertisements designed by J. C. Leyendecker for the Arrow Shirt Collar). Key examples of this kind of promotion since the 1990s include advertisements for Versace, Calvin Klein, Dolce & Gabbana, Diesel, Ben Sherman, Northwave Shoes, and Miss Sixty, all of which exploit the tension between straight and gay identities for men and women, and white and nonwhite spectators alike. At the same time, some designers like Vivienne Westwood and Yves Saint Laurent, and companies like Diesel have made post-modern intertextual references between well-known works of art or the cult of media celebrity

and their own products not only to deconstruct the meaning of personal identities but also to undermine the distinction between the representation and reality of fashion itself.

See also Art and Fashion; Economics and Clothing; Fashion Magazines; Fashion and Homosexuality; Retailing.

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