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Alcoholic Beverage Advertising
the emergence of a new style

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Introduction

Advertising and the analysis of advertisements has become an area of interest for many; this vast subject has been documented under many categories: sociological research, effects research, market research, cultural effects and consumerism. Books discuss the history of advertising, or examine advertising of a given period; others explain the language, semiotics and ideology in ads. But, as advertising is so transient, we rarely find books or even articles on new individual campaigns, because by the time these books are printed and in circulation, the campaigns have been replaced and the concept is no longer new. For this reason, I have chosen to analyse particular campaigns which are presently in use and on which little or nothing has been documented previously. Through these collective campaigns I hope to identify the emergence of a new style of advertising.

I have chosen one particular area of advertising to discuss, the category of alcoholic beverage advertising. There are many reasons for choosing this category including the difficulties that arise, because of legislative restrictions when advertising these products. It is also perhaps the most challenging area of advertising. According to Jonathan Goodall, Editor of 'Wines and Spirits International',

"I find most alcohol advertising incredibly clever and inventive because it must be created and work within extremely tight restrictions." (Sweet p23 '93)

The campaigns chosen exemplify a new style of witty, oblique advertising, within the alcoholic beverage category. The campaigns of Absolut Vodka, Smirnoff Vodka, Boddingtons and Heineken are not the norm in alcoholic beverage advertising, as they use innovative and often rebellious methods. These tradition-breaking ads fall into the 'creative' rather than 'selling' category of advertising. In the past these kind of 'creative' adverts were looked upon as distinctive and humorous ads that could certainly win awards but could not successfully sell the product.

According to Peter Mayle,

"This is the amusing advertising which assumes that the public has a sense of humour and can grasp words of more than two syllables. The standard criticism is that it is easier to make people laugh than to get them to spend money." (Mayle p14 '83)

The 'selling' approach, on the other hand, is often repetitive and obvious, and the belief is that although it won't win any awards, it will certainly sell the product.

"... 'selling' advertising assumes an almost complete lack of intelligence on the part of the public, and takes the line of attacking the lowest common denominator. To have any effect it requires a high level of repetition and thus a high level of expenditure."
(Mayle p14 '83)

It is only in recent years that creative advertising has become appreciated by more than just the design critics; now people, not only find these adverts humorous, but they also buy the products.

Another reason for choosing these particular campaigns within the alcoholic beverage category is that they are leading the way for gender-free advertising, ads for both men and women. Women are becoming more and more important in this previously male dominated consumer group. These campaigns accept this and mirror it in their advertisements. This new style of advertising targets both sexes and features neither in their advertisements.

These particular campaigns were also appealing due to their use of poster rather than T.V. format; they appear on either billboards, bus shelters or in print media. This form of advertising is, again, a difficult area to advertise within, as 'still' type and image must work together to create an image that works instantly. According to Tim Imrie,

"Posters can be a very economical way of conducting a campaign, but they do force the advertisers to be very economical with their message." (Imrie p1256 '88)

Following the selection of the four campaigns, research was carried out. This took the form of communication with the breweries, advertising agencies and Market Research Companies involved in the campaigns. In return I received general and background information and some market research on the chosen products and the alcoholic beverage industry in general.

The analysis of this subject will begin by discussing restrictions within alcoholic beverage advertising and defining previous and present advertising styles. It will then discuss the emergence of a new style, giving examples in both the spirit and beer categories. Following the analysis of the campaigns which initiated this new type of advertising, I hope to determine its advantages over typical alcoholic beverage advertising. I hope to examine whether intelligent, humorous, gender-neutral advertising, can emerge within the extremely tight restrictions of the alcoholic beverage category, without their employing the patronising advertising ploys typical of the alcoholic beverage industry.

Chapter 1

This chapter explains the rational behind the selection of the alcoholic beverage category, within the wider category of advertising. It discusses this categorys dependance on, and difficulties with advertising, while explaining the need for image, evident within this category of advertising.

*Difficulties of advertising within
the alcohol beverage category*

“Booze is big business. Last year Great Britain spent more on alcohol than the entire National budget of some third world countries. So it should come as no surprise to realise that the advertising turnover for the drinks trade is also massive.” (Imrie p1256 ‘88)

The alcohol beverage category is one of the most heavily dependent on advertising, while also one of the most difficult product categories to advertise successfully. There is such an enormous range of beer and spirit products on the market, that there is intense competition for market share:

“At the beginning of 1993, it was estimated that there were some 400 different premium bottled beers alone, on the U.K. market.” (May p39 ‘94).

Also, the food and drink category to which alcoholic beverage products belong is a particularly difficult category to advertise within. In this group an advertisement cannot convey to the consumer what a product ‘tastes’ like, so instead, the advert tends to rely on what the product ‘looks’ like. Although not ideal, this method works for many food items as they are not all similar in appearance, and can be portrayed appetisingly in an advert. The drinks products, on the other hand, are often similar in appearance, with little to differentiate them. Within this ‘drink’ advertising category, it is the alcoholic beverage products which are the most highly priced, numerous and competitive. Other products (e.g. soft drinks, juice, tea and coffee) are in a much less expensive and less competitive category. Therefore within the food and drink industry, alcoholic beverage products are perhaps the most difficult products to advertise. The only other product advertising which operates under such difficult restrictions, is cigarette advertising. As a result, some advertising similarities appear between these two categories, this will be discussed in a later chapter.

The I.T.C.A. is the filter through which every script and every commercial in Ireland must pass before it is allowed on the air.

“The independent television contractors associations are guardians of our delicate sensibilities, defenders of common decency, dedicated foe of the misleading statement and unproven claim.” (Grocer p24‘95)

The alcohol beverage category is one of the most restricted categories; as well as conforming to general advertising rules it also must conform to a special set of rules for alcohol advertising. These restrictions are the most significant differentiation between this and other categories of advertising; they are also the main reason for advertising difficulties within the alcoholic beverage industry. Some of the restrictions are as follows:

- * Ads should be socially responsible and should not encourage excess drinking.
- * Ads should not exploit the young or the immature.
- * Ads should not be directed at people under 18.
- * No ads should feature any characters who are likely to attract the particular attention of or admiration of people under 18.
- * People who are under 18 should not appear in ads except when at family celebrations and then it should be obvious that they are not drinking.
- * People shown drinking should not be under 25.
- * Ads should not suggest that drinking leads to social acceptance or popularity; or that alcohol is the main reason for the success of any event or occasion.
- * No advert should be seen as a challenge to people to drink. There should be no suggestion that drinking is an essential attribute of masculinity and anything which suggests that the brave, the tough and the daring owe these characteristics to their drinking.
- * No advert should suggest that the femininity or attractiveness of women is enhanced by choice of a particular drink.
- * Ads should not suggest that it is sensible or desirable to prefer a drink merely for its high alcohol content.
- * Ads should not suggest that immoderate drinking is sensible, admirable or amusing.
- * Ads should avoid any implication that a particular drink offers the key to success in personal relationships of any kind.
- * Ads for drink should not suggest the enhancement of mental ability or physical capacity. In any advertisement which features sportsmen, avoid the implication that their performance or success is related to their alcohol consumption.
- * Ads should not suggest that drink has therapeutic properties, or that it can solve personal problems, e.g. use as a means of removing inhibitions. (Smirnoff ‘95).

Michael McAleer describes alcohol beverage advertising in Ireland as follows:

“Imagine the most competitive of markets, with a big number of superb quality players, both indigenous and foreign; then add some strenuous laws, plus a good dose of restricted advertising and you begin to get an idea of what it is like to operate in the Irish beer and spirit market. And that’s without considering the seasonality of spirits, the conservatism of the Irish drinking classes and the stringent drink driving laws.” (Checkout p24 ‘95)

Importance of Image

“Worldwide sales of alcoholic drinks each year amount to more than \$200 billion, some \$3 billion is spent on advertising, this is the supreme image product.”(Hunt p15 ‘95).

The Alcohol beverage category appears to be a category based on image advertising and price. As these products are difficult to advertise and are often similar in appearance, packaging and even taste; they need something to differentiate them. As a result, an image is created for each product and is used as a tool for selling. One of the reasons for the importance of image in this category is the realisation that these products are aimed at young people and their social life. While socialising, be it in a pub or a club, people want to look their best; this often means drinking the right drink, the name with the ‘cool’ image.

“It isn’t the whiskey people choose, it’s the image. The brand image is 90% of what the distiller has to sell.” (Evans p18 ‘95)

In recent years the importance is on not only what you drink, but also the way you drink it. In the early ‘90s they were called ‘designer beers’, golden beverages in long neck bottles. Drinking from the bottle was reckoned to be a passing phase when it first became fashionable, but many young people are still staying off the pints in favour of the ‘trendy’ bottles. Advertisers are promoting long neck bottles as the cool way to drink beer. Young people, in particular, are falling for this and are willing to pay more for long neck beers once the image comes with it. The average price of a pint of lager containing 540ml costs around £2.05 - £2.15 in pubs, but bottles containing 330ml are £2.15 upwards. According to Heineken’s sales manager,

“The consumer is getting a stronger drink. Many bottles are 5% alcohol volume compared to 3- 4% for draught product.” (Heineken ‘95)

While spokeswoman for Guinness believes,

“The style factor can’t be overestimated, less and less people are pouring bottled beer into a glass, you almost have to ask for a glass when you’re buying a bottle in a pub.” (Evans p18 ‘95)

In the alcohol beverage category many of the ad campaigns have become so well established that they are virtually a part of our popular culture (e.g. Print, billboard ,T.V.). Advertising, through all its channels, is responsible for this. One channel which is commonly used to reach the people that the adverts might not is ‘promotional’ work. This promotional work often takes the form of sponsorship, where a brand will sponsor or promote an event, often something that young people take part in or enjoy. The brand, therefore, wins the approval of the associated people and associates itself with the image of the event. For example, Smirnoff vodka is involved in the new James Bond film, ‘Goldeneye’, (fig. 1.1). The film, which stars a new Bond, Pierce Brosnan, features Smirnoff Black as the character’s favourite drink (Grocer p80 ‘95), the product therefore, not only reaches a new audience that advertising may not have, but it also, by association, inherits part of the ‘Bond’ image. Smirnoff reaches another market segment through its sponsorship of the annual Smirnoff Fashion Awards held in Dublin.

Boddingtons is also heavily involved in the city of Manchester in numerous ways, including sponsorship of the annual Boddingtons Manchester Festival of Arts and Television, the Boddingtons Bitter/Manchester Evening News Sports Awards and the Northern University boat race. Boddingtons was also one of the most active supporters of the Manchester bid to bring the Olympic games to the city in the year 2000 (Boddingtons ‘95). These two brands illustrate how advertising is further reinforced by sponsorship, through everything from mainstream cinema, fashion and sports, with youth being the largest target.

Therefore, as illustrated, the alcoholic beverage category is a particularly difficult category to succeed in, with advertisers relying heavily on image and clever use of sponsorship to target their prospective consumers.

Chapter 2

This chapter discusses general alcoholic beverage advertising, including a brief account of past and present advertising methods. It identifies the faults of previous advertising styles and discusses the progression of advertising within the alcoholic beverage category.

*Alcohol beverage advertising
two decades ago*

In the past alcohol beverage advertising has been a conservative area. It is only in the past two decades that the drinking of lager has become popular. Spirits and stout were the typical drinks of the '70s, as lager was a new concept and only beginning to gain popularity.

"The drinking of lager, was looked upon much in the same way that handgliding is today. An interesting pastime for others, but not for the likes of you and me." (Mayle p9 '83)

In the '70s, due to restrictions and legislation on advertising these products, the ads were dull and often lacked individuality. The ads of the time treated their beer with great reverence; the concept of making jokes in a beer advert was incomprehensible. The designs tended towards the obvious; they used crests, filigree, olde style type, oval emblems, malt and barley images, oat houses and the like (fig.2.1). These adverts all seem to be derived from similar briefs, which dictated the structure and content of almost every ad. According to Peter Mayle, the following were the six 'commandments' for beer advertising in the '70s:

- *All commercials shall be shot in pubs.
 - *There shall be three principal characters in each commercial, Eric, Derek and Jack.
 - * Each commercial shall show a friendly confrontation. Eric and Derek will gang up on Jack.
 - * One of the three is obliged to buy pints. He will then have his back slapped and there will be manly laughter.
 - *The act of drinking shall be followed by a brief period with the eyes half closed and the mouth shall be composed in an expression of purest joy.
 - *Women shall from time to time be permitted to take part as long as they pose no threat to the camaraderie of Eric, Derek and Jack.
- (Mayle p14 '83).

The briefs were always the same; the ads had to appeal to the 'lads' who were going out on a Friday night to enjoy themselves. These ads were specifically aimed at men, as few women went into pubs, and even fewer drank beer and certainly not pints. The female customer drank her's in a 'lady's' glass.

*Alcohol beverage
advertising today*

"The beer market doesn't take kindly to change, heavily imbued with a traditional male 'macho' image and with 85 per cent of its sales still made over the counter, it is not an area in which design and marketing innovation are either expected or welcome."

(Gardner p36 '87)

As a result of this, two decades later, not much has changed. Ads continue to present beer and spirits in a noble frame; designers are simply refining cliches. Packaging motifs are still drawn from the 'olde world' with chunky lettering and golden images of crests, malt and barley. It remains a fact that alcohol continues to be advertised to a largely male audience, using the pub as the setting with the 'lads' as the subject.

Although many of the traditional ads remain the same as earlier ones, attitudes towards the products have changed. People have changed from drinking for effect, to drinking for taste. Taste is more important now, as the days of acquiring a taste for whiskey are gone; young drinkers want things to taste good right away. Image is also more important now than ever before, and it is often the image that persuades people to taste the product initially. There has been massive social change, including new female drinking habits, as more and more women are frequenting pubs and drinking alcohol. But, although women are forming an ever larger proportion of alcohol consumers, they are still in the minority.

"The deal here is absolute commercial reality. The vast majority of beer is consumed and bought by men, therefore ads are aimed at men." (Adam Kirby, Lowe Howard Spink)

Advertising today has become much more complex, with ads containing layers of meaning. Adverts have many hidden devices and ploys which work on different levels of our subconscious and conscious, persuading us to purchase their products. Advertising has adopted a convenient way to join together symbolic messages and products, it has reached a stage where anything of value, including human traits are reduced into exchange goods. Thus, a product can stand in for an interpersonal relationship; the consumer is led to believe he can achieve attractive attributes, signified traits, such as allure and sex appeal, through consumption of mass produced products (Fig. 2.2). Often advertisers feel that they must make hugely exaggerated, earth shattering claims for people to take an interest in their product. They try to tell us that through their product we will find love, happiness, wealth or a successful career.

As a result, many of the alcoholic beverage adverts portrays a dull 'sameness'.

"Full of traditions and seriosity. There must be some kind of unwritten law - probably in every language - that a beer, whether pils or lager, premium or export, dark or light, can only be presented in a noble frame. The result is a visual identity of an earnestness that is equally effective, for all brands." (Lehmann p43 '88)

Most of the alcoholic beverage ads seem to have an aversion to anything lively, original or witty. Some have, only barely, a touch of atmosphere and humanity. They almost all feature a 'still life' format where the product takes centre stage (fig. 2.3). In recent times there has been a reaction against these type of adverts; advertisers are now beginning to realise that even within the restrictions of this category they can find ways to create inventive, humourous, distinctive ads without making such earth shattering claims. According to Eve Golden,

"You buy the car, you wear the clothes - and you're still a loser - but at least you've got the car and the clothes." (Golden p50 '90)

As a result a new form of advertising has emerged; with ads that are very different from typical alcohol beverage advertisements. They are humourous, intelligent and appealing, they do not try to be more than they are, adverts. They often use colour to attract the viewer rather than earth shattering claims. Instead of preaching to the consumer, these ads merely suggest. The advertisers are rebelling against the dull, serious, sexist and 'false promising' adverts typical of alcoholic beverage advertising.

Chapter 3

This chapter introduces a new style emerging within alcoholic beverage advertising. Dealing with the spirit category, it briefly discusses the Absolut Vodka campaign, in which signs of this new style first emerged. Then concentrating on the more recent Smirnoff Vodka campaign, it analyses individual ads and identifies common themes running through the campaign.

Absolut Vodka

This new wave of gender-neutral, humorous and truthful advertising, has actually been around for quite a while. One product, Absolut Vodka has been using this format in their campaigns since the early '80s. These ads use the traditional form of advertising liquor products, 'bottle advertising'. It means making the bottle the hero of the ad. According to Calderhead,

"If you don't have a bottle in your ad you're out of the business. Unfortunately, out of all those countless, highly forgettable ads very few campaigns really stand out." (Calderhead '87)

The difference in this new style of ads is that they use the bottle/can or in some cases the actual beer as the hero of the ad, but they also add humour. The humour in these ads often takes the form of clever twists and punning copylines. These ads often have tremendous stopping power and graphic impact. As illustrated by fig.3.1, the agency (T.B.W.A.) decided to make us really look at the Absolut Vodka bottle. That way we will notice the cool, clear vodka inside and we are reminded of the fact that it is Swedish Vodka. In this ad the bottle has been surrounded by fish and is dramatically backlit. Fig.3.2 shows again how dramatic lighting is used to create a monumental image for the bottle. The body copy for these ads is on the bottle itself, which entices us to read it.

In 1986 the 'Absolut' campaign changed dramatically. The agency decided to have internationally famous artists paint their own interpretation of the bottle (fig.3.3). The ads continued to use the bottle as the hero of the ad and the images were supported with short punchy headlines. Absolut sales soared as the creative team consistently managed to keep the bottle ads interesting and alive.

"Certainly, the Absolut campaign is an example of enlightened international talent working together, to produce something dramatically different from the ordinary and the expected." (Calderhead p 71 '87)

Smirnoff Vodka

Smirnoff vodka is the world's largest selling vodka; it also claims a sixty percent share of the Irish vodka market (Checkout p 23 '95). Lowe Howard Spink, a London based advertising agency, have managed the Smirnoff account for the past four years. The agency was formed

in 1981 by Frank Lowe and Geoff Howard-Spink and from that day on has enjoyed a reputation for outstanding creative work. It is now the sixth largest agency in the U.K. with clients like Diet Coke, General Motors, Tesco and Smirnoff, many which have adverts which run worldwide.

In October 1993 Gilbeys launched a new campaign designed for Smirnoff by Lowe Howard-Spink entitled 'through the bottle'. This campaign involved posters, super lites and print media, in a nationwide campaign. The campaign appears similar in parts to that of the Absolut Vodka campaign. Smirnoff appear to have been inspired by this new trend in humorous gender-neutral advertising. The new campaign follows on from such memorable campaigns as "Until I discovered Smirnoff", "Smirnoff leaves me breathless" and "Pure Thrill". "Through the bottle", Smirnoff's latest campaign, is intended to share in the ground breaking advertising tradition of earlier campaigns. These new ads are a collection of eye catching images; they are clear, precise and to the point. The surreal images are intriguing, aesthetically pleasing and humorous, yet not blatantly funny. 'Smirnoff - the other side', the caption on many of these ads, suggests the other side of life, 'through the bottle'; the solutions to our problems 'through the bottle'.

Some of these adverts have copylines. 'Smirnoff - the other side' or 'Pure Smirnoff' However, more than half of these ads have no copyline at all. The copyline (as the word 'Smirnoff' is included) lets the viewer who is not familiar with the bottle know what the ad is for. Without the copyline many of the ads would not have the name of the product visible in the ad. Only the first few letters of the name are visible as the bottle is turned away from the viewer. In the ads without the copyline, people who are not familiar with the bottle or who would not recognise the 'Smi' as a section of the Smirnoff trademark, would not know what drink these advertisements are promoting. However, if we look at these ads closely we can see that Smirnoff have intentionally compensated for the lack of product name. Some ads lack the copyline but instead they have a modestly sized 'Smirnoff' written on the cap of the bottle (fig.3.4). Whereas other ads (fig.3.5) lack the product name on the cap of the bottle, they compensate with the copyline.

Visual and Verbal puns

The majority of these ads fall into one of two categories: visual puns and verbal puns. Some ads (fig.3.6) use visual puns as humour. In these cases the object transformed 'through the bottle' is similar in appearance to that outside the bottle. In these ads the objects are similar in size, shape and colour, while in reality they differ greatly. For example, fig 3.6 abc& d show inanimate objects being compared to dangerous, even wild animals. Yet in reality they are not alike at all; the animals are much more fierce than their inanimate comparisons. Other ads use ver-

bal puns; in this case the object transformed 'through the bottle' may be similar in appearance to those outside the bottle, but it is also verbally linked through a well known saying or word. Examples include, 'Wolf in sheep's clothing', 'Hell's angel' and 'Clay pigeon shooting' (fig.3.7).

Significance of Animals

Animals are used in almost half of these ads. The animals are transformed into many objects, shark fin to sail, wasp to helicopter, crocodile to rock, zebra to shoe and sheep to wolf (fig. 3.6 abc&d, fig 3.8). Sometimes the animals are used in these ads for their weaknesses, strengths or their degree of fierceness. The crocodile for example is chosen for its dangerous qualities, while the sheep are chosen for their weak timed qualities. This is most apparent in the 'sheep' advert as two animals of contrasting personality traits are chosen. This ad shows a flock of sheep with a wolf appearing 'through the bottle'. The sheep symbolise a sameness or lack of individuality. They represent a sea of nondescript people who almost blend together into insignificance. The sheep, as in the word 'sheepish', also suggest shy timid, perhaps weak people with no individual identity. The wolf represents everything the sheep is not: courageous, superior, daring, distinctive and standing out from the crowd. The wolf is symbolic of what many young insecure people strive to be. The wolf appears 'through the bottle', implying that the wolf is present as a result of the bottle, and that one does not exist without the other. The ad is suggesting that 'through the bottle' / by consuming the product, the consumer can inherit the desired qualities he lacks, which are now transferred from the wolf to the prospective user of the product.

When the saying 'A wolf in sheep's clothing' comes into play it gives this ad another dimension. Looking at the ad again with this in mind, the meaning is altered. The wolf becomes a person in disguise, someone who conceals the truth. The product, therefore, exposes hidden dangers, by exposing the wolf 'through the bottle'. The ad is, in turn suggesting that this product will help the consumer to see through a facade and to expose hidden dangers. It also suggests that the product lets you be yourself, helps you let down your defences and facades while letting you see things more clearly. This theme, 'exposing hidden dangers' is prominent in many of the ads. Fig.3.6, for example, shows a shark's fin exposed 'through the bottle' amongst a group of windsurfers, while the other ads reveal fighter helicopters and wild animals (Fig. 3.6 bc&d).

Destruction of birds

An interesting aspect in relation to the animals in these ads is that the only animal that does not survive is the bird. The bird is also the only animal that is used more than once, and in both cases the bird dies. Fig.3.9 shows these animals being both shot and eaten. The significance of this will be discussed following an analysis of the two ads.

The first of these ads (fig.3.9a) shows a set of flying ducks which are typical wall ornaments of middle and working class houses in the 1960s. These ducks are always in threes. This, and the equal distance and gradual progression of height of the birds, lead us to believe that there were three birds. Even without knowing that these birds were always in threes, the pattern formed by the other two and the gunshot, immediately registers with the viewer as three birds. The birds are placed on a blue wallpaper reminiscent of the sky; the wallpaper is embossed with images of foliage, and the gunshot to the wall reveals the wall to be made of wood rather than brick. The wall and wallpaper, therefore, evoke images of the sky, foliage and trees; the bird's bird's natural habitat.

There are many ways to interpret this ad; it is the most visually simple yet complexly layered with meaning of all the ads. In one interpretation, the ad is implying that 'through the bottle' / by use of the product, the consumer will be able to reach his targets / goals. He will succeed in choosing a target, aiming correctly and getting the desired result, in this case succeeding to shoot the bird.

Another humorous and perhaps coincidental interpretation is that 'through the bottle' / by drinking the product, someone has mistaken these birds for real animals and has unknowingly shot one. This would suggest that by drinking the product, reality becomes blurred and the lines between real and imaginary become less defined. This is apparent in many of the ads and will be discussed later.

The final and perhaps most solid interpretation as it can be backed up by another ad, is as follows: the birds appear on the blue background and light from the window shines on them. This light is symbolic of the outside world where the birds would be in reality. The birds are flying in the direction of the window; they are trying to escape from the unreal world they exist in. The birds do not make it to the outside world as they cannot make it past the bottle. 'Through the bottle' we see that the first bird has been killed. The bottle represents reality and suggests that these birds cannot survive in reality. Fig.3.9 b reinforces this theory as again the bird has been eaten by the gargoyle as it passes 'through the bottle' into reality.

Birds are usually seen as weak, fragile animals who are often prey for larger stronger animals. In these two ads the birds symbolise the weak and fragile people in society. The bird also evokes words such as 'birdbrain', meaning the less intelligent. These two ads, though quite different, have similar messages. The weak, fragile, insecure and less intelligent

people of society will not succeed in the real world, as they will be preyed upon by the stronger and more intelligent. In each case the bottle / Smirnoff is the stronger more intelligent person, preying on the weaker, more fragile person. These ads imply that by drinking this product the consumer can inherit these powerful attributes and use them to survive in the real world.

Underlying themes

These ads encompass many themes, the next one under discussion is the 'trendy or cool' theme which is apparent in many of the ads (fig.3.10). This theme is most obvious in the 'Easter Island' advert (fig.3.10 a). This ad consists of five large stone heads in a rugged landscape. These are stone sculptures which are found on Easter Island in the Pacific Ocean. These stone heads are symbolic of strength, endurance and stability. They are unchanging, constant and everlasting. The head that appears 'through the bottle' is wearing a bandana, shades and earphones. This is unexpected, as these items are contradictory to the endurance and stability of the stone heads. The image transformed 'through the bottle' suggests changing with the times, fads and fashions, being 'trendy or cool' and having attitude. The whole expression on the face, the frown, the way the mouth and jaw are set is reminiscent of a 'trendy' youth with attitude. The advert suggests aspiring youths can acquire this 'personality' through the product, Smirnoff.

Another theme which is common in these ads is individuality, the ability to stand out in a crowd. This is apparent in the following ads : 'sheep', 'hell's angel' and 'football' ads. (fig 3.7 a&b, fig 3.11) as well as the previous 'Easter Island' ad. In all these cases the bottle selects one of a group of people, animals or objects, and transforms it, gives it a uniqueness and lets it stand out from the crowd. The 'football' advert features a rear view of a row of Republic of Ireland soccer players. The Smirnoff bottle transforms the number seven player into 'Elvis' The King. This ad was based on the 1994 World Cup. The number seven player was Andy Townsend, who was captain of the team. At the time he was seen as the 'king' of football and therefore compared to the 'king' of music, Elvis. This ad helped Smirnoff pick up the grand prize at the 1994 Advertisement Awards in Dublin. 'Elvis' also won the F.M.C.G. award, gold in the wine and spirit category and two distinction prizes. (Grocer p80 '9)

Both the 'Football' and 'Christmas' ads (figs 3.11 & 3.12) show the versatility of this and the earlier Absolut campaign. The ads are capable of encompassing seasonal and topical subjects, while still using the same format in all the ads. This is an important aspect of any campaign, as topical items make it easier for the viewer to identify with the ad; therefore the ad becomes more interesting when the viewer is familiar with the subject.

Some of the themes running through these ads are more obvious than others. One of the more subtle themes is that of an inanimate substance, stone, coming to life. In many of these ads pieces of stone in the form of gargoyles, heads, gnomes, statues and rocks, are given life 'through the bottle', while others remain inanimate outside the bottle (fig.3.5, 3.13 & 3.10 a). These ads are based on the unexpected. The ads suggest that, if the product can make stone come alive, imagine what it can do for the living. It could give us a second lease on life, help us to live life to the full.

Statue of Liberty

The 'Statue of Liberty' advert (fig.3.13 b) differs from the others in this category and from all the ads in the campaign. This ad portrays a cityscape, with the Statue of Liberty visible 'through the bottle'. This is the only ad which is contained within the bottle, meaning, it is the only ad that does not compare what is outside the bottle with what is 'through the bottle'. It is also the only ad that does not show us the object as it was before it was transformed by the bottle. This ad is able to communicate to the viewer without any background material, the ad works because the source material, the Statue of Liberty, is already familiar to the viewer. We know what the image was before it was transformed by the bottle. We know what this statue is and what it stands for. Therefore, it is only when combined with viewer knowledge that this ad communicates its message correctly.

This ad, as with many others, uses the 'unexpected' as a medium for humour. This image is not what we expect to see as the Statue of Liberty. It has turned the statue's meaning and our expectations on their head. This statue has become a cliché for America. It is one of those images that has been used so often, in so many different ways and is so layered with meaning, that it has come to represent America and everything American. This results in many possible interpretations of this ad.

One interpretation I believe to be viable is the following: The statue represents serious political issues, justice, liberty and freedom, but 'through the bottle' this is transformed into freedom and liberty of another kind. Freedom of expression and enjoyment. The pose of the transformed statue is reminiscent of the famous Marilyn Monroe pose, from the film "The Seven Year Itch", where she stands over an air vent and her white dress blows above her knees. This image is also famous and has become a Hollywood cliché. This image evokes sex appeal, glamour, success and a free spirit, Marilyn Monroe is an icon for a desirable woman. The ad is suggesting that the product can change even the most drab, serious people into desirable, free spirited, fun-loving, spontaneous people.

Freedom of Sexuality

Another of the more subtle themes appears in two of the ads. This is the theme of sexuality (fig. 3.14). These ads expose revealing secrets about a person's sexuality. In the first ad the priest is apparently having an affair. The bottle reveals the lipstick on his collar, suggesting that the priest was trying to conceal his affair, as society and other members of the priesthood would not approve. The pattern in the background is a blurred image of a stained glass window. The window symbolises the church and all it stands for. It is possible that this blurred effect on the window suggests confusion, the priest is confused about the church; what it stands for has become hazy in his mind. This blurred, out of focus window also suggests that the subject of the church is not what the priest is focusing on, it is not at the fore of his thoughts. Instead, the perfectly focused lips on his collar are at the fore of his thoughts. It seems that this woman is the only clarity in his blurred confused life.

The second of these ads (fig.3.14 b) presents us with the subject of cross-dressing. This advert features a row of judges' gowns and wigs hanging on a wall, one of these is transformed through the bottle. The judge's wig becomes a long blond wig and the gown becomes a long flowing yellow dress. A possible interpretation is that the judge is a cross-dresser. The judge is used in this ad as he is seen as a stable, secure, reliable person, 'a pillar of society'. Therefore it is even more of a shock when it is the judge that is revealed as a cross-dresser. Another simpler interpretation is that "through Smirnoff" the stodgy and staid (the Judge), who we presume to be a man has become exciting and sexy (the dress).

Both of these ads, the 'Priest' and the 'Judge', are encouraging a more free approach to sexuality. They are also stressing that all types of people from all social classes and professions, can be sexually ambivalent. The ads suggest that 'through the bottle' / by drinking the product the viewer will find it easier to reveal his or her sexuality, to come to terms with it and be proud of who they are rather than hiding it from society.

Hypocrisy of the Ideal Figure

All of the ads in this campaign have one thing in common, they turn things on their head. They rely on the 'expected' and therefore reveal the 'unexpected'. The 'weights room' (fig.3.15) continues to employ this theme, but it brings the ad to a deeper level, revealing flaws in society and in turn advertising. This ad features a weights room in a gym. 'Through the bottle' a weights table is revealed as chains and cuffs; the room is transformed into a dungeon-like prison.

The gym or weights in this ad symbolise physical fitness; this in turn symbolises the perfect body. Many of us strive to achieve this perfect body, the model figure. This striving is fed and encouraged by the constant bombardment through T.V. and print media, of images of the perfect body. These images, frequently advertisements, lead us to believe that this is the norm; these perfect bodies are the only healthy, normal and desired shape. The result is that, people of any other shape or size feel abnormal and undesirable when they don't conform to society's 'ideal figure'. The reality 'through the bottle' is that the gym or weights room is actually a prison for people who are constantly striving for perfection, acceptance and conformity. We allow ourselves to be imprisoned by our bodies rather than be freed by our minds.

According to Susan Bordo:

"Watching the commercials are thousands of anxiety ridden women and adolescents with anything but an unconscious relation to their bodies. And watching is a ten year old girl, bursting with pride : "Daddy guess what? I lost two pounds!", and watching the commercial is the anorexic, who associates her relentless pursuit of thinness with power and control, but who in fact destroys her health and imprisons her imagination." (Bordo p164 '93)

This advert is exposing the hypocrisy of the 'ideal figure' and in turn the hypocrisy of advertising for encouraging this myth of the ideal figure. The advert suggests that the product can help us to discover this hypocrisy and destroy the myth of the perfect body. Smirnoff will enable us to break the chains of conformity and release our bodies from the prisons they have endured. The suggestion is that the product can help us to rebel against the false myths that advertisements often portray; just as these ads, the Smirnoff campaign, help break the chains of conformity in the advertising world. This campaign rebels against the myth of spirit advertising. They break the so called rules over and over, by advertising spirits in a humorous, light-hearted, unfamiliar and unexpected way.

Structure of ads

The appearance of these ads is quite varied, with colours and images constantly changing. Yet they are always immediately recognisable as part of the same campaign. There are many subtle techniques used to help us recognise these ads. Firstly, the bottle features in every ad; it is also turned to the right in every ad. Secondly, there seems to be an intentional underlying structure in most of these ads, many falling into one of the following categories: three column, four column and five column; each category containing three ads. The first three ads (fig.3.16) fall into the three column category. In this case the ads have three objects, one of them being

transformed 'through the bottle'. In this category the three objects are all similar in size and distance from one another.(left section of fig.3.16b missing)

The second three ads (figs.3.17) fall into the four column category. These ads feature four objects; the third being transformed by the bottle. In these four column ads all the objects are approximately equal in size and distance from each other. The final three ads (figs.3.18) fall into the five column category. In these ads the fourth object is transformed 'through the bottle', and the objects all vary in size, spacing and distance. After some time the viewer becomes used to the visual format of these ads and recognises new ads instantly.

Target audience

According to Bernard McDonnell, Brand Manager at Smirnoff, the product is targeting the 18/24 yr. age group,

"because if we don't they will drift not only to other brands, but other categories. We are trying to bring in younger drinkers, make Smirnoff seem an exciting, attractive proposition to them. This is quite a difficult task, because beer is where most young people will veer towards. You've got to work hard to pull them into a different category."
(Checkout p22 '93)

There are many ploys used in this campaign to attract young people. They come in the form of colour, loud images, humour and, most importantly, the range of meanings and varied interpretations given in these ads. Young people are attracted to ads that are slightly ambiguous, ads that let you read into them. This campaign works on many different levels. At a glance the humour in these ads is revealed, but when the viewer is confronted with this ad again he will perhaps see beyond the humour and find a deeper meaning. Upon seeing the ad thereafter this meaning can change and other interpretations can be read. Ads appeal to young people when instead of preaching they suggest and instead of being blatant in their message they leave it open for individual interpretation.

Negative interpretations

Many of these ads suggest 'drunkenness'. After one has been 'through the bottle', reality becomes blurred and the imaginary comes to life. In fig.3.16 a for example, the bird is mistaken for a real bird and shot. Hallucination also takes place 'through the bottle', where people see things that are not really there (fig 3.19 ab&c). The ads also suggest what being drunk could lead to; fig. 3.20 portrays goodness and innocence being transformed into evil and destruction.

Figs 3.13b & 3.14 show drunkenness resulting in confusion, sexual misconduct, affairs and loss of control. Smirnoff portrays all of these negative interpretations 'through the bottle'; they are clearly as a result of the bottle. By allowing this type of negative, but humourous honesty creep into their ads, Smirnoff appear to be successfully targeting the young consumer, while not alienating the older consumer.

Chapter 4

This chapter illustrates the emergence of this new style of advertising within the beer section of alcoholic beverage advertising. It briefly discusses a recent Heineken campaign and then continues with a more indepth analysis of Boddingtons most recent campaign.

Heineken

Heineken beer is one product which has always had memorable campaigns.

'Heineken, refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach' is their most famous campaign and was a famous slogan of mid '70s (fig.4.1). Heineken's latest campaign which began in June 95 is their simplest, yet most effective. This campaign brilliantly uses the logo/label of the product as the ad. They do not single out any form of Heineken (e.g. bottled, cans, draught) as only the logo is used and it appears on all the Heineken products. These ads zoom in on the Heineken logo and use sections of it in conjunction with clever punning copylines (figs.4.2). According to Margaret Harvey, Heineken sales rep., these images have not been altered in any way to accommodate the ads, they are direct replicas of the logo (Murphys Nov.95). The reason for the success of these ads is that the colours and typeface used in this logo are so familiar, they are immediately recognisable as the Heineken logo. The only fault with this campaign is the fact that there is only so much you can do with a logo. There are only so many ways the logo can be photographed without adding something to it or altering it. The ads in the campaign, though few, are simple and extremely clever.

Boddingtons

The Boddingtons ad campaign is perhaps the most innovative beer campaign at present. These ads defy every rule that has been followed in the past by prestigious beer companies, but they are being rewarded for their creative campaign with sales increasing by a dramatic 21 per cent a year. Tracey Mason (Brand Marketing at Boddingtons) believes that there are three main factors which led to the product's dramatic success. Firstly, the product itself has had a long term reputation among ale enthusiasts. Secondly, Whitbred P.L.C. purchased Boddingtons in the late '80s for £50 million and proceeded to inject £3.5 million in 1992. Thirdly, the new advertising campaign got under way with national newspaper and poster support reinforcing the 'Cream of Manchester' theme (Boddingtons '95).

Four years ago Boddingtons was a name known only to dedicated bitter drinkers in the North West of England, but according to Bob Patch, Whitbred's Sales Manager,

“After only one year, consumer research revealed that spontaneous awareness of Boddingtons draught among regular beer drinkers surged by 50 per cent in the period following the 1991 national press campaign, giving it awareness levels higher than established national bitter brands such as John Smiths, Bass, etc.”(Boddingtons ‘95)

The London based agency Bartle, Bogle and Hegarty combined with Whitbred are responsible for the increased awareness of this product. Whitbred knew what they wanted from their advertising. When they began in 1991, their initial aim was to build a consumer base outside North West England, while avoiding over exposure. They needed to appeal to a wide group of targets but also to avoid cliches of bitter product advertising. They decided to start with the product, making it the hero, but in a simple eye-catching way. They chose the traditional medium for the market, T.V. and billboards, but also used press as a more targeted poster campaign.

Beer and Cream

The press ads, which are the most widespread, are very different from ads usually produced in beer advertising. They are powerful memorable images; metaphors for beer and cream (fig. 4.3). It is the unique visual format in these ads which gives them their power. In each case the product (the golden liquid or the can) is the hero and takes centre stage in the ad. They even appear to be spotlit. The product therefore gains all the consumer’s attention as there are no distractions. The product is not placed in the context of a bar or in the hands of a beautiful model; there is no borrowed interest to distract us from the can or the golden liquid with the creamy white head. According to Bob Patch,

“The elements which have the most potential are the smooth, distinctive taste, tight creamy head and golden light colour.” (Boddingtons ‘95)

The ads proceeded to exploit these properties and build a campaign around them. The creamy and smooth qualities seemed the most universally appealing characteristics, therefore these became the point of sale and the theme for the whole campaign.

The visual metaphors in these ads are chosen for their qualities similar to those of the product. The two most common images are cream and ice cream. Fig. 4.4 illustrates the variations of this theme in different ads; in each case the creamy white head of Boddingtons becomes the ice cream or the cream. The golden colour of the beer is also emphasised in some cases by forming the wafer for the ice cream or the sponge for the cream (fig. 4.4 a&d).

Other metaphors in these ads are products which are associated with cream (e.g. cheese, milk). In the 'cheese' ad (fig.4.5) it is the golden colour of the liquid rather than the white creamy head that is emphasised. Although this image represents a block of cheese, it also suggests 'cream cheese' because of the 'cream' associations. Most of these ads use food, cream associated dairy products in particular, to illustrate the 'creamy' quality of the draught. However, others use properties such as the texture and look of cream rather than cream as a food or an ingredient in a food (e.g. hair mousse, shaving foam) (fig. 4.6).

There are copylines with all of the Boddingtons ads; most of them simply say "Boddingtons, the cream of Manchester". This is a new copyline created for the campaign. It reinforces the emphasis on the creamy quality of the beer and links the image with the name 'Boddingtons' through the repetition of 'cream'. Without this copyline many of the ads would be incomprehensible. These ads use both visual and verbal puns to clearly emphasise the 'creamy' quality of the beer.

Power of colour

The striking colours of these ads make them distinctive. In each case, the product / metaphor is placed on a plain black background, which contrasts dramatically with the golden liquid and white creamy head. In these ads the products appear to be floating in a vacant black space (fig.4.7). These images are not resting on anything; there is no apparent surface which they sit upon. These ads have a surreal quality, which is a result of both the vacant black background and the images which are themselves surreal. The surrealism in these ads makes them stand out from all other beer adverts. It also adds importance to the product, giving it an 'arty' feel. The product appears like pieces of sculpture suspended against a black backdrop. These ads let the viewer know that the product is of excellent quality and that it is more expensive than many other beers, but the suggestion is 'you get what you pay for'. In many cases the product appears so beautiful and intriguing to look at that it is too good to drink. The colours chosen for these ads come from the product's packaging. Although the product/can of Boddingtons is not present in most of these ads, the associations are still there through use of colour. Therefore the product, when seen in the context of a pub, supermarket or off-license is still immediately connected to the ads.

The overall impression of a piece of design is often created by the colour. Therefore, understanding the effect that colour has on people will help in making a fundamental packaging decision. The colours used in the Boddingtons adverts are taken directly from the product's packaging colours. These colours, black and yellow, are extremely vivid and work brilliantly when transferred from product packaging to advert.

Colour is the strongest means of graphic communication as it conveys powerful and emotional signals. Every product sector has its colour rules (if seeking conformity), which would be foolish to ignore. Red signifies meat, green signifies vegetables and 'fresh' products and blue signifies dairy produce. The beer category has its colours too, ochre being the most prominent. Boddingtons choose to use this colour (ochre) as it has immediate associations with beer products. However, instead of using this colour the typical way, it is combined with strong black backgrounds. This combination of colours is extremely contrasting and vivid, and as a result is often used to warn us of danger on the road or in industry. These colours give the Boddingtons campaign definition as they are instantly recognisable. This close identification of an individual colour scheme with the product allows the designer to leave the packaged product out of the advert, this is not common in beer advertising, as the bottle or can is generally very prominent. Boddingtons are able to do this as yellow and black have come to represent the packaged item. In Boddingtons' case, they incorporated these colours in every part of their corporate identity, trade-mark, packaging, advertising and promotional items. This continuity is seen in every aspect of the company's corporate identity. The clarity, repetition and continuity in the colours, images, layouts and themes of Boddingtons adverts has resulted in this brand's immense visual strength.

The Cream of copylines

Boddingtons, unlike many other beer companies, believe that there is a place for humour in beer advertising, and prove that humourous ads can be successful without lessening the importance of the product. The humour in Boddingtons ads takes the form of visual puns and copylines. The copyline complements the visual pun, and adds a second dimension to the humour; without it the images lack depth of meaning. The copyline has changed subtly over the years. It began as 'Boddingtons, the cream of Manchester', stating product name, origin, suggesting quality and emphasising the creamy qualities of the beer. Then in 1992, after the first year of the campaign as the product became more and more recognisable, the product name disappeared and the slogan 'The cream of Manchester' remained. The word Boddingtons was no longer needed as the colours, image and slogan now combined to say 'Boddingtons'. The slogan now stands for the product, which is a common advertising technique. The following copylines are now so familiar that consumers can automatically attach them to the product name, package and advert:

- * Helps you work, rest and play. (Mars)
- * Probably the best lager in the world. (Carlsberg)
- * Makes exceedingly good cakes. (Mr. Kipling)

After much repetition these slogans or copylines become associated with the product name and image, so much so that they can alone evoke the product in the consumer's mind. The more recent Boddingtons adverts have begun to individualise the copyline for each image. The first of these is an image of a Frenchman (fig.4.8) and the copyline reads 'The creme of Manchester'. This is the only advert that uses a person, and although the visual and verbal pun work brilliantly, the image visually lacks the power of previous adverts (Fig.4.4).

The next set of ads still using individual copylines, reduce the slogan 'Cream of Manchester' to the word 'cream'. The first of these, 'Artificial cream', contains an image of a cardboard cutout of a pint of Boddingtons and the words 'artificial cream'. This registers with us as 'artificial Boddingtons' as the word cream has now come to represent Boddingtons, through the slogan (fig. 4.9).

The next ad, is perhaps the most conceptually sophisticated yet visually simple advert ever. This ad, 'Vanishing cream' (fig.4.10), was released in early '95. At this stage Boddingtons had built up consumer recognition of their campaign including their colours, slogan and format. This ad features a completely black page, with the words 'vanishing cream' in the yellow bar along the bottom. This is extremely risky advertising, and only a product with such immediately identifiable colours and slogans could make it successful. The result is that the words 'Vanishing cream' on a yellow bar at the bottom of a black page now convey to us 'Boddingtons, the cream of Manchester', while evoking the creaminess of the beer, the striking visual metaphors and the wit that has been consistent throughout the entire campaign. James Lowther's (Saatchi & Saatchi) review of "Vanishing cream", though complementary ('A nice spin on an excellent campaign'), did ask one question: Are the visual metaphors for beer and cream running out? (Baker p9 '94). This is a valid question, as nothing lasts forever and even the most fertile minds can only think up so many ideas on a single theme. This ad achieves the kind of instant visual recognition with minimal copy that we have come to expect from certain cigarette ads, for example, Carrolls and Silk Cut (fig.4.11).

This form of advertising (fig. 4.10& 4.11) holds the viewer's attention for longer than most of the more obvious ads. These ads engage the viewer, who has to add the final pieces to the ad as they have been left somewhat unfinished. These ads challenge the viewer to put the pieces together and reveal the meaning of the ad. The viewer feels that he has in some way interacted with the ad; there is two way input. The consumer also feels that the advertiser realises that the viewer is intelligent and, therefore, does not need adverts that blatantly tell them what to do with their lives.

The 'Vanishing cream' and cigarette ads prove the power of advertising as they rely totally on the viewer's absorption of their previous adverts, as without them these would be incomprehensible. Many ads use this technique; they rely on what we know, believe and aspire to, what we bring to the adverts as well as what we get from them.

Chapter 5

This chapter compares the spirit and beer ads within this new category of advertising. It explains the concepts behind this style of advertising and compares it with more typical alcoholic beverage advertising, illustrating the advantages these particular campaigns have over their competitors.

Absolut & Smirnoff

All four of these ad campaigns have common threads, but, although they use the same principles, there are differences, as emphasis changes from one campaign to the other. Concentrating on the spirit ads first, both campaigns, Absolut and Smirnoff use “bottle advertising”. They use the typical still life format while adding an unexpected twist, through humour. The Smirnoff campaign is more modern and daring than the Absolut. The Smirnoff campaign uses more colourful, loud, surreal images; these ads have minimum copy, with only the word “Smirnoff” in tiny letters appearing on some ads. The Smirnoff bottle is turned away from the consumer, resulting in the label being only partly visible; whereas the Absolut bottle is in full view with the body copy appearing on the bottle. In the Absolut ads the bottle is of ultimate importance. It always remains the same, the same size, the same position in the ad; it is as if the bottle is stationary and objects around it constantly change. The bottle appears like a piece of art, backlit and in centre stage. The Smirnoff ads, on the other hand, avoid positioning the bottle in the centre of the ad; the Smirnoff bottle, though clearly visible in the ads, is not dramatically lit or overtly obvious. The position and size of the bottle also changes and the bottle sometimes bleeds off the page. Both campaigns rely heavily on concept and humour, but the Smirnoff ads tend to be more visually pleasing.

Heineken & Boddingtons

The beer category, Heineken and Boddingtons campaigns, have some similarities. Both campaigns use the product as the “hero” of the ad. The Heineken ads cleverly photographed the logo adding droplets of water and shadows to suggest a curving shape. This lets the viewer know that it is the product, the bottle / can of Heineken rather than just the logo. The Heineken ads have nothing added, they simply use sections of the logo with clever punning copylines, whereas the Boddingtons ads use the product combined with visual metaphors for cream. Both of these campaigns rely heavily on copylines as without them all of the ads would be meaningless. Fig. 5.1 shows how one of the Boddingtons adverts seems to have been ‘inspired’ by an earlier Heineken campaign, however the concept behind these ads differ. The Heineken ad is part of the “Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach” campaign. It features a bird landing on a can of Heineken and drinking some. Then it shows the bird with a ‘red breast’, the Heineken has

refreshed the bird and transformed him into a 'robin red breast'. This ad was featured in December of 1980, therefore, the robin suggests December and the festive season. Exactly fifteen years later Boddingtons released their ad; in this case the bird is perched on top of the can. The suggestion is that the bird is drinking the cream, 'the Cream of Manchester'; in the same way that birds drink the cream from the top of milk bottles. These ads, therefore, although visually alike, are not conceptually alike.

Spirit ads & beer ads

When comparing the beer category with the spirit category, there are many contrasting elements. The spirit ads (Absolut and Smirnoff) are more sophisticated and visually pleasing than the beer ads. They are also more intricate and rely more on detail. The beer ads (Boddingtons and Heineken) on the other hand are more simple, clear and to the point. They rely more on strong bold colours; they use the colours of their packaging/cans alone in the ads. The beer adverts are more blatant and obvious in their images, colours and message. Unlike the spirit ads they are not open to individual interpretations.

The spirit category of these ads use borrowed interest. Both campaigns (Absolut and Smirnoff) add images to help the ads to attract the viewer's attention. While this is not always the most effective way to advertise (as it can distract from the product), it does give advertisers great scope.

"It is generally accepted as a bonus, in advertising terms, if your campaign is flexible enough to accommodate the occasional news story. 'Man bites dog' will usually attract more attention than 'washes even whiter'. It follows that if you can take advantage of borrowed interest and slipstream in behind the news, your message and product should be noticed far more than normal." (Mayle p16 '83)

Fig. 5.2 shows how the present Smirnoff campaign and a previous Heineken campaign have used news or topical items to attract attention.

Concepts behind new campaigns

All four of these campaigns are based on solid research and development, including packaging advertising links and consumer reaction. According to D.K. Holland,

"Graphic design is often based on fluff, not ideas, strategy or research, only pure style and emotion. We respond to it or we don't.

But there is no concept to discuss with the client, nothing substantial to judge hit or miss.” (Holland p31 ‘93)

The packaging and packaging colours of the four products dealt with here are extremely important, as they are also an integral part of the ads. The packaged product becomes a symbol of identity that is constant, familiar and instantly recognisable; then as the advertising medium provides a larger canvas, it creates the opportunity to use persuasive images as well as words to add visual and emotional dimension to these products. In this case, the advertisers choose to take advantage of the already designed, instantly recognisable label, packaging, or the product itself.

As these ads show, it is a great advantage to use in your advertising strong links with the packaged product. These four campaigns have put huge emphasis on the bottle / product, but it is the Heineken ads which use the label alone. The other campaigns use borrowed interest of some sort, no matter how small. This does not take away from the ads, nor does it distract attention from the product or result in conflicting imagery, as the products/bottle always plays the most important role in the ad. For example, in the Smirnoff ads the bottle is always larger than the ‘borrowed’ interest; the bottle contains the punchline, and the bottle is responsible for the transformation and humour. Therefore, the consumer must look ‘through the bottle’ to find the punchline.

New campaigns & typical alcohol beverage advertising

The use of borrowed interest in these campaigns is very different from the use of borrowed interest in many other campaigns. Fig. 5.3 compares two of the spirit ads, (Absolut and Smirnoff) with other recent spirit ads. The Bacardi and Bushmills ads allow the borrowed interest to become the ad (fig.5.3b&c). In both cases the packaged product / label is separate from the image. It is outside the frame of the image, which is the interest. The only link between the product and image is the juxtaposition of the product/label and the suggestion that these people are drinking the product. It is not the product which makes these ads work. Neither the bottle/label or product is important in these ads. They are secondary to the imagery instead of being an intricate part of the imagery. This results in the viewer thinking “I know the ad but I can’t remember what it was advertising.” According to Howard Milton,

“The evolution of the advertising campaign for a brand should be inseparable from the primary proposition, the product.”
(Milton p8 ‘91)

If there is great difference between a brand's advertising image and its physical on shelf appearance. This can create discontinuity in the mind of the consumer. People look for some visible link between what they have seen and what they are buying. While advertising may alert a large number of potential consumers to a product's existence, it is only at the point of purchase that the promotional story and the product's image come together. Therefore, in the case of many ads (e.g. fig. 5.3c.& d) when the consumer sees the product in the context of a supermarket, off-license or bar, the promotional story and image is forgotten, (as the packaged product was not an integrated or important part of the advert).

"What is important to a potential customer on the verge of buying is how he feels about the product, not how or whether it works. Brand personality triumphs over brand performance." (Meyers p38 '85)

There are many differences between these types of campaigns, one of the more important being that these new form of ads (Smirnoff, Absolut, Boddingtons & Heineken) are gender-free advertising. Looking at the other ads (fig. 5.3c&d & 5.4) we can see how much they rely on people, and the male, female relationship to create interest. However, these four campaigns do not use people. These campaigns illustrate successful gender neutral, sexless ads emerging for both men and women. According to Mike Wells of B.B.H., Art director of the Boddingtons series,

"The campaign's appeal is rooted in its contemporary approach. It was not our conscious intention to aim the ads more at women, we decided they had to be contemporary, and what you see is the results of that. I guess it was a case of recognising that there is a growing female presence in the pub." (Bartle Bogle & Hegarty '95)

In these four campaigns, the lack of people, and as a result lack of clothes, stage or setting, where the people would have been placed,(e.g. bar, restaurant, house) means that these ads do not date as easily as their competitors. The lack of human element also results in the lack of typical 'false promising' ploys; unlike the other more typical alcoholic beverage ads, these new people-free campaigns refrain from using sex, relationships, status, lifestyle or career as ploys to entice the consumer. These new "truthful" ads don't really tell us anything; instead they suggest and intrigue the viewer. These ads, unlike their competitors, are not blatantly obvious in their message. Instead, they allow the viewer to take what they want from the ads, as there is often more than one interpretation. The ads use humour in a way that has not been seen in this category of advertising before. They use humour in a clever subtle often punning way. The ads amuse us while lacking the patronising tone of other typical alcoholic beverage adverts.

Conclusion

These four campaigns are examples of creative advertising. This type of advertising is often considered to be 'risky'. The Absolut campaign, when first released in the early '80s, was thought to be extremely risky advertising, as was the Boddingtons campaign when it was launched in 1991. However, according to Chris Baker:

"In fact the really high-risk advertising is that bland 'safe' stuff with all the impact of faded wallpaper, invisible from birth and destined to be a total waste of money." (Baker p.13 '94)

This new style of campaign, (Absolut, Smirnoff, Heineken & Boddingtons) strongly relies on integration and the communication of product truths. Integration is a vital part of these campaign's success; in relation to the product and its importance in the ad, these campaigns rely on total integration of the product and image, rather than simple juxtaposition of product and image. Most drink advertising tends to create and reinforce images that suggest social acceptability, sexiness and the interpersonal relationships between men and women. These new campaigns contrast dramatically to this stereotypical drink advertising.

The advertisers of these new style of campaigns realise that, the female drinker is a powerful force and gaining in strength.

"Women were never as salient in the alcohol market as they are now, and gradually breweries are picking up on this" (Sweet p. 23 '93)

These four companies have produced campaigns aimed at both men and women, these gender neutral campaigns are also 'sexless' they do not feature people, men or women. These ads are therefore, totally sex-free; they do not use relationship ploys, sexism, promises of love, sex appeal, allure etc., This lack of people also results in adverts with no racism, no cultural or status boundaries. These ads do not bribe the powers of our criticism and persuade us to buy objects by promising us attributes that we cannot achieve through commercial goods.

This new form of advertising campaign uses humour as a replacement for "false promises". The posters in these campaigns are a very sophisticated combination of wit and beauty. In many cases, by creating a setting that was so elegant, the posters were able to convey the right combination of quality and humour. The advertisers realise that the modern consumer does not want to be patronised, but does appreciate intelligent creative advertising.

“Despite increased competition from other brands, U.K. vodka brand leader Smirnoff has continued to dominate the market throughout 1995 with an overall market share of 41 per cent”. (Grocer p. 80 ‘95)

While:

“Survey results consolidate Heineken lager as the no. 1 brand in Ireland with an overall 31 percent market share and 35 per cent of draught lager segment, 14 per cent ahead of its nearest competitor”. (Checkout p. 20 ‘95)

And Boddingtons:

“After only fifteen months of their new advertising campaign became the U.K’s no. 1 take home bitter. In 1994 however the brand reached its peak, having established its credentials as a serious contender in the fashionable bevy market, and its brand colours of black and gold having been secured in the public’s mind, the creative team of Tim Riley and Mike Wells capitalised on the previous year’s work and really began to show what can be achieved when a campaign matures.” (Boddingtons ‘95)

As these campaigns illustrate, the power of this new form of advertising is huge. So huge that it allows advertisers build a vodka into one of the drinks of modern times, managing to persuade a young public that one brand of odourless, colourless, tasteless liquid, is better than the others.

Chief Executive at Gilbeys says,

“Smirnoff, remains one of our flagship brands and the current campaign is exactly what Irish consumers of Smirnoff have come to expect from Ireland’s number one brand.” (Smirnoff ‘95)

The difference between these campaigns and many typical alcohol beverage advertising, is that these products are striving for individuality, rather than just aiming to belong. They have blatantly ignored the conventions within the alcohol beverage category and as a result the ads project a contemporary, dynamic and refined image.

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Plates



Fig. 1.1

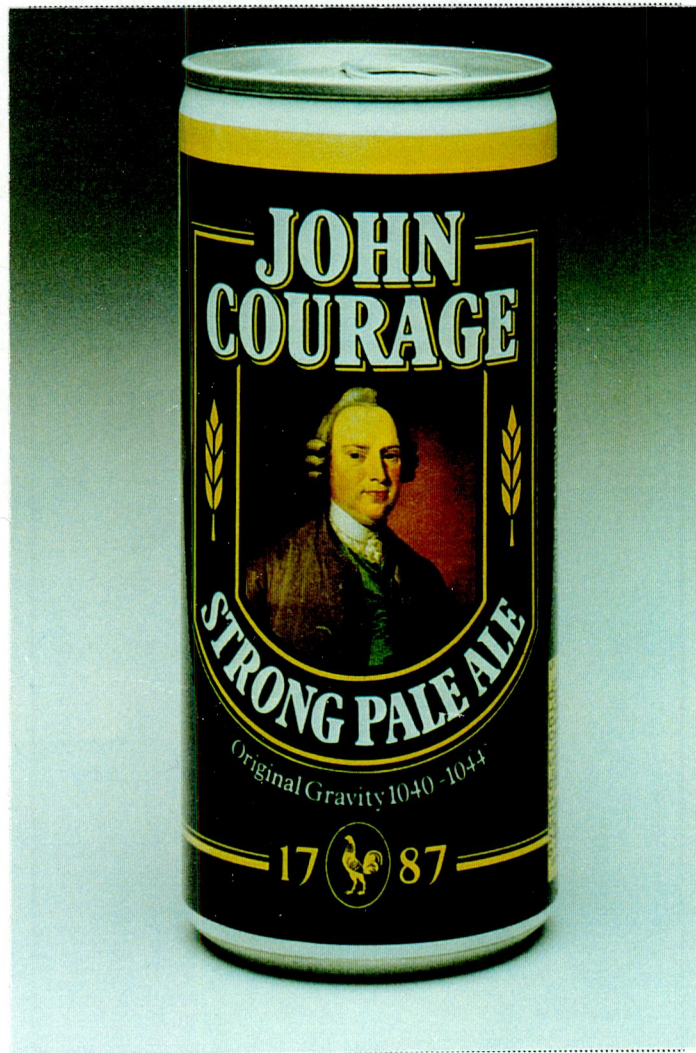


Fig. 2.1



Fig. 2.2 a

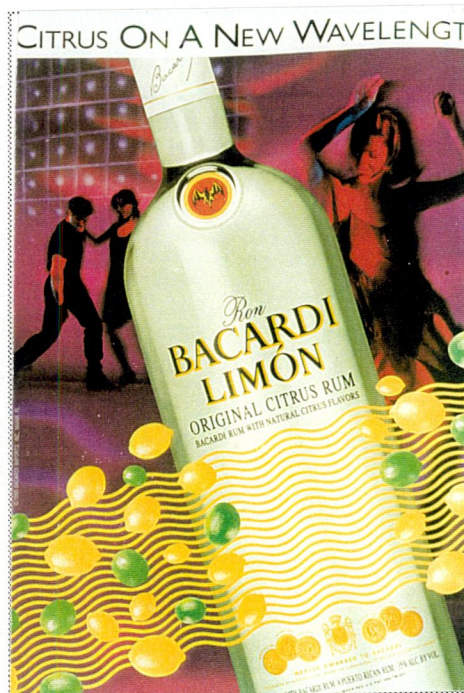


Fig. 2.2 b

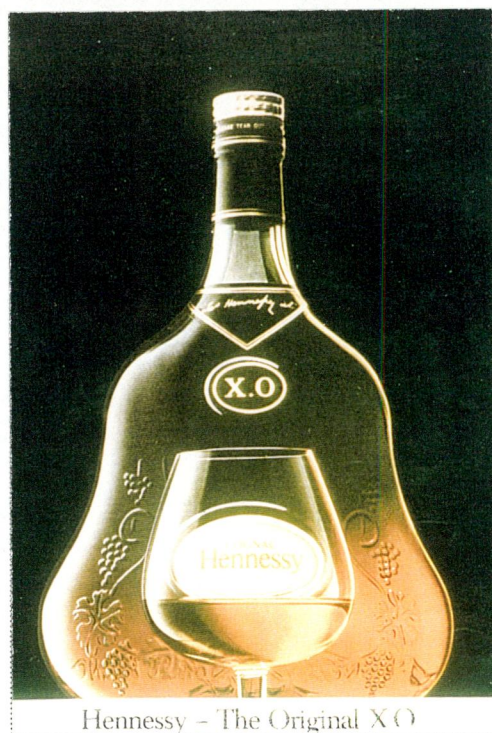


Fig. 2.3 a



Fig. 2.3 b



Fig. 2.3 c



Fig. 2.3 d





Fig. 3.1

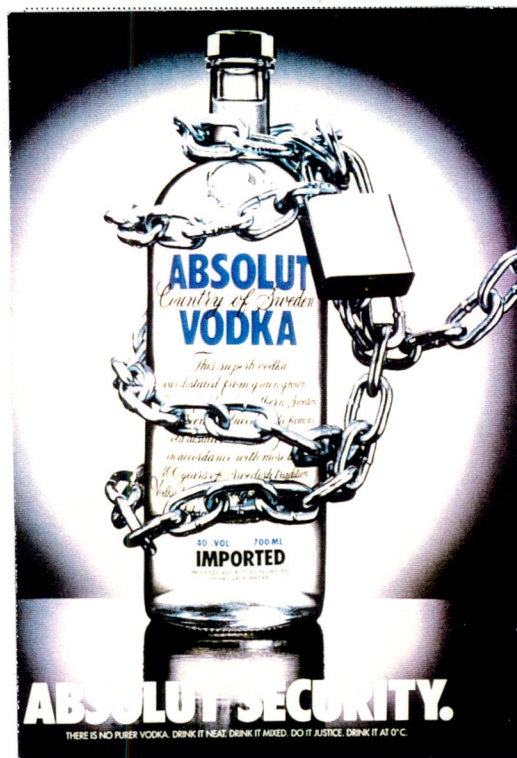


Fig. 3.2 a

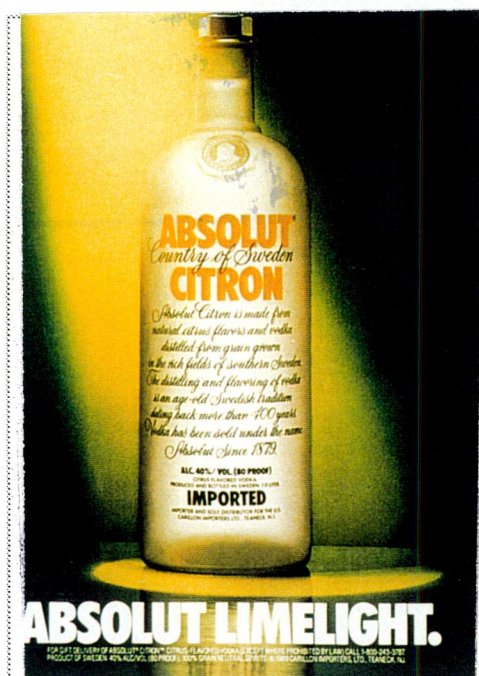


Fig. 3.2 b



Fig. 3.2 c



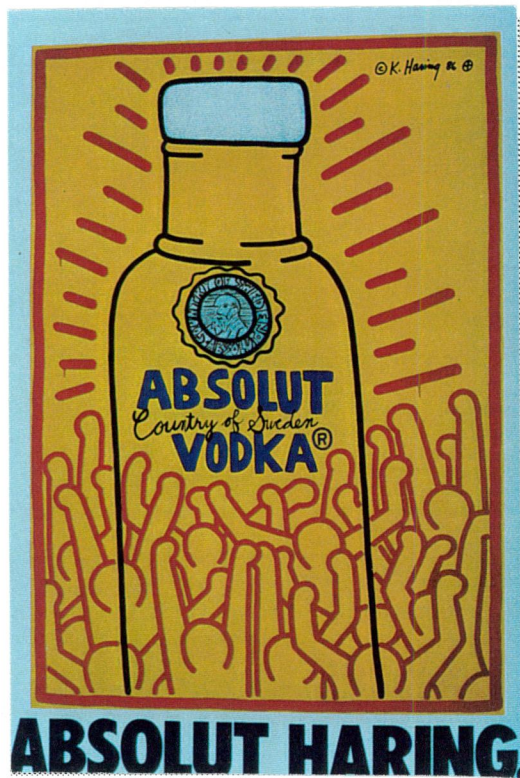


Fig. 3.3 a

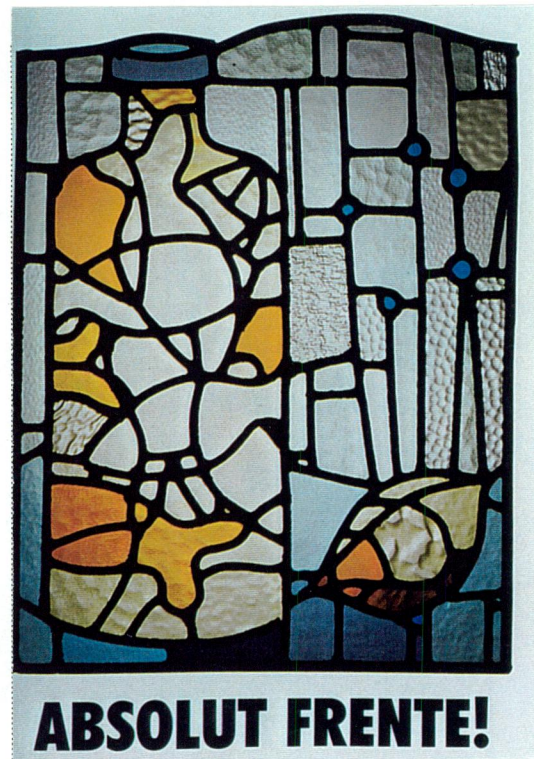


Fig. 3.3 b



Fig. 3.3 c

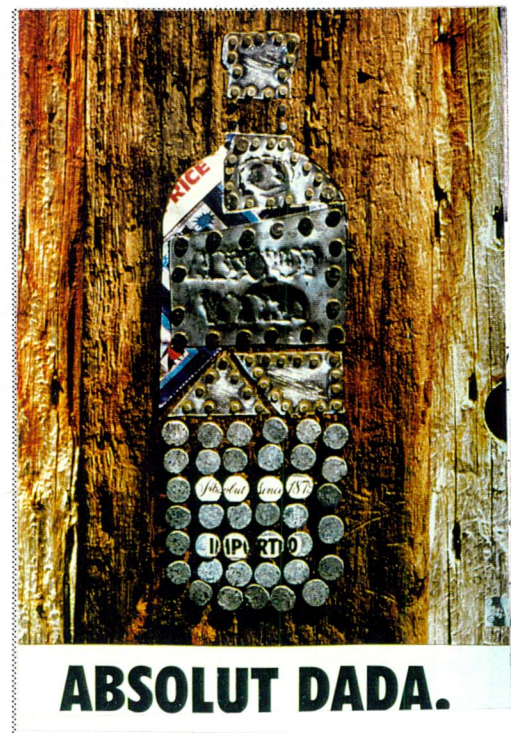


Fig. 3.3 d





Fig. 3.4 a

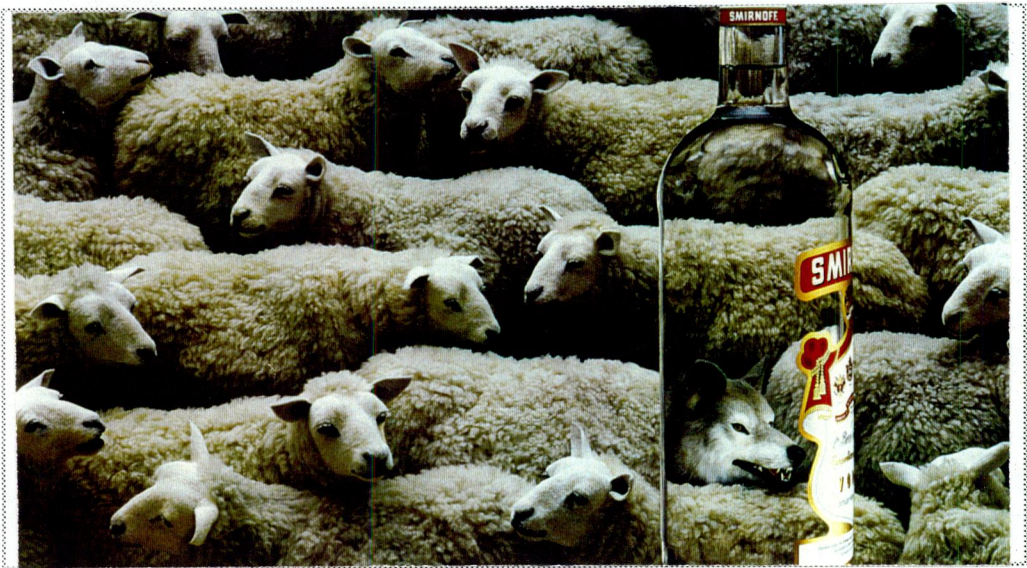


Fig. 3.4 b



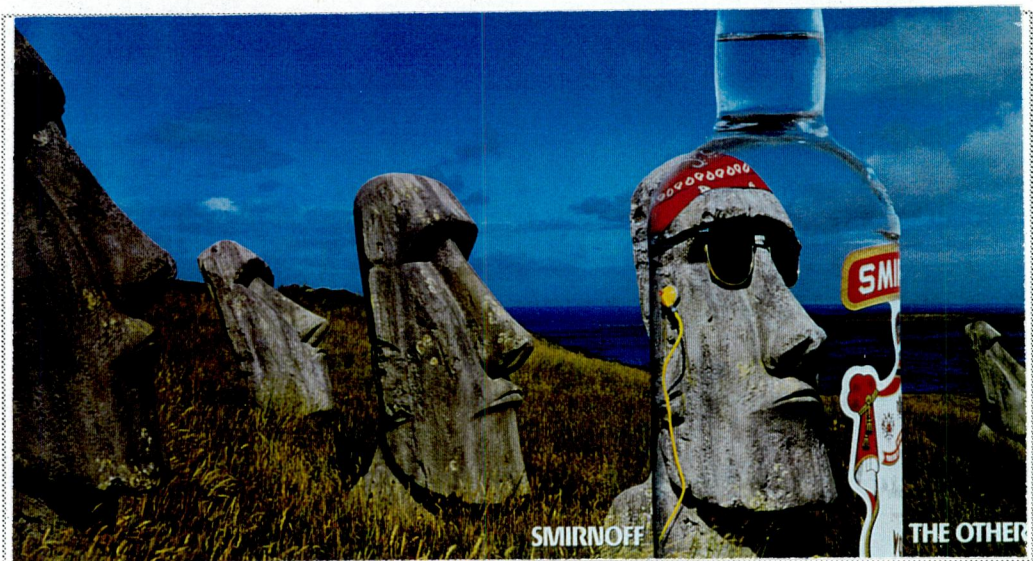


Fig. 3.5 a



Fig. 3.5 b



Fig. 3.6 a



Fig. 3.6 b



Fig. 3.6 c



Fig. 3.6 d





Fig. 3.7 a

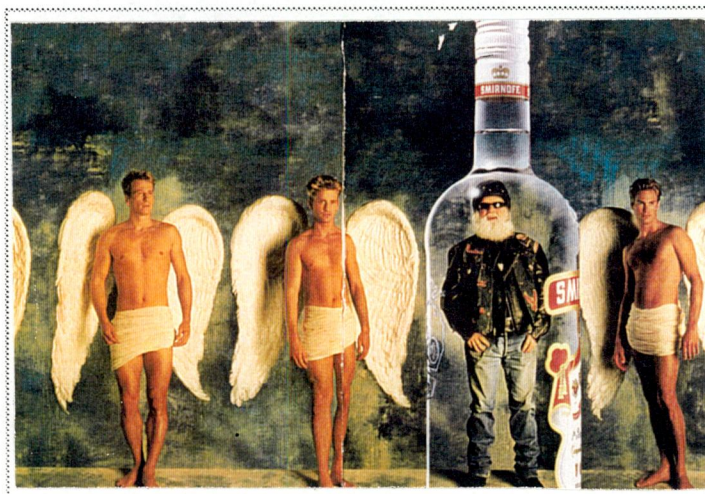


Fig. 3.7 b



Fig. 3.7 c



Fig. 3.8

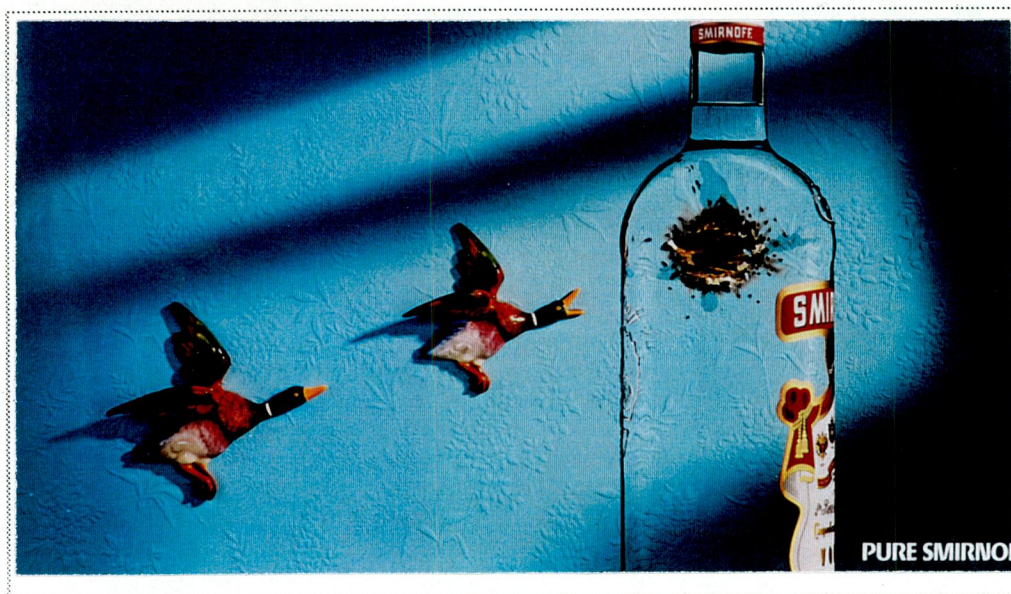


Fig. 3.9 a



Fig. 3.9 b

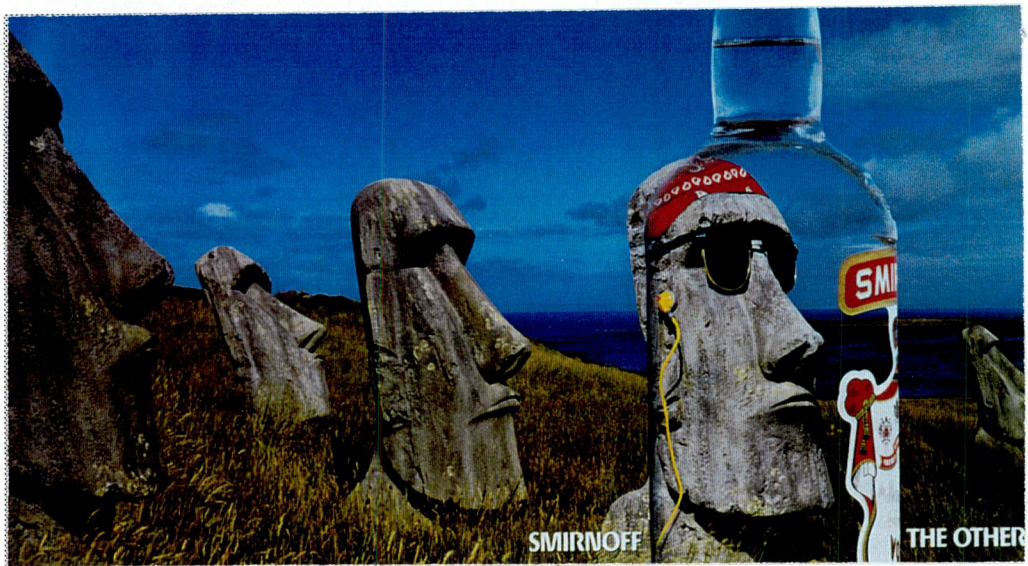


Fig. 3.10 a



Fig. 3.10 b





Fig. 3.11

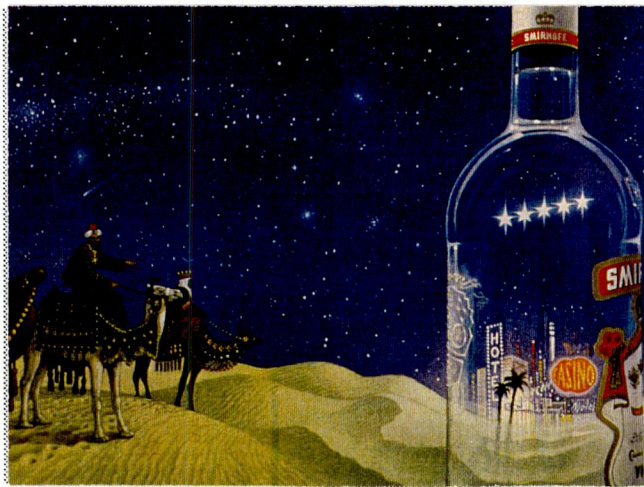


Fig. 3.12 a



Fig. 3.12 b

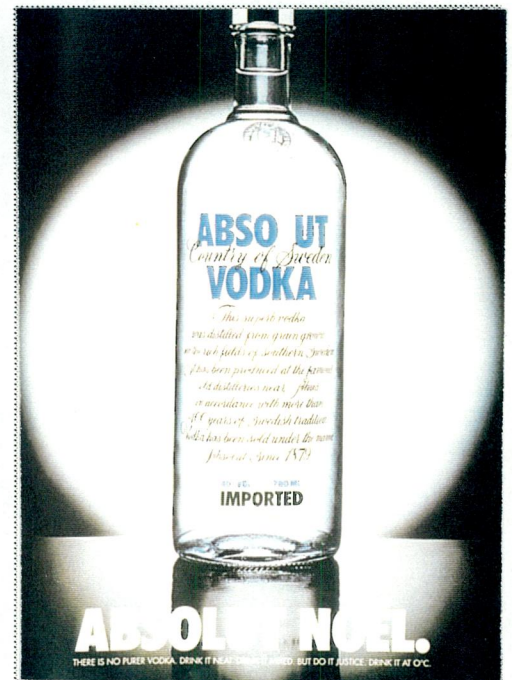


Fig. 3.12 c



Fig. 3.13 a



Fig. 3.13 b



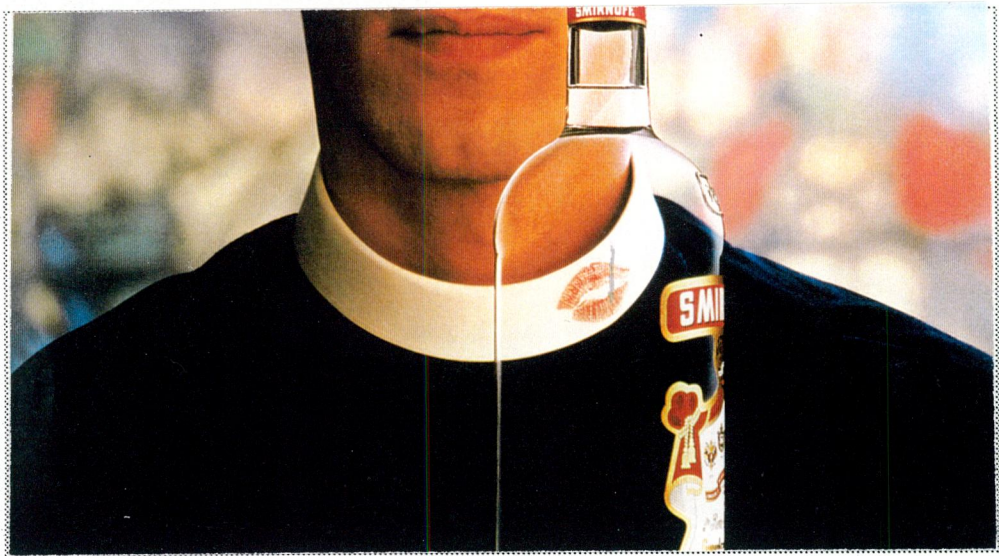


Fig. 3.14 a



Fig. 3.14 b





Fig. 3.15



Fig. 3.16 a



Fig. 3.16 b



Fig. 3.16 c



Fig. 3.17 a



Fig. 3.17 b



Fig. 3.17 c

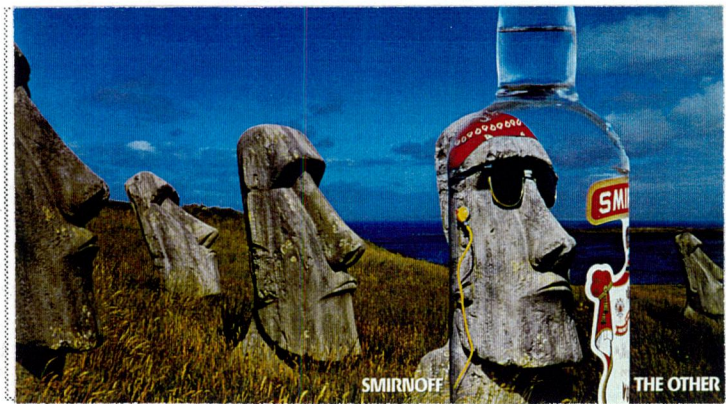


Fig. 3.18 a



Fig. 3.18 b



Fig. 3.18 c



Fig. 3.19 a



Fig. 3.19 b



Fig. 3.19 c





Fig. 3.20 a



Fig. 3.20 b



Fig. 4.1 a

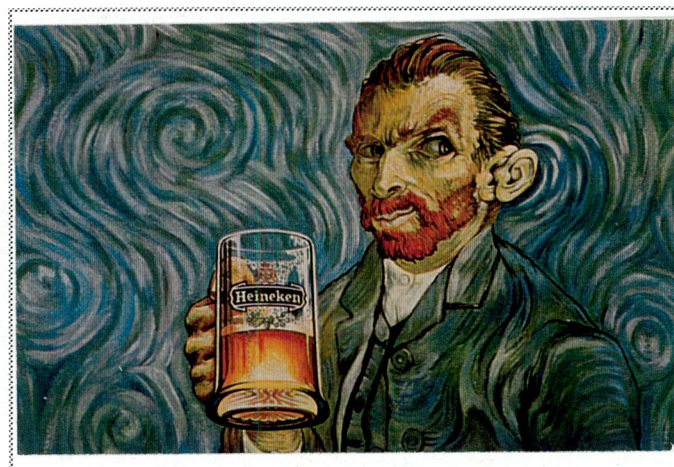


Fig. 4.1 b



Fig. 4.2 a

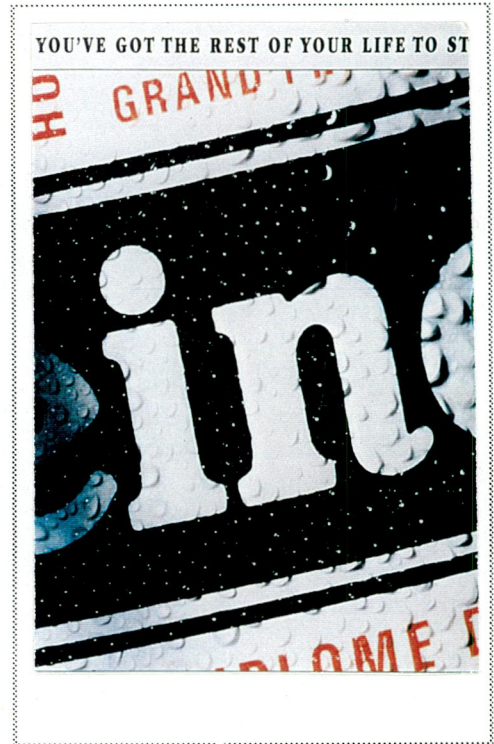


Fig. 4.2 b



Fig. 4.2 c

Fig. 4.3 a

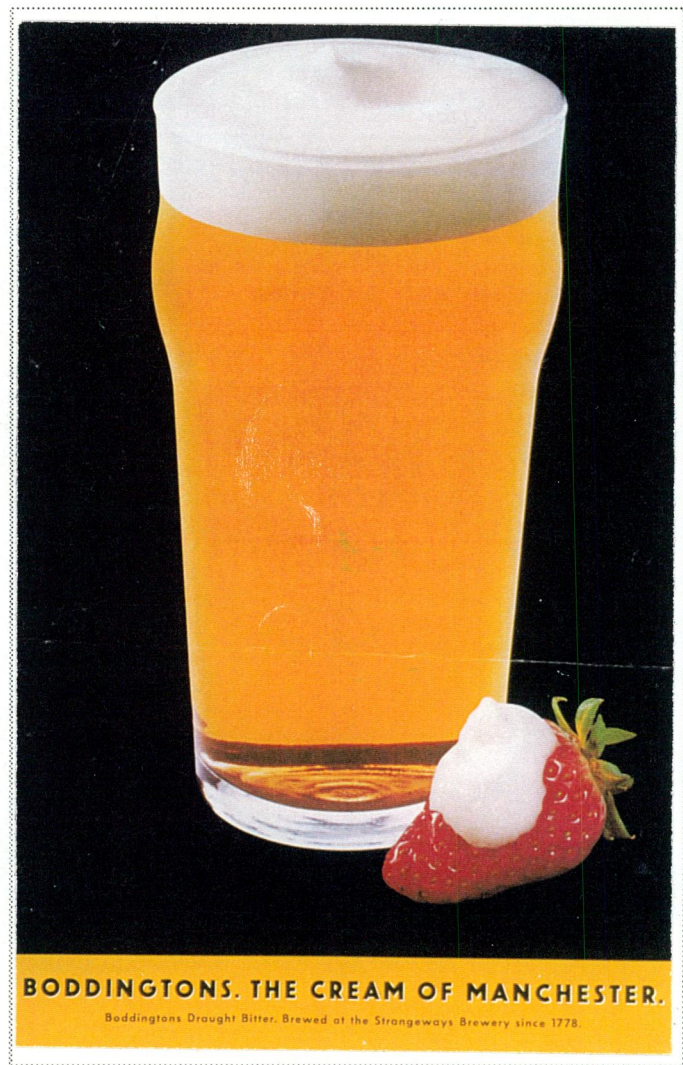


Fig. 4.3 b







Fig. 4.4 a

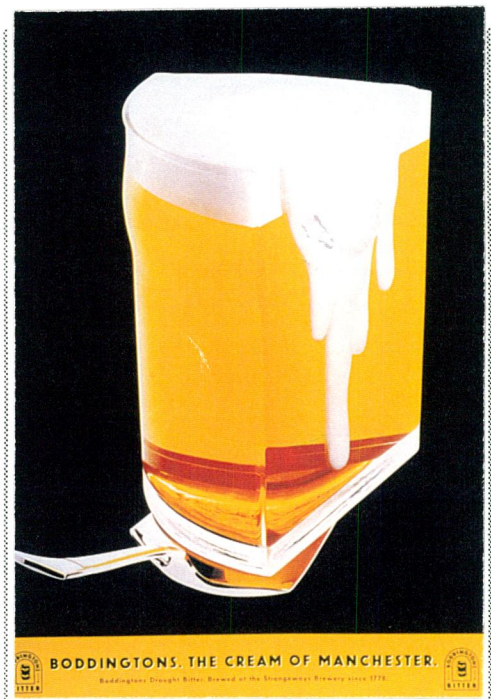


Fig. 4.4 d

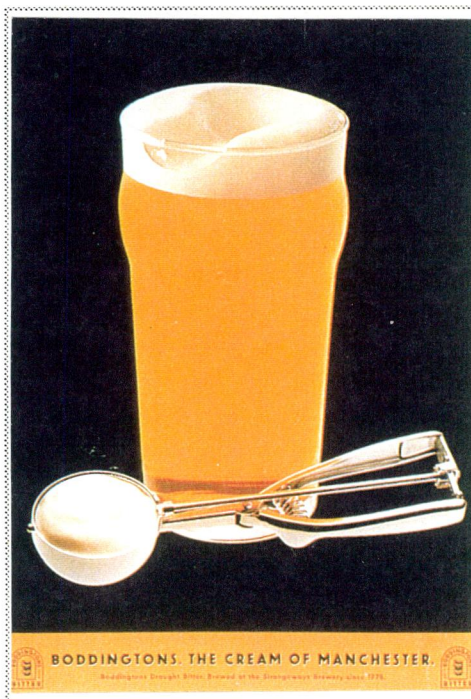


Fig. 4.4 b

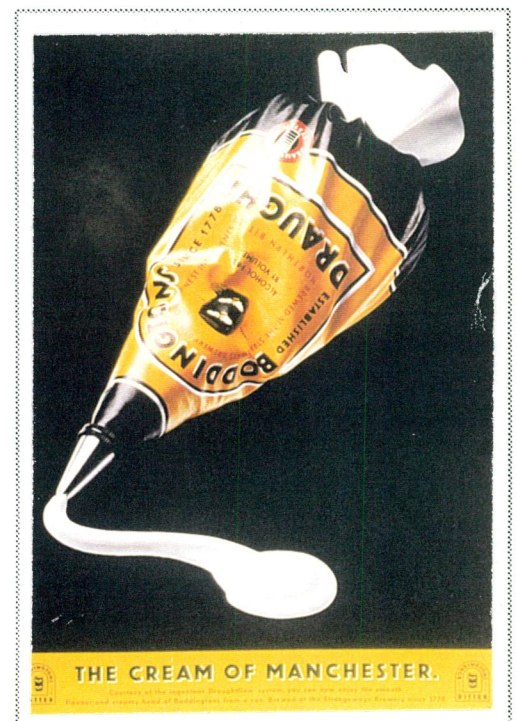


Fig. 4.4 e

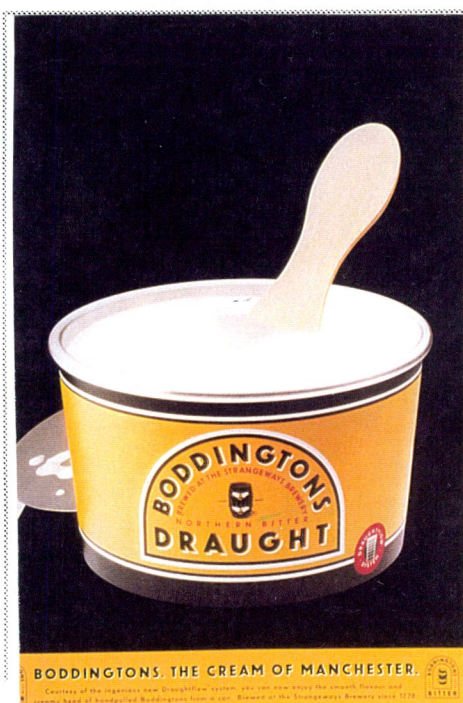


Fig. 4.4 c

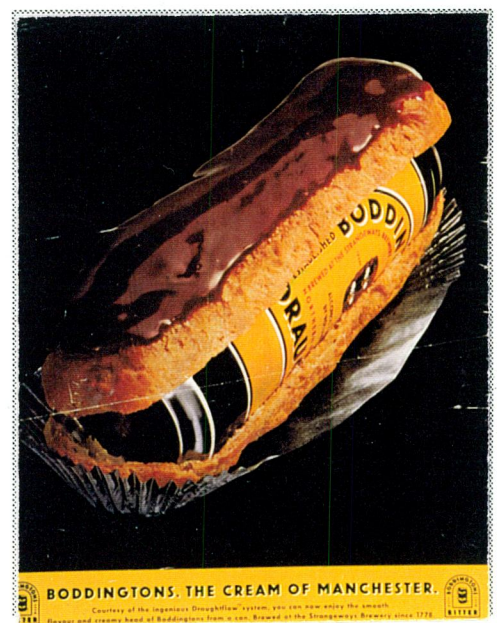


Fig. 4.4 f

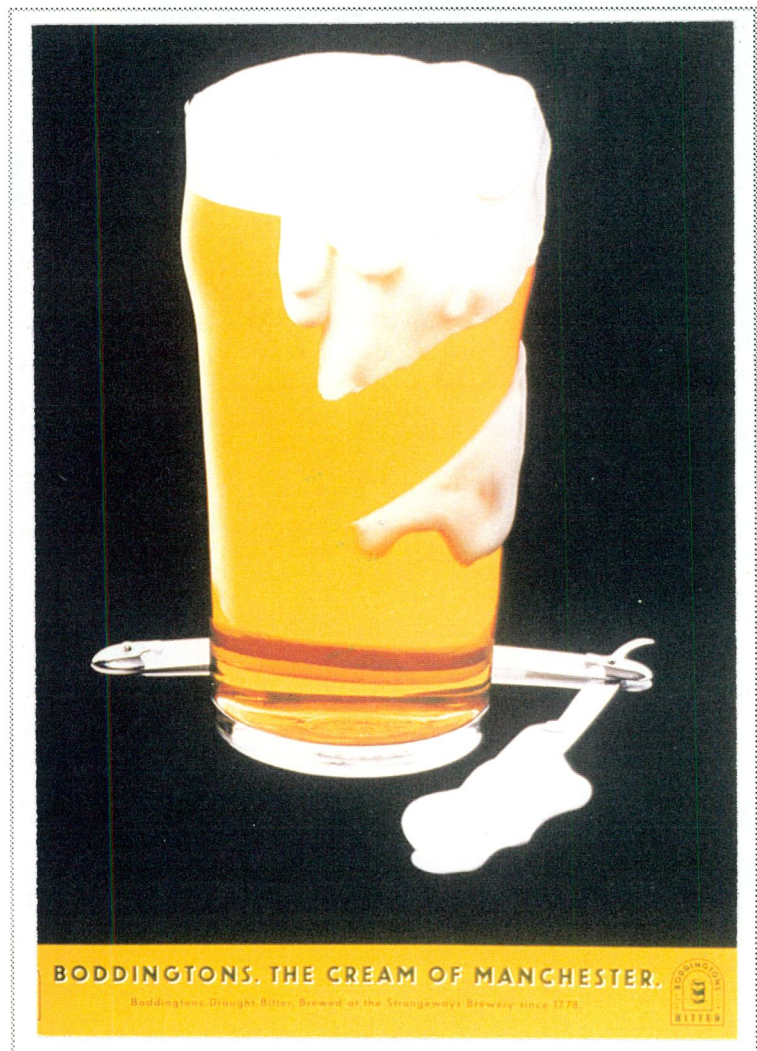


Fig. 4.5

Fig. 4.6 a



Fig. 4.6 b





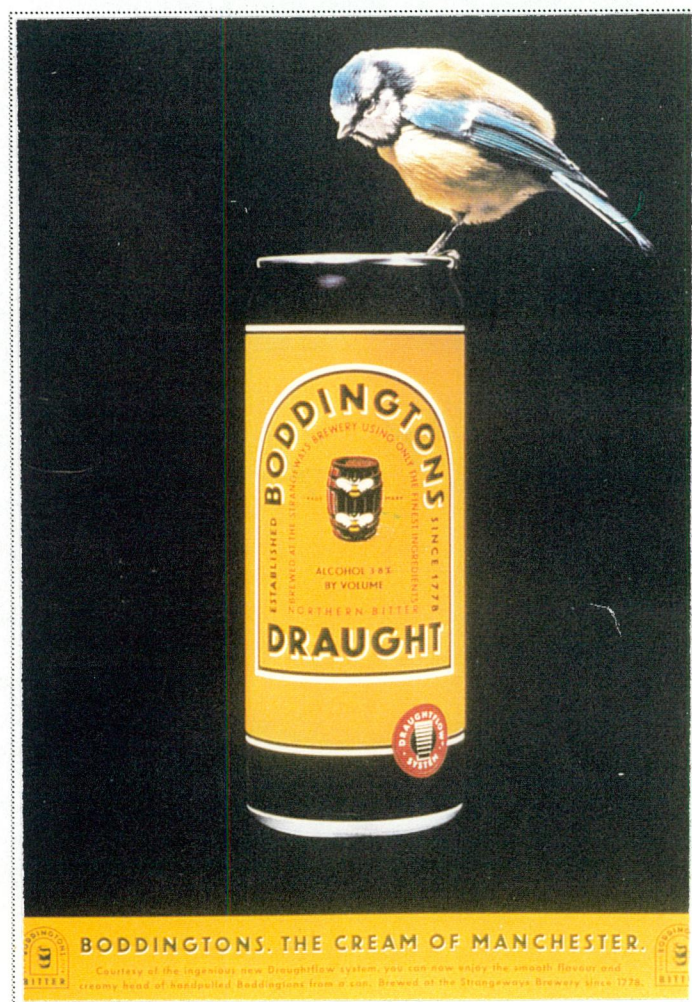


Fig. 4.7

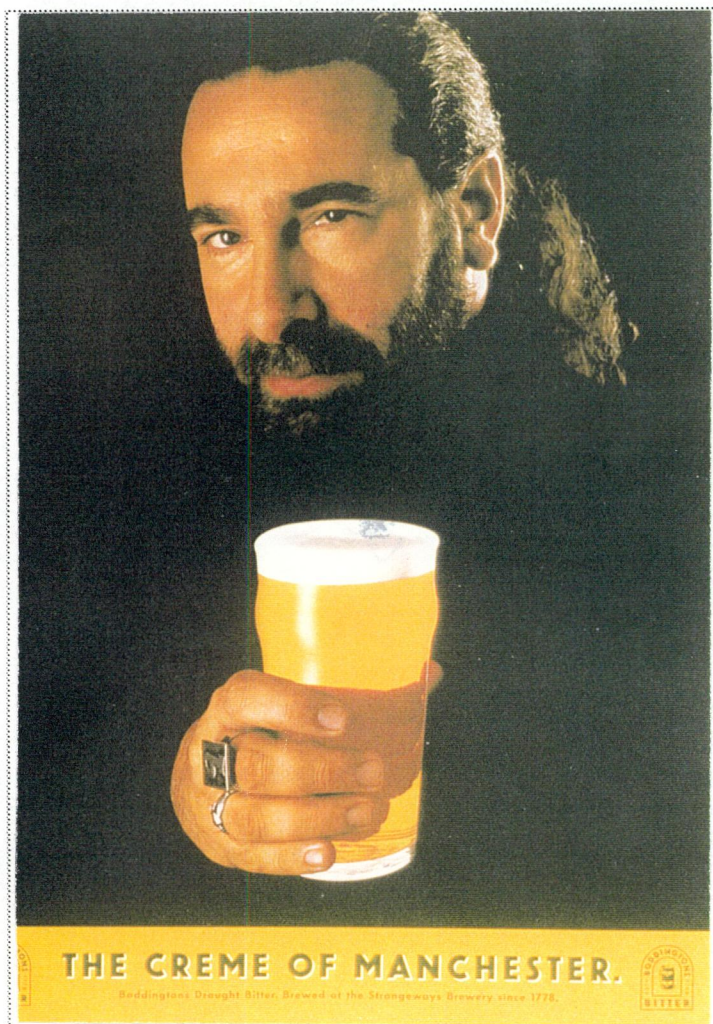


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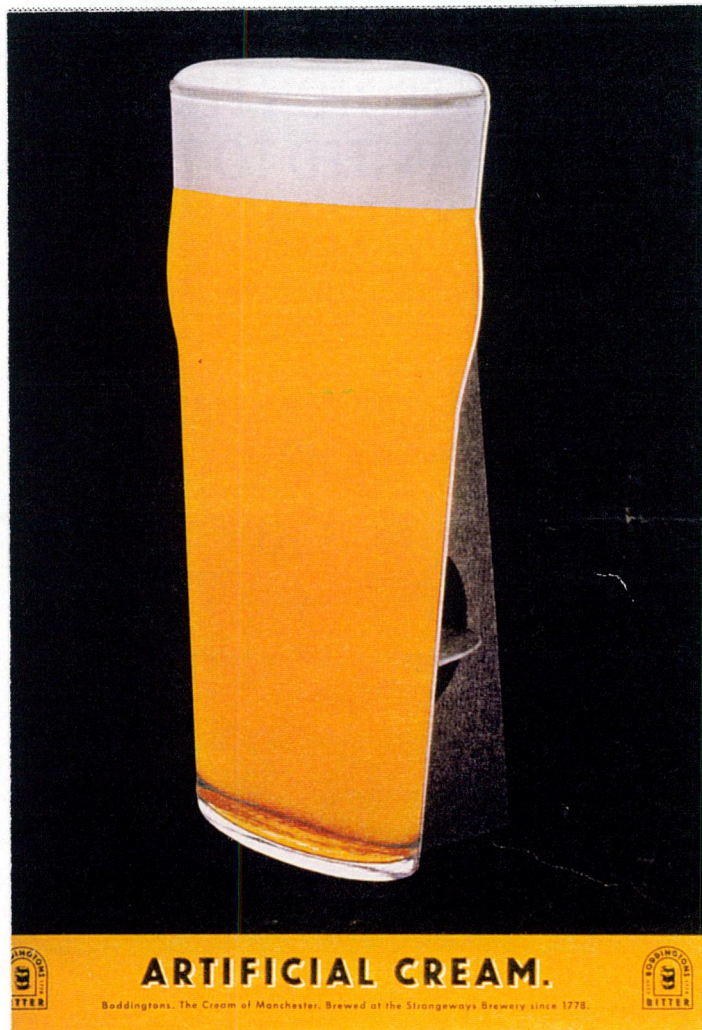


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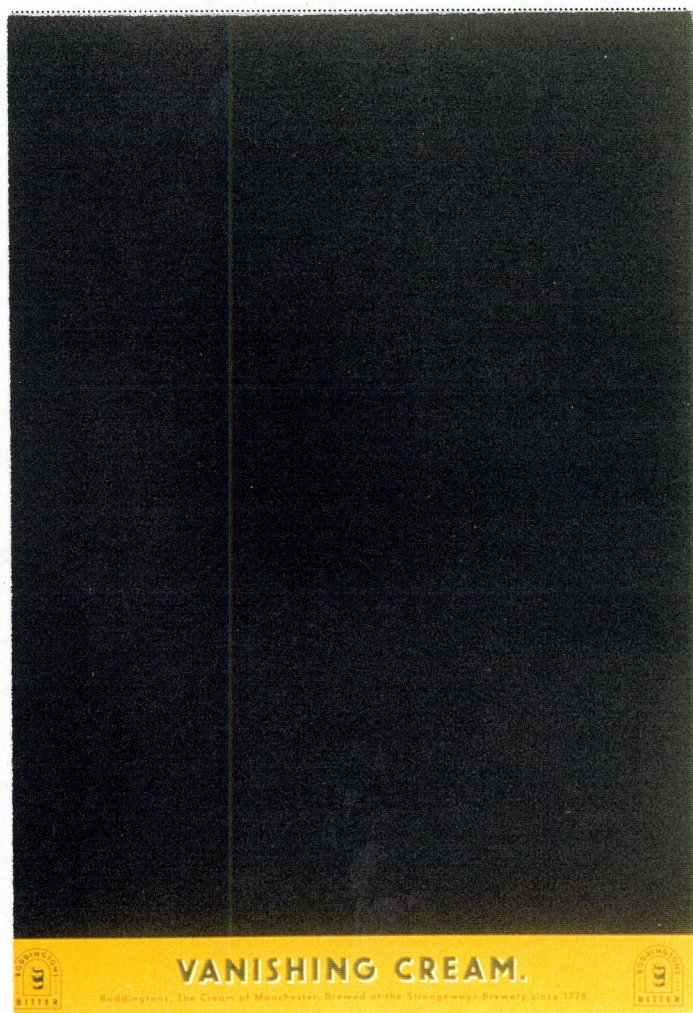


Fig. 4.10



Fig. 4.11 a

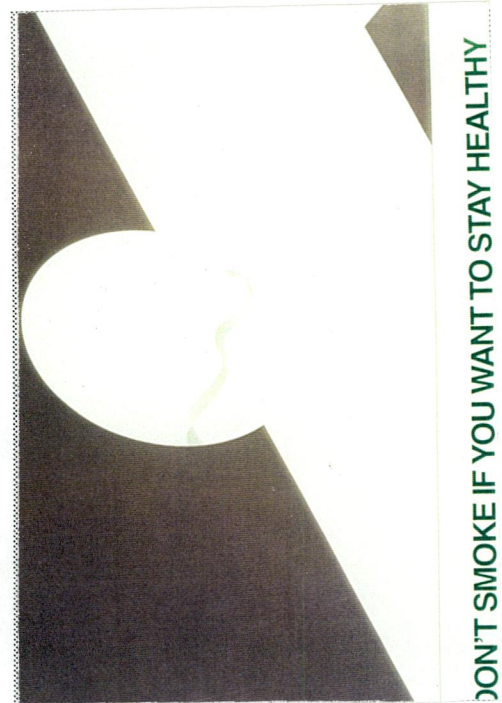


Fig. 4.11 b



Fig. 4.11 c





Fig. 5.1 a



Fig. 5.1 b



Fig. 5.2 a

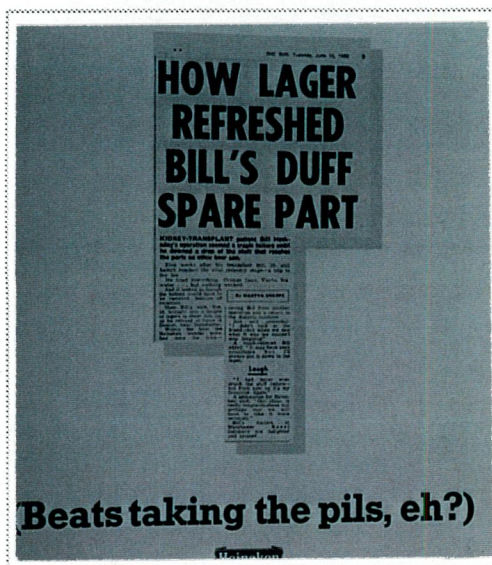


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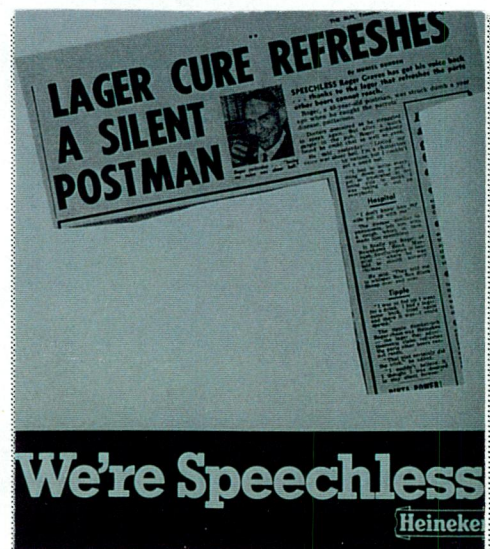


Fig. 5.2 c



Fig. 5.3 a



Fig. 5.3 b



Fig. 5.3 c

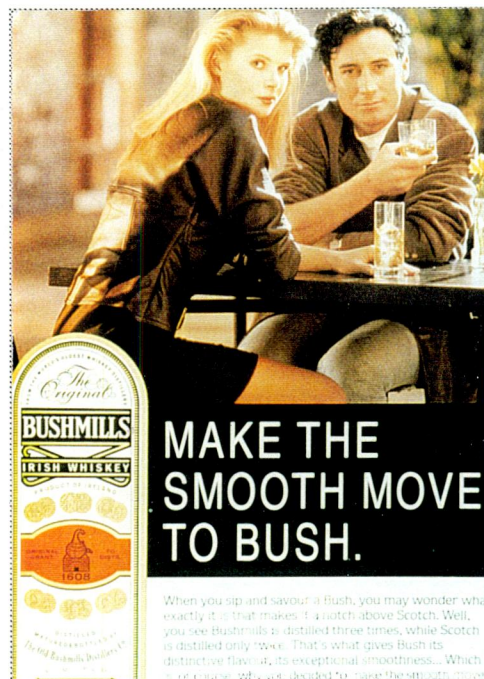
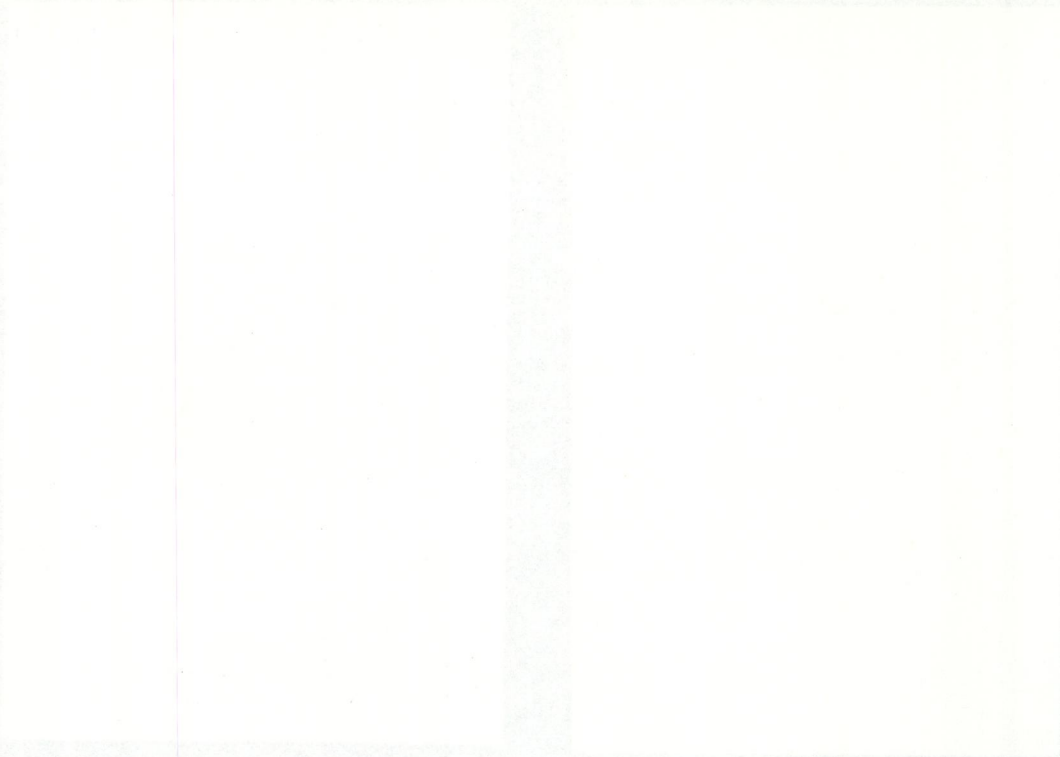


Fig. 5.3 d



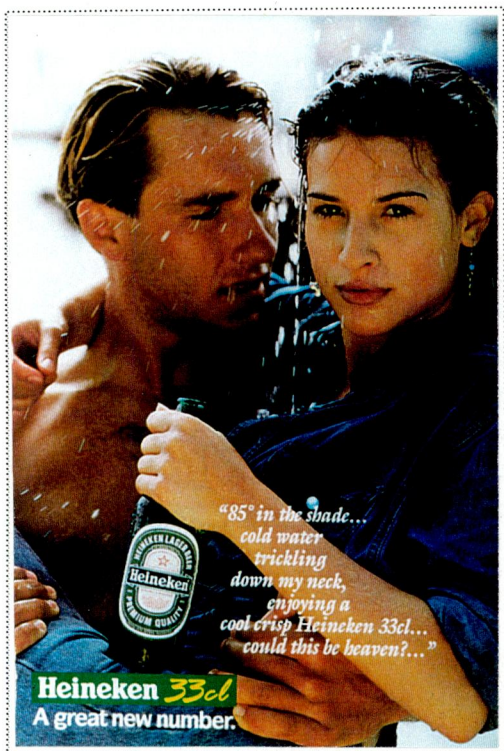


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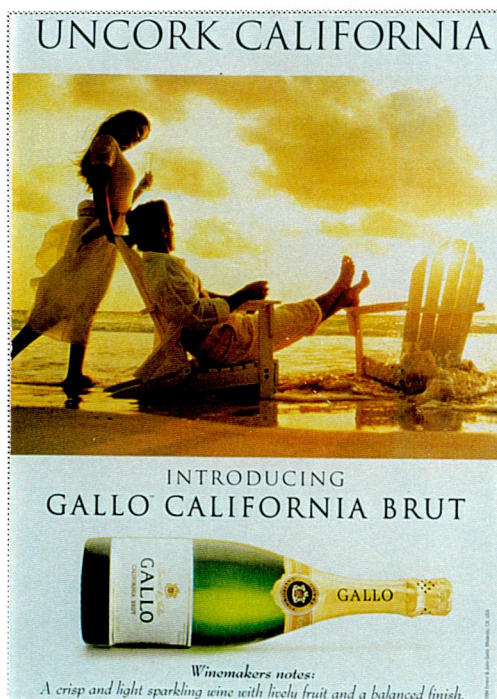


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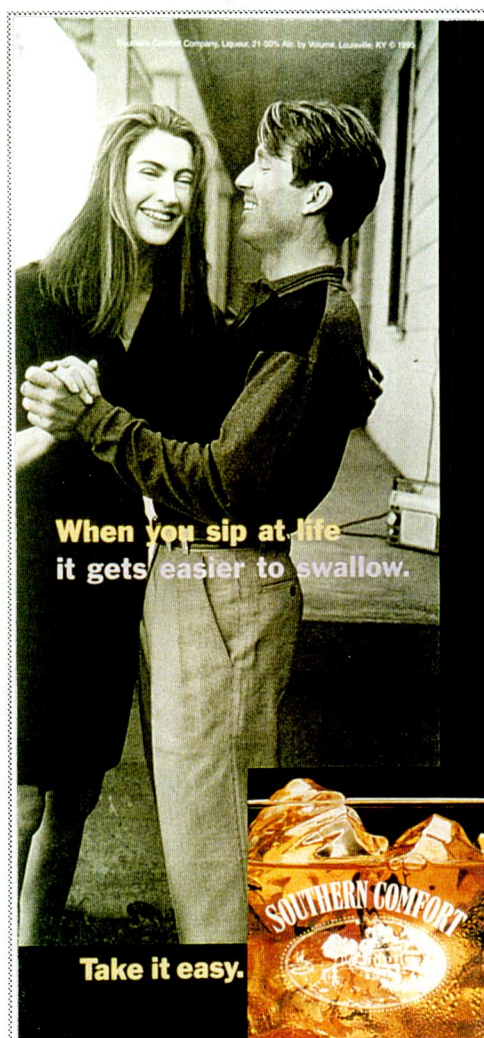


Fig. 5.4 c

