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National College of Art and Design
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# How to get Ahead of Advertising

by
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## Introduction

Advertising has been a part of our lives for so long that we have come to accept it as normal. Everywhere we look we are bombarded with advertisements, whether they are in print, on T.V. or on radio. Entire magazines and TV networks are dedicated solely to advertising, leading to a stage where we absorb this information subconsciously. Aversion to advertising is nothing new, it has raised its head many times over the decades.There is no doubt that some advertisements could be called into question as stereotyped and biased. There have been many demands for greater media pluralism and non-commercialism. In earlier years these took the form of graffiti on billboards and posters in protest and outrage at sexist or racist content. These graffiti protesters often used ironic humour to make the poster or billboard look ridiculous. This form of protest was often very successful and in more recent years has become a lot more sophisticated and organised. Groups have banded together and taken on the media at their own game, using their own medium against itself. Worldwide, small organisations have put out their own advertisements protesting against corporate and establishment advertising, focusing in on many different issues ranging from the general to the specific. This thesis is a study of these groups and is a compilation of information on them, how and why they were set up, their aims, and a discussion of their methods in combating discrimination and exclusion in advertising.

While a multitude of books and articles have been published covering all aspects of advertising, all utilised databases showed anything from

hundreds to thousands of entries on the topic. In researching this thesis very few sources dealt directly with opposition to advertising. Considering the sheer volume of material published on the general subject of advertising, it was both surprising and intriguing that so little critical comment had been made regarding the role of opposition to advertising. Although it was hard to collect relevant information, research led to a diverse range of sources showing the many stimulating aspects of advertising. This in itself was another obstacle to overcome, because with such a surplus of interesting information it was difficult to keep focused on the subject at hand. The topic that this thesis is concerned with is diverse and the discussion is two-tiered, dealing with groups against advertising, and their campaigns. As a result of this, the method employed was to break the subject down into different chapters and categories.

The first chapter serves as an introduction to the debates and arguments that surround the field of advertising and its influence on society. Discussing groups against establishment advertising, against consumerism, and how these groups use parody to turn the rhetoric of advertising back on itself. The second chapter deals with gender differentiation, sexism in advertising and the growing opposition to it. This chapter (dealing with opposition to sexist advertising) will consider feminism, stereotyping of women and the use of imagery (focusing on the female form) in advertising. The third chapter focuses on sexuality, on the protest against discrimination and exclusion in advertising because of sexual orientation. This chapter concentrates on aids-activism because the aids crisis in the '80s and the inability of government advertising campaigns to properly target gay communities, led to much debate and

highlighted the discrimination against homosexuality in advertising. The fourth chapter deals with the opposition to racist advertising. It focuses on stereotyping and racism in both advertising and the media, discussing the artists and designers who deal with these issues. Surprisingly, little material was available on the subject of racism in advertising, possibly due to the more pressing issues resulting from open racial discrimination.

In this thesis, while the different groups and individuals discussed all had varying motives and focused on very different areas, a lot of similarities existed between them in the way that they tackled their problems. Another aim of this analytical discussion is to show, how under very different issues, the same establishments were being targeted and singled out for ridicule, and how parody of advertising was used in some way by nearly every group to attack advertising and make the consumer more aware. Although it is difficult to measure either way the success or failure of these campaigns, this thesis will discuss why some were more successful than others. Another difficulty arises due to the fact that literature on these topics are scant. This is because of the relatively new nature and continuing evolution of this area. However of the works consulted, Liz McQuistion's *Graphic Agitation* (1993) and *Suffragettes to She-devils* (1997) were useful in providing information on the backround of some of the groups discussed. None of the books mentioned in the bibliography deal directly with the subject of opposition to advertising or had information that was relevant in the current climate of change. For this reason periodicals such as *ID Magazine*, *Graphis* and *Creative Review* were invaluable source of up-to date informaton. The Internet was also useful as this thesis sets about examining a largely uncharted area in design literature and is based mainly on personal opinions.

# Chapter 1: General

## Ethics of advertising, anti-consumerism and anti-establishment advertising, use of parody in advertising.

### Ethics of advertising :

Advertising really only exists to perform one function: to increase consumption. It is advertising that helps to give goods their attraction and their meaning. In the words of Judith Williamson, advertising is used to "translate product statistics to us in human terms, they give us a humanly symbolic exchange rate - advertisements provide a structure which is capable of transforming the language of objects to that of people, although it is not necessarily all part of one language or social discourse." (Williamson, 1978, pg 12 ). We use advertising for many things. Some examples given to us by Williamson are, the use of advertising in an attempt to classify, bring order and understand the world and our own identity. As social beings we all feel the need for common culture. Among other things we use manufactured goods as a means of creating class so in one sense we feel we can rise or fall in society depending on what we can buy. Advertising uses this and plays on our guilt and insecurities, selling us things we never intended to buy. Indeed, it is the intention of ads to make us feel lacking.

There have been many studies done on advertising over the decades and there are many different schools of thought on advertising. Some depict it as a necessary evil in our society, others show it as a manipulating beast,

something that is the root of all evil in society. But despite the assumption "made by various social critics and reformers, public interest groups and activists of all shades who have mobilised against advertising: that the social failings of the ruling order can be eradicated by attacking the images which seem to encourage and legitimise them," (Sinclair, 1987, pg 5 ), it would appear that however much an image attached to a product in an advertisement stimulated the imagination and the desire or inclination to buy it, the advertisement cannot on its own make a consumer buy a product. It is but one link in a chain of factors right down to the availability of a product and whether it is affordable. So despite the many wars waged against advertising, it would seem that on occasion it has become the scapegoat, because, in the words of John Sinclair, " Advertising is merely the visible end of the whole marketing operation" (Sinclair, 1987, pg 6). However, advertising is not entirely guilt free, and debate still goes on about the ethics of advertising.

In a recent head to head in *Ads International* magazine ( winter 94/95 ), Indra Sinha and Steve Grime disagree on whether main-stream advertising can ever hope to improve society for the better. Sinha argues that advertising cannot change society for the better unless major companies make positive social change a fundamental corporate objective. While many companies boast of their 'green strategies' and environmental policies, they do little to implement them, secure in the belief that it is enough just to possess them. "Look at Benetton's well known campaigns. By airing the world's problems in public Oliviero Toscani believes that Benetton is doing its bit to alleviate them. This is dangerous because it

gives people the idea that it is enough to pay lip service." (Sinha & Grime, '94/'95, pg 18-20). Sinha believes that advertising is currently a species of propaganda which does not encourage creative thought, but narrows choice, presenting the client's product or service as the only possible solution to a given problem. For advertising to change society for the better, it would first have to transform itself. " The advertising of the future would seek not to coerce or manipulate, but would present its case and leave people to make up their own minds, creativity would be the tool to make ads more transparent and more honest." (Sinha & Grime, '94/'95, pg 18-20)

Steve Grimes argues that " advertising does not exist to improve society directly, anymore than the city or toy manufacturing or any other commercial activity does. Its role is to maintain demand for products and keep people spending so that a system can be established of, more jobs, healthy businesses and more money for consumers to invest and spend... Despite all the problems that Western economies and societies get into," he argues, " this system certainly seems overall to lead to a better standard of living and quality of life than in the former command economies of Eastern Europe" (Sinha & Grime, '94/'95, pg 18-20). Grimes also points out the non-consumer advertising that aims to better society - fire prevention, car safety, drink driving and burglary prevention, all striving to make people more aware. How many charity organisations around the world depend on advertising for fund raising, he asks?

Quotes.

In *Graphis* magazine Sharon Klahr poses the question,

> *Where do you draw the line?.... People in advertising shoulder the responsibility of influencing millions of people every day, hour, even every 30 seconds. While public perception of ethics in business does not put advertising high on the list, there are those who struggle, sometimes successfully, sometimes not, to maintain certain personal and professional standards of integrity with regards to, politics, sex, and particularly such vice products as cigarettes and alcohol. The temptation to bend these standards may simply be money or, more surprisingly, the creative challenge* (Klahr, 1996, pg 2-3 ).

Tibor Kalman, of *Colours* magazine fame, defends his decision to work on a cigarette campaign by saying you can afford to pick and choose your jobs when you are doing well, but these " ethical decisions are harder when you're not working." ( Klahr, 1996, pg 2-3 )

Other people have argued that advertising is the fall guy. Put bluntly, the argument is that you can't expect the advertising business to say, "no, we don't want your hundred thousand pounds because we don't approve of the product." This puts responsibility in the wrong place. An analogy could be drawn that advertising a vice product is like a criminal's right to a proper defence: every legal product has the right to the best advertising possible, until the government says these products are illegal.

## Anti-establishment, anti-consumerism advertising:

In articles debating consumerism and advertising, a lot of the arguments involve the advertising of vice products such as cigarettes and alcohol. Therefore, many of the anti-consumerism and anti-establishment groups

target these advertisements. One of the arguments that crops up quite frequently is that advertisers are targeting younger audiences by glamourising these vices. Meanwhile, advertisers reply that their trendy hard sell campaigns are just a way to get people to switch brands in an already flooded market. One example of this debate would be the controversy surrounding the marketing of 'alco-pops', an alcohol based drink, where imagery and typeface used in the advertising campaigns and on the products themselves were in a cartoon style which would appeal to children. Due to a public outcry, several brands of this product marketed by different companies had to be recalled, rebranded and advertised in a different way.

Erik Johnson and Joshua Gannon of St. Lawrence University in America set up a web-site discussing the targeting of younger people in advertising. Although it deals mainly with television advertising, what they say could be true for all forms of advertising. They argue that,

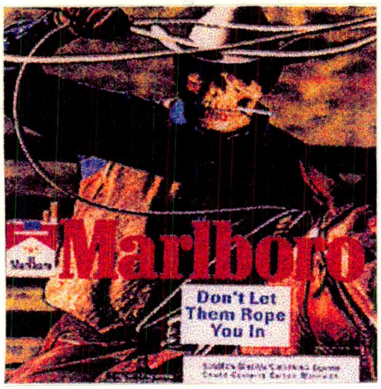
> *Children, even those of adolescent ages, are often not yet equipped with the experience nor knowledge necessary to critically analyse and decipher inherent messages of consumptional promotion and even more subtle presentations of strategically orchestrated pattern of behaviour and demeanour.*
> (http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ahx/advert.htm)

General objection to manipulation from advertising ranges from acts of impulsive outrage (defacing and writing grafitti on billboards and posters that are found to be offensive), to the more directional 'refacing' and reworking of billboards, and the formation of organisations that have become internationally recognised for their work towards non-consumerism and greater pluralism in advertising. Adbusters is one such group.

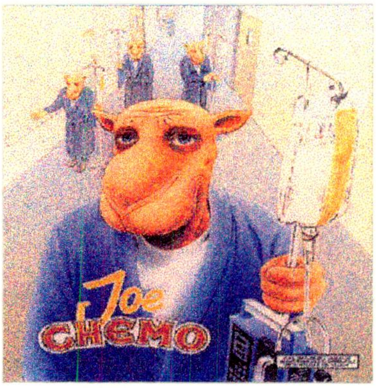
## Use of parody in anti-advertising:

Adbusters is a Canadian non-profit organisation backed by The Media Foundation. Founded by Kalle Lasn, among others, they publish a quarterly magazine exposing advertising practices and see themselves as an organisation that promotes ideas rather than products. Adbusters produce their own 'uncommericals and subvertisments' for TV and print, and encourage the individual to join in and do the same. In their magazine they give helpful hints on 'culture jamming', and explain how to go about booking airtime on your local TV station. Some of their best known work is their ads that subvert the familiar images used in typical cigarette and alcohol ads. They target large companies like Marlboro (fig 1a), Camel (fig 1b), Absolut (fig 1c), Smirnoff and those in the fashion industry such as Calvin Klien, just to name a few (fig 1d). Not surprisingly companies object to being singled out and, more often than not, Adbusters is blocked from booking ad space and airtime.

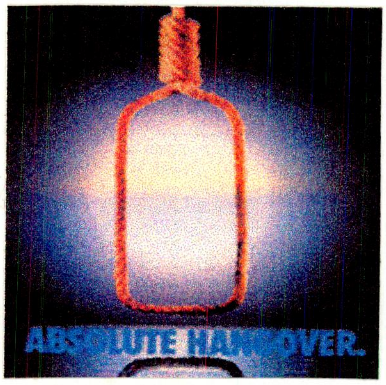
They use parody and a certain style of black humour as their main weapons, producing slick subvertisments such as those in fig 1 and while the success of their campaigns is hard to measure, their work has certainly created a lot of debate. The sentiment of their magazine has been described by Carrie McClaren of *Stay Free* fame as being "holier than thou", and its message that the world will be a better place if we all just turn off our TVs and shop less lays itself open to accusations of naivete. Other criticisms have been that Adbusters talk of "developing your values independent of the mass media smacks of Californian psycobabble"


Marlboro
Don't Let Them Rope You In

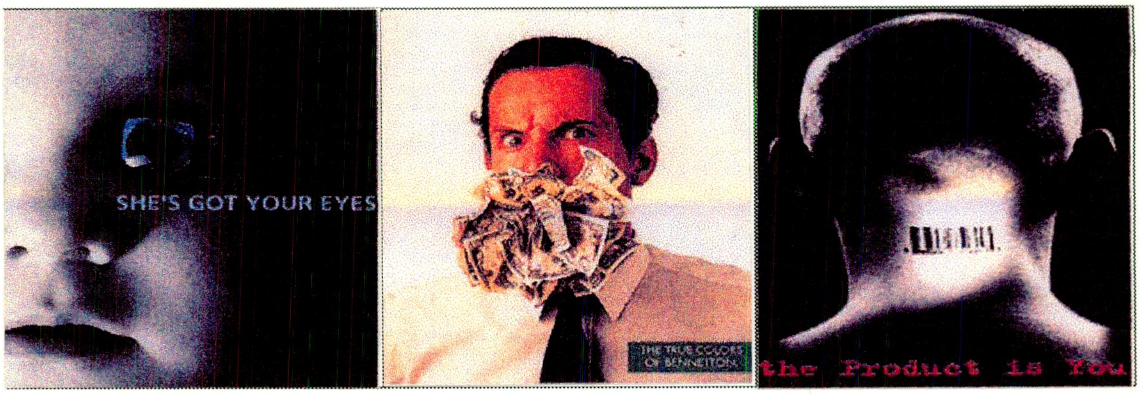
(fig 1a) One of the many ads done by Adbusters using parody to speak out on the advertising of vice products.



(fig 1b) The ads they produced were based on the style of the original ad, with a small injection of black humour Adbusters holds the companies and advertisers up for ridicule


ABSOLUTE HANGOVER.

(fig 1c) Another example of using the main character of an advertising campaign, and by putting it in a different situation or making it less exotic, subverting the image, to advertise against what it was originally ment to advertise for. Carrie McClaren makes the point that after the initial shock, in the long term we will only remember what product the ad was for thus advertising it indirectly.


SHE'S GOT YOUR EYES
THE TRUE COLORS OF BENETTON.
the Product is You

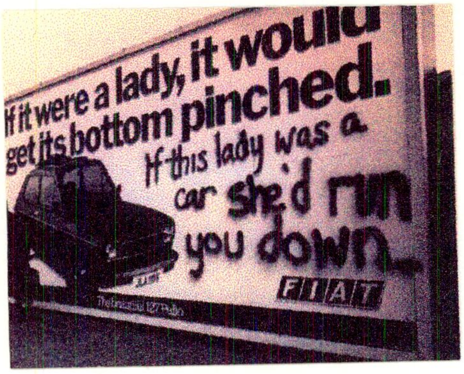
(fig 1d) These three images are a comment on consumerism, one singles out Benetton for its hippocracy while the other two are a comment on how the media can brainwash and manipulate us into thinking a certain way or play on our emotions to make us buy more products.

(Jones, Aug 1997, pg37 ) and one letter to the magazine asks "don't you idiots know that advertising and consumerism are what fuel our economy?" (htt://www.adbusters.org/adbusters/main.html). Despite criticism, Adbusters has proved to be inspiration for many other groups around the globe, which is an achievement in itself. This form of protesting against advertising has caught on. From Manchester to Australia, groups are using parody as a "powerful form of critique and deploy it to reveal the many hypocrisies and empty promises of Adland" (Cosper, '97, pg. 78).

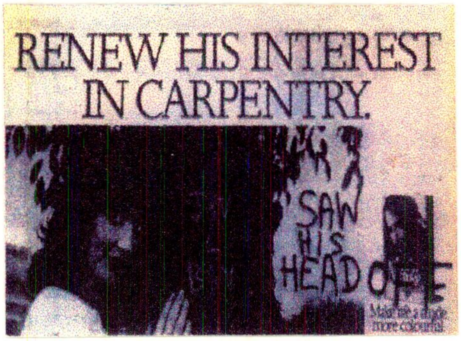
Despite the limited success of such parody ads and lampoons one is inclined to agree with Carrie McClaren, publisher of the semi-annual fanzine, *Stay-free* . She is sceptical about about the long-term effectiveness of such parodies. While they may provide people with a short moment of reflection, in more cases than not they will end up promoting the products they make fun of. McClaren favours the more activist approach of physically defacing ads - which she does in tandem with members of the Public Works group.

Billboard defacing is not a new concept by any means; grafitti itself has been found on the Pyramids in Egypt and perhaps more notoriously on the walls of Pompeii dating from 79 AD. Such activist forms of public debate, albeit more localised than publications or TV commercials, to my mind are a more powerful form of social critique than the parody of advertisements. " As the voice of commercial programming, billboards are an authoritive and exploitative device, a one-way form of communication. Defacing and graffiti magically transform this into a two-way

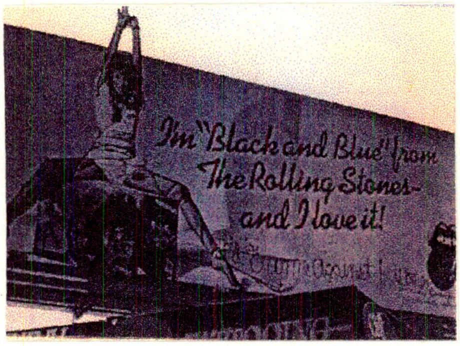
conversation: the voice of authority is overtaken by the voice of resistance, and commercial power is subverted to people power." (McQuistion, 1993, pg.182). The rawness of graffited ads ( fig. 2), usually done with a blend of anger and humour, is so much more memorable than its slicker up to date counterparts from Adbusters publication. Perhaps it is the feeling that these slick parodies look too much like the real thing; they raise suspicions and paranoia that they could be another clever ploy of the advertising agencies to seduce us. One feels they are pretending to agree in theory with the concepts of non-consumerism and showing us anti-establishment views, getting us on their side, but at the same time promoting their products in that subliminal way that advertising is so famous for. The irony is that, while half of the Adbusters magazine is used to promote such concepts as 'Buy Nothing Day', the other half tries hard to sell us Buy Nothing Day T-shirts and other such promotional goods. Although the idea behind the professional parody of advertising is ( paraphrasing McClaren ) to fight fire with fire and beat the advertisers at their own game, there is always that niggling feeling that what comes out is no real alternative to our present culture of consumption, just a different brand.


If it were a lady, it would get its bottom pinched.
If this lady was a car she'd run you down...
FIAT

(fig 2a)


RENEW HIS INTEREST IN CARPENTRY.
SAW HIS HEAD OFF
Make life a little more colourful

(fig 2b)


I'm "Black and Blue" from The Rolling Stones - and I love it!

(fig 2c)

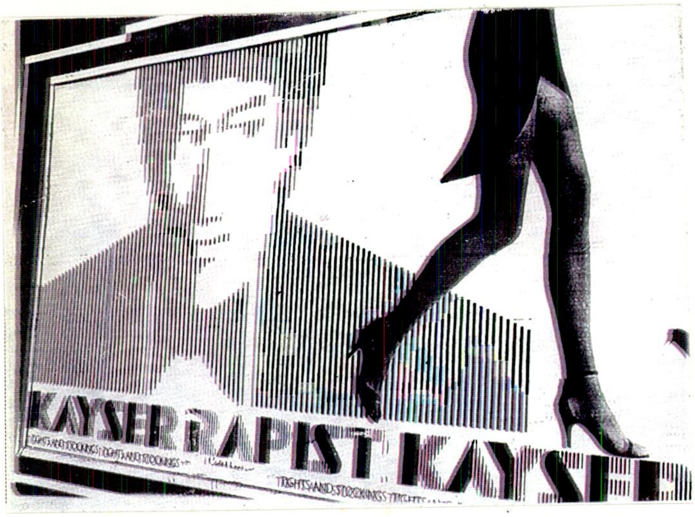
Fig 2a, 2b and 2c are postcards that were made from Jill Posner's photographs of graffited billboards around Britain. Although graffiti as a form of protest is more localised the spontaneity and emotion with which it is done adds to its effectiveness. The sentiments behind the amended billboards are perfectly clear unlike some of the slick parody ads that followed.

# Chapter 2: Gender

## Sexist advertising, feminism, stereotyping of women and the use of imagery in advertising,

### Sexism and feminism:

The battle against sexism and particularly the use of sexist imagery in advertising was initially waged through very public formats. Jill Posner's photographs of graffited billboards are a good example (see fig. 2). Many groups and individual artists took their cues from these early examples of the reworking of billboards and went on to develop it as a slicker format of protest, changing the messages of the billboards to suit their own purpose. Groups like BUGA UP ( Australia ), Public Works ( America ), and Saatchi and Someone ( England ), all used this format in the '80s and '90s. Fig 3 shows an amended billboard done by a group called Angry Women dating from late '70s to early '80s.



(fig 3) this shows a billboard reworked by a british based group called Angry Women, the amendments to the billboard are not immediately clear, in fact it is so subtle that it might go unnoticed for some time by a casual consumer. The inclusion of the word 'rapist 'in the brand name is a comment by the group that by showing billboards like these advertisers incite violence and condone sexist behaviour towards women.

According to McQuiston the influence for all this subversive activity stems from the punk movement.

> *Punk produced an alternative image of women as tough, streetwise, uncompromising, non-conformist, exhibitionist, with attitude, defining sex and power on their own terms. A new generation therefore embraced a subversive attitude, image and street-style, joining women of all ages in targeting the media, and waging a battle that raged throughout the decade and that continues still.* (McQuiston, 1997, pg 118 )

The '80s also saw a whole new culture of magazines or 'fanzines' and other publications. Magazines like *Shocking Pink*, *Spare Rib* and *Oz* were produced, challenging the oppressive representations of women that pervaded our culture. These were in direct reaction to popular fashion magazines that reinforced false images and values for women and teenagers alike, whose main content were beauty, style and make up tips. During this time, many feminist printing houses opened to counter sexism in the media and to keep the women's movement alive. Bloody Good Graphix, Jillposters, Wimmens Warehouse Screen Printing Collective, Sheba Press and Kitchen Table were just some of those set up. This wave of publications led to the printing of guidelines and dictionaries promoting non-sexist language that gradually made an impact on the education system, in business and in the media. In the media at this time there was a revival of the butch feminist or lesbian stereotype, who was ugly and aggressive and displayed 'odd' behaviour. This was reminiscent of of the anti-feminist attacks and attacks made on suffragettes in the earlier part of the century, (it also coincided with the promotion of the image of the 'new man' in advertising). The women's press worked to

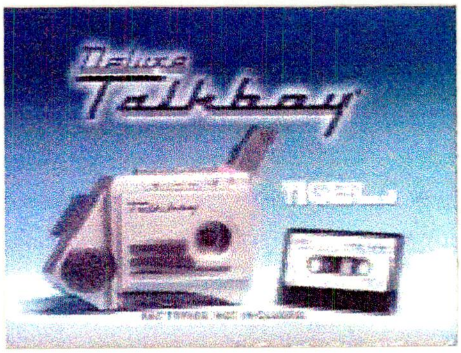
counteract this reclaiming language used against women (eg. dyke). They also reprinted forgotten works by women of past generations.

## Sexism and stereotyping in advertising:

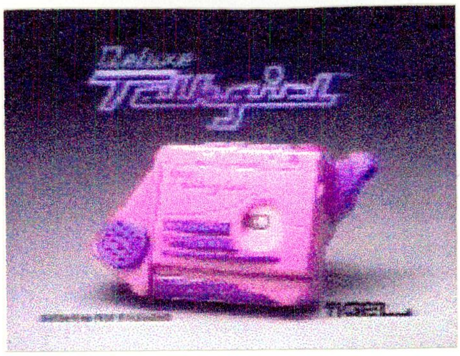
> *" Research indicates that six-month old babies are already forming mental images of corporate logos and mascots. By the time they are three years old, most children are making specific requests for brand name products."* (htt://www.library.uiuc.edu/ahx/advert.htm).

In their study *The rape of our youth (8am est)*, Erik Johnson and Joshua Gannon illustrate the stereotyping of gender roles that we are faced with from an early age. One example of such stereotyping discussed was using a television ad for a phone marketed differently for boys and girls - the Tiger Talkboy and Talkgirl. (fig 4). What follows is an abstract from this discussion:

In the Tiger Talkboy and Talkgirl not only have the gender boundaries been established by the presentation of masculine and feminine product lines, but this differentiation has been reinforced by the use of colour in the ad. Black, grey and metallic colours signify the masculine orientation of the Talkboy, while a pink and purple colour scheme and the warmer, friendlier plastic material is used for the Talkgirl. In the actual ad itself, the main character is male and the degree to which he is used to sell traditional gender role stereotypes is extensive. On three different occasions in the ad, the young boy is seen in a position of power through the use of his Talkboy pen extension of the toy, (which is an obvious phallic symbol ). On these occasions the actor was allowed to engage in threatening violence and in mild forms of sexual harassment. The females


Deluxe
Talkboy
TIGER

(fig 4a)


Deluxe
Talkgirl
TIGER

(fig 4b)

Fig 4a and 4b are of the Talkboy and Talkgirl to show how the same product is packaged differently for girls and boys reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes.

in the ad, his teacher and a young girl, were persecuted as onlookers or victims of the toys.

In conclusion, the product itself was not sexist, beyond its colour schemes. It was rather that " the commercial's images and messages which give meaningful value to the product, and provide children with subtle lessons of expected and accepted forms of behaviour (treatment and reaction ) that differ for a boy and girl."

(htt://www.library.uluc.edu/ahx/advert.htm).

This was just one example of several ads discussed on this particular website, but it illustrates the values indoctrinated into us from an early age. Studies have been done on advertising over the years, and have demonstrated that issues such as sexism and stereotyping are being addressed in advertising. In table (1) we see a range of studies dating from 1983, - a cross section of studies taken from the University of Texas Advertising Research and Resource Centre website.These studies have been edited to include just the results and information that is relevant to this thesis. While some of the studies and results may not appear directly linked to the subject, they are illustrative of the diversity, extensiveness, and depth in the study of advertising. What is more telling than the answers in these studies are the questions being asked. The realisation has being dawning for some time that people will no longer tolerate stereotyping and sexism, or just don't relate to the stereotypes being displayed. It would be a gross generalisation to say that it doesn't happen anymore in the enlightened '90s, as the next part of this chapter will show. However advertisers are definitely more aware of the increasing importance of political correctness in advertising. In *Creative Review* (May

## TABLE (1): Table of studies done on advertising in the 80's

Gary Warren Melton and Gilbert L. Fowler, Jr. 1987.Female Roles in Radio Advertising. *Journalism Quarterly*, 64 (1): 145-49.

Result: The study finds female presence in radio commercials to be virtually nonexistent comprising only 7% of the commercials studied. Results also indicate that when used in ads, females are typically placed in consumer or worker roles and under represented in the areas of banking, employment and professional areas such as doctor and lawyer.

Jane M. Simmons (1996) Gender Differences of Nonverbal Power Cues in Television Commercials. Proceedings of the 1996 *Convention of the American Academy of Advertising*, (ed) Ernest F. Larkin: R72-R76

Result: Results suggest that nonverbally, television commercials describe women as lacking authority and possessing less power than men. The correlational analysis indicates no relationship exists between recall and the nonverbal power cues present in the commercials regardless of the gender of the presenter.

Kathleen Debevec and Easwar Iyer (1996). The Influence of Spokesperson's in Altering a Products Gender Image: Implications for Advertising Effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 15 (4) 12-20.

Result: Results suggest that a spokesperson's gender can not only alter a products gender image, but can result in more positive attitudes and product usage intention when the gender of the spokesperson and the product's gender differ.

Majorie J. Caballero and William M. Pride (1994). Selected Effects of Salesperson Sex and Attractiveness in Direct Mail Advertisements. *Journal of Marketing*, 48 (Winter):94-100.

Results: Results show that the ad featuring a highly attractive female and the ad without any stimulus person are likely to lead to purchase of the product advertised.

Maureen Coughlin and P.J. O'Conner (1984). Gender Role Portrayals in Advertising: An Individual Difference Analysis. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 12: 238-41.

Results: Results suggest that personality characteristics are a significant factor in explaining purchase intent as a function of the female roles in ads.

## Continuation of Table (1)

William E. Kilbourne (1983). An Exploratory Study of Sex Roles in Advertising and Women's Perceptions of Managerial Attributes in Women. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 11: 84-87.

Results: Sex role stereotypes in magazine ads are shown to affect women's perceptions of managerial attributes in women such that respondents exposed to professional role ads evaluate males as possessing more managerial attributes than women exposed to the housewife role ads.

Paula England and Teresa Gardner (1983). Sex Differentiation in Magazine Advertisements: A Content Analysis Using Log-Linear Modelling. *Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 6 (1): 253-268.

Results: The study finds considerable sex-typing in ads, and little change in the extent of sex-typing during the period. Comparing portrayals in ads with data on Americans' behaviour, the authors conclude that ads portray more sex differentiation than is actually present in American men and women's real-life

Teresa A. Swartz (1983). Role Portrayal Preferences for Print Advertisements. *Proceedings of the 1983 Convention of the American Academy of Advertising*, (ed), Donald W. Jugenheimer: 112-115.

Results: Results of the study reveal that the role portrayal preferred is not dependent on the subjects' role orientation. In addition, this study presents some evidence that a neutral role portrayal may provide advertisers of most products with the best spokesperson.

Leonard N. Reid and Lawrence C. Soley (19830. Decorative Models and the Readership of Magazine Ads. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 23 (April / May): 27-31

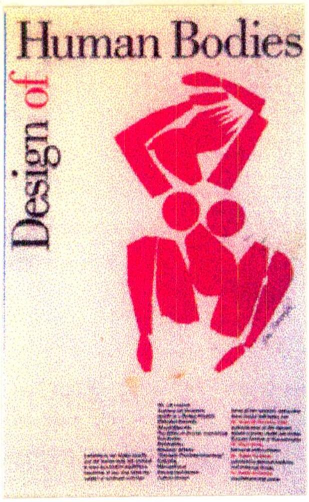
Results: Results show that the 'noting' of an ad by male readers is affected more by the presence of a decorative female model than the presence of the male only, male and female together, or no human model. No such effect, however is found in the 'read most' scores. The study also indicates that type of product differentially affects both the nothing and the reading of ads by male readers.

(htt:www.asa.org.uk/faq/dec-8/htm)

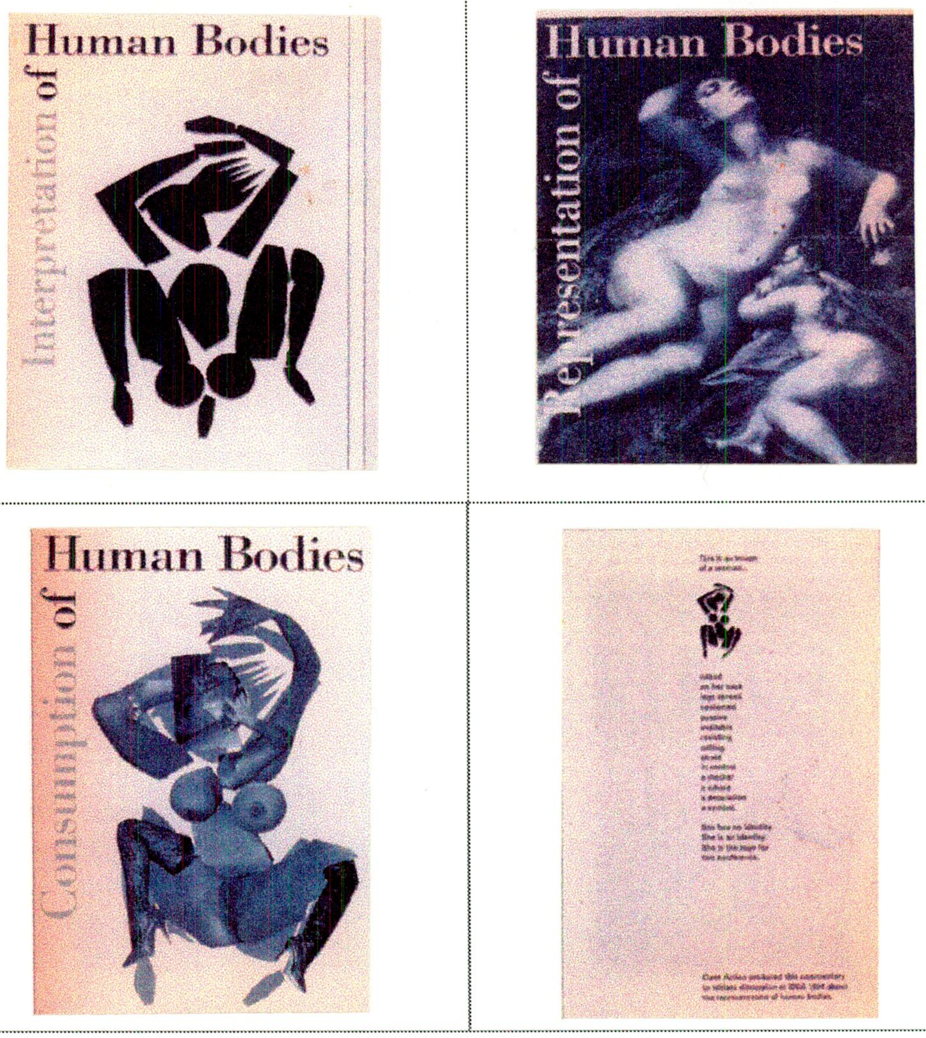
'97), Helen Jones gives an alternative reason why advertisers are pulling themselves into the twentieth century. One point table (1) underlines is that to sell a product the consumer has to identify with their counterpart in an advertisement. Unsurprisingly women don't recognise or associate themselves with the old stereotypes anymore. Advertisers now get the portrayal wrong at their own peril, because a market that has existed for some time has finally been recognised. The financially independent, single woman now has the spending power to make a difference, and advertisers have noticed. So, it is not about political correctness any more; it is about money.

## Politics of the body - The use of the female form in advertising:

In 1994, the official programme of the 44th International Design Conference in Aspen USA, raised an issue that feminists and designers have debated for years. It was a group of graphic designers and artists called Class Action who instigated this discussion on ' politics of the body, the representation and misrepresentation of the female form'. The original conference logo was a Matisse-like cut out female figure (fig 5). Class Action took this image and designed a pamphlet around it to demonstrate how open to interpretation and ambiguous the image was. On this pamphlet, which was distributed at the conference, they used reconfigurations of the logo with different headings: Interpretation of human bodies, Representation of human bodies and Consumption of human bodies (fig 6). The production of this pamphlet and the much-needed debate it generated called designers "and those commissioning

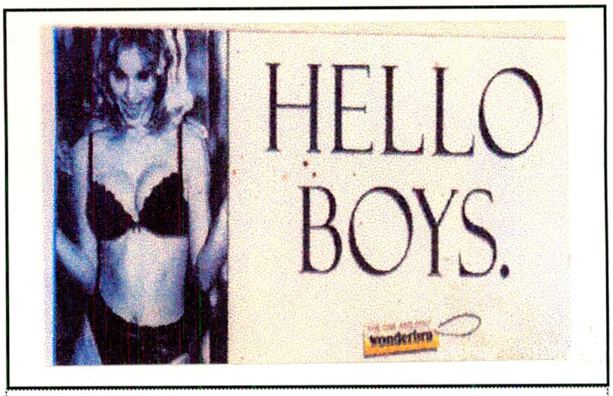

Human Bodies
Design of

(fig 5) shows the original cover of the official programme of the International design conference at Aspen, USA. It was this design that led to the protest by Class action, which in turn sparked off much debate on representation and misrepresentation of the human and particularly the female form in advertising.

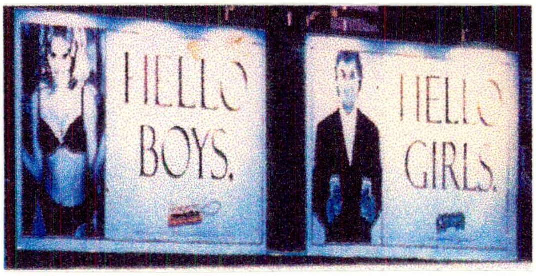

Human Bodies
Interpretation of
Human Bodies
Representation of
Human Bodies
Consumption of

(fig 6) these images are part of a pamphlet designed by class action to initiate discussion at the IDCA about ambiguity in images, they describe the logo for IDCA as a women who is at once: contorted, passive, available, resisting, willing, afraid and in control. They pose the question as to whether she is a mother, a whore, a decoration or a symbol.

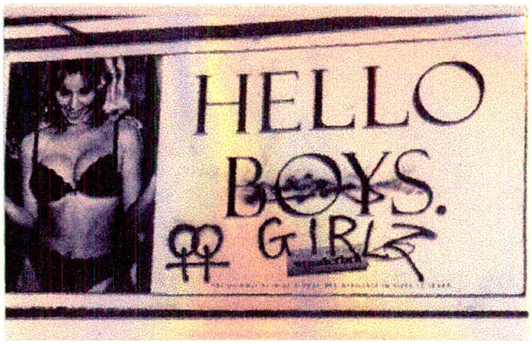
design to look more critically at the image making process, while also delivering a strong reminder of the need to be responsible and sensitive to the various communities being addressed" (McQuiston, 1997, pg 172). This debate on representation of the female body in the media was to flare again, another controversy was going on around the same time as the Aspen protest. This time it was Gossard's billboard, for the 'Hello Boys', Wonderbra commercial (fig 7a), which was received with many mixed reactions. The image used was an attempt to represent the empowered '90s woman confident with her sexuality on her own terms, and to some this is what it was. To others it "misfired due to the 'boys' humour' innuendos of the copywriting" (McQuiston, 1997, pg 174). Other advertising agencies used versions of the ad to sell different products like kebabs and beer (fig 7b). Activist groups subverted the image. While some reclaimed and aimed her sexual advances towards women (fig 7c), another group produced a spoof advert that appeared in *Bad Attitude* magazine (issue 7, '95 ), incorporating the unforgettable Lorena Bobbit story, making the ad a powerful social commentary on sexual violence towards women (fig 7d). The British Advertising Standards Authority received, out of 846 complaints related to sexist advertising in 1996, 321 complaining about the Wonderbra commercial in particular. Radio stations had phone-in talk shows about the billboard, where as many people liked it as didn't. The varying range of views and questions raised by this one advertising campaign was extensive. This, in the words of Liz McQuiston, shows the "difficulties that tend to ensue when attempting to use women's bodies to make empowering statements through commercial advertising channels more traditionally known for abusing them." The reason is, "That the focus on posturing and appearances usually overwhelms any deeper


HELLO
BOYS.
wonderbra

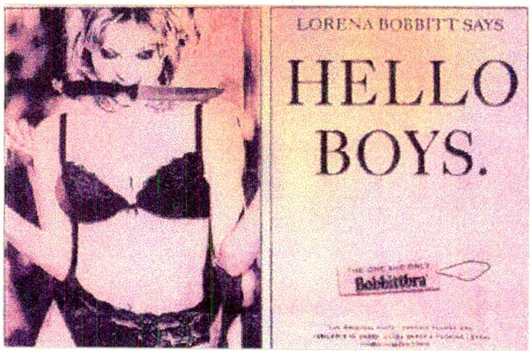
(fig 7a)


HELLO
BOYS.
HELLO
GIRLS.

(fig 7b)


HELLO
BOYS.
GIRLZ

(fig 7c)


LORENA BOBBITT SAYS
HELLO
BOYS.
THE ONE AND ONLY
Bobbittbra

(fig 7d)

Figs 7a to 7d show the different parodies of the Wonderbra commercial from its original target market through to its amended versions. 7b uses the sex appeal of the original ad to sell the consumer beer, 7c subverts the gaze for which it was intended and 7d uses black humour in its parody daring men to make a sexist comment or cast a lecherous glance.

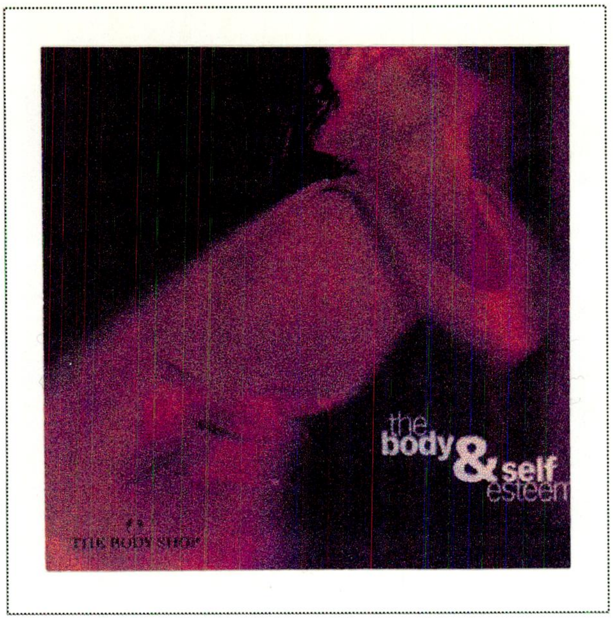
meaning or message." ( McQuiston, 1997, pg 174).

In 1995, a debate entitled, 'Dream Girls: Images of Women in Advertising', was held at the Art Directors Club in New York. One question posed during this debate was, how to most effectively target women in advertising? It was discovered that women were susceptible to advertising that played on their discontents, and this is what advertisers have done for years. The products and the appeals may have changed over this time but one thing stayed the same. "Advertisers still resort to guilt in communicating their messages to women, it doesn't matter how you got the guilt, whether its from leaving your career or for staying at home a smart marketeer will pull the guilt chain." (Fitcher, 1996, pg 101-103).

Another example of the advertisers' play on the discontents and insecurities of women is with the fashion industry, through their joint portrayal of the ideal woman. They give us our perceptions of beauty and set unachievable standards for how we should look. This leads to distorted self image, leaving some with sickening self-loathing, anger and a wish to conform to the popular opinion of beauty. The relationship between a woman's self image, contradicting the media's portrayal of the super-waif/supermodel, has been linked to the growing amount of of eating disorder cases and illnesses like bulimia and anorexia. Naoimi Wolf pointed out that the media uses images of the female body as a means of controlling women. "Beauty is understood as an artificial value judgement, intended to keep women in their place by instilling self-hatred in them, fear of ageing and a host of other worries" (McQuiston, 1997, pg. 178). Because of this stereotyping and the attitudes reinforced by advertising and the media, the health and happiness of many women

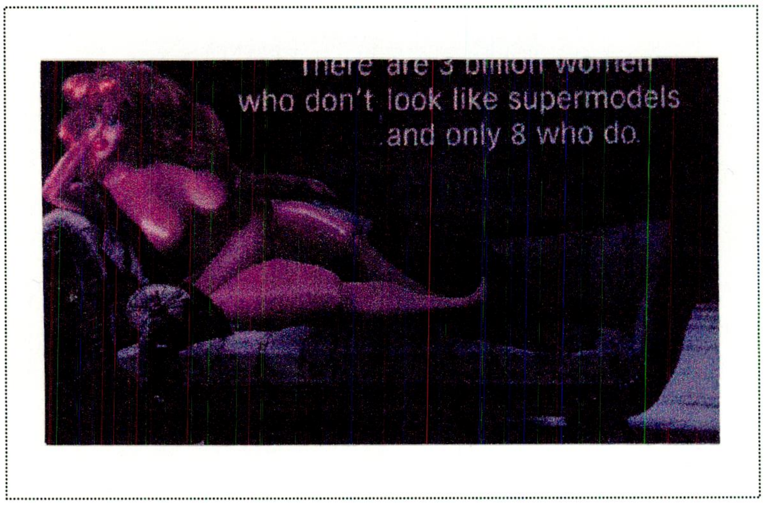
have been affected. There has been a response to this on an international level. All over the world, groups have banded together in opposition to advertising and the fashion industry. Examples of these would be SisterSerpents and Adbusters in America, Red Planet in Australia and Sarah Brown's graphic book on eating disorders published in Britain in '95. Beauty product manufacturers and retailers, including The Body Shop, perhaps jumping on the anti-advertising band wagon (fig 8a and fig 8b), also took the fashion industry to task, which was unusual as it is the industry on which they rely and to which they are peripheral. Another group that sprung up in 1995 was About Face, which grew from the discontentment and disgust of one woman after seeing Calvin Klein's Obsession ads. The frustration and fury of seeing yet another model photographed as thin, weak and vulnerable as possible led her to launch a one women poster vendetta against the fashion industry. From small beginnings About Face grew into a voluntary, self supported group of people, demanding more powerful, positive role models for the next generation of women. One sentiment that appears on About Face's website and which is echoed by all these activist groups is the following: " there is nothing wrong with being beautiful, but there is something wrong with today's standard of beauty - it excludes most women." (htt:www.about-face.org/contact.html).

Many designers and artists became famous for their work in furthering the image of women as powerful and independent. Vivienne Westwood opened the first punk clothing shop in 1974 and her work has had significant impact on the feminist movement over the decades, and also on


the
body & self
esteem
THE BODY SHOP

(fig 8a)

Fig 8a is the front cover of a pamphlet produced by The Body Shop available free from all their outlets informing people in a positive way about the realities of having a less than perfect body.


There are 3 billion women
who don't look like supermodels
and only 8 who do.

(fig 8b)

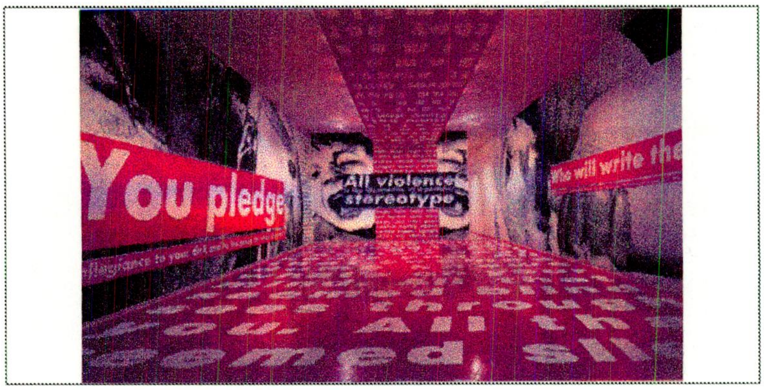
Fig 8b is an inside spread from the booklet making a commentary on the fashion industry and using the recognisable and controversial image of a Barbie doll the make a commentary on the dangers of stereotyping and use of unhealthy role models and unattainable standards that we set ourselves and our children.

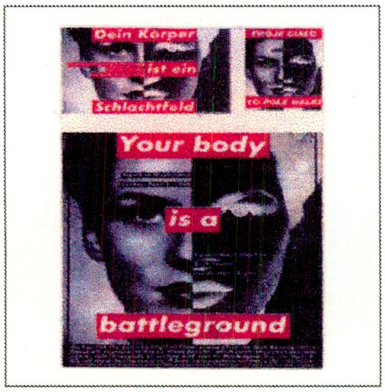
the fashion industry itself. Her collections have joined the ranks of other top fashion designers like Klein and Chanel, although her work is still subversive and innovative. There is the danger that in being accepted by the industry Westwood first chose to subvert, she has joined enemy ranks. Another example of this could be in the work of artist Barbara Kruger who, like Westwood, was one of the earlier activists to take up feminist issues and force them into the public eye. Kruger, famous for her editorial type design consisting of photomontages of text and image in the style of a modern magazine layout, asked provocative questions and provided important social commentary on huge billboards and installations (fig 9). However, in recent years one of her projects was a fashion feature in *Harpers Bazaar* (November 1994), a project not noted for its success but rather how it proved that parody of advertising is not always as powerful a form of social critique as it would first appear. What follows is a quote from *I.D.* magazine where Michael Rock makes parallels between the fashion industry, politics and graphic design.

> *What happens when a mainstream fashion magazine attempts to make political commentary on the industry it supports? Perhaps Kruger's article is a testament to the extent to which political commentary has become the accepted language of the theory-savvy consumer. That Bazaar can find space for an artist to openly critique the process by which it functions is a measure of the contradiction consumerism can tolerate. Kruger's street posters work because they jerk language and ad layout out of context and make us consider the odd ideology imbedded in words and images we confront everyday. In the context of the fashion page, however, Kruger's signature rage is denuded. Her brutally direct language becomes just one more in a familiar litany of layout techniques.* (Rock, 1995, pg 28-30).

There is truth in Rock's comments on Kruger's work for Bazaar. In her earlier pieces, which borrowed heavily from advertising and other

forms of the media, were much more successful. In this instance, the design elements she uses (which she always used before out of context) have been put back into the context of the magazine page, to blend with the other advertisements and fashion layouts. This example of parody does not seem to work because it is not clear to the consumer that the layout, instead of being a commendation, is actually a critique of the fashion industry. If one was not familiar with Kruger's earlier work, these layouts join the others with their trendy images and catchy slogans in promoting what she means to subvert. As a TV generation we are so used to being faced with abstract advertisements that one does not stop to think when we see another and this is how this layout fails. It does not force the consumer to think about what they are seeing. If anything this is more a comment on the effectiveness of parody and lampooning advertisements as a form of social critique. This is an example where it does not work and brings one cliche to my mind, that is: 'Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery'.





(fig 9)

Installation and billboard by Barbara Kruger. This is an example of her earlier work showing how she married text and image borrowing heavily from editorial type layouts.

# Chapter 3: Sexuality

## Protest on discrimination and exclusion because of sexual orientation; AIDS activism; the power of images; Benetton and Gran Fury; Advertising for a new era.

### Protest and discrimination because of sexual orientation and AIDS activism:

Although the Gay Liberation Front dates from 1969, it wasn't until the '80s that issues like the rights and recognition of homosexuality came to the forefront.

> *The AIDS crisis has been a severe blow for the gay community, and the most difficult battle to date: a fight for recognition of the problem, safe sex education, and a host of other issues surrounding the illness. Although AIDS has provided yet another opportunity for societal prejudice and misunderstanding, it has turned the gay community into a unified force. For it was the anger of the gay community that gave rise to AIDS activism, one of the most powerful and popular movements of recent decades, and a point over which all communities have locked arms.* (McQuiston, 1993, pg 174).

Up until then, all types of advertising ignored the gay community and anything to do with homosexuality was relegated to the back pages of seedy magazines. With the introduction of Clause 28 (Parliamentary Bill passed in Britain outlawing the 'promotion' of homosexuality) there were many public protests. One of the most famous was the release of Boy George's album, No Clause 28, with memorable graphics done by Jamie Reid, who also designed the covers of the Sex Pistols albums and is generally credited with writing the formula for 'punk graphics'. One of

the main reasons the '80s is as seen the era of gay liberation is that it was the decade of the AIDS crisis. Acutely aware of the vulnerability of its numbers, the gay community grouped together and took the lead in AIDS activism, pushing the issues of homosexuality from the margins into the very centre of public debate.

The AIDS crisis brought up many interesting issues. Governing bodies didn't officially recognise the gay community, one reason being that they didn't want to take a stance that might prove controversial or be used against them in their next governmental or political campaign. Another contributing factor was the conservative stance taken by the Catholic Church. This fear that any action might backfire led to gross inaction, and a refusal to admit the existence of a problem that had been growing since its discovery. Although some campaigns were done on AIDS education, the establisment and government advertisers didn't know how to target the communities that needed it the most, and still save face politically. Because of this, it was up to grassroots organisations in gay communities to advertise, educate and to protect their own. The campaigns launched by the community, were much more successful than their government and establishment counterparts, because they tended to be more audience specific, addressing the groups that needed to know, which the government campaigns failed to do. Community campaigns also tended to be more enlightened, getting across their message with some humour, but more importantly, without prejudice. They were clear and direct without compromising any one group, unlike some of the institutional and establishment campaigns which had ambiguous, cloaked messages, leading to misinformation and sensationalisation, just because of their own prejudices and attitudes.

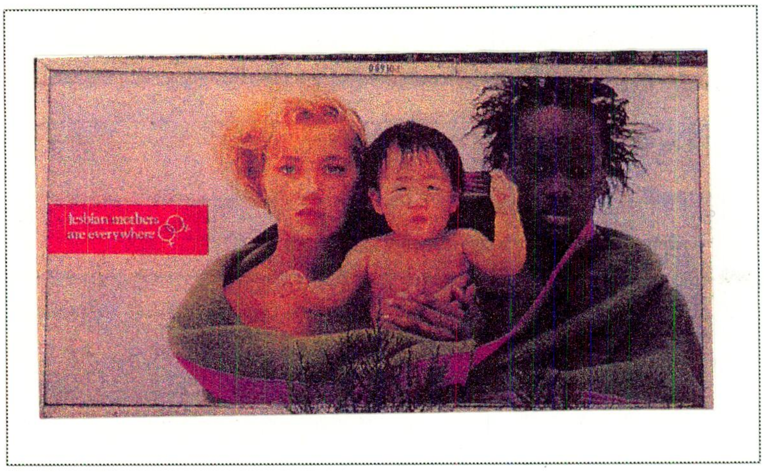
> *Campaigns tended to be generated by two types of sources: government agencies and institutions; or community / voluntary groups and concerned individuals. The two sources operate very different approaches. Government agencies normally address a broad general audience; worried about offending the status quo, or aligning themselves to issues that may prove to be politically embarrassing during an election campaign, they tend to talk from a distance, using generalised and often bland imagery conjured up by large agencies. The community sector, on the other hand, is obviously more directly involved; it will target a specific audience or community and attempt to communicate with that audience on its own terms.* (McQuiston, 1993, pg 181).

The relevance of this may not be immediately apparent to the topic under discussion in this thesis. The point being made is that establishment advertising failed to address its most important audience during the AIDS crisis, that is the gay community. Because of this, gay activists had to undertake the task of setting up advertising campaigns, warning people about the dangers of AIDS, in order to reach this audience and protect their own. Although they did not campaign against advertising, what they did was in direct reaction to discrimination and exclusion in advertising. The AIDS crisis was a much more pressing issue for them to advertise about, but indirectly their advertising campaigns were in criticism of the advertising industry and brought to centre stage how the gay community felt ignored by it.

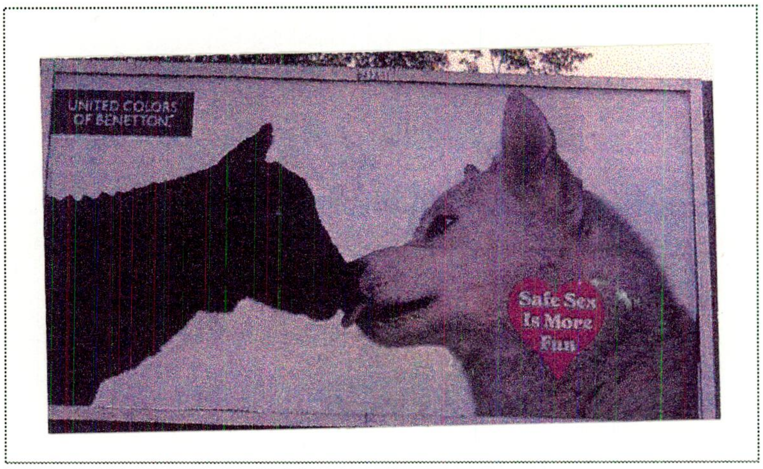
## The power of images; Benetton and Gran Fury:

Although it was mainly gay liberation and activist groups that led the way in confronting issues on homosexuality in advertising, other individuals and groups began to get involved as well . Among these groups were the British art activists, Saatchi & Someone. In the early '90s, David Collins

and his supporters were working on their theory of 'visual intervention'. They aimed to "hijack the images and production values of high-profile advertising imagery." (McQuiston, 1993, pg 183). In some ways their methods were similar to other groups who used existing billboards and campaigns to protest against consumerism advertising (Adbusters) and sexist advertising (Angry Women). One company they took issue with was Benetton, because of its ambiguous use of imagery that, while appearing radical, actually says nothing. In fig 10a and 10b, we can see some examples of Collins' work. By changing the copy in the rectangle from reading 'The United Colours of Benetton', to read 'Lesbian mothers are everywhere', they force Benetton 'off the fence' so to speak and make a positive stance on the images they use in their advertisements. It also forces the consumer to ask questions about why some communities and minorities are being ignored by the media, and gives us the chance to join our voices with theirs, in the call for greater pluralism in advertising. Benetton have always been seen as radical innovators in their advertising campaigns, their philosophy in their own words, being to make people think by displaying universal and socially orientated images. As their images became more controversial, public outcry increased (as did publicity for Benetton). In one ad campaign Benetton used a photograph of AIDS sufferer David Kirby on his deathbed. This ad to promote clothing, caused outrage among gay and AIDS activists, Act Up. They promptly called for a boycott on Benetton shops and produced their own poster campaign (fig 11a and 11b), condemning the use of a dying homosexual for the commercial gain of a large clothing manufacturer. Approaching such topics as race, gender and sexual orientation in the


lesbian mothers
are every where

(fig 10a)

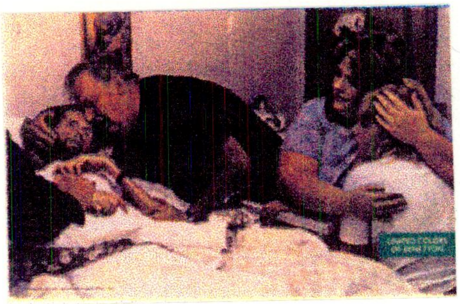

UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.
Safe Sex
Is More
Fun

(fig 10b)

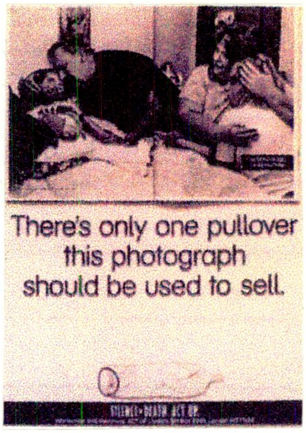
Fig 10a and 10b are examples of work done by Saatchi and Someone, in 11a the Benetton logo is covered to read differently, by changing the text on this billboard we then read the images in a different way. They are both examples of David Collin's commentary on ambiguity in advertising.

media and advertising has always been a touchy subject, especially now in the 'caring '90s', where no social or political commentary will go unnoticed or unremarked upon. But by broaching these subjects in advertising, the debates will continue on how to handle social and political involvement in commercial sales strategy. How far can one go before it is too far? How images are used in the public domain, and to what ends? One also has to give credit to some advertisers because at least they attempt to address important issues. But debates will continue until someone resolves these issues, until then, many of us will continue to treat the motivations of advertising campaigns like Benetton's with the healthy cynicism they deserve.

Groups like Gran Fury, Act up, Queer Nation, DAM, Big Active and The Lesbian Avengers are more in tune with the needs and wants of the gay community. Their graphic strategies seem to centre around the appropriation of images and styles from recognisable works of fine art and commercial advertising, while delivering a confrontational message to the viewer. Gran Fury's poster, "Kissing doesn't Kill" (fig 11c) which was carried on the side of buses in San Francisco and New York in 1989, broke ground in the boldness of the gay imagery it used. Imitating a Benetton style, but using a line up of same-sex couples, this campaign achieved international recognition and opened the way for more radical gay advertising graphics in the future. (fig 12).

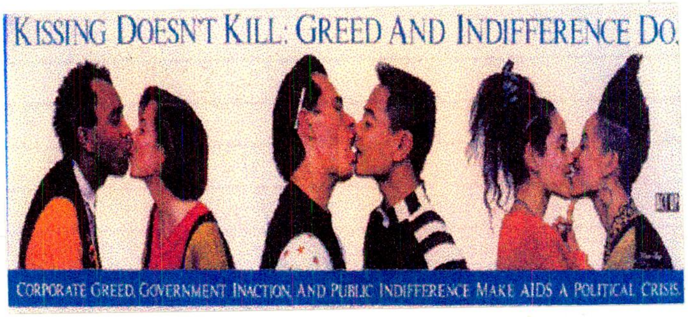


(fig 11a)


There's only one pullover
this photograph
should be used to sell.
SILENCE=DEATH ACT UP.

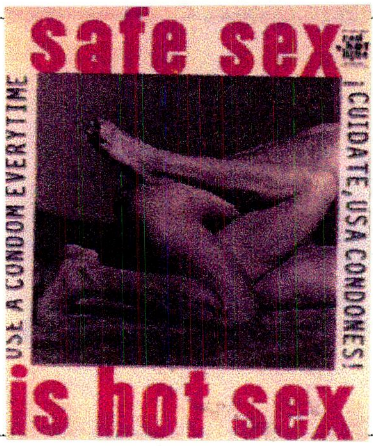
(fig 11b)

Fig 11a and 11b show the original Benetton billboard and the reworked poster done by Gran Fury in protest to the use of a photograph of a dying AIDS sufferer

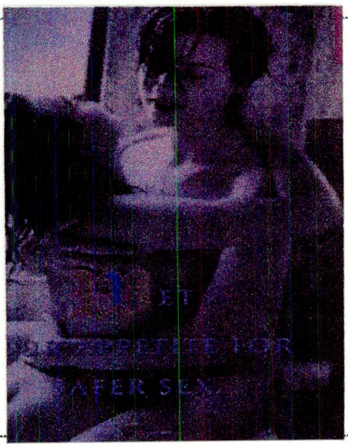

KISSING DOESN'T KILL: GREED AND INDIFFERENCE DO.
CORPORATE GREED, GOVERNMENT INACTION, AND PUBLIC INDIFFERENCE MAKE AIDS A POLITICAL CRISIS.

(fig 11c)

Shows Act up poster by Gran Fury done in the style of a Benetton billboard but changing the line up of models to look like real people and to have different sexual tendencies


safe sex
USE A CONDOM EVERYTIME
¡CUIDATE, USA CONDONES!
is hot sex

(fig 12a)

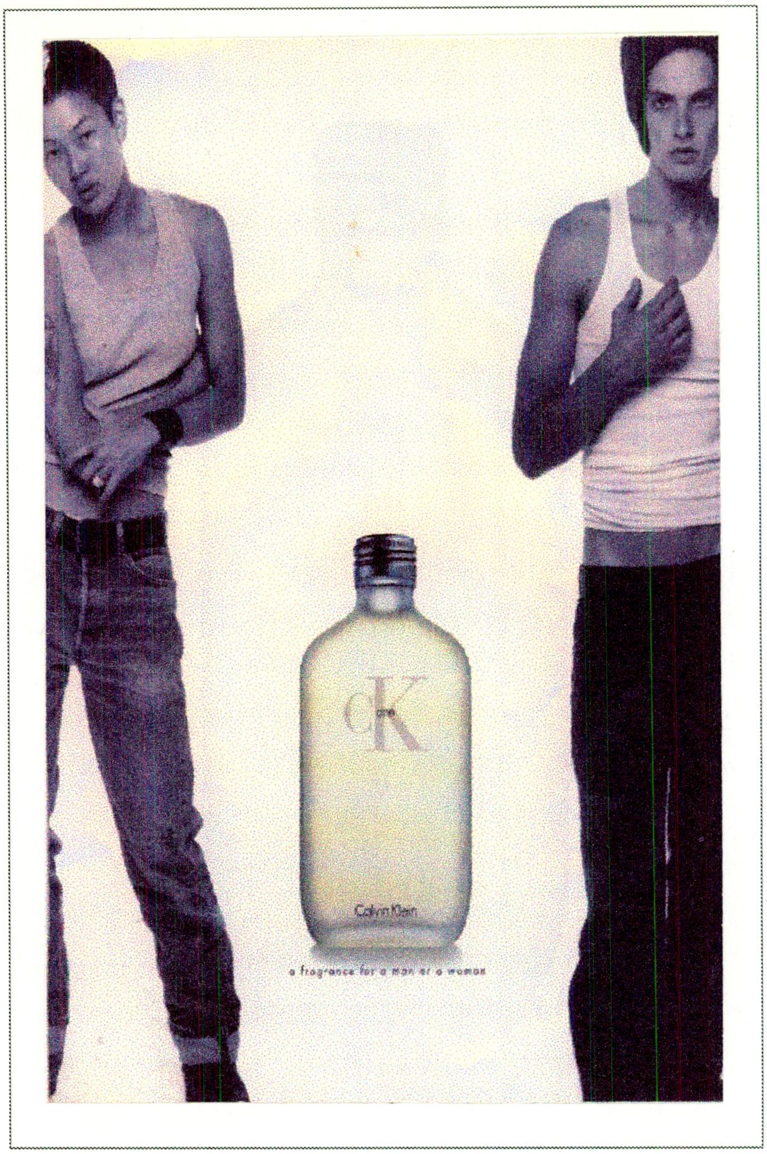

FOR
AFER SEX

(fig 12b)

Fig 12a and 12b are an example of the more radical gay imagery that followed the Gran Fury and Act Up advertising campaigns.

## Advertising for a new era:

In addition to the life saving information many of these posters carried, they also sought to break down the invisible barriers relating to public imagery and the established visual profiles of society. By breaking out of the restrictive values set by mainstream advertising, they provided recognition and visibility for gay and lesbian culture. The success or effect of such 'anti-advertising' campaigns can be seen around us today. Advertisers have come to realise that by omitting the gay community, they are missing out and so the race is on to compete for the 'pink pound'. Companies like Calvin Klein have brought out ranges of uni-sex beauty products such C.K. ONE and C.K. BE, to appeal to people of any gender or sexual orientation, and the huge success and imitation of such products speak for themselves. Advertising campaigns for products, especially in beauty and fashion categories, now use androgynous models and ambiguous copy to incorporate everyone (fig 13) and suddenly all things camp, kitsch and flamboyant are fashionable. Where before films used a token stereotyped gay as comic relief, in recent years the film industry has given us a wealth of films exploring themes of homosexuality and celebrating the camper side of gayness. This transformation is happening right across the globe: from Britain *Withnail and I* and more recently *The Crying Game*; the French gave us *La Cage aux Folles*, which got the Hollywood treatment in America to become *The Bird Cage*, and Australia gave us *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, which was quickly followed by its American counterpart *Too Wung Foo - Thanks for everything Julie Newmar*. Even TV sit-coms have moved into the twentieth century with popular


ck one
Calvin Klein
a fragrance for a man or a woman

(fig 13)

Fig 13 is an example of a Calvin Klein advertisement that includes the gay community as well as straight people. The huge success of the product on the market is a measure of how well the advertisement was received by the consumer.

shows like *Friends* and *Ellen* having successful gay and lesbian main characters. The stereotypes of the butch lesbian and limp-wristed homosexual have been broken down and have been replaced by happy, good looking, well adjusted characters that are believable and can be related to. Although it has taken a long time and has been a hard struggle for many, it would appear that the media and advertising is catching up and while it may not be quite there yet, at least it appears to be heading in the right direction.

# Chapter 4: Racism

## Stereotyping and racism in advertising and the media, Artists and designers against racist advertising,

### Stereotyping and racism in advertising and the media:

Although there are many anti-racist projects and groups existing and thriving globally and there is a lot of graphic material on racism itself, these campaigns tend to focus on racism as a whole. They concentrate on the broader issues rather than on anything as specific as combating racism in the media and advertising.

Graphic racial stereotypes existed in the form of printing devices dating from the 1800s. Quite simply they were stock images that were readily understood and could be used over and over again with print text.

> *In the 1800's, blatant stereotypes with their inherent racism were nothing exceptional. Advertisers traditionally organised their sales promotions around this method of visual shorthand. An import merchant in the post colonial era, for example, might have selected a stock cut of a chinese man holding a tea branch to illustrate his handbill. Stock cuts of slave women were used to advertise auctions or rewards for runaways.* (Morgan, 1995, pg 86-109)

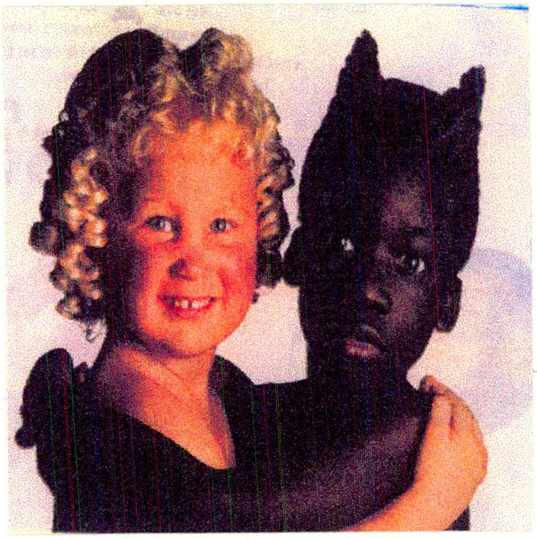
We are all familiar with traditional stereotypes from such period films as *Gone With The Wind* , and probably laugh at how ridiculous they seem to us in today's context. But for every era we generate a new stereotype.

Every race has been stereotyped in some way: the Irish and the Australian aborigines are drunkards, the English are a nation of yobs and snobs, the French smell, Italians are lecherous and the Spanish are greasy. The Germans are unemotional, the Americans are stupid and fat and the Swiss and the Austrians are punctual. The list could go on forever. We may not like the stereotypes of ourselves but yet can conjure one up for every other nation. The images may change but the principle remains the same, we all deep down have fundamental, inherent racial affinities. It may not be as blatant in today's era of political correctness, but it still exists, only these days it is a much more subversive and subliminal racism. Advertisers are aware of the repercussions of being racist and so while being careful not to appear so, some have been caught redhanded. One example that springs to mind were the events surrounding the O.J. Simpson trial. Courtroom photographs of a close up of Simpson's face featured on the cover of two prominent American magazines. Although both ran the same photograph, he appeared much darker in one than the other. If the two magazines had not been published simultaneously, the travesty may have gone unnoticed. By way of 'apology' one editor admitted to digitally darkening Simpson's skin for the cover so that the alleged criminal / suspect would look more menacing, thus selling more magazines. When cases like this come to light, one pauses to think how many more went by undetected ? Another similar incident that caused public outcry was a billboard campaign for Ford which ran in several states in America. The image on the billboard was of the car assembly workers on the factory floor. This in itself was fine except that, for certain states that it ran in, all the coloured people in the picture were airbrushed out. An explanation was never

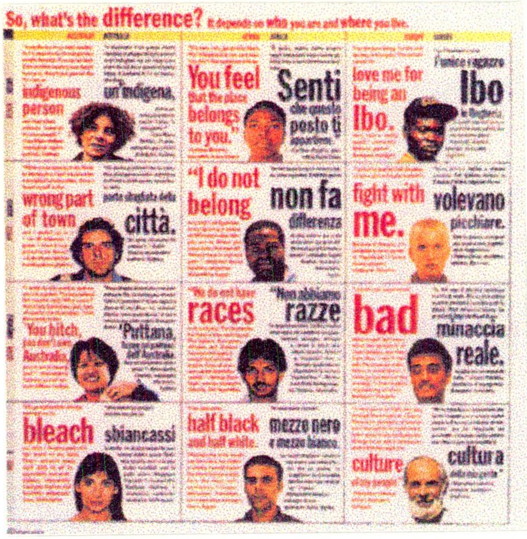
given but the billboards came down.

On the other hand, the quest for political correctness can go too far -an example that could be considered extreme was the removal of the gollywogs from the cartoon *Noddy in Toyland,* because they were thought to be degrading. Another example could be the controversy over Tim Burton's *Nightmare Before Christmas* because the malevolent gambling Oogie Boogie man had an obviously black voice. Director Henry Selick explained that, in Alabama, where his mother was from, a boogie man was a huge black person, so although it did have racial connotations, this had been carefully considered before the airing of the film and the black singer Ken Page, who was the voice of the Oogie Boogie man, had no problems with it. (Felperin, 1997, pg 27-29).

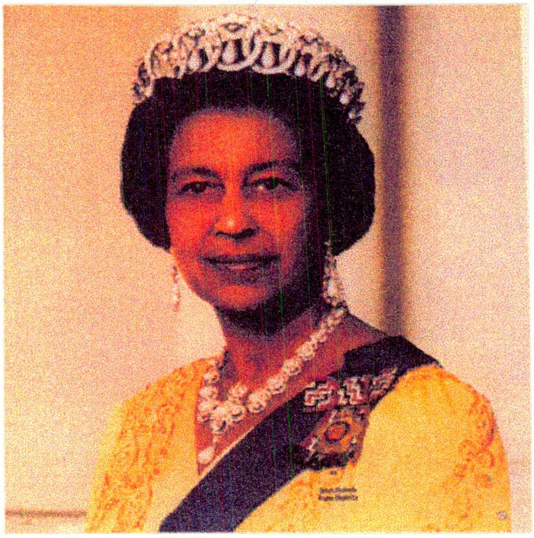
Over the years Benetton have taken a lot of adverse criticism because of their use of ambiguous and sometimes controversial images.In fig 14a we see an image where Oliverio Toscani was accused of degrading coloured people by bringing back the old stereotypes and reinforcing the values of white is good, black is bad. Although the images are certainly ambiguous, I think it is harsh to consider them racist. It is unclear exactly what point Benetton was making, but they could just as easily be construed, as addressing issues of racism while making a point about racial harmony. In *Colours* magazine, Toscani and Tibor Kalman are more successful in their editorial on racism. Through text and image they break down the barriers and myths that are accredited to different races (fig 14b). In fig 14c we also see how such serious matters can still be discussed and confronted with a little humour and style.



(fig 14a)
In this poster Benetton were accused of reinforcing old stereotypes, complaints were made the the coloured child is depicted as bad while the white child is depicted as good


So, what's the difference?
indigenous person
un'indigena.
You feel that the place belongs to you."
Senti che questo posto ti appartiene
love me for being an Ibo.
l'unico ragazzo
Ibo
wrong part of town
città.
"I do not belong
non fa differenza
fight with me.
volevano picchiare.
You bitch, Australia.
'Puttana,
races
razze
bad
minaccia reale.
bleach
sbiancassi
half black and half white.
mezzo nero e mezzo bianco.
culture
cultura

(fig 14b)
In *Colours* magazine Toscani and Kalman try to break down the myths and boundaries surrounding people of different races and colour. Here is one of the layouts that appeared in the magazine.



(fig 14c)
This example of another layout from the same *Colours* magazine issue 4 'Race' and shows that such a serious topic can be discussed successfully with good humour and get its point across.

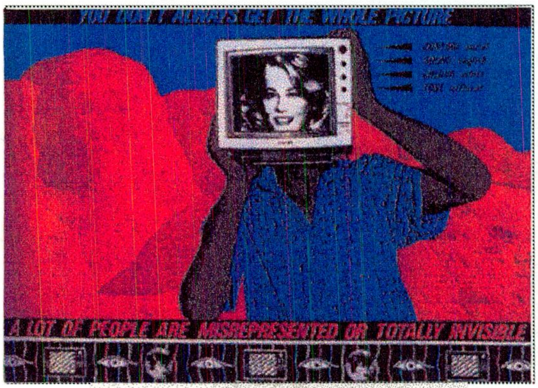
## Artists and designers against racist advertising:

We all know that an element of racism exists in every country, whether it's against the colour of someone's skin, because of different cultures or traditions, between natives and settlers or against refugees. For this reason, the nationality of my examples of people against racist advertising is diverse. In fig 15, we see a poster by Jayne Amble of Australia, produced in 1987, in protest against misrepresentation and exclusion of minorities in the mainstream media. It was commissioned by the South Australian United Trades and Labour Council.

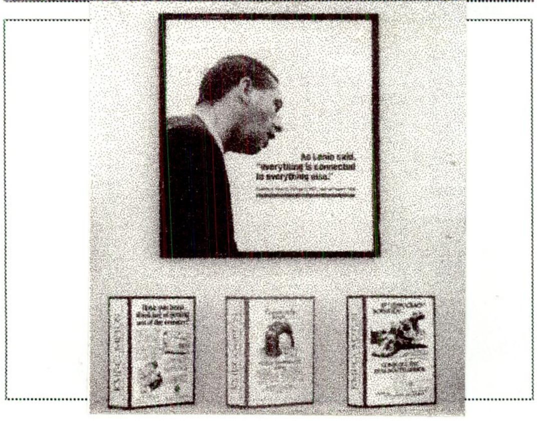
Zimbabwe in the early '80s was rebuilding their social structure at the end of a war of independence. To do this they also had to restyle a whole new graphic language. Because their entire visual culture was produced by white dominated advertising agencies, which not only patronised the black community through their "handling of images of black people, but also in the attitudes and strategies employed to sell them products" (McQuiston, 1993, pg 76). Graphic designer Chez Maviyane-Davis founded the Maviyane project in Harare to bring about this reconstruction. The aim was to create graphics that would communicate the needs of a new and modern society, while still staying relevant to the community it represented and respecting their strong traditional visual culture.

Hans Haacke was one of the artists that took issue with racism in advertising. Although he did not attack any advertising campaigns in particular, what he did do was "turn media propaganda and rhetoric

back on itself, presenting an unsettling view of the corporation and its interface with the public, as well as casting a shadow on the ethics of the creators of the corporate image: the advertisers, P.R. men and the graphic designers." (McQuiston, 1993, pg 95). Haacke used the language and style of advertisers to question and cast aspersions on their motivation. In the late '80s he took on the Saatchi and Saatchi conglomerate at their own game with his installation *'The Saatchi Collection (Simulations)* . According to Ronald Jones, Haacke is troubled by the global agenda of Saatchi and Saatchi, who as well as having a name for being promoters of products and ideas, have been known to dabble in the world of politics and to have affiliations with a racist South African advertising agency, KMP Campton. In his installation, he uses irony with his parody of the KMP Campton poster campaign, where the copy reads 'If hippocracy bores you, come see the real South Africa' (fig 16).


YOU DON'T ALWAYS GET THE WHOLE PICTURE
A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE MISREPRESENTED OR TOTALLY INVISIBLE

**(fig 15)**
here we see an Australian poster calling for greater pluralism in the media and advertising.


As Lenin said, 'everything is connected to everything else.'

**(fig 16)**
Commentary by Hans Haacke on the underhand activities and political agendas of Saatchi and Saatchi.

## Conclusion

In the writing of this thesis I have touched on a wide range of different issues and reached many conclusions on the state of our advertising industry, the trends it is following and the direction in which it appears to be heading. In order to draw any final conclusions I think it would be useful to give a brief summary of the main points made in the thesis.

Although the aim of advertising is to make us feel lacking by playing on the consumers guilt and insecurities, it is a necessary industry especially in the sense that many worthwhile companies, such as charities rely on it for funds. It supports consumerism, which although construed by some as a bad thing, leads to a stronger economy and an overall better standard of living. Advertising is sometimes made into a scapegoat, especially when it comes to the controversy surrounding the advertising of vice products. Although advertising is only the visible end of the whole marketing process, it is the most tangible thing about it that people can blame and in this way has earned itself a bad name. It is not an industry that could be thought of as ethical or noble and this is reflected in the amount of groups that have formed in adversity to advertising.

The thesis also considered those who do not agree with certain advertisements in the general sense. Some of these groups have used parody as their way of objecting to advertising and others have used graffiti, defacing, or refacing of the offending poster or billboard.

One has to agree with Carrie McClaren in doubting the lasting effects of the parodies of advertising campaigns despite their professionalism and wit. While they may serve to give us a brief moment of reflection, the point they make will be soon forgotten and all that lives on in the memory of the consumer is the product or company shown. Therefore in the long term they end up promoting what they hoped to ridicule. By using parody of advertising, there is also an element of irony in the utilisation of the very medium you are in opposition to and are protesting against. The consensus, therefore, is that the more activist forms like graffiti and defacing ads is a more powerful form of social critique even though it is more localised. It is more successful not only because it transforms billboards and posters, normally deemed to be the voice of the establishment, into a two-way form of communication, but it is also more memorable due to its passion and spontaneity.

In relation to the portrayal of the genders in advertising, from an early age advertisers give us clues about our roles in society. This study has demonstrated that gender differentiation, discrimination and sexism is even more evident in the advertising of toys for children than we would stand for in the advertising of products for adults. Girls are fed unreal values and unattainable perceptions of beauty from an early age, starting with their first Barbie doll and up to adulthood with fashion advertising. Having already reached the conclusion that advertising plays on the insecurities of the consumer which is especially evident in the portrayal of the female form in advertising.

Many debates and controversies have developed over the ideal perceptions of beauty, stereotyping and attitudes reinforced by the media. It is universally believed that these images have led to the appearance of illnesses like anorexia and bulimia in our society and are to blame for affecting the health, happiness and well-being of many women. In this respect, the conclusion must be reached that advertising has a long way to go before the issue of use of the female form in advertising has been properly addressed and resolved.

Many people have campaigned for the inclusion of more powerful and positive role models for the next generation of women. The two campaigners discussed in this thesis to illustrate the success and failure of a campaign with similar goals are, artist Barbara Kruger and About Face. About Face's success can be measured by its growth from a one woman poster campaign against the fashion industry, to a large volunteer force, producing posters lampooning the advertisements of the fashion industry and sending helpful information and statistics over the internet. Kruger's parody of a fashion layout for *Harpers Bazaar* failed as a form of social critique because its message was unclear. It blended with all the other abstract fashion layouts, because as consumers we are used to dealing with contradiction and ambiguity in advertisements, the fact that it is a condemnation of the fashion industry and advertising in parody style goes unnoticed. This reinforces the conclusion reached in the first chapter that parody is not so powerful a form of social critique as was first thought.

This thesis also attempted to show how advertising has come a long way in the last twenty years on the subject of homosexuality. The main complaints most people have against advertising are that it is manipulative, exploitative and that it patronises people; the main crime of advertising and the media against homosexuality is the exclusion of the gay community from their campaigns. Although the campaigns of gay activists concentrated on the AIDS crisis, they were in direct reaction to this discrimination and exclusion, and were indirectly criticising the advertising industry. Their campaigns led to more open and radical use of gay imagery and brought advertisers to realise that they were missing out on the pink pound. Reaction to the launch of campaigns and products that included the gay community has been favourable so although it will take time to realise the full extent of the success of these campaigns, predictions for the future are good and it appears that advertisers are moving in the right direction.

Another conclusion reached in this study is that racism is an inherent part of our culture; however, although racism in the media still exists, there are not too many examples to show. No advertising agency would dare appear openly racist for fear of repercussions from public outrage. For this reason, the type of racism apparent in the media is of a more subversive and subliminal kind that often goes unnoticed. Designers and artists like Toscani, Kalman and Haacke have led the way in dispelling myths surrounding people of different races and in exposing underhand racist agenda in the advertising world. Despite this, the issue of racism in advertising still needs to be addressed and resolved before the industry can be said to be guilt free.

Overall the advertising industry appears to be growing more conscientious. This is because of the constant pressure for change that is being applied by the many organisations and individuals that have become the conscience of our society. The techniques that they employ in their fight against discrimination in advertising vary, but more often than not, uses parody in some way. Already discussed is the irony of using parody and that it can be over-rated as a form of critique, how sometimes the more traditional ways are the best. Trying to compete with the professionals at their own game does not always work. Most of the groups mentioned have had an element of success in their campaigns, even if it was only the failure of their campaigns that led to the issues they campaigned for to be raised.

In conclusion, I believe that advertising is more a reflection on our culture and the present state of our society, than we are a product of our advertising. If this is the case then we appear to be moving in the right direction. It has been a slow battle but perhaps this is because we must combat the social prejudices and attitudes in ourselves before we move on to have the perfect advertising industry, an industry that does not try to coerce or manipulate, to exploit or discriminate against anybody regardless or their race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation.

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