PORTFOLIO REVIEW

:: The Modern History of Advertising

While advertising is thousands of years old, it has come into its own only in the last 100 years, thanks to a growing population hungry for goods and services and a rapidly changing technology that could make these products available.

If we look back at the ad campaigns of 30, 50, 70, and even 100 years ago, we get a fascinating indication of how life was lived back then, and we can also see how the development of modern advertising parallels the development of our own standard of living. As British writer and diplomat Norman Douglas said in 1917, “You can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements.”

- Study the array of historical ads in this Portfolio Review and consider how well each relates to the seven functions and effects of advertising discussed in this chapter.

Coca-Cola was first served at a small pharmacy in Atlanta in 1886. Coca-Cola’s inventor, John S. Pemberton, placed an ad in the Atlanta Journal proclaiming that the soft drink was “delicious and refreshing.” By 1904, when this ad was produced, Coca-Cola’s long history of successful campaigns was just getting under way.
This full-color ad from 1916 would have been considered very modern at the time of publication. Note its inclination toward post-impressionism.

Appearing in publications across the country, this 1930s print ad for Coca-Cola was one of the first to incorporate Santa Claus. Interestingly, it was not until the mid-19th century that Santa Claus began to be portrayed in this rotund, jolly manner, and in fact, artists working for Coca-Cola played a major role in popularizing the Santa Claus we know today.
Coca-Cola has always been known for being up to date with youth trends. In this case, a teenager is pictured stopping outside a drive-in for a Coke. Note the difference in style and copy length from earlier ads. The "real thing" slogans first appeared in the 1940s and were readopted in the 1960s.

McCann-Erickson art designer Phil Messina and director Harvey Gabor shot three versions—one in England and two in Italy, each with a cast of hundreds—before they found gold with the classic 1971 "hilltop" TV spot. Young, modern people from around the world throng on a hillside to drink Coca-Cola and sing, "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony/I'd like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company." The commercial flopped in Europe, but U.S. audiences embraced the spot and the music, deluging the company and radio stations with requests for it.
In the late eighties, forced to compete with Pepsi's new campaigns, Coca-Cola reinvented its image and its cola. Campaigns ranged from celebrity endorsements to ones like this, slice-of-life ads that show people sharing and enjoying a Coke.

The lyrics of the watershed "hilltop" ad are still so well known 35 years after the ad appeared that Coca-Cola can refer to them in a simple TV spot with nothing but text and an electronic remix of the tune.