The Art of Advertising

Dr. Pj Forrest, forrest@alcorn.edu
Dr. William Piper, wpiper@alcorn.edu

Abstract

For many years a debate raged, primarily in the artistic community, regarding whether art which was created for commercial purposes was indeed "Art." (Waite 2013) According to the "pure artists" an artist who did commercial work had "sold out." Receiving recompense for the work meant the artist was not suffering for his/her art. Fortunately for both Art and Advertising such artists as Toulouse Lautrec, Norman Rockwell, Andy Warhol and Theophile Steinlen embraced the form and found not only a means of artistic expression, but a way of increasing their popularity and raising their profile.

From a marketing perspective - we just don't care. Whether advertising art is created by a master with his or her brushes or by a graphic artist with a computer, advertisements have to fulfill their role in the Promotional mix – grab the target markets attention and assist in achieving the communications objectives of the ad. However, history informs us that great art by a great artist has an immense potential to fill that role. Artists also benefit from this association; some artists are more famous for their commercial art than their traditional pieces. The relationship between Art and Advertising is mutually beneficial. In this paper we examine the work of four famous artists, Lautrec, Rockwell, Warhol and Steinlen, for their contribution to the Art of Advertising.

Henri Toulouse Lautrec. Henri Toulouse Lautrec is probably the artist most famous for his commercial poster art. Lautrec was a Parisian artist in the Montmartre district during the 1880's and 1890's. He was known for his intense colors, strong lines and simple forms. Lautrec immersed himself in the Paris nightlife, and although from a wealthy background, chose to live among the less fortunate, and paint the poor who were the citizens and entertainers who populated the streets, bars and cabarets. His various paintings, posters and sketches have provided a vivid and intimate glimpse of life on the streets of Paris (Pudles 2013). The majority of his works depict the life of the working poor of Paris. While his paintings are well known and highly valued, the most famous of his works are the posters and advertisements he did for Montmartre business establishments. Perhaps the most famous of these is the Moulin Rouge poster featuring Jane Avril. However he created many other visual masterpieces for advertising purposes, such as those shown below.

Norman Rockwell. Norman Rockwell is an artist primarily known for his stunning and iconic cover art for the Saturday Evening Post. Less well known is that Rockwell was an inveterate advertising artist and created hundreds of ads during the time period of 1914-1976. He worked for dozens of companies including Heinz, Del Monte, Borden's, United States Marine Core, Kellogg's, Coke, Pepsi, Fortune, The New Yorker, Cosmopolitan, Jell-O, Orange Crush and literally dozens of others (Anonymous 2015). Even in a very commercial vein the images he created celebrate his unique artistry.

Andy Warhol. Andy Warhol, best known for his iconic Campbell's Soup can portrait, was an avid advertising proponent who designed dozens of ads for many diverse companies such as Vanity Fair, Glamour, Schiaparelli and Bergdorf Goodman. Coke, Miller and Perrier. Contrary to the standing controversy, Warhol believed that commercial art was a legitimate art form stating "Business Art is a much better thing to be making than Art." (Sharrock 2011).
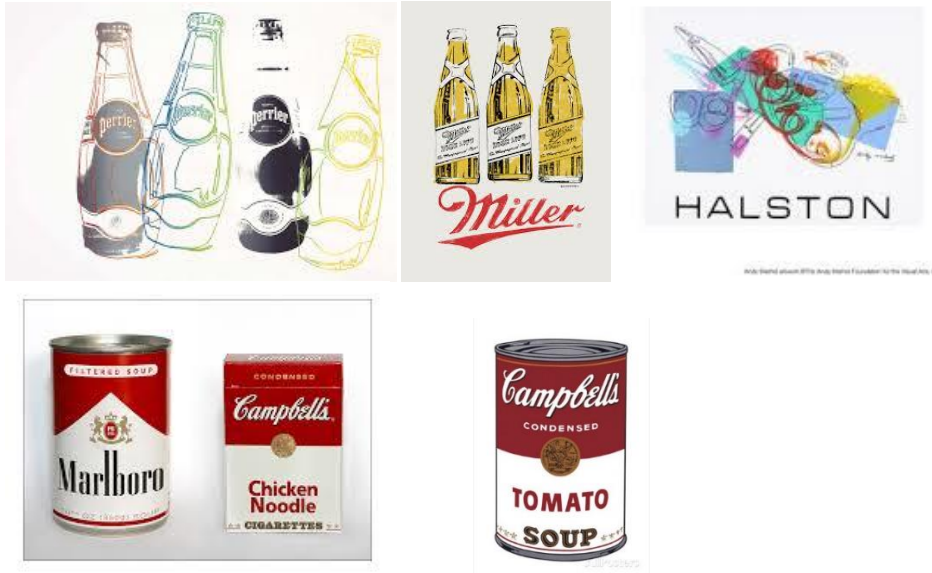
Theophile Alexander Steinlen. In the case of Steinlen, you may not recognize the artist but iconic cat is a familiar symbol in our culture. While working in the Montmartre district of Paris Steinlen fell in with the artists that patronized Le Chat Noir, a café and club. This led to his commission to do the poster art for the club, and to further commercial jobs.

Conclusion. While some artists may consider themselves above the lowly commercial use of art, the artists described above are proof that beautiful, striking images can be created regardless of the intended medium. Each of them have created lasting images which have ensured their place in art and advertising history, and these are only four of the many artist who saw, and even embraced, advertising as an outlet for their astonishing works. Andy Warhol even took it a step farther and turned his advertising illustrations into museum quality art. Advertising has benefited from the art's ability to draw attention to and communicate the advertising message.

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Keywords: Fine arts in marketing, advertising, Rockwell, Lautrec, Warhol, Steinlen.

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners: This paper demonstrates the interplay between fine arts advertising by sharing with readers an historical perspectives of the role that now famous artists have had in marketing activities.

Author Information:

Pj Forrest is an Associate Professor of Marketing at Alcorn State University. Her work includes research and publications in many areas most recently including the structure of the fine arts industry, social media, and sports marketing.

William Piper, is a Full Professor of Marketing at Alcorn State University. His research includes fine art marketing, music marketing and technology commercialization. His teaching encompasses consumer behavior, human resources management, and international business.

TRACK: Music, Fine Arts, and Entertainment Marketing