

## Looking Westwards and Worshipping: The New York ‘Creative Revolution’ and British Advertising, 1954-80

In 1993, Martin Boase, founding partner of the British advertising agency Boase Massimi Pollit (BMP), addressed an audience at the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) in central London. In his speech, delivered to mark the twenty fifth anniversary of the founding of the company, he recalled how in 1968 ‘New York was the Mecca of advertising’.

‘London’, he suggested, ‘faced westwards and worshipped the work being done by Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB), Wells Rich Greene and the long defunct Jack Tinker’ (Boase, 1993).

Boase’s reference to the inspiration provided by New York advertising in the 1960s served to remind his audience of a set of influences upon the domestic industry that were slipping out of view after a decade in which the creativity and financial power of British advertising had eclipsed that of its US counterpart (Mattelart, 1989; Mort, 1996; Nixon, 1996). Yet Boase was not alone in drawing attention to these influences. In 1996, the British Design and Art Directors Association (D&AD) acknowledged Helmut Krone’s unique contribution to advertising (D&AD, 1996a: 114-120). Krone had been one of DDB’s key art directors at the height of its powers in the late 1950s and 1960s, famously art directing its celebrated ‘Think Small’ press advert for Volkswagen. In *The Art Direction Book*, published to promote good practice in advertising and design, D&AD singled out Krone as the most significant figure amongst its 28 strong list of the world’s best art directors (D&AD, 1996a: 114). In the same year, in the D&AD’s annual book of the best creative work produced in Britain, the agency Abbott Mead Vicker’s (AMV) sponsored a tribute to Krone. Its epigram, carried on the inside cover of the annual and prompted by Krone’s recent death, suggested that none of the work featured in the annual could have been done without the enormous influence of Helmut Krone on advertising art direction since the 1960s (D&AD, 1996b).

This honouring of the influence of DDB and the New York ‘creative revolution’ continued. In 2002, filmmaker and former copywriter and commercials director Alan Parker reiterated the claims made about the influence of New York advertising. Looking back on his career, which had started in 1967 at the US-owned agency Papert Koenig Lois (PKL), he recalled how DDB’s advertising in particular had proved inspirational at the time because it produced ‘witty, intelligent and interesting advertising’, advertising that was a million miles away from the tradition of ‘hard sell’ American advertising, being ‘intimate, conversational and colloquial in style’ (Parker, 2002). In 2011, nearly a decade after Parker’s reminiscences, *Campaign*, the trade paper, returned to DDB’s legacy for British advertising. Prompted by the centenary of the birth of DDB’s founding partner and guiding spirit, Bill Bernbach, the paper eulogised about the way Bernbach had ‘changed the history of advertising’. For Claire Beale, the paper’s editor, it was now time for ‘a second creative revolution’ in the mould of DDB (Beale, 2011).

In this article, I want to probe the folklore that has grown up around the New York ‘creative revolution’ in order to reflect upon the ways in which the innovations in advertising strategy and execution associated with it were imported into the UK, helping to reshape advertising practices here and their rhetorics of persuasion. I take the period from the mid-late 1950s when the vibrancy and distinctiveness of New York advertising and design began to catch the eye of those on this side of the Atlantic and move through the 1960s and 1970s. This was a period when those British practitioners who were committed to the new American advertising became themselves influential within the UK industry.

In opening up the influence of the New York-led ‘creative revolution’ upon London advertising, the article reflects on the modes of transmission and the material conduits through which these innovations crossed the Atlantic. Central to this was the role played by

student exchanges, transatlantic travel and the circulation of American magazines and books in the UK, including the influential New York Art Directors Club Annual. These modes of transmission were complimented by the arrival in London in the 1960s of some of the leading New York advertising agencies. With the establishment of London subsidiaries by agencies like DDB and Papert Koenig Lois (PKL), the techniques and idioms of New York advertising literally arrived in London.

The article also seeks to explore the institutional mechanisms through which the ‘new advertising’ helped to reshape advertising practices in this country, beyond the establishment of subsidiary offices. I focus in particular on the role played by a distinctive 1960s formation of practitioners who used the D&AD to champion the new idioms of US advertising. Acting effectively as a circle of believers and advocates this 1960s formation promoted advertising influenced by the precepts of the ‘creative revolution’ through the auspices of D&AD, shifting the terms of what was defined as ‘good advertising’ in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Their rise to influence was not uncontested, but it did help to legitimate a new set of criteria for evaluating advertising which placed ‘creativity’ above ‘research’ and the ‘science of selling’ as the principal measure of good advertising. Through this attention to ‘creativity’ as a key organising concept, the 1960s formation also sought to attribute greater authority within the process of generating effective advertising to the creative teams (the art directors and copywriters) at the expense of the account handlers or account managers. This marked a shift in the relative balance of power between the different specialists within advertising agencies and had long term consequences for the way advertising agencies worked. It formed a second strand of the influence of the ‘creative revolution’ upon British advertising.

In exploring the modes of transmission and mechanisms of institutionalisation which shaped the importing of the ‘creative revolution’, the article draws upon a wider field of scholarship

which has sought to attend to the trans-Atlantic dimensions of commercial and cultural change in Britain and Europe through the long ‘American century’. Recent historiography – from Daniel Rodgers’ ‘Atlantic Crossings’ to Victoria de Grazia’s ‘Irresistible Empire’ – has prompted historians to attend to the porous boundaries between nations, especially in the North Atlantic world, and to reflect on the ways in which, in de Grazia’s case, American models of commerce and consumption crossed the Atlantic from the 1920s helping to reshape European business and styles of consumption (Rodgers, 1998; de Grazia, 2005).

Locating the development of UK advertising practices within this history of commercial change is central to my argument. But I also develop a particular understanding of how Anglo-American advertising relations worked to shape UK advertising practices. Much of the debate about North Atlantic cultural traffic, including that prompted by de Grazia’s book, has focused upon the scale and scope of US influences and whether or not these are best understood as American hegemony, the development of a common trans-Atlantic culture or as good old ‘Americanization’ ( Killick, 1997; Tomlinson, 1997; Djelic, 1998; Zeitlin & Herrigel, 2000; Schwarzkopf, 2007; J. H Wiener & M. Hampton (eds), 2007; Nolan, 2012; Nixon, 2013; Schwarzkopf, 2013). This article develops an argument about US commercial and cultural influences over British advertising which foregrounds the way the US ‘creative revolution’, like other forms of US advertising, was adapted, hybridized and indigenized in its importing to Britain. This was a process of reworking, as we will see, shaped by the sensibilities of practitioners working in this country, but also driven by recognition of the cultural differences between British and American consumers. The influence of the advertising created by agencies like DDB is best thought of, in this regard, as constituting a resource and stimulus to British practitioners, but one which was reworked and combined with more local cultural influences. The article also emphasizes that it was innovations in

New York advertising and design rather than US advertising tout court that were drawn upon by British practitioners and these gained much of their force and currency from being the product of New York's vibrant creative cultures. Out of the translation, adaptation and reworking of these specific cultural influences distinctive British styles of advertising emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

### **The Making and Consecration of the New York 'Creative Revolution'**

Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB), the most lionised of the exponents of the 'new advertising', was formed in 1949 as a break-away of staff from the large American agency Grey. From the outset DDB and, in particular, its creative head Bill Bernbach, deliberately sought to challenge prevailing advertising wisdoms. This included a desire to differentiate the new agency from the dominant tradition of US advertising represented at the time by multinational agencies like J. Walter Thompson and McCann-Erickson. These had grown successful by emphasising the importance of market research to advertising and the 'science of selling' embodied in the tradition of long copy, 'reason why' advertising (Fox, 1984; de Grazia, 2005; Nixon, 2013). For Bernbach this approach, especially the emphasis upon market research, was problematic and he insisted on the need for good advertising to resist the temptation to 'worship research' (Bernbach, 1965:14).

Bernbach's desire to generate novel and innovative advertising was built upon a declared commitment to understanding the client's product. 'Your cleverness, your provocativeness and imagination and inventiveness must stem from knowledge of the product', he argued (Bernbach, 1965:15). Perhaps more importantly, it also came from a closer integration of copy and art direction in the development and communication of the 'provocative idea'. In practical terms this entailed pairing a copywriter with a visualiser or art director. DDB became well-known for promoting this new way of working and two of its original group of

12 founding staff included the art director Bob Gage and the copywriter Phyllis Robinson who became DDB's first creative pairing. As Gage later told *DDB News*, the in-house paper, 'The combination of the visual and the words, coming together and forming a third bigger thing, is really fundamental' (Cracknell, 2011:57). This pairing of 'art' and 'copy' broke with the established division of labour within most agencies in which the copywriter and the 'visualiser' sat in different rooms, with the copywriter handing finished copy to be illustrated by the visualiser. Whilst this could produce effective advertising, the stronger processual and organisational integration of copy and visual contributed to the distinctive style of advertising developed by DDB through the 1950s. This was a style, especially of press and poster advertising, which was characterised by the extensive use of photography rather than illustration, a strongly art directed look and witty and sophisticated copy. All these elements were present in one of DDB's most important early accounts for the New York department store Orbach's.

DDB's advertising for the store included a press advert from the late 1940s in which a man strides across the frame of the image as if he is walking out of the picture. Under his arm he carries a cardboard cut-out of a woman (his wife) [Figure 1]. Following behind, and offset, is the headline 'Liberal Trade-in' and below that the sub-head, 'Bring in your wife and for just a few dollars we will give you a new woman'. The striking layout, use of photography and the witty, irreverent headline with its play on the practice of part-exchange used by car salesmen aimed to intrigue and amuse readers. In the process they learnt about or were reminded of Orbach's Department store and its modest prices.

A later advert for Orbach's was even more striking. It again featured a photographic image, this time taking up two thirds of the page [Figure 2]. There was no headline, simply a haughty looking cat wearing a glamorous ladies hat and holding a cigarette in a holder. The

sub-head expressed the intriguing thought 'I found out about Joan'. The body copy elaborated, offering a bitchy commentary on the fact that the friend Joan, who was not as well-healed as she appeared, actually bought her clothes from Orbach's. The striking visual image and the clever, humorous copy were all designed to intrigue the reader, drawing them into the advert and encouraging them to smile.

The urbane wit of DDB's adverts for Orbach's became a DDB trademark and ran across many of its most celebrated campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s. The elegant, restrained layout, the use of bold photographic images and the decision, often, to avoid headlines featured in campaigns for clients like Polaroid, Levy's Jewish Rye Bread, Avis Car Hire, El Al Airlines and Jamaica Tourism. The distinctive communicative ethos of DDB's advertising, however, found its purest and most successful realisation in the 1959 press advert for Volkswagen [Figure 3]. Art directed by Helmut Krone with copy by Bob Gage, the advert consisted of a small photograph of a Volkswagen Beetle placed in the top left-hand corner of a page, almost lost amidst the white space that surrounded it. At the bottom of the photograph was the sub-head 'Think Small'. The advert was striking for the minimalism of the layout, for its lack of headline and for wittily subverting the grandiose claims typical of American car advertising. <sup>2</sup>

Observers have often seen the roots of DDB's distinctive advertising and its apparent distance from the established traditions of Madison Avenue as the product of the immigrant, outsider backgrounds of its key staff (Cracknell, 2011:70-76). Bill Bernbach was the son of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, Ned Doyle an Irish Catholic, Helmut Krone of German extraction and George Lois, an art director at DDB (and later to co-found PKL), the son of Greek immigrants. The agency itself often played up the social characteristics of its leading staff in emphasising its dissident position within US advertising, though it is not clear

how different the backgrounds of most of DDB's staff were from that of other New York agencies. DDB's early client list contributed to the association between the agency and the minority, immigrant populations of New York and it was often unfairly pigeonholed by critics as being dependent upon 'Seventh Avenue' clients, a barely coded anti-Semitic reference to the Jewish clothing trade that was concentrated there (Samuel, 2012:2). The relationship between DDB and Jewish clients like Orbach's, Levy's Rye Bread and El Al Airlines, however, reinforced the agency's distinctiveness, allowing it to draw on New York Jewish humour and setting it apart from the big, multi-national Madison Avenue agencies like J. Walter Thompson, who were often seen as Puritan in their formation and ethos and dominated by WASP executives (Lears, 1994:329).

If the ethnocultural make-up of agencies like DDB, certainly at the upper echelons, was foregrounded in the self-promotion of the exponents of the 'new advertising', the cultural backgrounds of key figures in these agencies was germane in one important way to the advertising that they produced. As Stefan Schwarzkopf has shown, European family connections of practitioners like Helmut Krone, Paul Rand and George Lois meant that they were open to and drew upon innovative currents in European design from the 1920s and 1930s, including surrealism and Bauhaus (Schwarzkopf, 2013:866). Undoubtedly part of the distinctiveness of Helmut Krone's work at DDB, for example, owed much to the influence of European design idioms, reworked in the creative milieus of New York.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the celebrated 'Think Small' advert for VW. The advert did much to raise DDB's profile, enabling the company to draw in new business and encouraging other advertisers, it was alleged, to approach their existing advertising agents to ask for an 'ad like the DDB ones' (Blackburn 1996:80). DDB's 'Think small' advert, and the campaign that followed from it, was also central to the peer recognition that DDB and Bill



Bernbach in particular received. In 1959 the New York Art Director's Club gave Bernbach a special award 'for his impatience with the trite and usual, for proving that boldness and originality in art direction are successful selling tools' (Willens, 2009:31). In 1960, the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual of Advertising and Editorial Art, published by the Art Directors Club of New York, gave the VW 'Think Small' advert the 'Award of Distinctive Merit' in its advertising design section (Art Director's Club of New York, 1960:17). In 1964 Bernbach was invited to join the copywriters Hall of Fame in the US. He won the Advertising Man of the Year award in 1964 and 1965 and was named top advertising executive in 1969. In 1971, The 51<sup>st</sup> Annual of the Art directors Club of New York gave special recognition to Bob Gage, DDB's art director, eulogising in the process about DDB's contribution to the 'new advertising' (Art Director's Club of New York, 1972, npn). In 1972, the Time-Life exhibition centre in New York ran a full-scale retrospective of DDB's advertising and in 1983, just after his death, Bernbach was inducted into the Art directors club of New York (Willens, 2009:31). The passing of time has not failed to diminish either Bernbach's reputation or that of his agency. In 1999 the US advertising journal *Advertising Age*, in its review of the Century of Advertising nominated Bernbach as its 'Advertising Person of the Century', suggesting that he had 'devised the creative yardstick by which most advertising today is measured'. In the same issue of *Advertising Age*, DDB's 1959 'Think Small' advert was declared the 'Number 1 Campaign of All time' (*Advertising Age*, 29/3/1999:5).

In the 1960s the commercial success and peer recognition received by DDB and other agencies associated with the 'creative revolution', like Papert Koenig Lois, Wells Rich Green and Jack Tinker, forced other advertising agencies to take note. David Ogilvy, copywriter and founding partner of OBM, and a practitioner who enjoyed as big a reputation within US advertising in the 1960s as Bill Bernbach, confessed to being 'impressed very much' by some

of the advertising. 'I couldn't write the VW campaign if I live to be 100', he conceded, 'but I admire it very much' (Ogilvy, 1965:82). J. Walter Thompson, the biggest US agency of the 1960s, sought to come to terms with the 'new creativity'. Its New York office launched a series of internal discussion papers called the 'Creative Forum Papers' in 1966 that sought to learn from DDB's advertising in particular.<sup>3</sup> It was not only other American advertising agencies, however, that took note of the 'new advertising'. It also caught the eye of practitioners in Britain.

### **Moving Eastwards**

An important route through which the 'new advertising' of the 1950s and early 1960s reached Britain was through the pages of the Art Directors Club of New York's *Annual of Advertising and Editorial Art and Design*. Or the New York Art Directors Annual as it was generally known. The annual enjoyed an elevated status amongst many young designers and art directors in Britain. Len Deighton, a design student at the Royal College of Art (RCA) and later to work in advertising before becoming a best-selling author, captured the sense of excitement and novelty that the annual generated amongst an aspiring generation of art directors and designers. In the 1954 issue of *Ark*, the RCA's student magazine, he claimed that,

'into a Europe bogged down with good taste came the 32<sup>nd</sup> New York Art Directors Annual. A shot in the arm for galloping Victoriana, students and agencies will make use of its brilliant, fresh and original ideas' (quoted in Salmon & Ritchie, 2001:9).

He was not alone in noting its significance. *Advertiser's Weekly*, the trade paper, reviewed the annual in March 1962. Describing it as a 'major publishing event in the world of American advertising art', it suggested that 'British advertising has always found much to

stimulate and challenge in American advertising and this is no exception' (*Advertiser's Weekly*, 16/3/1962:34). *Advertiser's Weekly* was itself also important in drawing the attention of British practitioners to the new US advertising, including that being recognised in the New York Art Directors annual. John Tucker, group art director at the US-owned agency FCB, writing in *Advertiser's Weekly* in July 1958, for example, encouraged British advertising to look at the innovations occurring in America. Tellingly he interpreted much of what was 'exciting' and 'believable' about American ads as stemming from the new role given to art directors within creative pairings. This encouraged, he claimed, art directors to be more than a layout man or more than an interpreter of the copywriter's ideas' (*Advertiser's Weekly*, 4/7/1958:20).

*Advertiser's Weekly's* returned to the challenge of the 'creative revolution' for British advertising in July 1964, prompted this time by the arrival in London of DDB's and PKL's subsidiary offices. Whilst the editorial questioned whether the approach of these agencies would be right for the British market, it conceded that they were likely to stir London agencies 'out of their complacency' in what it termed as a 'swing back to creativity' (*Advertiser's Weekly*, 17/7/1964:24; 3/7/1964:36). The paper's regular 'American Report' column also alerted its readers to the new 'style of creativity' bursting from Madison Avenue in April 1966. Under the headline, 'Creative Revolution', *Advertiser's Weekly* identified the 'sophisticated humour' of the 'new advertising' as one of its defining features, together with a desire to 'destroy the dogma that advertising must always proclaim the superlative and that the product advertised is the best'. It explicitly cited DDB's 'irreverent' work for Avis car-hire as an example of this approach (*Advertiser's Weekly*, 8/4/1966:32).

If the advertising trade press in Britain and the circulation of the New York Art Directors annual on this side of the Atlantic served to give the work of New York agencies a currency

in the UK, their physical presence further strengthened the visibility of their advertising here. The arrival of the New York 'hot shops' in London formed part of a wider 'American Invasion' of British advertising from the late 1950s. By the end of the 1960s, 6 of the top ten advertising agencies in Britain were US-owned (Sampson, 1968; West, 1987). If the dominance of US agencies over British advertising caused many commentators to worry about the 'Americanization' of British advertising, then the advertising produced by DDB London and PKL was viewed more favourably. DDB's London office, in particular, quickly established a reputation for its creative work and just 18 months after arriving in the UK won two of the seven Creative Circle Awards for its press advertising for Morphy-Richard and Polaroid. In 1970, it had the largest number of successful entries in the D&AD's annual award scheme (Times, 24/6/1970:26).

This recognition given to the 'new advertising' owed much to its championing by a young generation of London advertising people. David Abbott, later head of the agency Abbott Mead Vickers (AMV), was part of this generation. Abbott had started as a copywriter in Kodak's advertising department in 1960. In 1963 he got a job at Mather & Crowther, the venerable British agency, being joining DDB London in 1965. In 1966 he was sent to DDB in New York for six months to learn first-hand DDB's approach to advertising. In 1967 he became creative director and managing director of DDB London before forming his own agency in 1971. Abbott Mead Vickers was formed in 1977 (D&AD, 2011:12). Abbott became known for his controlled and economical style as a copywriter. For his contemporaries the source of this style was obvious: it came from his encounter with DDB's advertising ethos. As Tony Brignull, a copywriter at DDB London in the 1960s and 1970s, suggested in his eulogy to Abbott on his receipt of the D&AD's President's Award, 'there are

a few of us writers who think of themselves as the son of Bill Bernbach, but I have the feeling that David is the only one who would pass the blood test' (D&AD, 1986:9).

Martin Boase, working at the agency Pritchard Wood in the mid-1960s, was, as we saw earlier, another aspiring 1960s London adman drawn to the work happening in New York. The establishment of BMP in 1968 was partly prompted by a desire to emulate the style of advertising being done there. Boase and other founding partners of the company approached Gabe Massimmi (the M in BMP) because of the work he was doing in New York (Boase, 2008). For Boase, Massimmi's creative work shared some of the same attributes of the advertising developed by DDB and two other exemplars of New York advertising, Mary Wells and Carla Alley. This was advertising that 'wasn't trite or irritating but actually talked to people in a grown-up manner or an amusing manner or self-effacing manner' (Boase, 2008).

John Hegarty, who started his career in advertising as a junior art director with Benton & Bowles in 1965 before moving to Saatchi & Saatchi in 1970 and eventually forming his own agency Bartle Bogle Hegarty (BBH) in 1982, was a student at the London College of Printing in the early 1960s. He recalled being shown DDB's adverts by his tutor John Gillward. Their effect on him was, he claimed, immediate. 'When John showed me Bernbach's work for VW, it was like having a light turned on in a darkened room. Suddenly I could see what I wanted to do' (Hegarty, 2008). In his recent book, *Hegarty on Advertising*, he reiterated the formative influence of DDB on him. DDB's work, he suggested 'showed a generation, my generation, how advertising could be witty, intelligent, smart, truthful, inclusive and, most importantly, successful' (Hegarty, 2011, 17-18; Puttnam, 2008).

The veneration shown towards DDB's advertising by this 1960s formation of London admen did not go uncontested. Jeremy Bullmore, who started his advertising career at JWT London

in 1954 and who by 1966 was head of its creative department, was sceptical about the general applicability of the styles and techniques of the 'new advertising', especially in relation to the marketing of mass market packaged goods. In an interview with a journalist conducted in New York in May 1965, Bullmore conceded that the 'great hue and cry in America about creativity' had reached London. Whilst recognising the value of some of the 'creative advertising' coming out of New York, he cautioned against its usefulness for household products or repeat purchase products. The housewife, at whom 80% of advertising was directed, was, he argued, usually working with a limited budget and 'I don't think you can be flip with her' (Bullmore, 1965:11). He conceded that in advertising associated with more pleasure-orientated spending (leisure, books, eating out, beer and cigarettes) you needed 'advertising which adds a sense of fun to the product, which flatters the reader or the viewer, that is flip and imaginative'. Such an approach, however, would not work for the 'housekeeping money area of advertising' (Bullmore, 1965:12).

In seeking to qualify the usefulness of the 'new advertising' to the great mass of packaged goods advertising, Bullmore was evidently upset that the large, multinational agencies like JWT, who conducted much of this kind of advertising, were not given enough credit for their strategic thinking and creative execution. In an exchange with the commercials director James Garrett concerning an article in the New York times on the 'hot shops' of US advertising (notably Jack Tinker), Bullmore asserted that, contrary to the mantra about the 'new advertising', an agency 'can be big and relatively quick on its feet creatively' (Bullmore, 1968).

More recently, Jeremy Bullmore recapitulated these arguments. Whilst remembering 'all that brilliant stuff' that DDB produced in the 1960s, he felt that 'we [JWT] were closer to the mid-west agencies like Leo Burnett which were much more 'mumsy' and 'folksy'. The

‘much trumpeted golden age of advertising allegedly started by DDB’ was, on the whole, he suggested, ‘useful for only certain types of brands appealing to certain types of people and it was a house style, not a brand style’ (Bullmore, 2008).

### **The British Design and Art Directors Association and the Promotion of the ‘Creative Revolution’**

If Jeremy Bullmore’s views represented an important strand of opinion within British advertising, the advocates of the ‘creative revolution’ were tenacious in their desire to promote its values. A crucial vehicle in their championing of the innovations in New York advertising and design was the Design and Art Directors Association (D&AD). The D&AD was formed in 1962 by a group of designers and art directors working within London advertising agencies and design companies. They were explicitly motivated by wanting to bring the techniques and approaches of the advertising, design and art direction being practised in New York to Britain. A key figure in the establishment of the D&AD was Alan Fletcher, graduate of the RCA and founding partner in the design consultancy Fletcher Forbes Gill (FFG). Fletcher had first visited the USA in 1956 following the award of a scholarship as the inaugural Yale University/RCA exchange student (Seago, 1995:49). He was captivated by American graphic design and by New York, describing the city as itself an embodiment and realisation of the ‘uptown pop’ of American graphic design.

Fletcher was joined by two Americans, Bob Brooks and Bob Gill, in forming the D&AD. Bob Brooks was a New Yorker who worked for the advertising agency Benton & Bowles. Bob Gill was an art director and illustrator who came to London in 1960 to work for the advertising agency Charles Hobson, part of Grey advertising. Gill had acted as a judge for the

New York Art Directors Club before moving to the UK and felt that there should be a London equivalent to it. The three men - Fletcher, Brooks and Gill - laid out the basics of the D&AD following additional encouragement from Colin Milward, the creative director of the recently formed British advertising agency CDP. With Alan Fletcher rewording the New York Art Directors Club entry form for the new association, D&AD held its first show in June 1963 at the mezzanine of the Hilton hotel in Park Lane recognising the best art direction and design produced in Britain during the preceding year (Bonner, 2012). The exhibition made an instant impact, receiving more than 2,000 submissions for the first show (Bigham, 1989:6). Ken Bayne, former editor of *Ark*, remembered its arrival, suggesting that 'at last London had an annual forum comparable to the show sponsored by the New York Art Directors club' (Seago, 1995:201).

From the outset D&AD combined its central ambition to raise the status of designers and art directors in advertising with arguments about the social and commercial value of good design and art direction. In pursuing these goals, the association was ambitious in forming working relationships with government and governmental agencies. In 1965, D&AD collaborated with the British Council to tour its exhibition to three European cities, including Milan, as well as touring Arts Council-supported galleries in Britain (D&AD, 1966:7). In Milan, Jennie Lee, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Education and Science, opened the D&AD exhibition as part of British Week. The Central Office of Information (COI), the department responsible for government communication and advertising, borrowed the 1965 D&AD exhibition as part of its British Trade Promotion in Czechoslovakia and Romania. In 1968, the D&AD supported the first British National Export Council (BNEC) trade mission of British creative talent to New York, titled 'It's Great! Britain' (D&AD, 1967:8).



The rapid success of the D&AD in establishing itself as a reputable organisation with good links to government and government agencies was cemented by its move to a new headquarters in Nash House, off Pall Mall in the heart of London, as part of a consortium that included the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) and the Industrial Artists Association. Jennie Lee, now Minister for the Arts, opened Nash House in August 1968. Significantly, Bill Bernbach was also present to make a speech at the opening ceremony, conferring the legitimacy of New York 'creative advertising' upon D&AD (D&AD, 1968:11).

Bernbach's presence at the opening of Nash House revealed the important ties between D&AD and New York advertising and design. Through the late 1960s the association screened the show reel from the New York Art Directors Club, discussed the work done by Mary Wells for Braniff and again invited Bernbach to speak to the club (D&AD, 1966:5). More importantly, D&AD promoted the tenets of the 'creative revolution' by constituting juries for its annual awards that included individuals who were supportive of the 'new advertising'. These included David Abbott of DDB London and David Puttnam of CDP in 1966, Peter Mayle of PKL and Colin Milward of CDP in 1967, John Salmon, David Puttnam of CDP and Tony Brignull of DDB in 1969 and Martin boase (BMP), Arthur Parsons and John Salmon (CDP) and David Abbott in 1972. Through the 1960s and 1970s, one British advertising agency became closely associated with the D&AD awards, both supplying many jurors, winning a swathe of awards and having the contributions of its leading staff recognised by D&AD. This was CDP, an agency that saw itself as the British answer to DDB.

### **Collett Dickenson Pearce and the Indigenizing of the Creative Revolution**

CDP was formed in 1960 by John Pearce, managing director of Colman Prentis Varley, Ronnie Dickenson, who had worked for Picture Post and Associated Television and John

Collett, managing director of the agency Pictorial Publicity. Colin Milward, who worked for CPV with Pearce became the new agency's creative director. Arthur Parsons, to become one of CDP's best known art directors, moved across from Pictorial Publicity with Collett. The agency was strongly influenced by the New York 'creative revolution', especially Colin Milward. Along with John Pearce, he visited DDB in New York to look at how they organised their creative department, taking from DDB the idea of forming pairs of art directors and copywriters. In adopting DDB's system, CDP became the first British agency to pair these functions. CDP not only borrowed from the organisational structure of DDB. They also sought to develop its ethos by making the creative teams the key shapers of the agency's work. They did this partly by paying them more than other London agencies (including DDB's London office when it opened), but also by establishing a system whereby account executives were not allowed to rewrite or revise the agreed upon creative work (Parker cited in Salmon & Ritchie, 2001:25). Such practices had been common in London advertising and reflected the status of the 'account man' in the process of selling advertising to the client. Stopping these practices shifted the relative balance between the account executive and the copywriter/art director, giving the creative teams more power. It also had implications for how CDP accommodated the view of its clients. Rather than seeking to give them the final decision on advertising executions, CDP became famous within industry folklore for refusing to bend to the whim or wishes of clients. As Alan Parker recalled, if the client would not accept the creative work agreed within the agency then John Pearce 'would 'fire' them'. Whilst this rarely happened, the point of this stance was to signal that CDP aimed to give their creatives the freedom to produce innovative and challenging advertising and would lead rather than follow the expectations of clients. The stated goal of this approach was to facilitate the production of advertising that was, like DDB's, fresh and original (Parker, cited in Salmon & Ritchie, 2001:25).

CDP's early work for clients like Chemstrand, Harvey's Bristol Cream and Whitbread Pale Ale was principally done in the medium of print and posters. Like the exponents of the New York 'creative revolution', it almost exclusively used photography, strong clear layouts devoid of a mixture of typefaces and sub-heads, and urbane, witty copy. Much of this advertising was run in the recently launched *Sunday Times* colour magazine. The magazine became almost an in-house publication for CDP's output (Puttnam, 2008). Mark Boxer, the first editor of the *Sunday Times* magazine encouraged this relationship. Not only was CDP's advertising lucrative, but it added much to the look and style of the magazine. As Boxer recalled, 'the sense of style and the creativity of the ads from CDP [...] set us at the Sunday Times standards to match in the editorial (Salmon & Ritchie, 2001:13).

D&AD was quick to recognise the creative value of CDP's advertising. In 1964, the agency's campaigns for Chemstrand's Acrilan and Conde Nast's Vogue won awards. More followed through the 1960s and 1970s, including Gold and Silver awards for the 1975 Army Officer Recruitment campaign, Silver in 1976 for Heineken lager and Gold for the 1979 cinema commercial for Gallaher's Benson and Hedges cigarettes. In fact, through the 1970s, CDP won some 56 D&AD awards, making it the most decorated agency of the period (Rewind, 2002:25). Neil Godfrey, one of CDP's best art directors, accrued many of these and by the time he was given the D&AD's President's Award in 1992, he had won 20 D&AD Silver and 3 Gold awards (D&AD, 1992:5). When the D&AD created its President's Award in 1976 for the person who had made an outstanding contribution to the industry, the first award went to Colin Milward, with a tribute from the President, Alan Parker. Aside from their own successes at the D&AD, CDP's key art directors and copywriters served on many of the D&AD juries. Through this they contributed to the influence of the 'new advertising' over definitions of creative advertising in Britain.

By the late 1970s, however, the self-conscious development of the tenets of the New York ‘creative revolution’ had begun to be combined with a recognition that CDP’s advertising, and that of other British agencies, had acquired a distinctiveness of its own. Indeed, as the D&AD annual noted in 1979, the reputation of British advertising’s creativity was on the rise internationally, as that of New York advertising had begun to wane. CDP’s leading figures became more confident in asserting the distinctive style of British advertising. This was clear in the comments made by Arthur Parsons, CDP’s senior art director, in his President’s editorial in the D&AD annual for 1979. Celebrating the standard of the 1979 awards, Parsons not only took the time to pay his dues to those American advertising people who had influenced him, but also sought to encourage his ‘heroes’ to look at the advertising now being done in Britain. As he put it,

‘To those advertising greats on the other side of the Atlantic whom I’ve admired so long, people like Bert Steinhauser, Ed McCabe, Helmut Krone, Same Scali, Bob Gage, Dave Reider, Phyllis Robinson, Ron Rosenfeld etc., I’d just like to say, with cap in hand, ‘you’re very welcome to look at our book any time’ (D&AD, 1979:11).

Parsons, for all his bravura, was making the serious point that, despite the debt that it owed to the New York ‘creative revolution’, the best ‘creative advertising’ in Britain, especially CDP’s, had developed, translated and reworked it for the British market. CDP had notably taken the colloquial style of DDB’s copy and applied this to a British context. This translation and indigenising was most evident in the advertising produced by copywriter and later commercials director, Alan Parker. As a copywriter at CDP, Parker used everyday speech and puns to carry the advertising message. For example, in a press advert for ‘Wall’s sausages’ he had used the headline ‘Porky and Best’, whilst in an advert for Harvey’s Bristol Cream he used the headline ‘Iced Cream’ over a photograph of a glass of the sherry with two cubes of

ice in it. The art direction for both adverts followed closely the layouts associated with classic New York advertising of the 1960s, with the design of the Harvey's advert echoing that of a well-known press advert for 'Alka Seltzer' produced by Jack Tinker in the USA. The punning headlines in Parker's adverts, however, were distinctively British.

Parker was also innovative in how he cast actors for commercials. He became well-known for choosing character-full actors, often with regional accents, and coaxing naturalistic performances out of them. This was evident, for example, in Parker's casting and direction of a 1974 CDP commercial for Bird's Eye Beef Burgers. In the advert, two brothers sit at a kitchen table, a plate of food (including a Bird's Eye beef burger) before one of the brothers. The older brother talks directly to the camera about his young brother Ben, describing how he was a 'man' of few words. What is striking about the commercial is the colloquial dialogue delivered in the boy's strong northern accent and the 'ordinary' looking appearance of the boys.<sup>4</sup> Similar quirky casting and colloquial dialogue was evident in other notable commercials directed by Parker, including those for Bird's Eye Dinners, Cockburn's Port and Parker Pens.<sup>5</sup> In offering a tribute to Parker on his receipt of the D&AD President's Award in 1980, John Webster, creative director of BMP, suggested,

'Parker's influence on commercial film making has been immense. Before Parker, people in TV ads were plastic-wrapped, neither old nor young and never went to the lavatory. Alan changed all that with a whole parade of characters who had creases in their shirts, blew their noses and talked like the milkman' (D&AD, 1980:11).

### **Beyond Advertising**

Webster's observation about the distinctive style of advertising produced by Alan Parker formed part of the wider recognition afforded to CDP and its alumni through the pages of the

D&AD annuals. This recognition, as we have seen, formed part of the consecration of the kinds of advertising that took its principal cues from the advertising pioneered in New York in the 1950s, helping to secure the influence of this tradition of ‘creative advertising’ but also forming the basis for the subsequent industry folklore about the ‘golden age of advertising’ that started with DDB.

The process of remembering this history and of retelling the story of the ‘creative revolution’ through the 1990s and beyond, however, has produced its own blind spots and omissions. Perhaps the most significant has been the tendency to trace the New York influence upon British advertising as a story exclusively about advertising. However, as the D&AD annuals reveal, much of the distinctiveness of the advertising produced by CDP and others derived from the innovations in design art direction and fashion photography which emerged in the adjacent fields of design and commercial photography. CDP’s adverts for Chemstrand and Vogue which won awards at the 1964 and 1965 D&AD exhibitions depended heavily on the ‘new wave’ photography of David Bailey, Brian Duffy and Terence Donovan. All three photographers had developed a dynamic visual style of fashion photography in which the models were often shown in motion or in more naturalistic poses, breaking with the conventions of static posing associated with 1950s fashion photography. Bailey and Duffy also cast unconventional looking models (including tough looking men) and used gritty settings. The drama of their photographs was carried through the use of ‘soot and whitewash’ film stock which combined rich blacks with clean whites (Braybon, 2008:101).

The impact of these photographers was enhanced by developments in graphic design and art direction. These owed much to post-war American graphic design, together with the influence of Swiss typography. The latter brought a new emphasis upon clarity of design in communicating complex information and foregrounded legibility in the design of typefaces

(Bigham, 1989:36-9). These innovations from outside of advertising were drawn into the industry across the porous boundaries between design studios, the networks of freelance art directors, typographers and photographers and advertising agencies, helping to shape the distinctiveness of advertising produced in the 1960s and 1970s.

There were also other influences at work from outside the industry upon the advertising, especially the television commercials. Alan Parker's commercials were described as being 'mini-sitcoms' and owed something to the single plays for television developed by Granada television, especially under the direction of Peter Eckersley.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, Parker clearly looked towards the formats of television entertainment when directing and casting his commercials. It was these home-grown cultural forms which contributed to the process by which CDP translated and indigenized the tenets of the New York creative revolution. In this regard, the influence of the 'new advertising' is not best thought of as the product of a common, trans-Atlantic advertising culture or the domination of British advertising by its American counterpart. Rather, New York advertising provided a major stimulus and resource for a group of 1960s London advertising people. But what emerged was the reworking of the ethos of the 'creative revolution' for British sensibilities.

## **Conclusion**

In 1978, D&AD's President's Award was given to Jeremy Bullmore, JWT's creative director and chairman of the agency since 1976. The award recognised Bullmore's intellectual contribution to advertising. He was, it suggested, 'a theoretician as well as a practical man and his invaluable contribution is to the question 'the function of advertising'. This pronouncement, coming from the most important organ of London advertising's 'creative community', was something of a back-handed compliment. Bullmore, in accepting the award, revealed his own distance from the way in which D&AD recognised creativity. As he argued,

his award was a timely reminder ‘that style, however desirable, is not the only requirement of successful work. Some ads are made almost as if designers want people to buy the ad, not the product’ (D&AD, 1978:9).

Bullmore’s observations captured a wider resistance to the D&AD’s awards within British advertising, especially the self-referential system in which work by the advocates and fellow-travellers of the ‘new advertising’ was rewarded. One response was the establishment of a new award scheme in 1979 under the auspices of the IPA called the ‘Advertising Effectiveness Awards’. The new award aimed to produce evidence about and reward campaigns which had proved commercially effective in increasing sales of the product being advertised. Whilst not necessarily anti-thetical to the principles of ‘creative advertising’, the IPA Effectiveness Awards did represent a shift in emphasis in how ‘good’ advertising was to be judged. It relied less on peer recognition of elusive ideas of ‘creativity’ and more on hard sales figures. D&AD was not unduly affected by the new award, but their creation pointed to the existence of a body of opinion within British advertising which wanted to reward effective selling and not just creatively dazzling work.

If D&AD’s influence on London advertising was partly challenged by the IPA Effectiveness Awards, then there also existed tensions within D&AD. D&AD juries were notoriously fractious affairs with intense debates over the awarding of, in particular, the gold D&AD award. These internal disagreements and divisions were an important part of the character of D&AD in the 1960s and 1970s. However, the tensions within the association, especially within judging panels, should not lead us to underestimate the influence within D&AD of the 1960s group of practitioners influenced by the ‘creative revolution’. As I have argued in this article, they used D&AD as a vehicle to promote what they saw as the key innovations



pioneered by New York advertising and publicity in the 1950s and 1960s. British advertising in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s was profoundly reshaped as a result.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> On the idea of formations, see Williams, 1980

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of DDB's advertising that follows a similar line of argument, see Lawrence, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Memo to Miss Terry Munger from Roy Park 'Creative Forum Papers, JWT NY, 1/8/1966; Memo to the Creative Department from Philip F. Mygett, essay on the 'new creativity', 15/1/1968; Creative Forum Paper Number 8 The Relationship Between Researchers and Creative People, October 1966; Communications Forum Paper Number 4, 1969; Barrington Howard 'The Thing Called Creativity', Adam, April 1966, 18-20, JWT Duke Box 10, John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History, Duke University.

<sup>4</sup> Birds Eye Beef burgers 'Ben', 1974

<sup>5</sup> Bird's Eye Dinners for One 'Brief Encounter', 1971; Cockburns Port 'Lifeboat', 1974; Benson & Hedges Panatella 'Hat', 1974; Parker Pen's 'Finishing School', 1976.

<sup>6</sup> See, especially, 'Another Sunday and Sweet FA', directed M. Apted, 1972

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Figures

# LIBERAL TRADE-IN



bring in your wife  
and just a few dollars  
... we will give you a new woman

*Orbach's*  
"A BUSINESS IN MILLIONS...  
A PROFIT IN PENNIES"

Why have you left of the  
street and here just because you  
think you can't afford it? At Orbach's  
you don't have to pay high prices for beautiful  
things. And there are tremendous discounts  
to choose from - all sizes, all exciting. Bring us  
the wife you have now and we will transform  
her into a lovely new woman -  
for just a few dollars. It will be  
the smartest purchase you ever made!

Figure 1: Orbach's

I found out about Joán

The way she talks, you'd think she was in What's What, What! I heard her what with her. Her husband own a bank? Soemtimes, not even a bank account. Why that police at dinner has well-to-do mortgages! And that cat? Darling, that's happened, not morning power. They was

it is a life-time offer! Can you imagine? And those circles! Of course she does drive already that really... a mark made, and Paris suits, and all those dresses... on the occasion? Well darling, I heard her about that too. I just happened to be going her way and I saw Joán near out of Ohrbach's!

**Ohrbach's**

34th St. opp. Empire State Bldg. - NEWARK MARKET & HALLS - "A BUSINESS IN MILLIONS, A PROFIT IN PENNIES"

Figure 2: Orbach's

**Think small.**

Can you get in with it in a crowd? A crowd of 2000? College kids don't go to parties without it. The guy at the gas station doesn't see where the gas goes. It fits in every place you ever thought of.

Even don't even three dollars to the gas. For a penny you get more. Or save two pennies of oil every 100 miles. Or never needing a gas station. Or saving up \$1000 when you're out of gas. That's because more you get used to.

Some of our accessories, you don't even think about them any more. Street name you recognize into a small getting lost. Or never more small than yours. Or you a small repair bill. Or make it your own VW for a new one. Think it over.

Figure 3: VW 'Beetle', 1959



Figure 4: CDP for Harvey's

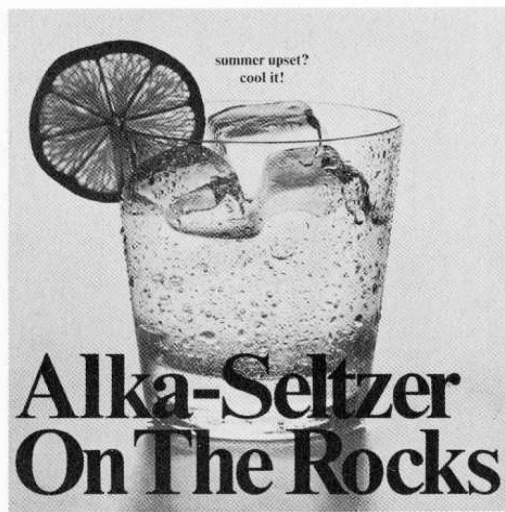


Figure 5: Jack Tinker for Alka-Seltzer