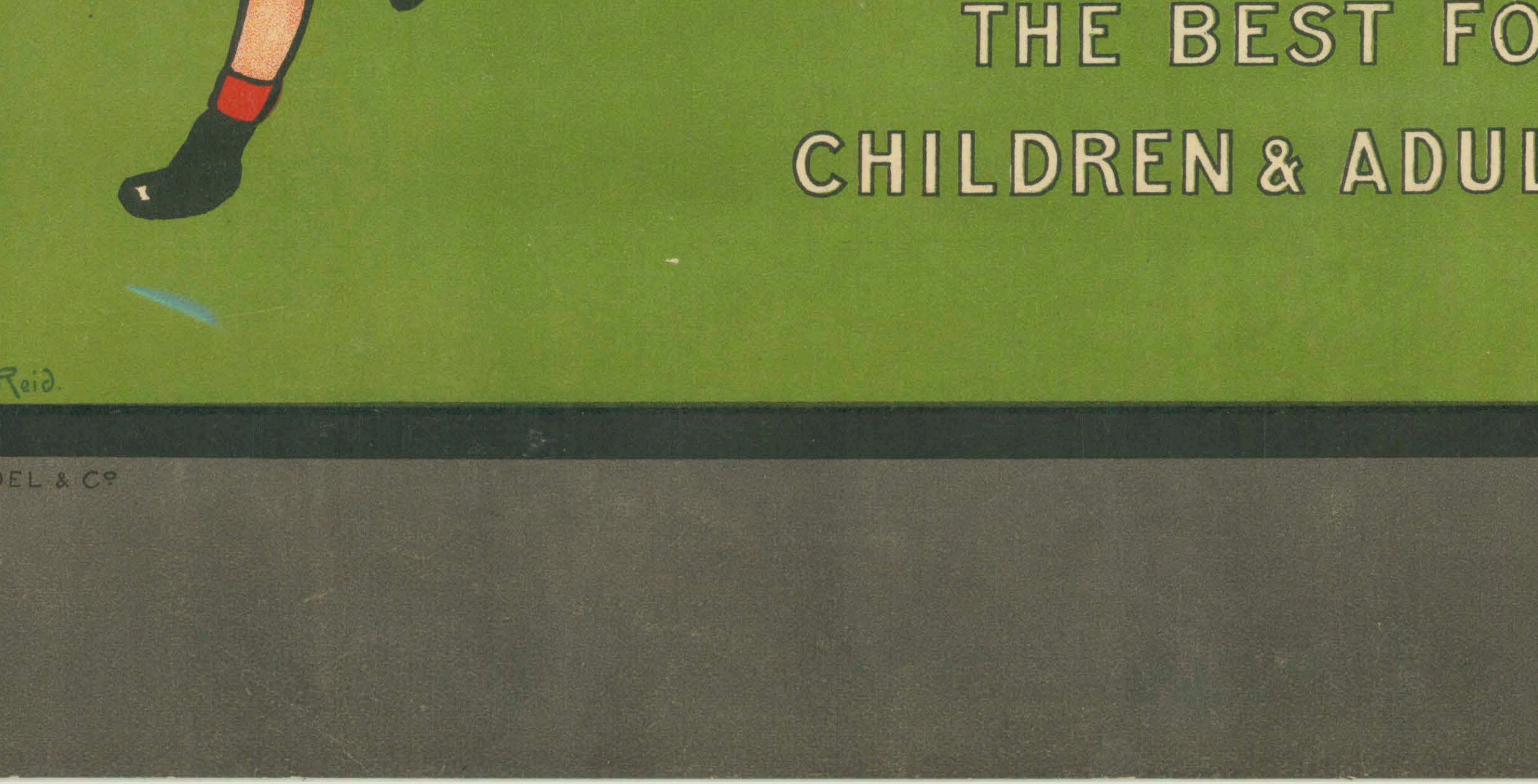
RMIT DESIGN ARCHIVES JOURNAL

VOL 8 №2 2018

SPECIAL ISSUE

COMMERCIAL ART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COMMERCIAL ART

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ISSN 1838-7314
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Cover
Beryl Reid, Empire Condensed Milk, 1926-1932, poster, Gift of Troedel & Cooper 1968, courtesy State Library of Victoria

This Page
Robur Tea ghost sign, Lygon Street, Brunswick East, 2017

Image supplied and modified by Stephen Banham

CONTENTS

04
Editorial
Revisiting Commercial Art
Robert Crawford

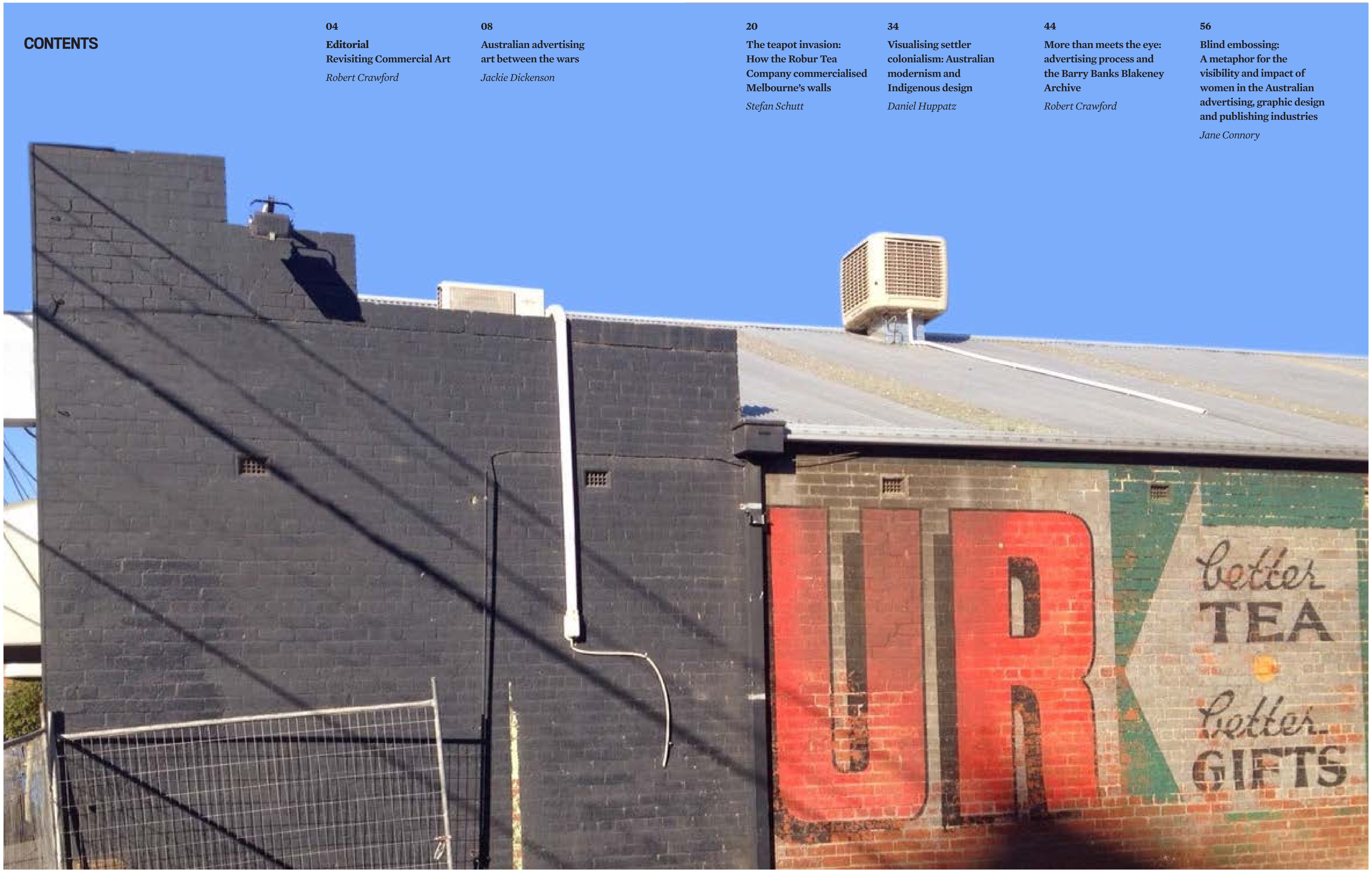
08
Australian advertising art between the wars
Jackie Dickenson

20
The teapot invasion: How the Robur Tea Company commercialised Melbourne's walls
Stefan Schutt

34
Visualising settler colonialism: Australian modernism and Indigenous design
Daniel Huppatz

44
More than meets the eye: advertising process and the Barry Banks Blakeney Archive
Robert Crawford

56
Blind embossing: A metaphor for the visibility and impact of women in the Australian advertising, graphic design and publishing industries
Jane Connory



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'Printers fist' image
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Stephen Banham

In July 1910, *Labor Call* announced the formation of 'an artists' Union', which included 'some artists, although the title of "artist" is, qualified'.[1] The newly formed Commercial Artists' Union, it continued, had been formed 'to protect, first and foremost, the artist who earns his living at the game. He needs protection in Australia'.

Shortly after affiliating with the Trades-Hall Council, the Commercial Artists' Union looked to stage an exhibition that would illustrate the work done by members. Announcing that it would be 'the first special exhibition of the kind held in any part of the world', the Union explained that the event would 'embrace every class of work from book illustrations to 24-sheet posters'.[2]A later report on the Union's activities noted that it would 'embrace all kinds of artist', including wood-engravers and stained-glass window makers.[3] Such accounts illustrate the breadth and range of activities that have fallen under the mantle of commercial art, as well as its lack of public recognition.

In its *History of Design in Australia 1789-2002*, the Design Institute of Australia makes no mention of the Commercial Artists' Union. However, it does list the formation of Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists' Association in the late 1930s as a noteworthy historical event.[4] This inclusion implies that commercial art fed neatly into the history of design. Such a narrative can be discerned in Geoffrey Caban's pioneering study of commercial art in Australia, *A Fine Line*.[5] However, Alan Young's recent study of the relationship between commercial art and graphic design offers an important challenge to this narrative.[6] Arguing that this narrative has oversimplified the practices of commercial artists, their status, and their connections with design, Young's critique offers a timely invitation for historians and designers to reconsider the history of commercial art.

The articles in this special edition of the *RMIT Design Archives Journal* build on Young's suggestion by revisiting the field of commercial art. Their collective aim is to develop more nuanced insights into the historical practices of commercial artists as well as the broader social, cultural, economic, and, of course, commercial factors affecting them. This special edition opens with Jackie Dickenson's account of art in the advertising agency ranks during the interwar period. Her study neatly illustrates the degree to which commercial art practices in the advertising context have been informed by broader technological changes as well as educational developments. In Stefan Schutt's article, advertising constitutes one aspect of a broader marketing strategy. Documenting Robur's efforts to win a share of the highly competitive and lucrative tea market, Schutt not only situates commercial art within a broader marketing context, he also draws attention to work of sign writers, whose work has had a lasting legacy on our cities. Daniel Huppatz focuses on those commercial artists whose work adorned magazine covers and monetary bills. Beginning in the interwar period and moving into the 1960s, Huppatz explores use of indigenous flora, fauna, and Aboriginal motifs across these outlets to illustrate the interplay between national and international ideas and their paradoxical impact on local commercial art. For smaller firms like the Barry Banks Blakeney advertising agency, local factors had a greater impact on their practice. Robert Crawford thus uses the agency's holdings in the RMIT Design Archives to demonstrate the degree to which this agency's operations and its creative work in the 1970s and 1980s were informed by the commercial context. This collection concludes with Jane Connory's important study of women across advertising, graphic design, and book publishing. Spanning the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Connory's account combines industry data alongside the personal stories of three women to tease out the hidden stories and experiences, and to emind us of the importance of social forces and their impact across the commercial arts.

It is hoped that the strengths of this collection extend beyond the mere sum of its constituent parts. In *Design History Australia*, Tony Fry posits that a 'history of design should … be a history of formations and process, as well as objects and form'.[7] The articles in this special edition seek to do both. By revisiting the concepts, practices, and trades that have historically constituted commercial art, this special edition seeks to remind designers and design scholars that their field and practices cannot be fully understood without reference to their broader context – both past and present.

Robert Crawford is Professor of Advertising, and Associate Dean, Research & Innovation, School of Media and Communication, RMIT University

[1] "In Town," *Labor Call*, July 14 1910, 2.

[2] "Commercial Artist's Union," *The Age*, August 22 1910, 8.

[3] "Commercial Artists'," *Herald*, November 14 1910, 3.

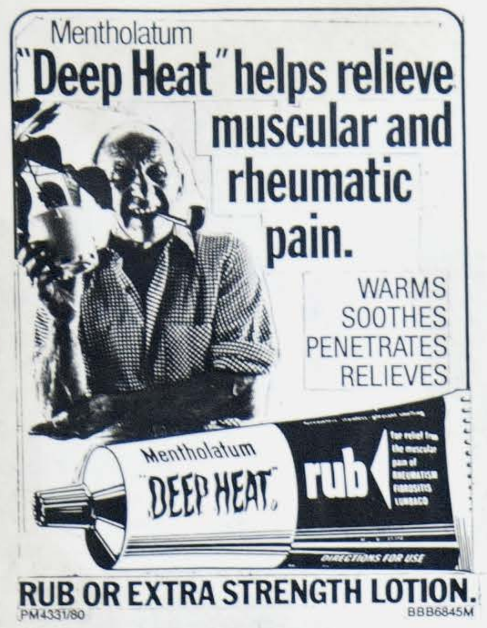
[4] Design Institute of Australia, *History of Design in Australia*, 1789-2002, https://www.design.org.au/documents/item/136, (accessed 24 September 2018).

[5] Geoffrey Caban, *A Fine Line: A History of Australian Commercial Art* (Sydney: Hale & Ironmonger, 1983).

[6] Alan S. Young, "Commercial Art to Graphic Design: The Rise and Decline of Commercial Art in Australia," *History*, Volume 28, no.3 (September 2015): 219–234.

[7] Tony Fry, *Design History Australia: A Source Text in Methods and Resources* (Sydney: Hale & Ironmonger, 1988), 43

STEP'N GROW PFC 10


Mentholatum
"Deep Heat" helps relieve muscular and rheumatic pain.
WARMS
SOOTHES
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RELIEVES
RUB OR EXTRA STRENGTH LOTION.
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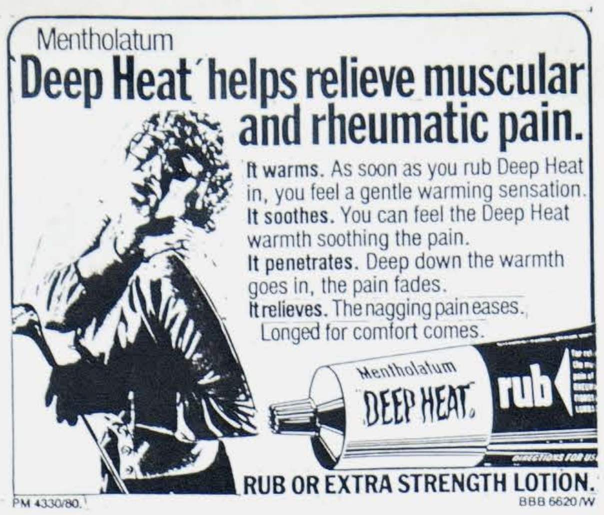
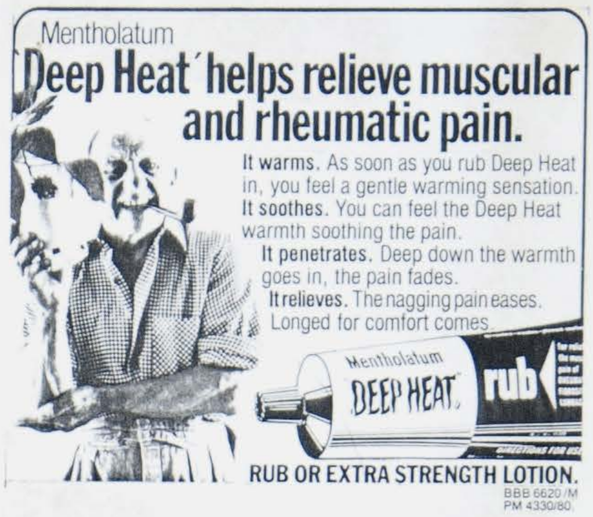

Mentholatum
'Deep Heat' helps relieve muscular and rheumatic pain.
It warms. As soon as you rub Deep Heat in, you feel a gentle warming sensation.
It soothes. You can feel the Deep Heat warmth soothing the pain.
It penetrates. Deep down the warmth goes in, the pain fades.
It relieves. The nagging pain eases. Longed for comfort comes.
RUB OR EXTRA STRENGTH LOTION.
PM 4330/80. BBB 6620/W

WOMAN.
WOMAN'S DAY 29/5/80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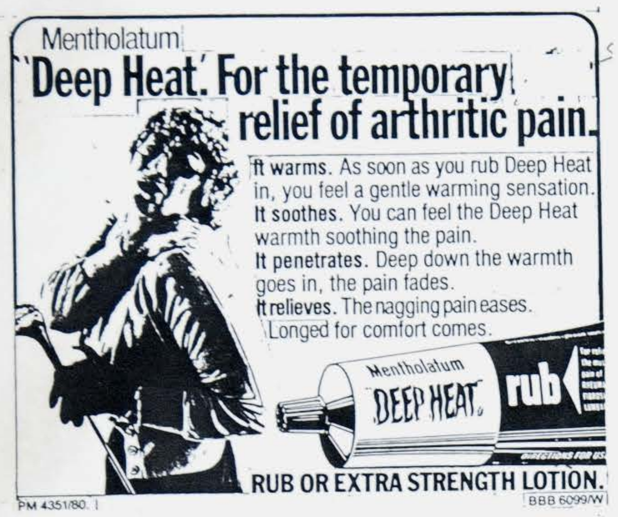
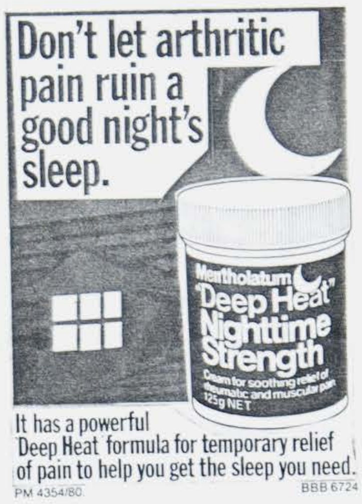
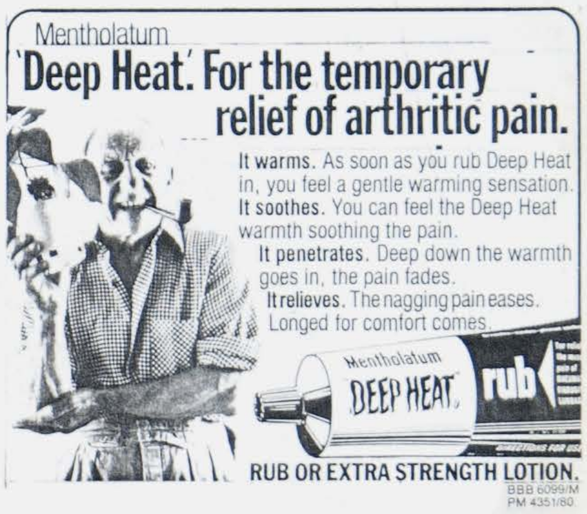
MAN
WOMAN'S DAY 1/5/80


Mentholatum
'Deep Heat.' For the temporary relief of arthritic pain.
It warms. As soon as you rub Deep Heat in, you feel a gentle warming sensation.
It soothes. You can feel the Deep Heat warmth soothing the pain.
It penetrates. Deep down the warmth goes in, the pain fades.
It relieves. The nagging pain eases. Longed for comfort comes.
RUB OR EXTRA STRENGTH LOTION.
PM 4351/80. BBB 6099/W


Don't let arthritic pain ruin a good night's sleep.
Mentholatum "Deep Heat" Nighttime Strength
125g NET
It has a powerful 'Deep Heat' formula for temporary relief of pain to help you get the sleep you need.
PM 4354/80. BBB 6724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RUB OR EXTRA STRENGTH LOTION.
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MAN

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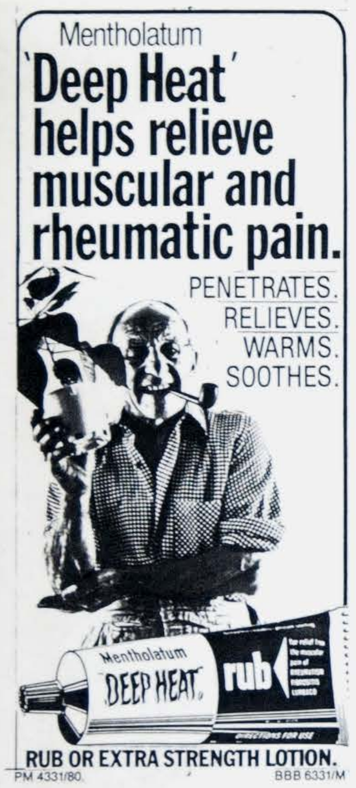
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'Deep Heat' helps relieve muscular and rheumatic pain.
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RELIEVES.
WARMS.
SOOTHES.
RUB OR EXTRA STRENGTH LOTION.
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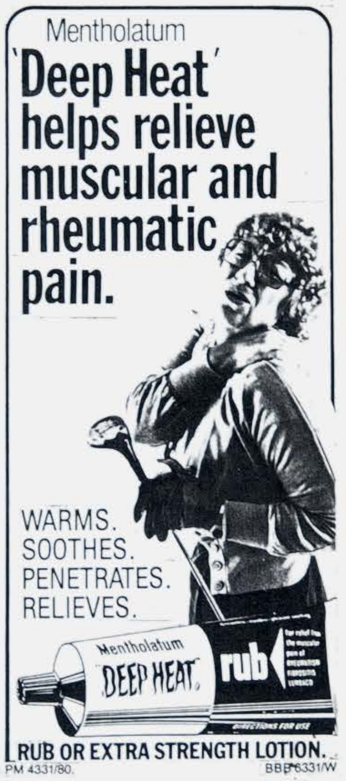
MAN


Mentholatum
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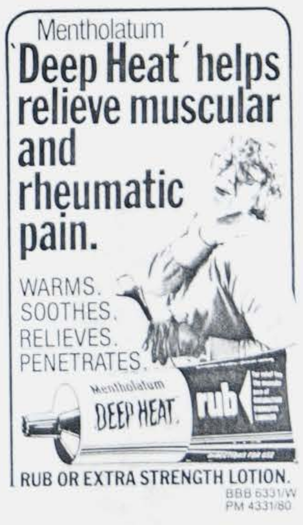
WARMS.
SOOTHES.
PENETRATES.
RELIEVES.
RUB OR EXTRA STRENGTH LOTION.
PM 4331/80. BBB 6331/W

WOMAN

1/6 p. 12·6 x 5·5 cm.
8/80

FAMILY CIRCLE.
1/6 PAGE.
12·6 x 5·5 cm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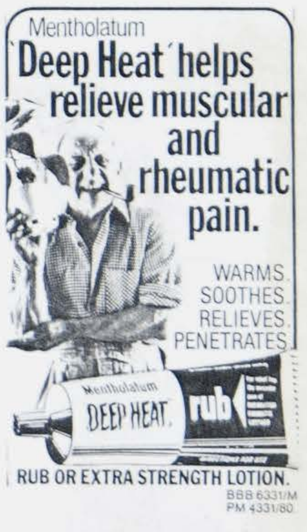
WOMAN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RUB OR EXTRA STRENGTH LOTION.
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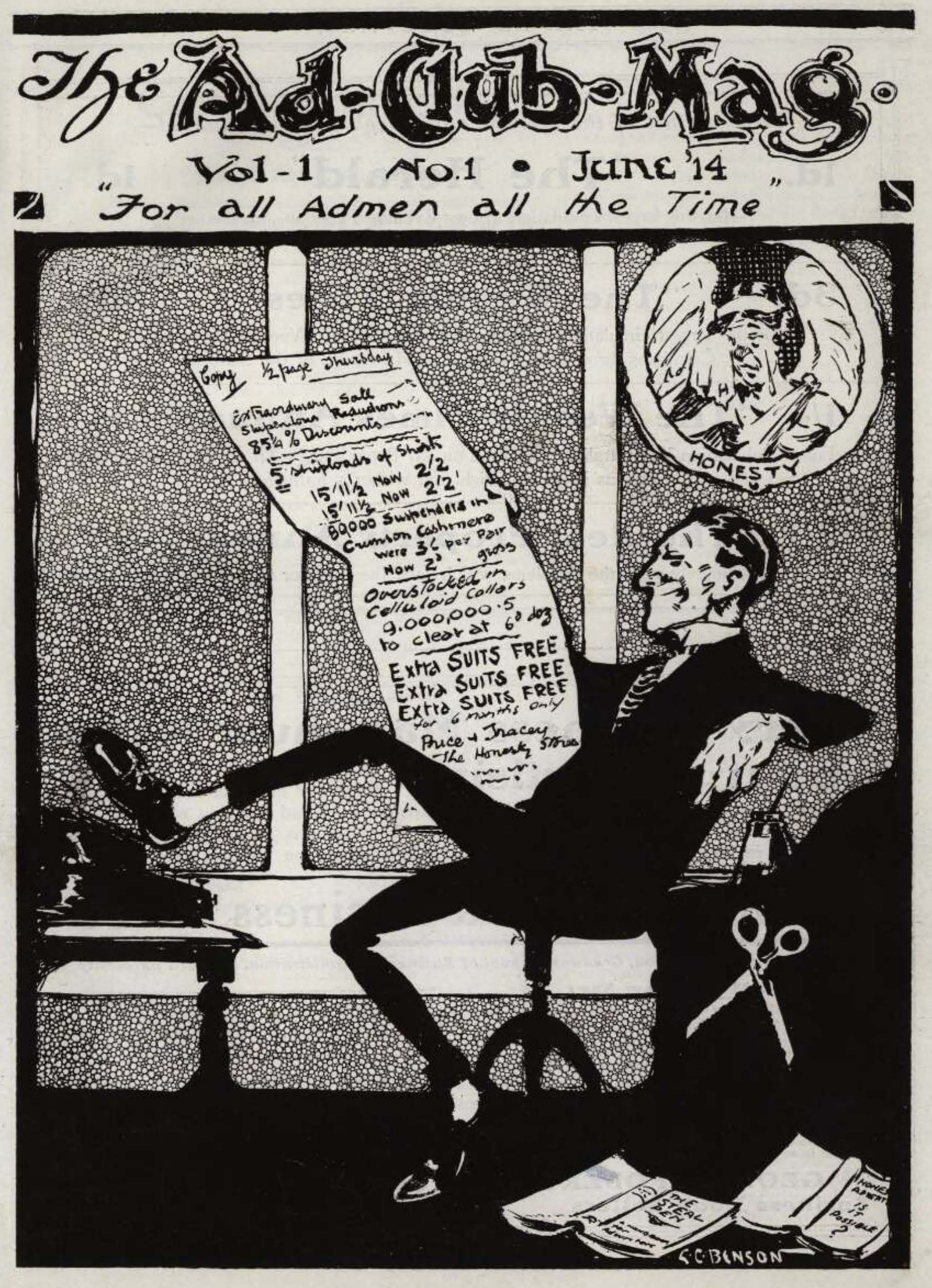
MAN

WOMAN'S DAY 8 x 11.5 cms.



Australian Advertising between the wars

Jackie Dickenson

PEER REVIEWED ESSAY

In October 1920, the author of a review in Brisbane's *Daily Mail* welcomed the increased use of the visual in advertising. The subject of the review was a display of advertising at the Second Annual Convention of the Advertising Association of Australia (AAA), which had recently been staged in Sydney. The reviewer compared the items on display with earlier advertising, which featured 'a page of a daily newspaper containing two-line ads, crammed in as tightly as they will be'.

This new display showed that modern advertising in Australia had reached a level of appeal that previously 'had not been thought to exist in Australian advertising art'. The high standard of the illustration work demonstrated that the local industry had finally realised that appeals to 'the human emotions and instincts' were 'the potent factor in the selling value of an ad'. It was further claimed that the work now compared favourably to American advertising art in its 'beauty, colour and production'. The review also drew attention to the importance of typography in advertising: 'some very beautiful effects can be obtained merely by the skilful placing of various kinds of type'.[1]

The review made no mention of photography, the visual form that would supersede the illustration in advertising, but the exhibition at the next convention, held in Melbourne the following year, featured a section 'devoted to photographs, which advertising men largely use'.[2] By 1935, the shift from illustration to photography had escalated to the extent that permanent positions in advertising were becoming increasingly hard for artists to secure.[3] The shift would never be complete, however. Artists would retain their place in the industry, albeit a less secure place and in vastly reduced numbers.

This article traces the place of art and the artist in the Australian advertising industry between the wars, as the industry responded to unprecedented technological change. It pays particular attention to the establishment and application of the Australian Advertising Association's art education programme and the impact of the designer of that programme, Edward Charles Perugini (1882–1956), whose experiences as an art student in turn-of-the-century London helped to shape advertising art education and practice in Australia for more than half a century.

At the start of the twentieth century, advertising art involved illustration work, typography, layout and design, and was, in effect, a sub-branch of the rapidly emerging occupational category, 'Commercial Art'. In his study of the 'genealogy of graphic design', the design educator Alan S Young found that those graphic designers he interviewed claimed professional status by differentiating themselves from their precursors, the commercial artists of the first half of the twentieth century, who, the designers argued, had been plying 'a trade' rather than pursuing 'a profession'. Commercial artists might have baulked a little at this simplistic formulation. It might be true that 'commercial art never constituted an actual discourse of its own' (unlike graphic design) but there is little doubt that commercial artists did, in fact, at various times in the twentieth century, move to professionalise their occupation.[4]

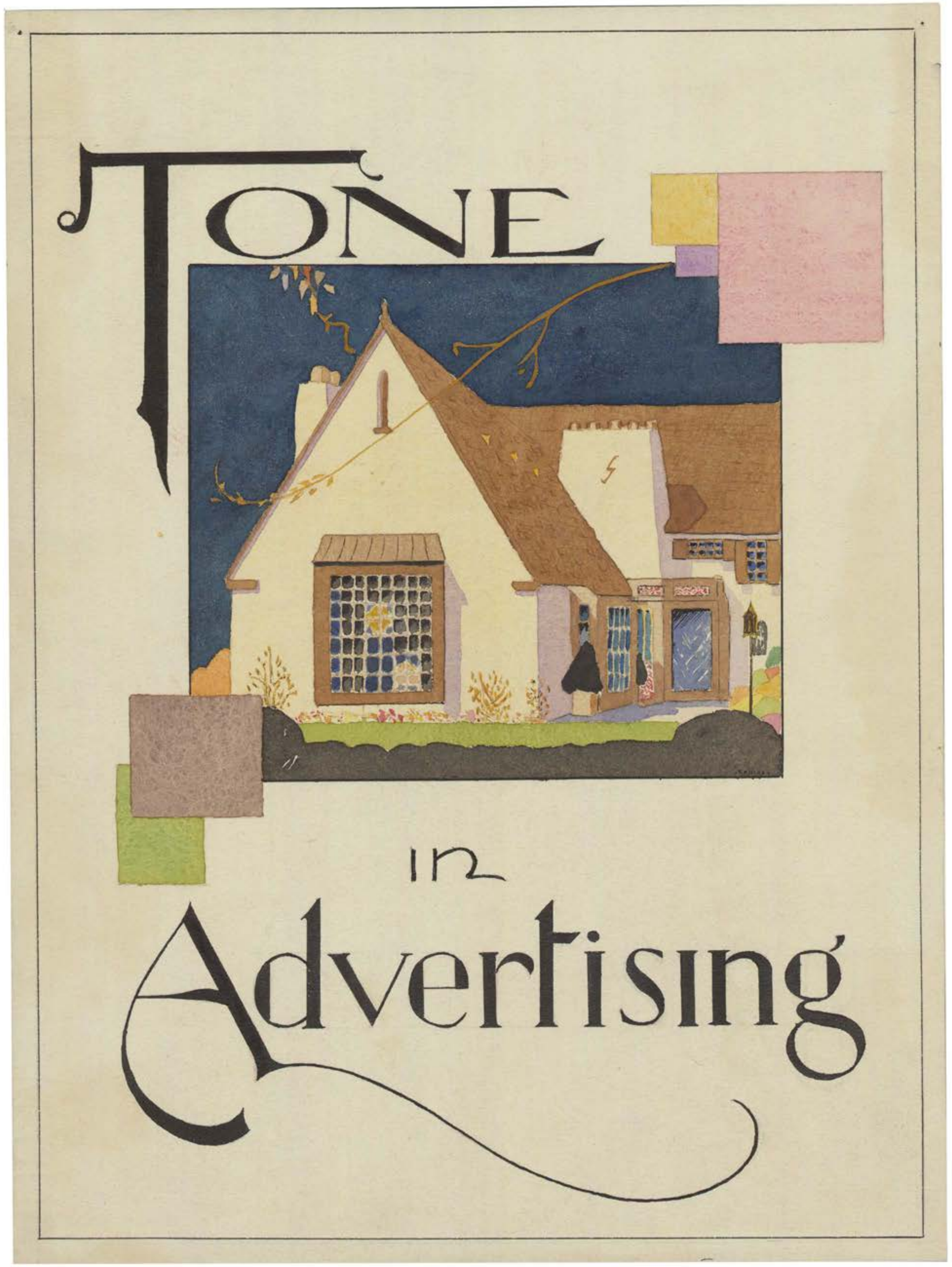
The professionalisation of any occupation typically includes the formation of an association to control and regulate membership through the payment of fees and the application of minimum education standards. Some commercial artists first attempted to organise at the start of the twentieth century by joining the Australian Writers and Artists Union (AWAU), which had been formed to stand up to the power of the newspaper proprietors: the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA) absorbed the AWAU in 1913. Further attempts to organise were intermittent and broadly unsuccessful (beyond the organisation of group shows) until the formation of the Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists' Association (ACIAA) in 1938.[5]

The application of minimum education standards was similarly haphazard, but the trajectory of commercial art education in the first half of the twentieth century can be viewed (very broadly) as one of rapid expansion, accompanied by moves to standardise curricula and examinations, in the years immediately following the First World War, then a rapid decline and consolidation from the time of the Depression in the early 1930s. Before the war, artists had been trained using a system that saw no differentiation between 'art for art's sake' (fine art) and 'applied art' (art produced for commercial and communication purposes). Graduates of the state-supported Technical Schools, and of private art schools such as Julian Ashton's Art School, called themselves 'artists' and worked across both spheres, supporting their fine art by producing illustrations for newspapers and commercial art studios.

This shifted after the First World War. Fuelled by the improvements in printing techniques and the expansion of manufacturing in Australia, especially by the big international brands, and the proliferation of design work that followed, the category of advertising artist or visualiser began to emerge and consolidate. The *Daily Mail* review's

Opposite
The Ad Club Magazine, Vol. 1, No. 1, June 1914, Melbourne : Ad Club of Victoria, 1914-1914, courtesy National Library of Australia

Previous Spread
Page from Mentholatum scrapbook "Deep Heat" advertisements, c. 1989, Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016 0012.2016.0010



Opposite
John T Collins,
Tone in Advertising
1932-33, student drawing,
courtesy State Library of
Victoria

observations about the improvement in Australian advertising art reflect these changes. Enhanced printing techniques made a new higher standard of design possible in mass production, and magazines such as *Home* and *Art in Australia* used these improvements to introduce a higher standard of illustration work, typography, design and printing to Australian advertising and publishing more generally. Also influential were the wartime recruitment posters produced for the government by artists such as James Northfield and Harry Weston, which had shown how bold design and colour work could enhance the impact and memorability of advertising messages.[6]

In the wake of this impetus, and the inclusion of Commercial Art training in the repatriation scheme (perhaps an additional indication of fledgling professional status), three levels of commercial art training emerged in the major Australian cities: the technical school, the privately-run commercial art school, and the business school offering commercial art classes.[7] Expansion was swift. The city's first School of Applied Art had opened at the Working Men's College in Melbourne in 1917. Three years later, the returned soldier and former Victorian National Gallery School student, Cyril Leyshon White opened his Commercial Art School – slogan 'Art that pays' – at 226 Little Collins Street, Melbourne. In Sydney, the artist JV Hall's School and the School of Applied Advertising specialised in advertising art. The big business colleges – Stott's, Bradshaw & Everett's, the Metropolitan Business College – all introduced commercial art classes around this time. Correspondence classes, including those provided by the Working Men's College and the International Correspondence School, made it possible to educate large numbers of students. After graduating with diplomas, artists worked for advertising agencies and, sometimes, in in-house studios at commercial businesses. Newspapers remained important training grounds for commercial artists.[8]

The Advertising Association of Australia and Art Education

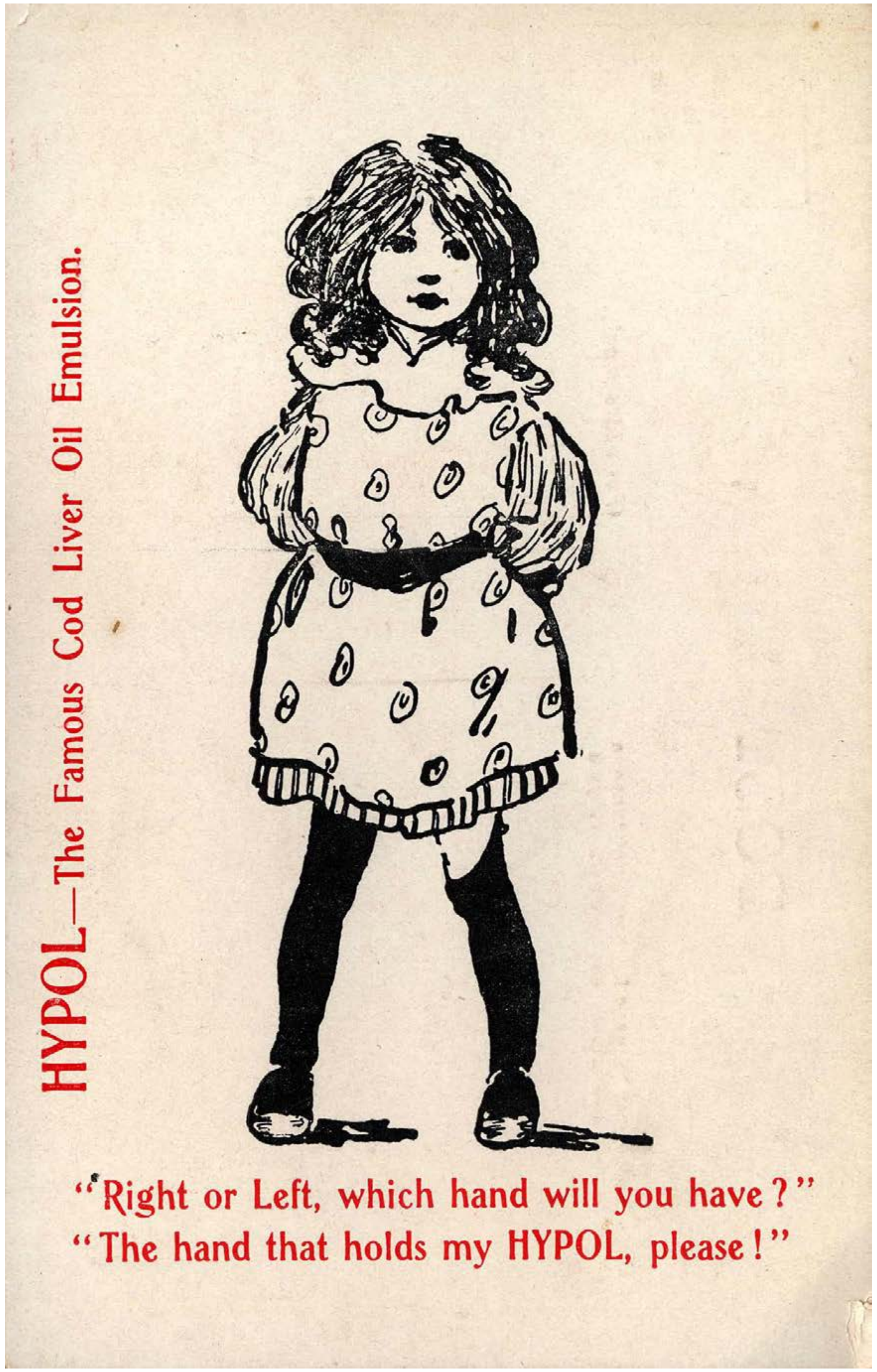
As part of a push to professionalise the advertising industry, and improve its efficiency and reputation, the newly formed Advertising Association of Australia (AAA) began to reflect on the question of how advertising worked. At the Third Advertising Convention, held in Melbourne in 1921, EJW Caldecoat, an AAA member based in Brisbane, discussed the comparative values of copy and illustration to effective advertising; the former was found wanting. Caldecoat argued that illustration was one of the most important factors in advertising, because 'a picture will always attract more attention than words'. The consumer found reading an image far easier than reading copy: the 'whole story' could be told 'at a glance', and studies had found that a picture was 'four times more effective than words'.[9]

Rules were formed, prescribing the correct way to illustrate an advertisement. These included ideas about the ways in which an advertisement might best connect with the individual consumer. Advertisers should move away from 'still drawings' of the goods, Caldecoat argued. Advertisements worked harder when they showed 'the human touch', where human figures were using the goods. These should be depicted 'in action' – using or wearing the goods – especially when advertising men's clothes, because 'the shirt is – well, a shirt'. Women should also be pictured in the advertisements aimed at them, but it was noted that they could be shown standing passively because their 'blouses probably have distinctive style features'.[10] Forty years later, proponents of the so-called Creative Revolution would argue that advertisers were failing to connect with consumers; that they spoke about themselves in their advertisements rather than showing consumers what the product could do for them; how it could make them feel. Caldecoat's chapter shows that Australian advertising experts had long recognised the importance of engaging *with* consumers rather than lecturing *to* them.

It is safe to assume that Edward Perugini, the chair of the AAA's newly formed Federal Education Board, approved Caldecoat's chapter before it was published in the Convention's report. The Advertising Association had first moved to develop an advertising education program in 1919, in an attempt to standardise advertising education and improve advertising efficiency. Perugini was charged with developing this education program, which included commercial art, typography, layout, design and printing. Born in England in 1882, Perugini belonged to an artistic Anglo-Italian family: his uncle Charles Edward Perugini, a renowned portrait painter, had married Kate Dickens, the famous author's youngest daughter (and also a respected artist) in 1874. His grandfather, Leonardo Perugini and his half-sister, Madame Campbell Perugini had been influential singing teachers. Perugini would later recall meeting prominent poets and opera singers at his half-sister's salon.[11]

Before sailing for Australia in 1906, Perugini studied at London's South Kensington School of Art, an experience that shaped his work on the advertising curriculum. Perugini's subsequent reverence for systemic training, for standardised classes and rigid examination, had its roots in his time at South Kensington. This reverence would serve well the structure and delivery of advertising education in Australia, although, as we shall see, Perugini's hostility towards the more experimental forms of modernism, also learned at South Kensington, might have been of less benefit to the industry.

South Kensington (then officially named the National Art Training School and now the Royal College of Art) was London's preeminent industrial art school. Administered by the Department of Science and Art, the school had been established to provide design education in aid of the manufacturing industry. Its method of teaching became known as the 'South Kensington system'. Its syllabus was based on twenty subjects, including antique (drawing from plaster casts) and life classes. Students were expected to present highly finished drawings (including laborious background stippling), paintings, and models, to write papers on various art topics, and to sit for 'rigid and thorough examinations'.[12] With its emphasis on industrial design, the school provided only limited training for artists: it offered no classes in figure composition, and paid little attention to the use of colour or the handling of paint. In 1871 the art critic John Ruskin condemned South Kensington for the rigidity of its training, and fine artists began to seek training elsewhere, in London and on the Continent.[13]


HYPOL—The Famous Cod Liver Oil Emulsion.
"Right or Left, which hand will you have?"
"The hand that holds my HYPOL, please!"

Right
HYPOL – The Famous Cod Liver Oil Emulsion, postcard, (1918), courtesy State Library of Victoria

Having completed his studies, Perugini sailed to Australia in 1906 armed with an introductory letter to his maternal uncle, Stanley Hunter, the chief geologist in Victoria's Department of Mines. The 24-year-old found work as an advertising manager and, in 1914, was part of the group of advertising men that formed the Victorian Institute of Advertising Men (VIAM).[14] The Institute affiliated with the AAA in 1918, and Perugini commenced work on the Association's education program after the first Advertising Convention, held in Brisbane in 1919. By 1921, he and his committee of two had prepared a draft education program for the approval of the members gathered for the Melbourne Convention. Topics in art and design appeared in three sections of the draft curriculum: Advertising Construction; Printing; and Commercial Art. Across the two-year graduate course, students studied the following topics: Principles of Design and Layout; Balance; Harmony; Proportion; Typographical Balance; Balance of Type and Illustration; Line Drawings–Black and White, Colour Line, Stipples; Wash Drawings – Black and White Combination Line and Wash; Colours – Oil Painting, Water Colour, Chalk (for 3 or 4 Colour Processes and Lithography); Photography – Retouching, Air Brush; Theory of Design; Theory of Colour; Theory of Tone; Relation of Art to Advertising Process Work and Printing – Suitability of Various Art Processes to Advertising; Rough Sketching, Ideas for Press Advertisements, Posters, Show Cards, etc. Students learned how to brief printers and illustrators, and were expected to produce rough layouts of advertisements in the examination.[15]

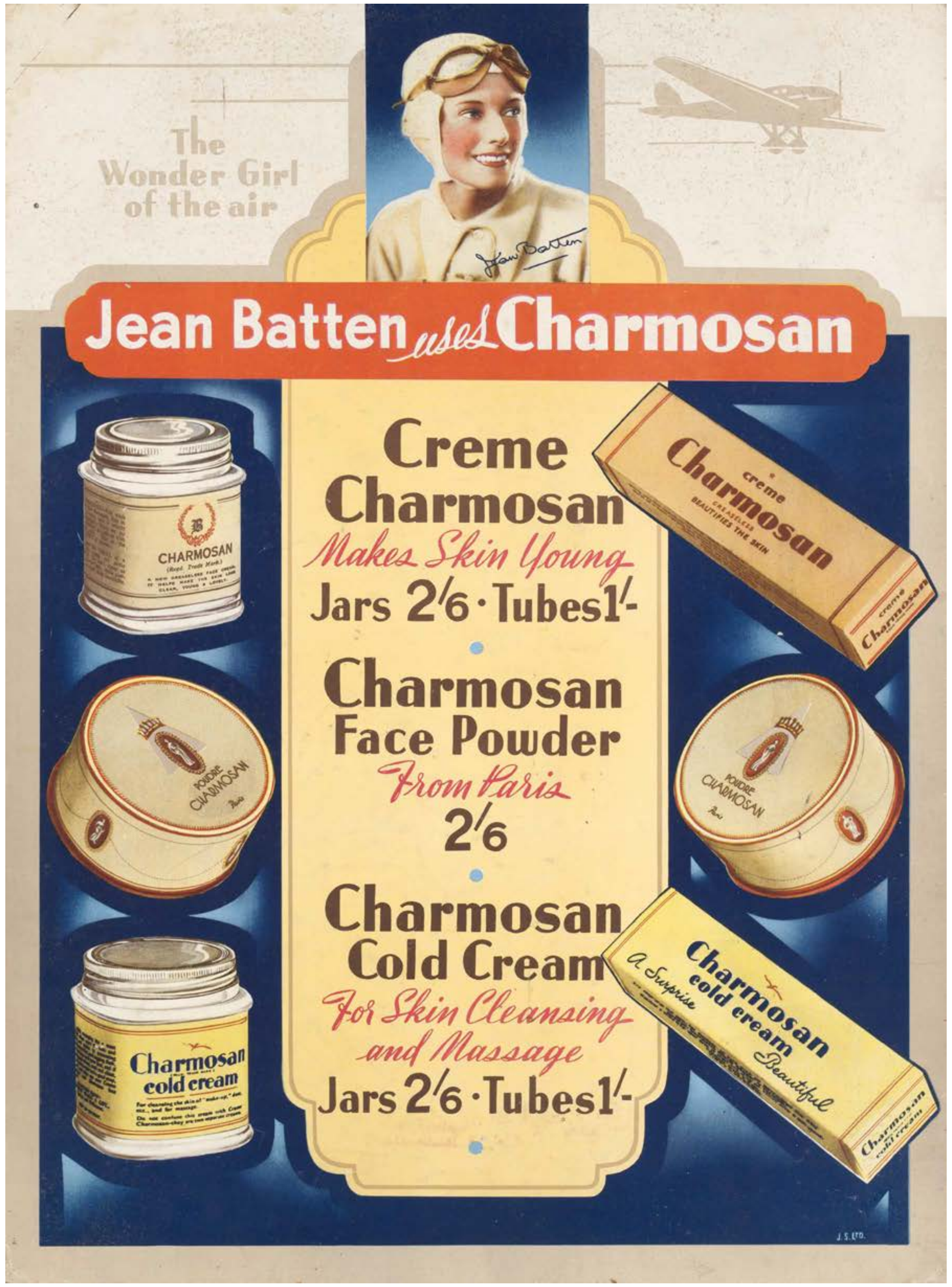
The texts prescribed in the draft curriculum included Ernest A Batchelder's (wrongly printed as 'Bachelor') *Principles of Design* (Chicago, 1911); Steven Spurrier's *Black and White: a Manual of Illustration* (London, 1909); James Ward's *Colour Harmony and Contrast* (London, 1903); and two magazines: *Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art* (1893–1964) and *Colour* (1914–32).[16] *Studio* showcased works in the Art Nouveau style, which was long out of fashion by 1921, and from the Arts and Crafts movement, which had also been on the wane. Perugini's selection of *Studio* is unsurprising. The Arts and Crafts movement was preeminent at South Kensington during his time there (possibly from 1900, when he would have been aged 18). *Colour* magazine was a more progressive choice, and its inclusion reveals Perugini to be in touch with current trends. *Colour* featured 'an eclectic mix of short stories, poetry and articles about art, alongside colour reproductions of contemporary British artists, including the Camden Town Group and the London Group. The Camden Town Group's work has been described as 'modern, but not modernist in style'; this might also describe Perugini's approach to art in advertising.[17] In a section of his curriculum called 'General Information', students studied 'the Arts: Graphic, Music, Literature (National, International, Australian)', and were asked in the ensuing examination to address the question: 'To what is due the modern trend of Art and Literature from traditional forms? On what reasons do you base your opinion?'[18] Students trained in the AAA's scheme were expected to understand the origins of 'modern' responses to industrialisation and urbanisation that had occurred in art and literature, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

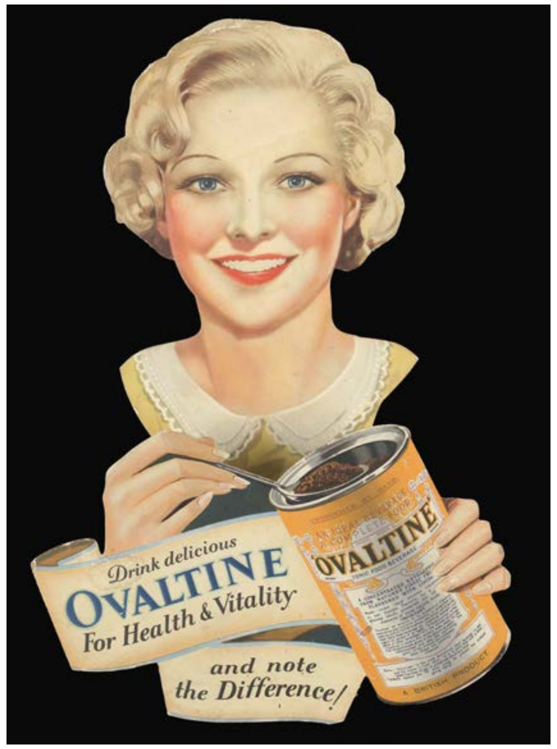
Perugini's interest, however, was in 'the modern trend' rather than 'modernism' *per se*. In other words, he rejected, uncompromisingly, more adventurous examples of modern art in advertising, but the 'decorative modernism' of Australian artists such as Thea Proctor (whose work featured prominently in advertising in the 1920s) would have offended him less. As the historian Robert Crawford has shown, Perugini (and many of his colleagues) viewed modern art through a racialised lens: it was 'base' and 'savage', and unworthy of the 'superior' 'white race'. His fears of unrestrained modern art were connected to the belief that advertising had a crucial role to play in the national project, in maintaining morality and building nationalist sentiment. These were widely held fears at the time, linked to unbridled industrialisation and the increasing buying power of the working classes.[19] Indeed, South Kensington had been founded in the mid-nineteenth century in order to temper industrialisation with the beauty of good design. In his 1912 discussion of art training at the school, Frank P Brown observed that because 'we are passing through a commercial epoch', students needed to be educated in 'GOOD TASTE', which meant understanding proportion and ensuring the 'fitness of purpose' of the objects they designed. By rendering industrialisation less brutal and by insisting that the human element be maintained, the artisan could then take pride in his craft.[20] Perugini's family background as well as his time at South Kensington had convinced him that beauty and good taste could mitigate the ugly proclivities of modernity, a belief that underpinned his work on the AAA's curriculum.

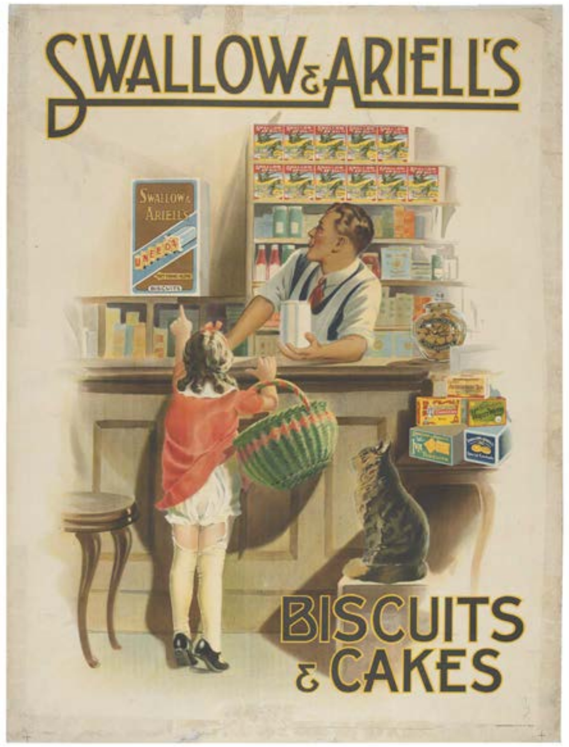
The Artist in the Agency

Perugini's education program was formally launched in 1924; applications to sit the examinations grew slowly across the decade. The examinations drew criticism from fellow advertising men at the 1930 Advertising Convention, but it was the General Knowledge section that upset them: the art component drew no criticism at all.[21]

To what degree did Perugini's views on art in advertising permeate the Australian advertising industry? The influence of the AAA's curriculum on art and design in Australian advertising agencies is hard to establish. Most advertising artists, designers and visualisers were not trained through the AAA's programme, but rather learnt their craft through specialist art and design courses in the Technical Schools or the privately-run art schools.[22] The AAA's education program produced mostly advertising managers, through specialist advertising courses offered by the various Technical Schools and the private business colleges, including Hemingway & Robertson, where Perugini worked as the advertising manager from 1931. Nevertheless, these advertising managers would eventually be responsible for hiring artists and visualisers to work in advertising agencies – both permanent and freelance – as well as having the final word on what should be presented to their clients. Their views on the place of the visual in advertising affected the finished advertisement in indirect ways; Perugini and his program helped to form these views. Business students at the Hemingway Robertson Institute were told: 'You may not be an artist but you can know what constitutes effective advertis-







Opposite
John Sands, printer, *Jean Batten Uses Charmosan*, showcard, (1920), Gift of Mr Nicolaas van Roosendael 1997, courtesy State Library of Victoria

Left
Drink Delicious OVALTINE For Health & Vitality and Note the Difference! (ca. 1930), showcard, Gift of Mr Nicolaas van Roosendael 1997, courtesy State Library of Victoria

Right
Osboldstone & Co. Printers, SWALLOW & ARIELL'S BISCUITS & CAKES, (ca. 1921–1930), poster Gift of Mr Nicolaas van Roosendael 1997, courtesy State Library of Victoria

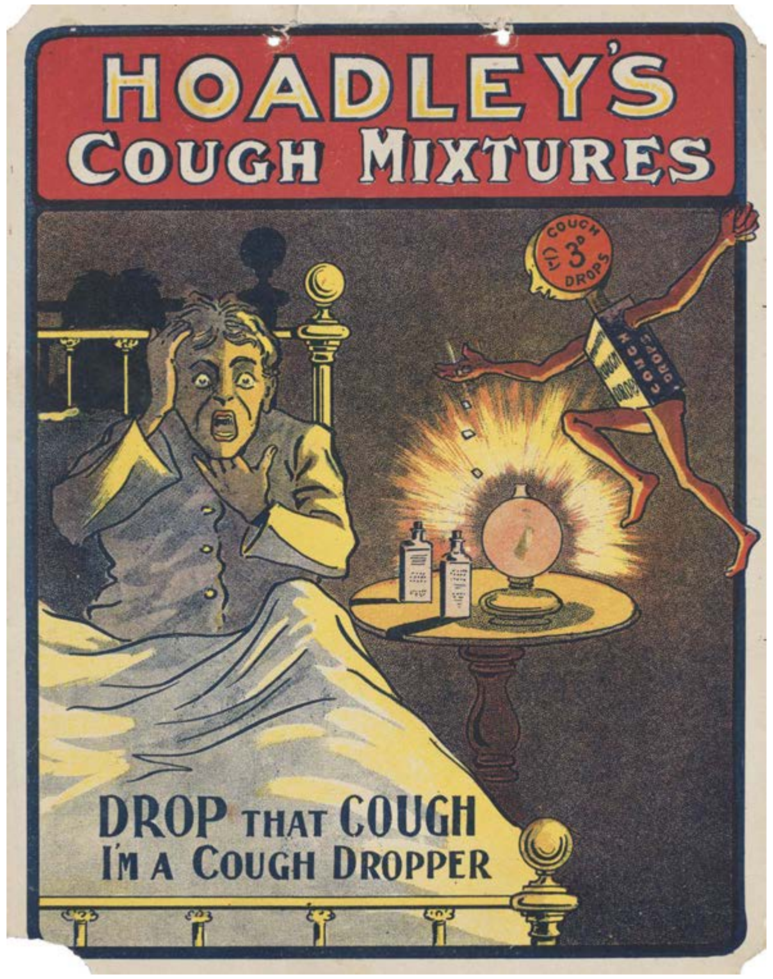
ing art … The business executive needs to understand … the essentials of good copy and layout.' It is likely that Perugini himself wrote those words.[23]

In 1935, the art critic Harold Herbert noted the reduction of employment opportunities for the visualiser in advertising as a result of the shift to photography. The increasing popularity of radio exacerbated this reduction because, of course, the visualiser had no role to play in this new advertising medium. Advertisements of the 1930s sometimes featured montages of photography and hand-drawn illustrations, but, as photography gained in popularity, the work of the visualiser began to recede from the pages of the newspaper and the magazine. The reduction of opportunities, however, did not mean the visualiser had no place at all in the agency, far from it. Illustration remained important to the advertising business, but its role was now restricted to more specific tasks within the advertising agency, notably for presentation, approval and briefing purposes. The work of illustrators was more likely to be used in the preliminary stages of the preparation of a campaign, rather than as a prominent element of the published advertisement. Visualisers were employed – as permanent staff, alongside finished artists, in the studios of the larger advertising agencies, or as freelancers – to produce rough sketches of advertisements for approval by clients and, when approval was obtained, to brief photographers, typographers, finished artists and printers. These 'roughs' as they were known needed to be of an excellent standard given the poor visual imagination of most clients. Roughs had to communicate the idea behind the advertisement and approximate as closely as possible the way the printed advertisement might look when printed in the newspaper or magazine. From this point on, if the finished advertisement required an illustration rather than a photograph (as a small number continued to do), the task would be given to specialist illustrators, predominantly freelancers. By the mid-1930s, however, permanent work for visualisers was becoming harder to find. As the economy contracted during the Depression, agencies struggled – some merged, others were taken over, and many simply closed. In this tough climate, work opportunities plateaued. The expansion in the training of commercial artists also drew to a close. The new larger agencies tended to back their preferred training organisations. The School of Applied Advertising in Sydney and the Art Training Institute (ATI) in Melbourne thus became the preferred source of artists for the leading agencies. The ATI, for example, advertised its relationship with the big agencies, noting that in-house artists had developed its curriculum.[24] The space for independent training schools reduced as a result, and many closed for good. Commercial art education became increasingly the task of the government-funded Technical Schools in the major cities.[25]

Advertising folklore has it that, in this period, agency writers would develop the concepts and write the copy, before slipping their scribbles under the studio door for the visualisers to execute. In other words, visualisers were excluded from ideas generation and were employed only to render the writers' concepts. This would change from the early 1960s in America and later in the same decade in Australia, when the importance of the human element to successful advertising was rediscovered.[26]

The certainties provided by a shift to market research from the 1930s had convinced manufacturers that they understood consumers' desires better than consumers themselves. A top-down communication had developed that infantilised and alienated consumers, especially the younger less conservative, better-educated generation that emerged in the years after the Second World War. American advertising practitioners such as Bill Bernbach and Mary Wells reframed advertising as a relationship, an exchange between equals. The Creative Revolution or New Advertising, as it was variously known, embraced the use of concise language, and humour, wit and warmth, to communicate directly with consumers, treating them once again as intelligent human beings. Advertisements now had to engage with consumers, to entertain them, in order to connect them to the brand and move them to purchase.

A critical element of this shift was the expectation that the visual should work harder than previously, now working together with the headline and body copy to complete the idea behind the advertisement. The visual – illustration or photograph – had reached a new level of importance in



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HOADLEY'S COUGH MIXTURES: DROP THAT COUGH. I'M A COUGH DROPPER, c. 1930, showcard, Gift of Mr Nicolaas van Roosendael 1997, courtesy State Library of Victoria

advertising. Now it was equal to the copy: the two worked hand-in-hand to communicate the idea. Bernbach's work for Volkswagen motorcars is the preeminent example of this: the copy made no sense without the visual, and vice versa. Moreover, the human element in advertising rose again to take precedence over science or pure reason, perhaps not in the literal sense, as with Caldecoat's prescription that every advertisement should depict a human being, but certainly from the perspective that together the visual and the copy should engage the reader's interest with a higher level of intimacy and emotion, 'the human touch', than had been the norm in the highly rational 1940s and 1950s.

To achieve this new formulation, the traditional agency structure was reconfigured; the creative department came into being. A new role emerged in the agency – that of the art director – who was not only was responsible for the visual aspects of an advertisement or a campaign (the presentation rough, the photograph, the typography, the layout and design), but also, increasingly, played a role in the development of the idea behind the advertisement. Visualisers were taken out from the studio, renamed art directors, given broader responsibilities (including liaising with photographers, directors, typographers, and finished artists), and paired with copywriters to develop concepts, design the advertisement, and oversee its production.[27]

Edward Perugini died in 1956, a decade before the Creative Revolution arrived in Australia – but he would have approved of its broad aims and its methodology. He had spent his working life in advertising and advertising education, but when he was not working, he pursued those interests that had moved him to study at the South Kensington industrial art school, interests he shared with members of his extended family.

From his arrival in Melbourne, Perugini threw himself into the city's literary and artistic life, publishing essays and poetry in influential journals, such as *Lone Hand* and *The Spinner*, and lecturing on poetry, including to the Roycrofters' Society, an influential Arts and Crafts organisation. His lyrics were also performed on the musical stage.[28] This commitment to the arts endured throughout his life; in 1951 the *Argus* interviewed Perugini about his hobbies, which included manuscript illumination, particularly of his own poems.[29] He had remained working at Hemingway & Robertson and was still playing an active role in the college's 'Editorial Faculty' well into the 1950s. He had also remained the Chairman of the Advertising Education Board until at least 1945 and continued to sit on the Advertising Association's General Council. In 1948 he was awarded a life membership of the Association.

A product of his upbringing in the artistic milieu of turn-of-the-century London and the influential, if rigid, South Kensington system, Perugini brought the tastes and values he had learned in his youth to Australia and applied them to the systematic training of Australian advertising artists. On his death, the AAA acknowledged his significance to the development of Australian advertising by naming its award for the best student, the E. C. Perugini award.[30]

Endnotes

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3 Harold Herbert, "Art," *Brisbane Courier*, April 13, 1935, 17.

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6 Nancy Underhill, "Smith, Sydney George Ure (1887–1949)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smith-sydney-george-ure-8485/text14925, (accessed February 28, 2017); Nancy Underhill, *Making Australian Art: Sydney Ure Smith, Patron and Publisher* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991); Kirsty Grant and Susan van Wyk, *Follow the Flag: Australian Artists and the Great War* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2015), 63; David Hansen, *Artists of the Great War* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2017), 5–6.

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8 Stephen Murray-Smith and Anthony John Dare, *The Tech: A Centenary History of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology* (South Yarra: Hyland House, 1987), 27, 191; "Advertising," *Age*, August 14, 1920, 6; "Bradshaw's College," *Herald*, January 15, 1921, 14; "Advertising," *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 2, 1927, 25. Also see the careers of the commercial artists Ralph and Betty Blunden, in Jackie Dickenson, "Nowhere Else to Work: The Left in Advertising in Australia," *Labour History*, no.108 (May 2015): 17–36; Jackie Dickenson, *Australian Advertising Women in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2016), 18.

9 Victorian Institute of Advertising Men (VIAM), *Efficiency in Advertising*, 53-58.

10 VIAM, *Efficiency in Advertising*, 57.

11 Pamela Ruskin, "Relax for Profit," *Argus*, June 29, 1951, 2.

12 http://www.victorianweb.org/art/institutions/1.html. (Accessed May 3, 2018); Young, "Commercial Art to Graphic Design," 219–34.

13 Jeanne Sheehy, "The Flight from South Kensington: British Artists at the Antwerp Academy 1877–1885," *Art History* 20, no.1 (March 1997): 124–53; Frank P. Brown, *South Kensington and its Art Training* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912), 57–63.

14 *Ad Club Mag* 1, no.1 (June 1914): 3, 11, 9, and 12.

15 VIAM, *Efficiency in Advertising*, 137–8.

16 http://arts-search.com/review/colour-magazine.html. (Accessed May 3, 2018).

17 http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/history-and-reception-r1106458. (Accessed May 3, 2018)

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19 John F. Williams, *The Quarantined Culture: Australian Reactions to Modernism, 1913-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 168; Caroline Ambrus, *Australian Women Artists: First Fleet to 1945: History, Hearsay and Her Say* (Woden, ACT: Irrepressible Press, c1992), 124; Robert Crawford, *But Wait There's More...: A History of Australian Advertising 1900–2000*, 56, quoting *Advertiser's Monthly* 1, no. 9 (December 1929): 5; "High Art or Low Art?," *Argus*, December 4, 1939, 6; William Moore, "Art and Artists: Modern Art again," *Brisbane Courier*, October 5, 1929, 27; Edward Perugini, "Power of Publicity: Process Exhibition Opened," *Herald*, August 30, 1921, 7.

20 Brown, *South Kensington*, 57–63.

21 "Benefits of Advertising," *Western Star and Roma Advertiser*, July 5, 1933, 1; "Advertising Association of Australia," *Advocate*, March 5, 1935, 1; Hemingway and Robertson, *The Guide to Careers in Business* (Melbourne: Hemingway & Robertson, 1940) 21, 71.

22 "Technical Schools," *Age*, October 17, 1934, 13; Young, "Commercial Art to Graphic Design," 219–34.

23 Hemingway Robertson Institute, *Reading Guide to Text Advertising* (Melbourne: HRI, c.1953), Circular, 6.

24 "Advertisement," *Table Talk*, March 24, 1928, 46; "School of Applied Advertising," *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 24, 1938, 10. The ATI advertised its relationship with the big agencies, whose in-house artists had developed its curriculum.

25 For details of the Commercial Art Course offered at Melbourne Technical College, see *School of Applied Art: Prospectus* (Melbourne: MTC, 1940), 7.

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29 Ruskin, "Relax for Profit," *Argus*, June 29, 1951, 2.

30 "Advertising Association of Australia," *Advocate*, March 5, 1935, 1; "Personal," *Argus*, December 16, 1937, 4; "Advertising Assn.," *Examiner*, December 10, 1948, 5; Ruskin, "Relax for Profit," *Argus*, June 29, 1951, 2. Perugini was also Vice President of the Victorian Institute of Business Sales and Management in this period, *Who's Who in Australia*, 1944, 663; "Institute Formed: Sales and Business Management," *Argus*, October 7, 1932, 5; "Personal Announcements," *Argus*, September 27, 1956, 11; Geoff Wild, interview by Robert Crawford, 1489342, National Film & Sound Archive, Canberra, Australia.

644

Active Service

ON THE
INDUSTRIAL FRONT

- Wanted for Munitions Manufacture! Alert intelligent men, 21 years and over, able to use tools or machinery, for TECHNICAL SCHOOL TRAINING in SKILLED FITTING, TURNING, MACHINING, and other Engineering Trades. Previous workshop experience in engineering or allied work is an advantage. Trainees to receive the Federal Arbitration Court's Basic Wage while training!
- Also fully qualified Turners and Fitters, or first-class Machinists are required for training as PRECISION TOOL and GAUGE MAKERS. TOOL MAKERS' AWARD RATES will be paid during training!
- *Full particulars in Application Forms. Write to Technical Inspector in charge of Defence Training, Education Department, or call at the National Employment Office, 110 Queen Street, Melbourne.*

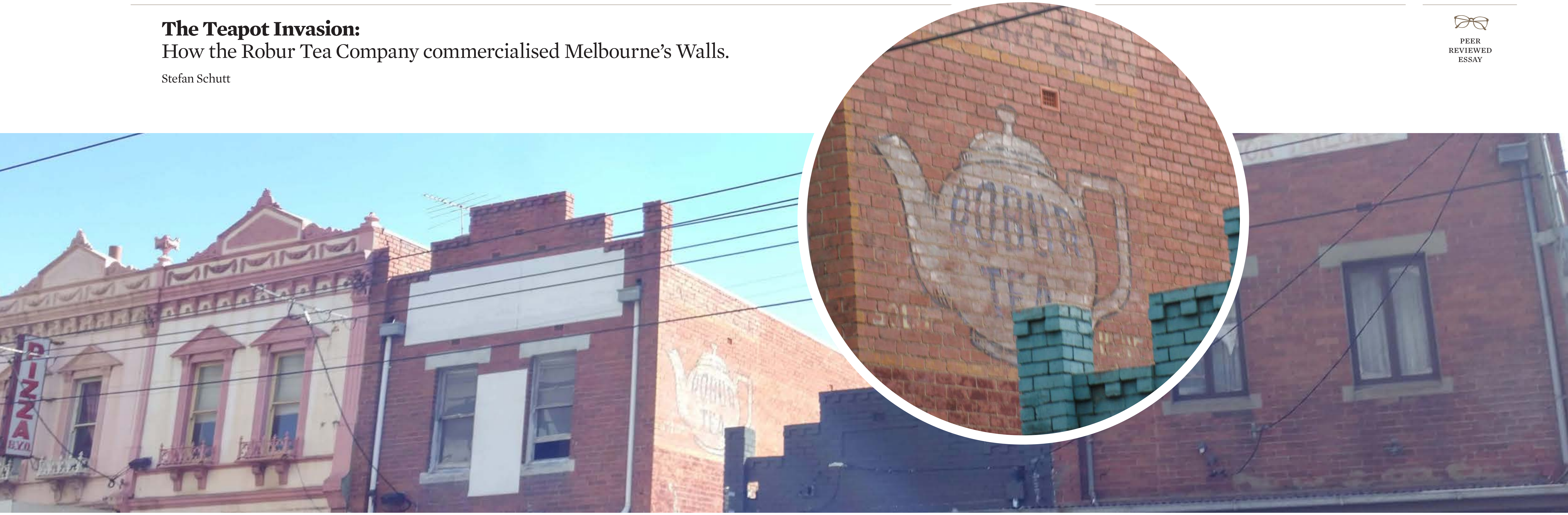
MUNITIONS TRAINEES WANTED!

This is ***YOUR*** *Opportunity!*

The Teapot Invasion:
How the Robur Tea Company commercialised Melbourne's Walls.

Stefan Schutt

PEER
REVIEWED
ESSAY



Above and Inset
Robur Tea ghost sign, Lygon Street, Brunswick East, 2017, photographer: Stefan Schutt

Previous Spread
Victorian Railways, Active Service on the Industrial Front – Munitions Trainees Wanted! (1938), poster, Gift of the Victorian Railways 1981, courtesy of the State Library of Victoria

High on the wall of an old building on Lygon Street in Brunswick East is a large painted 'ghost sign' for the Robur Tea Company. Commissioned around 1929-1930, the teapot bearing the Robur name is possibly the last surviving trace of one the most concerted and multifaceted marketing campaigns of its time. During the interwar period, hundreds, possibly even thousands, of Robur teapots were painted on walls and hoardings across Australian cities. The scale of the campaign came to light in 2012 when the records of former signwriting company Lewis & Skinner were rescued from a demolition site in Melbourne's inner west. One document from this collection details the painting of over 500 such teapots throughout metropolitan Melbourne in 1929 and 1930 alone.[1] Had the Lewis and Skinner signwriting documents ended up in landfill, we may have not known that this lonely 'ghost sign' was part of an early multifaceted marketing strategy of interest to researchers in design and commercial history.

Robur's painted teapots offer an important perspective into the past. They can teach us about the growing importance of coordinated marketing campaigns that incorporated large-scale outdoor advertising.[2] Additionally, they offer revealing insights into Australia's broader cultural history, notably ideas of Australian identity during a time of fundamental change. Purveyors of consumer products depend on their ability to gauge and respond to social change. Marketing campaigns therefore offer something of a cultural barometer of larger events (such as war and economic depression) as well as subtle changes in cultural and societal perspectives and trends. Susie Khamis describes this as 'the cultural logic of branding'.[3]

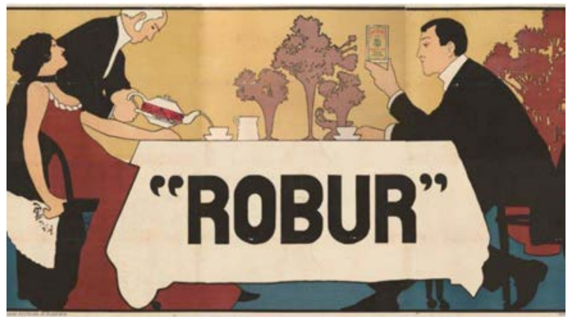
This article focuses on Melbourne as a locus of the 'teapot' campaign with a view to understanding Robur's marketing activities more generally. While the focus on Melbourne is ostensibly informed by the discovery of the Lewis and Skinner records, it also reflects Melbourne's status as Australia's premier tea distribution and consumption hub during the colonial era, and the fact that Robur's headquarters were located in the Victorian capital. However, Robur undertook elaborate marketing strategies in other states too, including its interwar 'teapot' campaign.

The Robur Tea Company was one of the few late-nineteenth century tea brands (of which there were many) that developed into household icons. An evolving roster of marketing techniques cemented Robur in the popular imagination as a solid choice for lower middle-class consumers, who were thrifty but cared about quality. These techniques included the integrated use of commercial art, catalogues, coupons, and the production and distribution of its own teapots, and, a little later, gimmickry such as the use of live elephants. The consumer narratives woven by Robur are compared here with those undertaken by Bushells, a competitor in the tea market.[4] Both brands were connected with the emergence of a new urban middle class in late Victorian and Edwardian Australia, following the gold rush and its influx of wealth. From the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, the two competitors adopted a range of marketing strategies. At times they copied one another; at other times, their respective strategies diverged. By examining the Robur campaigns and their relationship with Bushells, this article not only revisits the forgotten story of a significant national brand, it also reiterates the multifaceted contribution that commercial art has made to Australia's cultural and material heritage.

A Continent of Tea Drinkers

Tea has been central to Australian life since colonisation.[5] Indeed, the consumption and trading of tea, like tobacco, was long associated with the British Empire.[6] By the end of the nineteenth century, Australians were drinking the most tea per capita in the world: an estimated four to five kilograms per week.[7] Despite the traditional image of the outback pioneer, nearly two-thirds of Australians were living in cities or towns by 1891: a proportion greater than the United States or Canada.[8] With this new urban middle class came a nascent consumer culture. This development prompted Donald Horne to muse in *The Lucky Country* that Australia was one of the earliest countries 'to find the meaning of life in the purchase of consumer goods'.[9]

The Victorian gold rush from the early 1850s to late 1860s briefly elevated Melbourne to the status of the world's



This Page
New Seasons Robur Tea, polychrome billboard poster designed by Blamire Young, 1899. courtesy National Archives of Australia

wealthiest city.[10] It also saw the Victorian population explode from 77,000 people in 1851 to 411,000 only six years later.[11] Melbourne's built environment consequently underwent rapid development with elegant streets sporting well-appointed shops catering for a growing and newly affluent population. Such conditions would have an impact on the city's consumption patterns. Peter Griggs notes that by the late nineteenth century, nearly a third of the tea imported into Australia was drunk by Victorians.[12] This concentration of consumers and wealth also helped establish Melbourne as Australia's principal tea importation and distribution hub. Scores of tea importers, merchants and auctioneers made their living in the southern port in the 1860s and 1870s, followed by a second wave in the 1880s and early 1890s.

The Emergence of the Robur Brand

It was in this vibrant and competitive environment of the 1880s and 1890s that the Robur brand emerged. The word Robur is Latin for vitality or, variously, 'strong as an ox'. An alcoholic concoction called "Robur tea spirit" had been advertised as a health tonic in newspapers during the 1870s,[13] but 'Robur' was soon used to brand actual tea. As competition for consumers intensified, Robur, like the Oriental Tea Company, Griffith's and Bushells, developed innovative promotional strategies. These were buoyed by new packaging technologies, the rise of the department store, and the increasing gap between the production of commodities and their purchase and consumption.[14] Consumables were increasingly sold remotely in tins, jars and bottles with attractive labels, and no longer in paper bags from knowledgeable grocers. Griggs tells of tea marketers producing colour lithographs, full-page newspaper advertisements, elaborate packages and even a 25-foot high glass display case with a griffin on the top.[15]

Melbourne's rapidly growing wealth came to a sudden halt in the 1890s. An economic collapse resulted from a speculative and unsustainable property and infrastructure boom.[16] Although the financial crises peaked in 1893, the ongoing fallout was severe and protracted. As a low-cost staple and a source of everyday comfort, tea, however, continued to sell through the decade. Of the brands of packet and tinned tea, Robur soon became Melbourne's most promoted.[17]
First marketed by Melbourne tea merchants and importers Hawthorn, Rhodes & Company,[18] advertisements for this 'celebrated brand' began to appear in newspapers from 1890. Advertisements initially focused on the product's quality and purity, playing on consumers' negative past experiences with some teas, as well as contemporary quality issues with industrial food production methods.[19] Robur would reprise this theme repeatedly over the following decades. Consumption of Robur Tea by Melburnians grew through the decade, which also saw a number of new players enter the market - including Brisbane's ambitious Bushells company.

Early Robur promotions periodically included appeals to 'glamour, prestige and progress'[20] such as, the recently discovered and restored Robur poster created by William Blamire Young (better known for his watercolour art works and art criticism than his commercial art work). In 1899, Young presented two large, modern-looking poster designs to Robur's advertising manager, who ordered a thousand copies to be printed.[21] One depicts two well-to-do, relaxed-looking urban socialites being served Robur Tea by a waiter in a restaurant.

The James Service Years

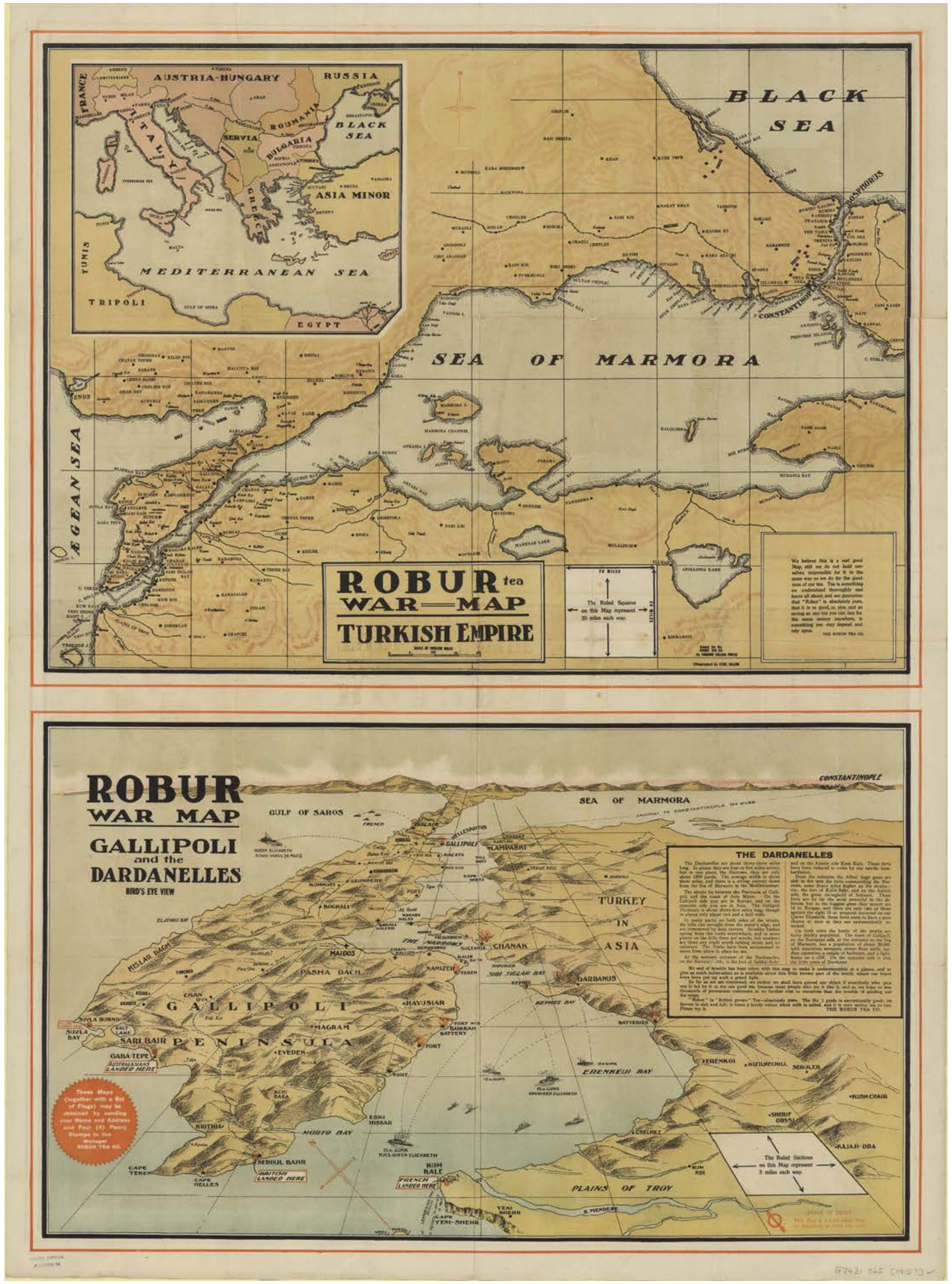
In 1900, the Robur brand was acquired by James Service & Company, one of Melbourne's larger tea importers and shipping agents. The company's Scottish-born namesake and founder had been a prominent tea importer and businessman, then a pugnacious and controversial political reformer who had gone on to become the Treasurer and Premier of Victoria in the 1880s. Service's father, who had also emigrated to Australia, was a long-term activist in the temperance movement, which gained popularity in Australia during the 1870s and 1880s. As Griggs points out, this movement was a further factor in the growing consumption of tea in the Australian colonies. It indicated a shift in societal values to the ideal of a hard-working, sober and devout population and was attended by a growth in nonconformist but family-oriented Christian faiths.[22]

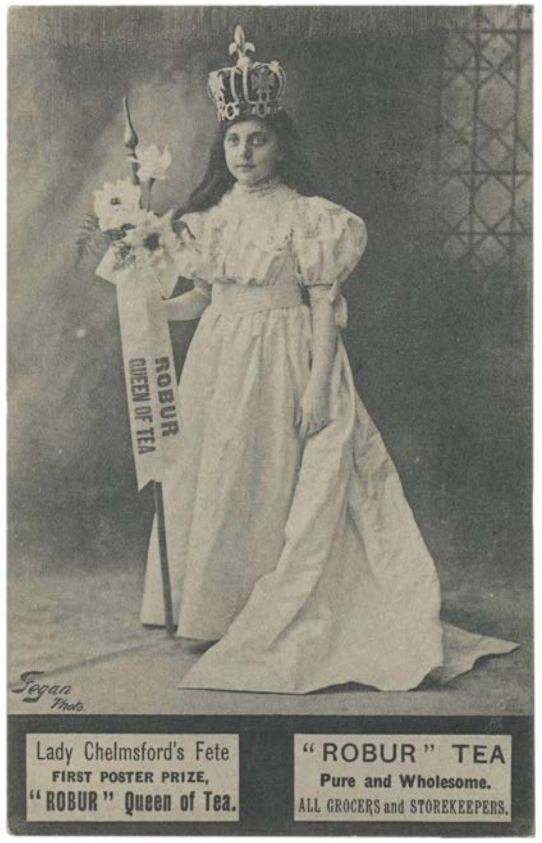
James Service died a year before the acquisition of Robur. The company was then taken over by Service's business partner, Randal James Alcock. Alcock was another big personality, a successful merchant and colonial identity. Under Alcock's direction, James Service & Co now specialised in producing and marketing Robur Tea, and acted as agents for a range of other companies.[23]

Robur's new owners advertised aggressively and sales continued to grow.[24] Victorian newspapers were swamped with advertisements. Robur's marketing continued to use pastoral images by well-known Australian artists. Susie Khamis notes that the banking and property collapse of the 1890s had led to a heightened awareness of the rural sector and its contribution to the fragile prosperity of the new nation.[25] This awareness was demonstrated by the popularity of the *Bulletin* magazine and the stories of shearers, farmers and swagmen written by contributors like Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson. Efforts to harness the appeal of the bush in the late Victorian era were widespread, as can been seen in brand names such as Camp Tea, Pannikin Blend, Swagman Blend, Coo-ee and Billy Tea.[26]

At the same time the developing middle class, and the less financially and culturally secure 'lower' middle class, were keen to demonstrate their respectability and status.[27] As tea was a relatively inexpensive product consumed by all classes, tea marketers recognised an opportunity to imbue

Opposite
Russell Brothers Grocers, Elephant tea party, 1939, courtesy State Library of NSW





This page
"Robur" Queen of Tea: advertisement for Robur Tea, South Brisbane, Queensland, 1907, courtesy National Library of Australia.

Opposite
Robur Tea war map, Gallipoli and the Dardanelles: bird's eye view / issued for the Robur Tea Co. by Farrow Falcon Press; lithographed by Cyril Dillon, courtesy National Library of Australia

their product with a respectability that was accessible and instant. Robur thus used art as an aspirational form of appeal to high culture and refinement. From 1903, the company published yearly calendars with illustrations featuring artworks in public galleries. These were available for free from local grocers. Brand awareness grew; by 1905, despite a downturn in national tea consumption, Robur's Melbourne operation employed some 120 workers.[28] In 1906 the company's ongoing success enabled it to move to a large red-brick warehouse that dominated Clarendon Street near the Yarra docks. The building, still known as the Tea House, would be Robur's home until the mid-1970s.[29] Other promotional devices appealed to people in a variety of working-class professions, such as the 'Robur Tea girl', the 'Robur Queen of Tea' and the provision of brewing advice. These tactics played a key role in personalising the Robur brand at a time where the specialist advice of the local grocer was beginning to fade.

Like other entrepreneurial marketers of consumables such as sweets mogul Macpherson Robertson,[30] Robur found an opportunity to capitalise on the First World War. Its wartime advertisements encouraged Australian women to send Robur Tea to their menfolk at the front. James Alcock was also behind a campaign to align Robur Tea with the war effort by publishing war maps, including a 1915 map of Gallipoli and the Dardanelles campaign. The map could be bought from Robur for 4d (including postage).[31] There was no hesitation in aligning significant world events to opportunities to promote ones' products to a population hungry for news about the war. Robur was by no means alone in doing this.[32]

Robur in the Interwar Period

From 1918, Alcock became Robur's sole proprietor. It was around this time that the teapot motif began to appear regularly in Robur's advertising. Tea was still the young nation's most favoured non-alcoholic drink in Sydney as well as Melbourne.[33] Australians would retain the title of the world's biggest tea drinkers until the great Depression, when they were out-drunk by their British cousins.[34]

Following the travails of the First World War, the 1920s saw renewed social and economic confidence in Melbourne, albeit at more subdued levels than previously. One of the lingering effects of the 1890s downtown was pervasive and entrenched pockets of poverty. This contrasted with the impacts of modernity including the widespread introduction of electricity, mass-produced cars, and the ideal of suburban living. Advertising played an active role in developing consumer desires for these modern ideas, incorporating increasingly sophisticated emotive strategies on the one hand and acting as a guide for people unnerved by the increased pace and changing nature of modern living on the other.[35] As the keepers of household budgets, women were identified as an essential target of advertisers as well as the commercial media – women's magazines proliferated while radio provided a new source of entertainment and information.

Bushells re-entered the burgeoning Melbourne market in 1922, having exited it in 1904.[36] Competition would be fierce: tea was still a lucrative business. The themes of the new era were adopted with enthusiasm by Bushells. Seeking to convey an image that appealed to the new suburban middle class, Bushells presented itself as traditional and 'sophisticated, discerning and modern'. Advertisements featured immaculately groomed women, opulent surroundings, and the use of exoticised but servile representations of women from India and Ceylon. Such imagery also fed into the narrative of identification with an enduring Empire that by then was in decline.[37]

As the jostle for market share intensified, attention-grabbing promotions were instigated. In 1924 Bushells gave away a half pound of free tea to every Sydney home.[38] Robur sought to incorporate elements of tradition with modernity via innovative marketing strategies, albeit in a different manner to Bushells. Robur focused on thrift and value, incorporating the central motif of the woman as the keeper of the home. It spoke to a less status-conscious kind of audience than Bushells, even as it cherry-picked some of its aspirational elements. The teapot as symbol of homely comforts gained traction during this time before becoming the core of an integrated advertising and marketing campaign. By 1928, the Robur Tea Company was the most prominent and profitable of James Service & Company's businesses. It was incorporated in its own right, took over the other James Service tea businesses, and turned to more innovative forms of marketing.[39]

One of Robur's key appeals relied on new silverware manufacturing technologies. Recently developed nickel-silver electroplating techniques allowed for the production of household goods that were relatively inexpensive yet retained the sheen of silver. This resulted in 'the golden era for the production of domestic silverware in Australia'.[40]

Opposite Top
Chapel Street, Windsor, Rose Stereograph Company, c. 1920–1954, Courtesy State Library of Victoria

Opposite Left
Luxury Tea with ‘Robur’ Quality and Economy, Cyril Dillon 1883-1974, artist, courtesy State Library of Victoria

Opposite Right
Robur profit sharing catalogue: 2nd edition, Robur Tea Co. Ltd. [trade catalogue] 1931, Courtesy Sydney Living Museums, Caroline Simpson Living Libraries Collection

The mix of perceived quality and value suited Robur’s market. The firm soon set up its own teapot manufacturing arm at its Tea House building, the Challenge Silverware division. Challenge’s first product was the Perfect Teapot, produced from 1927 from electroplated nickel silver (EPNS) and reproduction Sheffield plate. Patented worldwide, the teapot design was a huge success.[41] It also led to the development of a range of other silverware products and was still being made in 2002.[42] This is the teapot that can be seen print advertisements from this time.

The second key marketing tool deployed by Robur was painted outdoor advertising, which hit its peak in the 1920s and lasted until the 1950s when cheaper, mass-produced poster formats began to erode its dominance.[43] Advertising signs had been painted on walls and hoardings in an ad-hoc manner since early colonial days, but the post-First World War period saw small operators mature into companies capable of organising large-scale campaigns. Automobiles enabled sign painters to move more easily from location to location, and sign painting companies developed advertising rental arrangements with owners of buildings with highly visible walls.[44] Despite the growth of the car, the locus of most people’s shopping was still local strip shops within walking distance of home. Wall spaces in these strips were at a premium for advertisers. Significantly, many of the strips that were active from the 1920s to the 1940s still carry the remains of these signs, which have subsequently become community markers and points of identity.[45]

The production of the Perfect Teapot in the booming late 1920s heralded a wide-ranging, national marketing campaign that brought together these elements in a coordinated manner. In Melbourne and other urban centres, Robur teapots were painted on shops, walls and hoardings. The Lewis & Skinner records contain a hand-written book outlining the location of Robur teapots painted from January 1929 to June 1930. Over this eighteen-month period, 541 teapot signs were painted throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria.[46] Teapots also graced posters plastered on railway station platforms, on the sides of roads and elsewhere. Whereas signwriters painted the teapots directly onto walls and windows, posters were designed by commercial artists. Cyril Dillon thus produced the advertisement which features the Perfect Teapot while emphasising both the domestic charms of the brand as well as its economy.

The Depression and Aftermath

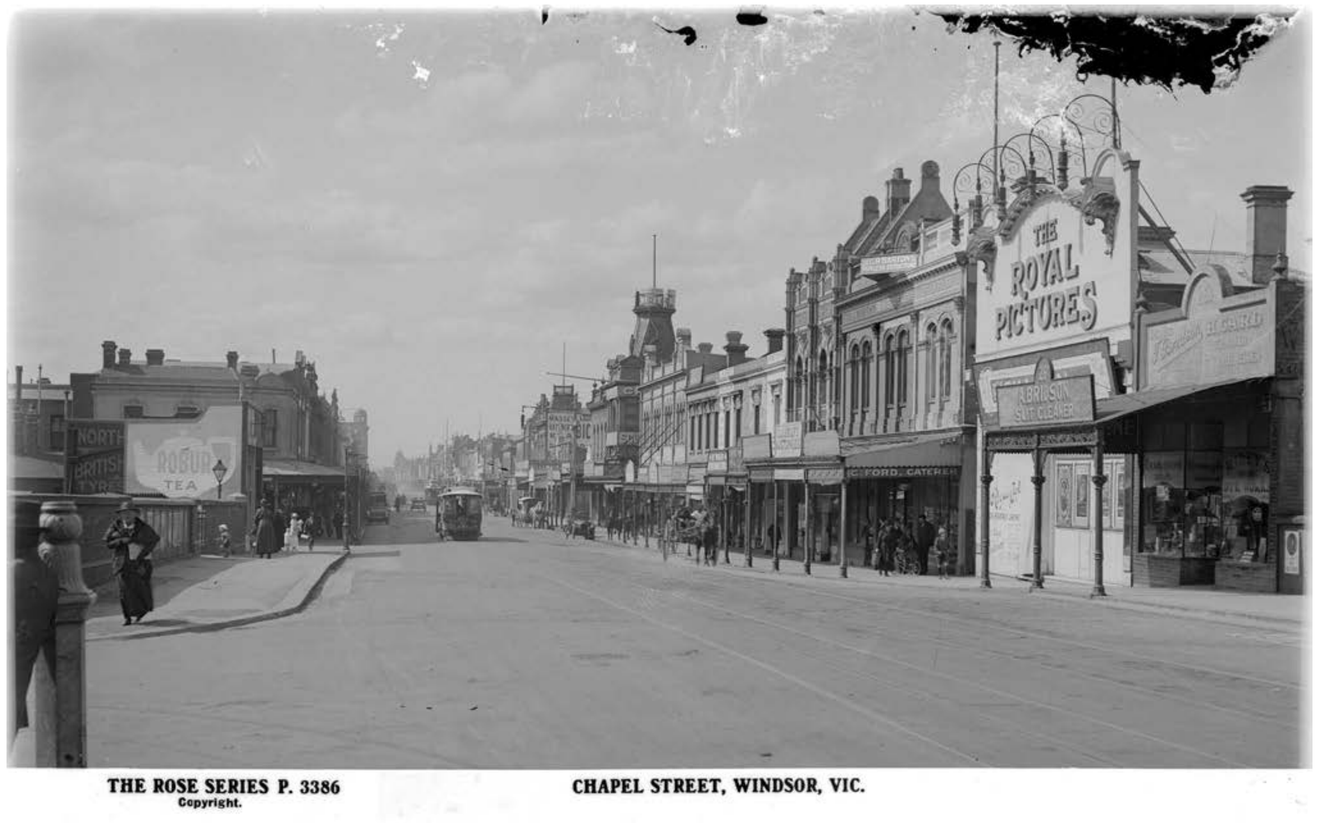
Following the US stock market crash of 24 October 1929, Australia sank deeper into depression. The Robur Tea Company, which was in the process of being taken over by the South Australian food importer and manufacturer DJ Fowler,[47] suddenly faced a straitened economic landscape. It needed to revisit its marketing strategies if it was to retain market share.

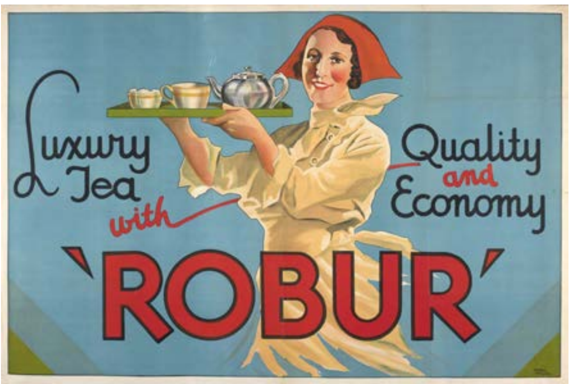
One of Robur’s key Depression-era initiatives was the ‘profit-sharing catalogue’. The idea of ‘profit sharing’ had originally referred to schemes, originating in the nineteenth century, which allowed employees to share some of their employers’ profits. The term then found its way into American retail catalogues, with customers presented as ‘sharers’ of profit. Goods-promoting catalogues had first been used in Australia in the 1860s. From the late 1880s these catalogues became popular with rural and regional Australians, who were growing in affluence and were keen to buy into the lifestyle improvements that their urban counterparts enjoyed.[48] In these catalogues, Robur argued that the company’s ability to buy in bulk allowed for economies of scale. These profits, it was claimed, were then distributed to customers in the form of vouchers or coupons for redeeming catalogue items that included not only teapots, but everything from tableware and kitchenware to aprons, beauty products, handbags, and playing cards.

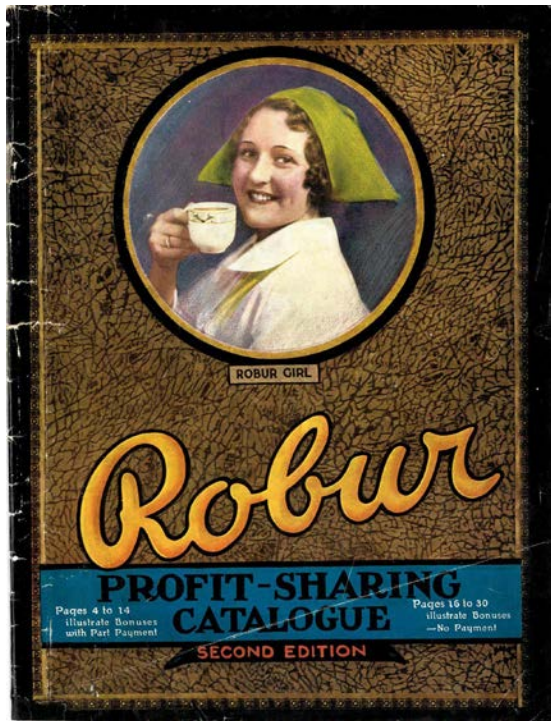
Robur’s ‘profit-sharing catalogue’ also echoed broader concerns. The economic crisis had propelled a growing sense of disillusionment in capitalism. Working-class people had borne the brunt of the Depression’s privations, and in Victoria the effects of the Depression had been particularly severe. One response was the establishment of cooperative movements in working-class communities that ‘promoted co-operation for mutual benefit, rather than competition for individual gain’.[49] These ‘co-ops’ bought everyday staples in bulk, which could then be bought at reduced rates by members, thereby incorporating elements of both pragmatism and idealism.[50] This discourse amplified the appeal of Robur’s ‘profit-sharing’ catalogues.

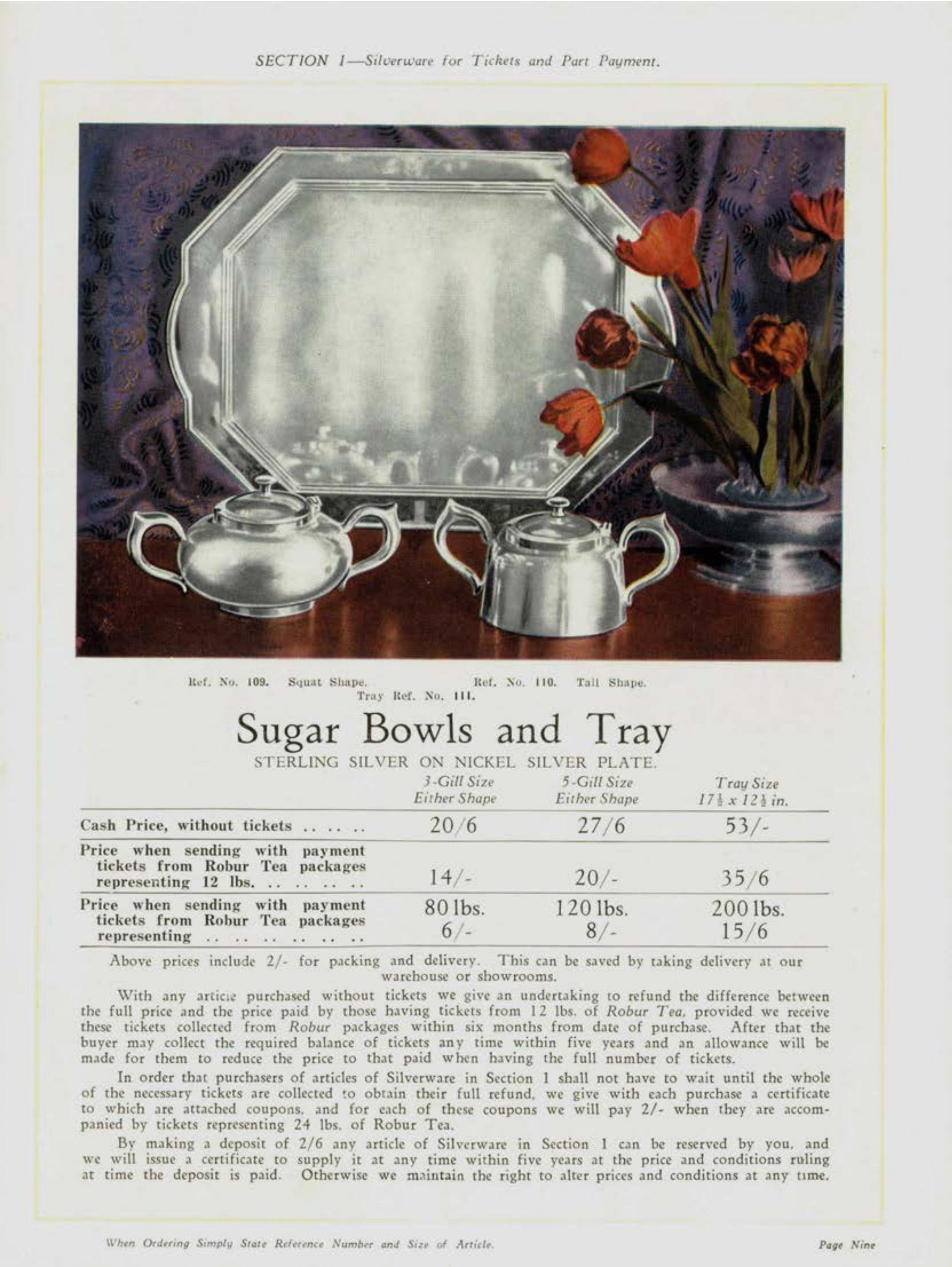
The Depression also informed other marketing initiatives. Khamis notes that the Depression years ‘summonsed a powerful discourse of thrift and frugality’ in the psyche of most Australian households, even the more affluent ones.[51] This air of restraint extended beyond the worst of the Depression years. It was well suited to Robur’s marketing strategies, which had already associated the brand with such qualities. Rather than trading on notions of glamour and status, Bushells similarly opted ‘to co-opt the concept of judicious consumption’,[52] connecting the notion of quality increasingly to value, and transforming ‘its leisured lady of the 1920s, the glamorous patron of hotels and matinees, into a paragon of household competence’.[53] This theme continued throughout the 1930s. Advertisements sporting the trappings and accessories of the upwardly-mobile middle class were replaced by ‘a no-frills minimalism that culled everything except for a single box of Bushells tea, and multiples of white ceramic tea cups’.[54] In 1933 Bushells followed Robur and instigated a catalogue-based rewards system for loyal consumers. However, a subtle difference in language reveals its more status-conscious clientele: Bushells framed its catalogue offerings as ‘gifts’ rather than as anything related to the products of corporate wealth redistribution.

Robur’s long-standing focus on thrift enabled it to adapt to the new economic circumstances. The profit-sharing catalogues continued through the 1930s, with a ninth issue published as late as 1950. As the effects of the Depression waned and confidence picked up, Robur’s marketing campaigns pivoted into more exotic approaches. Instead of conveying Bushells’ status-laden sense of glamour and privilege, Robur took a populist approach. It commissioned the painting of scores of new signs, including the painting of the word “Robur” on entire large roof surfaces (one of these still exists in Brunswick, Melbourne). It also generated marketing devices such as an ‘animal book’ for children, the






ROBUR GIRL
Robur
PROFIT-SHARING CATALOGUE
Pages 4 to 14 illustrate Bonuses with Part Payment
Pages 16 to 30 illustrate Bonuses —No Payment
SECOND EDITION



SECTION 1—Silverware for Tickets and Part Payment.

Ref. No. 109. Squat Shape. Ref. No. 110. Tall Shape.
Tray Ref. No. 111.

Sugar Bowls and Tray

STERLING SILVER ON NICKEL SILVER PLATE.

	3-Gill Size Either Shape	*5-Gill Size Either Shape*	*Tray Size 17½ x 12½ in.*
Cash Price, without tickets	20/6	27/6	53/-
Price when sending with payment tickets from Robur Tea packages representing 12 lbs.	14/-	20/-	35/6
Price when sending with payment tickets from Robur Tea packages representing	80 lbs. 6/-	120 lbs. 8/-	200 lbs. 15/6

Above prices include 2/- for packing and delivery. This can be saved by taking delivery at our warehouse or showrooms.

With any article purchased without tickets we give an undertaking to refund the difference between the full price and the price paid by those having tickets from 12 lbs. of *Robur Tea*, provided we receive these tickets collected from *Robur* packages within six months from date of purchase. After that the buyer may collect the required balance of tickets any time within five years and an allowance will be made for them to reduce the price to that paid when having the full number of tickets.

In order that purchasers of articles of Silverware in Section 1 shall not have to wait until the whole of the necessary tickets are collected to obtain their full refund, we give with each purchase a certificate to which are attached coupons, and for each of these coupons we will pay 2/- when they are accompanied by tickets representing 24 lbs. of Robur Tea.

By making a deposit of 2/6 any article of Silverware in Section 1 can be reserved by you, and we will issue a certificate to supply it at any time within five years at the price and conditions ruling at time the deposit is paid. Otherwise we maintain the right to alter prices and conditions at any time.

When Ordering Simply State Reference Number and Size of Article. *Page Nine*

Opposite
Robur profit sharing catalogue: 2nd edition, Robur Tea Co. Lt d. [trade catalogue] 1931, Courtesy Sydney Living Museums, Caroline Simpson Living Libraries Collection

sponsoring of scooter races, and the 1934 packaging and selling for charity (with Robur Tea promotions inside) of pieces of the "Centenary Souvenir Birthday Cake", which, at fifty feet high, claimed to be the largest cake ever made. The high point of Robur's golden era of marketing stunts occurred in 1939, when Robur borrowed an elephant from Wirth's Circus to visit its retail tea rooms for a 'tea party'.

Such follies came to an end with the Second World War. Coupon-based tea rationing was imposed during the war (and remained in place long after hostilities ceased), as the tea supply chains of the British Empire were disrupted and eliminated. People remained hooked on tea, complaining to parliament and the Prime Minister about the restrictions. Tea theft soared – there was even a riot in wartime Melbourne when a Bushells Tea truck overturned, and people rushed in to grab what tea they could.[55] Rationing played a role in reducing Australians' future thirst for tea. By the early 1950s, Australia had slipped to fourth in its per-capita tea consumption.[56] The downturn, however, did not prevent tea companies from continuing to slog it out on neighbourhood fascias and walls.

Other changes eroded tea consumption further, as well as the types of advertising driving it. A key shift was the rise of coffee, which had been popularised by the wartime influx of coffee-drinking American servicemen and the post-war wave of migration from continental Europe.[57] The concurrent rise in car ownership also enabled consumers to drive to supermarkets to do their shopping. Such developments, coupled with the advent of television in 1956, saw a decreased emphasis on local advertising. In this changing climate, Robur's teapot signs were left to fade. Those who had been responsible for producing the signs for Robur would also experience fundamental change. The shift away from local advertising points would have a significant impact on the large-scale sign painting industry, which would be further impacted in the 1980s with the arrival of vinyl cutting machines.[58] With consumers abandoning tea, marketers abandoning suburban walls, and commercial signwriters abandoning their paintbrushes, advertising campaigns of the "Robur teapot" kind would become a thing of the past.

Legacies in Lead Paint

In recent years, and especially in the age of social media and camera phones, people have become increasingly fascinated with the traces of painted advertising signs, now commonly known as 'ghost signs'. A range of reasons for this trend has been proposed including the valorisation of signwriters' lost skills, interest in 'retro' design and typography, a sense of loss as urban environments change,[59] identification with the signs as unofficial local landmarks, and nostalgia for remembered brands and former ways of living.[60] A cohort of 'ghost sign hunters' has emerged in cities around the world: people who actively locate, photograph and post images of ghost signs to blogs, photo sharing sites and Facebook pages. A parallel recent phenomenon has been the collecting of Robur Tea paraphernalia: examples of both the Perfect teapot and the profit-sharing catalogues often sell for hundreds of dollars.

Although only one of the hundreds of painted Robur teapots appears to have survived, many other Robur signs can still be seen throughout Melbourne. They are slowly fading but they cling on, bolstered by the addition of lead to the paint which has helped it seep into the brickwork. This addition has significantly lengthened the signs' lives – if not the lives of the lead-poisoned people who painted them.

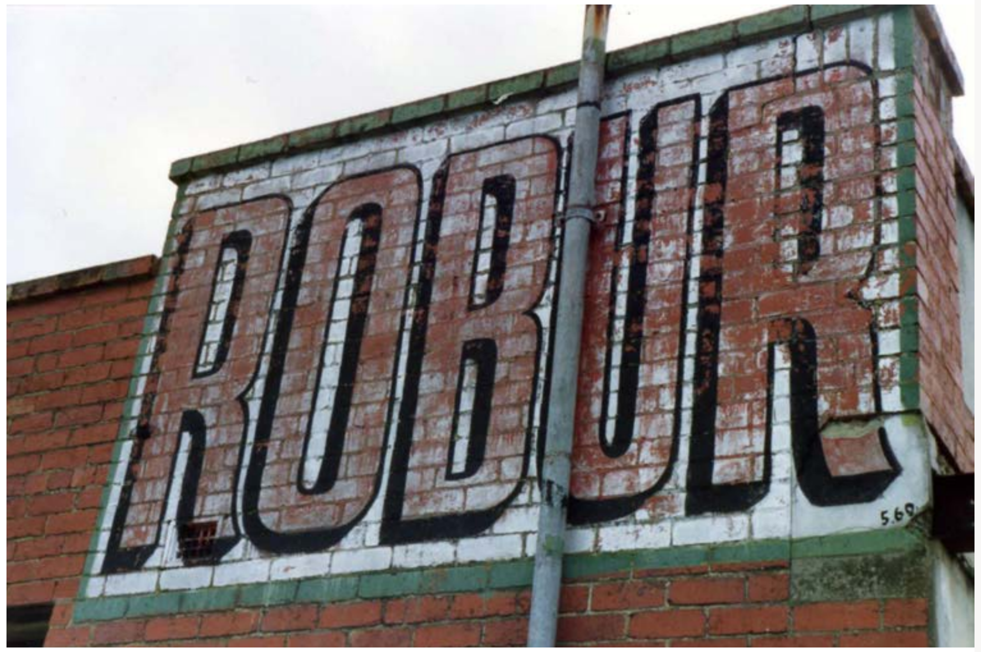
These kinds of urban reminders can be read in numerous ways. Khamis notes that the Bushells brand of tea 'has consistently documented major changes in Australia's social composition, cultural tenor and economic climate', thereby helping to 'illustrate and narrate monumental moments in the nation's past'.[61] She further contends that Bushells managed to do this because its 'strength was its associational pull, the various ways it convincingly lassoed broader aspirations and inclinations'.[62] The Robur brand can claim similar status as a cultural signifier; the long-term success of both brands evidence of their success in their associational endeavours.

However, Khamis also warns that the kinds of early marketing verve and innovation exhibited by Bushells – and also by Robur – should not be seen as above, or independent of, the larger social and cultural forces that have generated them. Instead, Khamis suggests they should be seen primarily as a tactical accommodation of those forces to serve the immediate needs of the business owners.[63] Commerce, in the end, is a pragmatic pursuit, but the traces of the artifacts generated by it can reveal broader forces from the vantage point of the future. But one must be attuned to such resonances and layers. The evocation of purely personal pasts often described by ghost sign fans and collectors of old branded paraphernalia may be valid, but may miss other kinds of readings.[64]

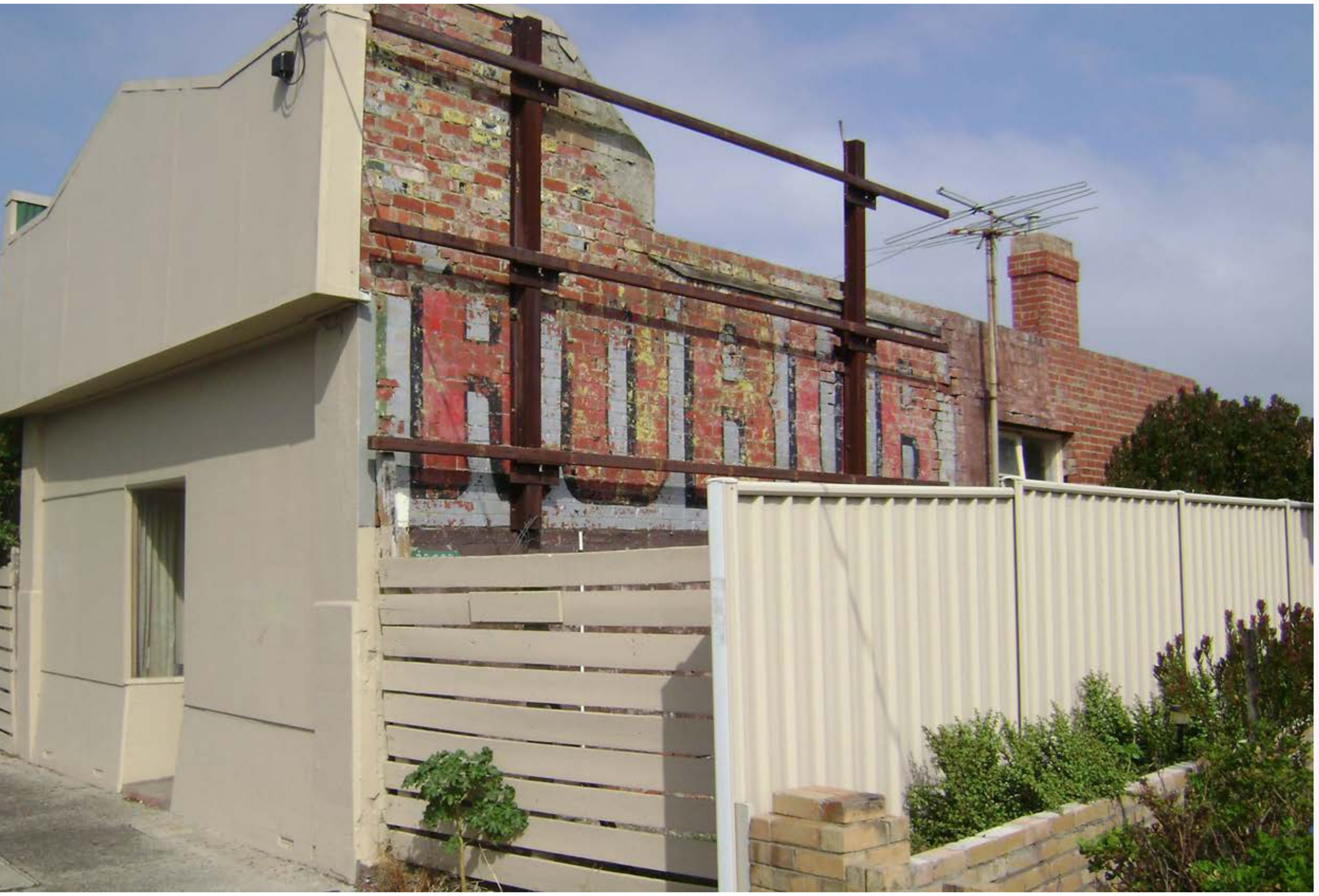
One such reading applies to both the Robur and Bushells brands, given their historical context and the products they advertised. This is that such brands are the unintentional signifiers of an empire in terminal decline. Sam Roberts and Sebastian Groes suggest that London's ghost signs 'could be construed as part of a mythology of loss that is a particularly strong current in this nation's consciousness and literature'.[65] A similar thing could be said of the advertising artifacts generated by the tea merchants operating in the far reaches of the British Empire. They speak of an identification with a fading mythical glory at the point of its loss, a pathos made more poignant by the fading, crumbling quality of the signs.

This identification with loss, however, is ironic given what has occurred since. Citing *No Logo*, Naomi Klein's 1999 examination of globalisation and its impacts, Roberts and Groes point out that 'the origins of globalisation as we experience it today is a continuation of earlier forms of imperialism'.[66] The sole remaining Robur teapot on a Brunswick East wall is an unofficial reminder of that irony in its evocation of the everyday affordances of the past: *the Empire has gone, and so have I, but Empire remains*. For Roberts and Groes, London's ghost signs 'stress both the continuity and relationship between London's and Britain's economic development during the industrial revolution and late capitalism, whilst, paradoxically, the signs' moribund status suggests a discontinuity with the past'.[67] The ghost signs produced by the Robur Tea Company provide an unexpected window into this tension and ambivalence. They are embedded in the urban fabric of the city, connecting past and present to the passer-by with a metaphorical arched eyebrow.

Like the signs around Melbourne, Robur's name has faded but it has not entirely disappeared. In more recent times, the Robur story has taken a unique twist. The firm J. Lyons took over the much-reduced Robur Tea Company in 1992, after having already taken over two other iconic tea brands, Billy Tea and Tetley. A joint venture with the Indian tea company Tata Beverages (now a diversified manufacturing conglomerate) followed in 1993, with Tata taking over Lyons Tetley in 2000. Hence, a company from a country whose products were once exploited by the British Empire now owns a brand associated with the Empire and that same exploitation. Such are the ways of globalisation.



Top and Bottom
The fading ghostsigns of Robur. Nepean Highway 1993. Photograph: Stephen Banham



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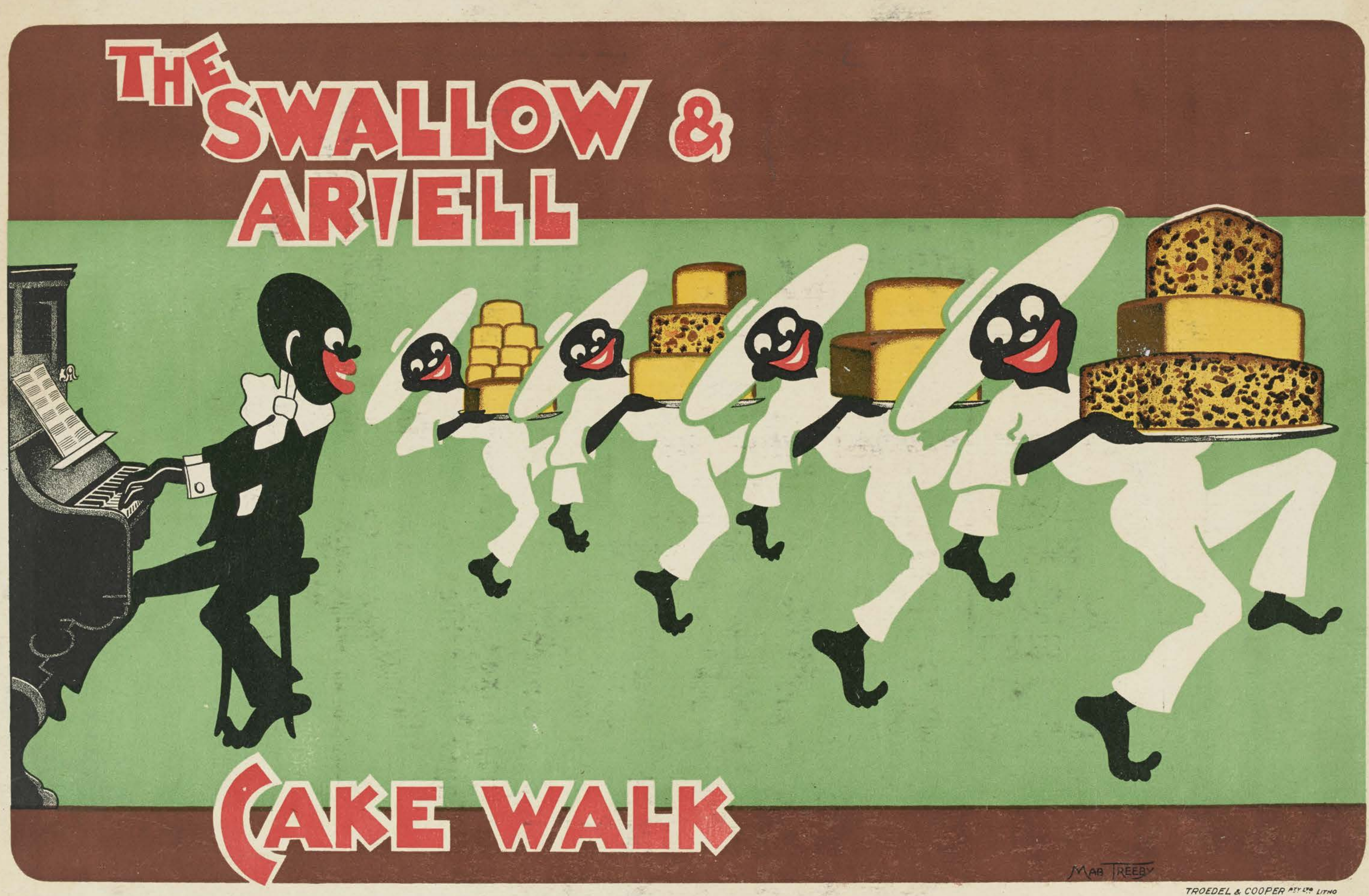
THE SWALLOW & ARIELL
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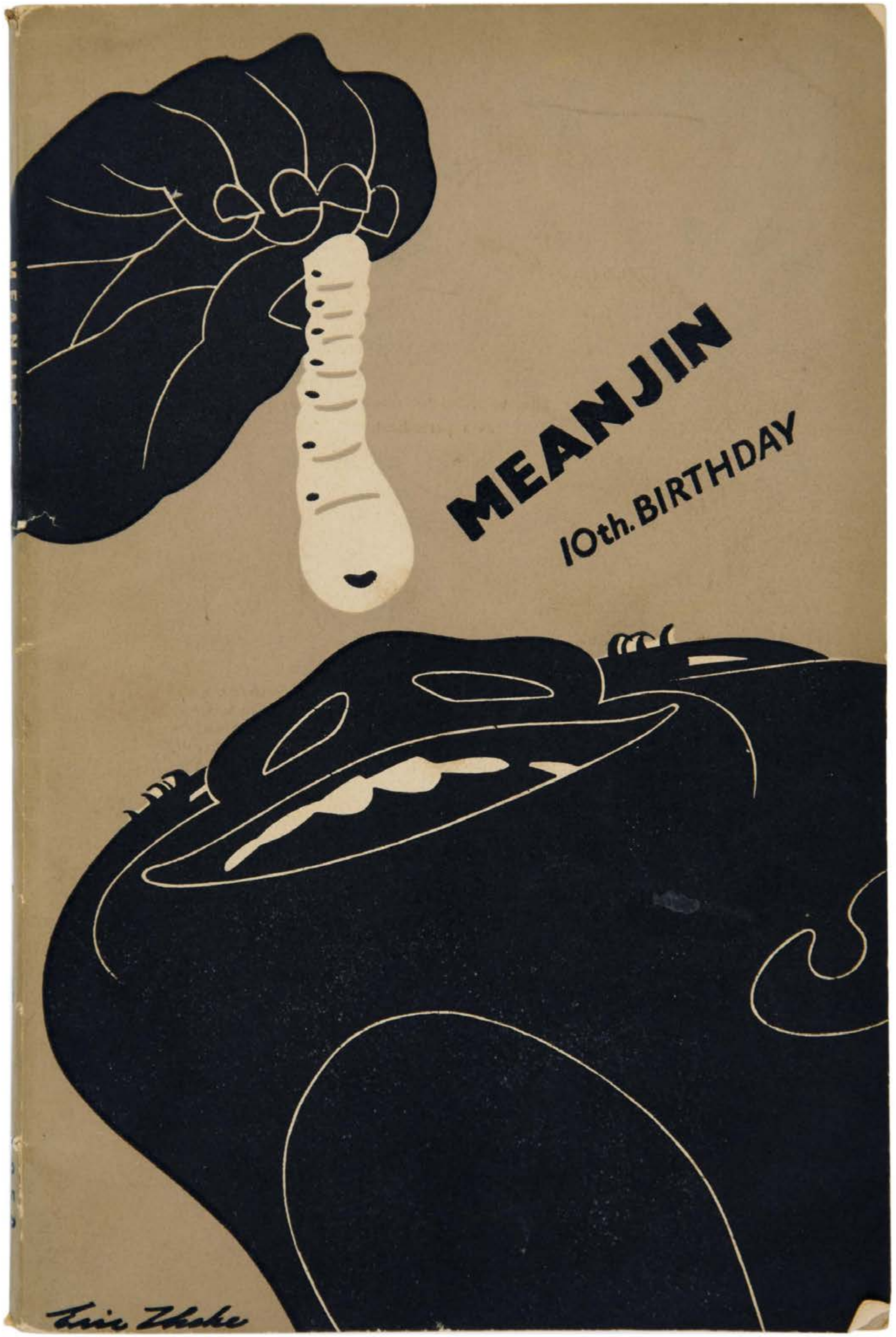
MAB TREEBY

TROEDEL & COOPER PTY LTD LITHO



Previous Spread
Mab Treeby,
The Swallow & Ariell
Cake Walk, postcard,
(1910–1930), Troedel
Collection, courtesy State
Library of Victoria

Opposite
Eric Thake, cover for
Meanjin Volume 9,
Number 2, 1950,
Gift of Harriet Edquist
2018, 0038.2014.0066
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Visualising Settler Colonialism: Australian modernism and Indigenous design

Daniel Huppatz

In the two decades following the Second World War, Australia's design industry fundamentally changed with the institutionalisation of modernist, professional practice. Promoted as universal and timeless, modernism was also associated with scientific knowledge, technological progress and economic profitability. Formally, it was characterised by a reductive aesthetic and an emphasis on function. But, embedded within this burgeoning discourse was a paradox. Though eager to appear international, Australian designers also wanted to signify their difference and distinction, typically through reference to Indigenous flora, fauna, or Aboriginal culture.

Beginning in the inter-war period, visual representations of Aborigines and their material culture by non-Aboriginal designers were promoted as a potential – if problematic – foundation for a modern, national culture. For designers in a peripheral locale such as Australia, Aboriginal culture could serve two functions – as a cipher of localisation and as a counterpoint to modernity. Although design critics have noted the appropriation of Aboriginal imagery, there has been little detailed reflection on this phenomenon.[1] Through examining key visual examples from the 1940s and 1950s from the *Australia National Journal*, cover designs of the cultural magazine *Meanjin*, and the design of the first Australian dollar bill, this article aims to further analyse the flip-side of colonialism and modernism.

Visualising a Settler Colonial Culture

In the twenty-first century, historians have constructed new frameworks for understanding colonial relationships, and 'settler colonialism' has proved a useful distinction for the Australian context.[2] Previously, the term 'colonial' could conflate two relationships – that between imperial metropole (Britain) and colonial periphery (Australia), and that between the primarily white Anglo settlers and Indigenous Australians. These were, of course, fundamentally different economic, political, social and cultural relationships.

Importantly, design, in the form of commercial art, advertising and posters, was seen by modern artists and designers in the mid-twentieth century as a means to potentially bridge these relationships. Yet, as we will see, this was a conflicted project.

A close-knit network of artists, designers, publications and organizations in the 1920s and 1930s first visualised aspects of Aboriginal culture. These included the modern lifestyle magazine, *The Home*, founded in 1920, that featured seminal articles on Aboriginal art by Margaret Preston; and the Australian National Travel Association (ANTA), founded in 1929. The latter produced tourist posters and publications (designed by James Northfield, Douglas Annand, and Gert Sellheim and others), which included depictions of Aboriginal people and their material culture. ANTA's magazine *Walkabout*, launched in 1934, emphasised depictions of Aborigines as 'primitive' people with a 'Stone Age' culture, rendered in modern photographic techniques.[3] In advertising too, an interest in Australian history included 'the Aborigine as a graphic device or visual shorthand for the past.' [4] During the interwar period, such representations provided a clear visual contrast with white, settler culture, reinforcing the latter's superiority and modernity.

Opposite
Margaret Preston, Aboriginal Hunt Design, woodcut, reproduced in *Meanjin*, 2:2, 1943, p.3. © Estate of Margaret Preston/Copyright Agency, 2018

Margaret Preston was one of the few artists in the inter-war period with an interest in Aboriginal art. In her 1925 article, 'The Indigenous Art of Australia', Preston celebrated the simple forms, patterns and natural colours of Aboriginal visual culture and argued that 'returning to primitive art' could provide a foundation for a national culture.[5] Using designs from shields and objects in the Sydney Museum as examples, Preston proposed Australian artists and designers should use for home décor, on textiles, graphic art, pottery, furniture or even 'an amusing dado for a child's room'.[6] In a 1930 article on the same theme, Preston adds 'please do not bother about what the carver meant in the way of myths, rites, etc; that is not the decorators' affair.' [7]

Numerous designers in the 1930s, including textile designers Frances Burke and Michael O'Connell, commercial artists Douglas Annand, Gert Sellheim, Dahl and Geoffrey Collings, Alistair Morrison and Gordon Andrews, took up Preston's proposal to use Aboriginal culture. Preston too self-consciously incorporated Aboriginal motifs, patterns and colours into her paintings and prints. Although her initial exposure to Aboriginal culture was entirely through museums and the writings of anthropologists, she travelled to the Northern Territory in 1940. This gave her some understanding of the regional variety of Aboriginal cultural practices, but, apart from brief references to spiritual beliefs, she remained primarily interested in form, pattern and colour.[8]

Such appropriation of Aboriginal culture was an instance of what Marcia Langton terms 'Aboriginality', the consumption of Aboriginal culture and people as 'primarily a textual or visual—and distant—experience for most Australians.' [9] Langton thus notes:

> [T]he familiar stereotypes and the constant stereotyping, iconising and mythologising of Aboriginal people by white people who have never had any substantial first-hand contact with Aboriginal people. These icons of 'Aboriginality' are produced by Anglo-Australians, not in dialogue with Aboriginal people, but from other representations ... inherited, imagined representations.[10]

This is an apt description of the work of Preston and the designers of the 1930s, whose primary interest lay in the utilisation of Aboriginality as a distinctive marker of national difference.

But, while it is tempting to dismiss all appropriations of Indigenous art by non-Indigenous artists and designers as essentially exploitative, and ultimately complicit if not colluding with the ongoing colonial project, both the designers' motivation and public assessment of such work was not always consistent with this position. Preston's Aboriginal appropriations, for example, were 'for the most part greeted with indifference or actual hostility,' [11] suggesting her cross-cultural ideals were at odds with mainstream Australian culture of that time. Primitive bodies and Stone Age material culture, objectified as visual evidence of another time and another place, were indissolubly linked to the modern. Yet this pairing was clearly too confronting for many Australians at the time.

Anthropologist A P Elkin, in his 'Foreword' to *Australian Aboriginal Decorative Art* of 1938, an illustrated booklet produced for Sydney's Australian Museum, further illustrates this conflicted motivation. For Elkin, an aesthetic appreciation of Aboriginal art by non-Aboriginal Australians was part of a larger project: 'in so far as we let the aborigines [sic.]—the civilized ones in particular—know our appreciation, we shall help them get rid of that feeling of inferiority for which contact with us has been responsible'.[12] Patronising and paternal, Elkin's 'appreciation' of Aboriginal art was seen as a potential bridge. This paradoxical visualisation of Aboriginal culture continued into the 1940s and 1950s, even as the disparity between these representations and the actual lived circumstances of Indigenous people grew.

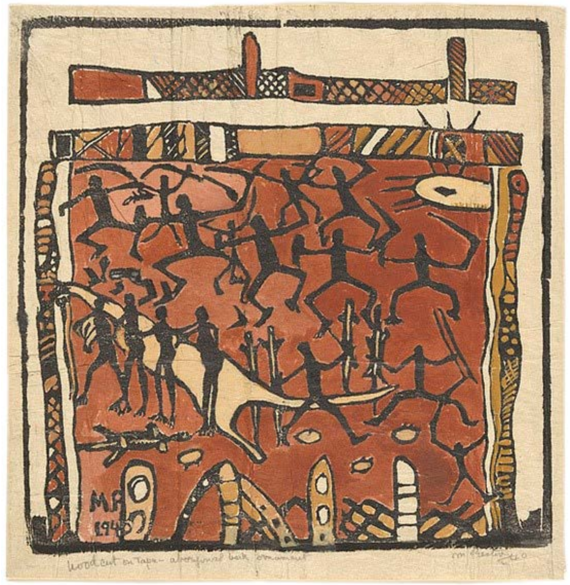
The *Australia: National Journal*: 1939–1940

In 1939, publisher Sydney Ure Smith set out the *Australia: National Journal*'s aim as 'to give expression to our progress in Art, Architecture and Industry.' [13] The journal was intended as a self-conscious vehicle for integrating the arts and the modern manufacturing sector. Promoting industrial progress in transport, mining and new technologies were part of Smith's initial agenda, and the architecture, industrial design, furniture and advertisements featured in the journal were distinctively modern. Richard Haughton-James, in the journal's inaugural issue, declared that 'good design is good always, at all times' and urged Australians to keep up with international standards.[14] A tireless promotor of modernism on radio and in print, Haughton-James claimed modernist design constituted a universal, international language.

For Australian design, 1939 was a significant year. Dahl and Geoffrey Collings returned from four years working in London, Geoff for an American advertising agency, and Dahl at Simpson's Department Store, where she had been the only female in Lazlo Moholy-Nagy's design team. With Haughton-James, also recently arrived from London, they founded a design consultancy, the Design Centre in Sydney.[15] Within modernist historiography, it is also worth noting that 1939 was the year architect Harry Seidler established his Sydney studio, after training and working in the United States with Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer. Although not the first self-conscious modernists in Australia, these arrivals certainly constituted a significant boost for the legitimacy of Bauhaus-trained modernists and London connections. Yet there remained an anxiety amongst cultural practitioners and critics about viewing Australian culture as international and innovative, not derivative and imported.

As well as Haughton-James' article on modernist design, *Australia: National Journal*'s first issue featured an article on Harold Clapp (chairman of the Victorian Railways) alongside an advertisement for BHP Steel. Yet, amongst the articles and advertisements devoted to modern industry, it is the page of illustrations by Douglas Annand that stands out. Titled 'Abo Annand', Annand's 'primitive' style drawing depicts Australians engaged in leisure activities such as golf, horse racing and fishing. A pastiche of Aboriginal art styles from various places, including rock engravings around Sydney, northern bark painting and the heads of Wandjina figures from the Kimberley, Annand's 'Abo' art was a continuation of his reworking of Indigenous art.[16]

In *Australia: National Journal*'s 1940 issue, 'At Last–Australian Design Fabrics,' comprised a short text and images promoting the launch of a clothing line for women and dressing gowns for men, called 'Arunta', from David Jones.[17] The text referenced Picasso and Dali, European modernists known for their appropriation of primitive art, and continued 'these age-old designs, representing primitive culture, strike a modern and sophisticated note'. The author also connected the appropriation of Aboriginal culture to the European vogue of appropriating local cultures, as 'an interesting and characteristic variation on the peasant art of European countries'. David Jones' 'Aboriginal chic', like Annand's 'Abo' illustration, comprises motifs from various places (not necessarily the Central Desert as the title suggests), abstracted and repeated as decorative patterns.


MP
1940
woodcut on tapa – aboriginal bark ornament

Australian modernists used Aboriginal art and culture in a number of ways at this time. As design director of the Australian Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair, for example, Annand drew together a team that included Dahl and Geoffrey Collings and photographer Russell Roberts. Annand's contribution to the Fair included motifs derived from Aboriginal rock art which depicted Aborigines hunting and fishing.[18] Graphic designer Alistair Morrison's cover for the exhibition 'Art of Australia, 1788-1941', which toured the United States and Canada in 1941, featured his version of Aboriginal art. And, although relatively minor in Australian modernist design overall, the presence of Aboriginal culture was nonetheless consistent.

The 1941 exhibition 'Australian Aboriginal Art and its Application', an Australian Museum exhibition at the David Jones gallery in Sydney, aimed to promote Indigenous culture as a source of inspiration from which to build a national visual culture. In this, the exhibition directly followed Preston's earlier articles. But, according to the catalogue, another reason to use Aboriginal art as source material was to 'avoid the necessity of paying heavily to other countries for the right to use their designs in commercial work.' [19] The exhibition presented a mix of Indigenous material culture, including bark paintings, shields and photographs of rock art and engravings, as well as non-Indigenous design and craft by practitioners including Preston, Annand and Sellheim.[20]

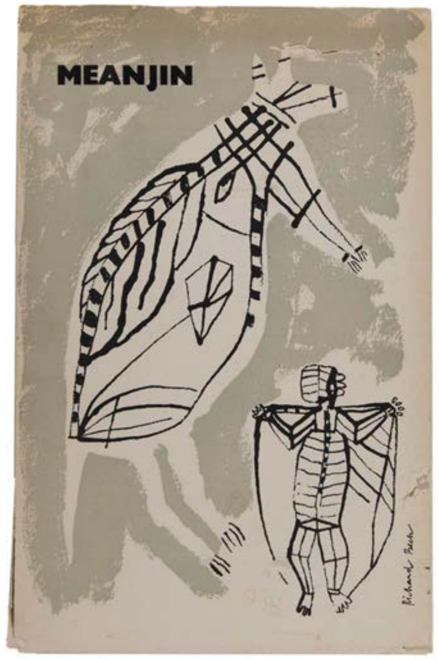
Australia's first film on modern design, *By Design*, directed by Geoff Collings and released in 1950, also included Aboriginal culture.[21] Collings' intention was to promote the benefits of industrial design to Australians. The modernist belief that design should be functional, timeless and improve the quality of people's lives is illustrated in the first scenes. As a modern jet taxis along a runway and takes off, the voiceover draws the audience's attention its form, suitably designed for its purpose. The next scene features a group of Aboriginal men working on their boomerangs. One stands and throws his, and as it flies through the air, the film cuts back to the jet and the voice over tells us that boomerangs are also designed to fit their purpose. This juxtaposition of the modern and ancient was important as it situated modernist design within a distinctly Australian context.

Meanjin: 1940–1954

Founded in 1940, the literary and cultural journal, *Meanjin* began modestly in Brisbane. The journal's title, noted editor Clem Christensen in the first issue, 'was the aboriginal [sic.] word for "spike," and was the name given to the finger of land bounded by the Brisbane River and extending from the city proper to the Botanic Gardens'.[22] A more extensive explanation of the word's origins and pronunciation appeared in a later issue, clearly, the title's Aboriginal origin was deemed important.[23] Christensen was one of a quartet of bohemian Brisbane poets who founded the journal, and its initial scope was to publish Queensland writers, but it soon became a national journal that published well-known Australian writers from poets A D Hope and Judith Wright to art historian Bernard Smith.[24] *Meanjin's* self-conscious quest to establish a modern Australian culture included not only European literature but Australian history, anthropology and an ongoing interest in Aboriginal art.[25]

Like the Collings' and Haughton-James, Christensen returned from Europe in 1939, keen to establish a modern literary culture in Brisbane.[26] Initially, *Meanjin* shared an outlook with the Jindyworobak writers, and the Jindyworobak founder Rex Ingamells contributed to early issues of *Meanjin*. The Jindyworobak program was a nationalist one that attempted to self-consciously blend elements of European and Aboriginal culture. Like *Meanjin*, Jindyworobak was a word appropriated from an Aboriginal language (specifically, Woiwurrung from Victoria, though the Jindys were based in Adelaide), and their annual anthology was published from 1938 to 1953. Aboriginal culture, as the editors understood it, was intimately connected to the local landscape, therefore could ground an authentic Australian culture. However, their literature was written by non-Aboriginal people.

For *Meanjin* and the Jindyworobaks, the borrowing of an Aboriginal word was part of a broader agenda in which Aboriginal art and culture were understood as a repertoire of materials available to found a national culture. Aboriginal words, Ingamells wrote, could 'express something of the Australian place spirit which baffles expression in English words',[27] and Ingamells used Aboriginal words and stories in his poetry. But, though there were certainly similarities in their approach in the 1940s, *Meanjin* was more diverse and its impact on Australian culture ultimately more lasting.



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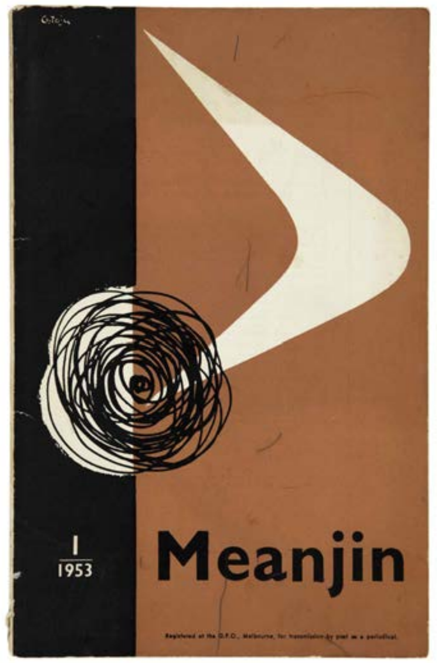
Richard Beck, cover for *Meanjin*, Volume 5, Number 47, 1951, Gift of Barbara Beck, 0001.2011.0009



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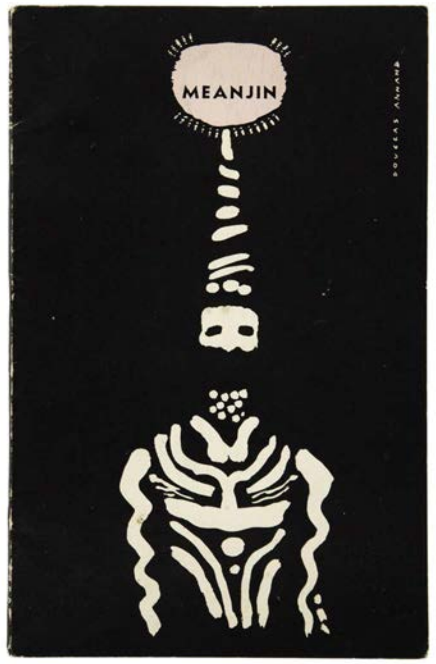
Stan Ostoja-Kotkowski, cover for *Meanjin* Volume 12, Number 1, 1953, Gift of Harriet Edquist 2018, 0038.2014.0069, ©Copyright courtesy estate J S Ostoja-Kotkowski



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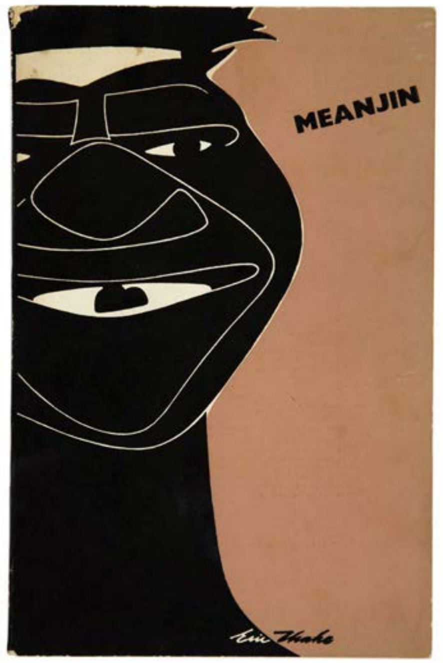
Douglas Annand, cover for *Meanjin* Volume 9, Number 1, 1950, Gift of Harriet Edquist 2018, 0038.2014.0068, © 2018 S A Annand & family.



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Eric Thake, cover for *Meanjin* Volume 9, Number 4, 1950, Gift of Harriet Edquist 2018, 0038.2014.0067 © 2018 Estate of Eric Thake

Early *Meanjin* covers of the 1940s featured a trail of four footprints. While they may have represented the journal's four founders, a trail of footprints also unmistakeably represented an idea borrowed from Aboriginal mythology. In an early issue, anthropologist A P Elkin related the footprints to *mundowi*, 'spirit-tracks', or traces of ancient heroes or spirits:

> To the aborigines [sic.], those foot-prints, those mythological paths, are not simply relics, fossils or memorials of an age long past. They are steps into a present, of which the past and future are but phases. In aboriginal [sic.] philosophy, as in dreaming, the limitations of time and space do not exist. They live in the 'eternal now,' in all the richness of its experience and the inspiration of its conviction.[28]

He then described an Aboriginal ritual in some detail and concluded with the idea of 'an Australia in which we shall live out our 'dream-time' myths, sharing them with all men of vision, courage and truth'.[29] The same 1943 issue of the magazine featured a full-page reproduction of a Margaret Preston print titled 'Aboriginal Hunt Design' (although the 'earthy' ochres, yellow and black colours were lost in the black and white magazine).

This intersection of literary, anthropological and visual cultures is characteristic of the journal's first fifteen years or so. In 1945, *Meanjin* shifted to the University of Melbourne and from a bimonthly to a quarterly magazine. Starting in 1949, the footsteps disappeared, and the cover of each issue instead featured a unique design. One of the first illustrated covers, by Peter Burrowes, featured two stick figures on a dotted ground, while another, by W E Green, featured a caricature of a crouching Aboriginal, a cartoon-like figure with a long headdress holding a painted shield. Over the next six years, a dozen covers featured similarly Aboriginal-inspired art, motifs or imagery.[30] As a representative sample, the four covers analysed below illustrate their variety.

Eric Thake's two *Meanjin* covers from 1950 feature line-art portraits of Aboriginal men's heads. Before the Second World War, Thake had worked for Paton's advertising agency in Melbourne, and also painted and designed engravings and book plates. He gained some notoriety as a surrealist when he shared the Contemporary Art Society prize in 1940 with James Gleeson, for his painting 'Salvation from the Evils of Earthly Existence'. After serving in the RAAF, Thake returned to Paton's and to his design and art work, which also included covers, newspaper advertising, stamp design and murals. However, these covers are rare in his oeuvre in their overt visualisation of Aboriginal culture.

In contrast, Douglas Annand's work was littered with Aboriginal references. His 1950 cover comprises a black background on which Annand highlights an Aboriginal figure by the use of white body paint and a ceremonial headdress. Annand grew up in Brisbane, and his design career began at Read Press where he learned printing technologies and worked on packaging, advertising and poster design. After moving to Sydney in 1930, Annand found work with David Jones and ANTA, and he became known for his innovative techniques, including photomontage and collage. Annand worked on publications such as *The Home*, *Art in Australia* and *Australia: National Journal*, and produced graphics for the Orient Line cruise ship company, including 'Kangaroo Hunt', a mural for RMS Orcades inspired by the bark paintings of Arnhem Land.[31]

Expatriate British designer Richard Beck arrived in Sydney in 1940, and, after the War, worked as a freelance designer in Melbourne. Beck already had an impressive portfolio from London, including posters for Orient Line and brochures and posters for the London Transport Board. Although best known today as the designer of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic poster and the iconic Wynn's wine label, Beck also designed a *Meanjin* cover inspired by Aboriginal bark painting. This same 1951 issue featured an article by Ronald Berndt on Aboriginal art, so perhaps that was the inspiration for Beck's design. His later work showed little engagement with Aboriginal culture, so this cover seems to be a one-off production.

In a more abstract way, Stanislas Ostoja-Kotkowski created covers in 1953 that made use of a boomerang form. Polish-born Ostoja-Kotkowski arrived in Melbourne in 1949, and worked in graphic design and art there for some years before moving to South Australia. This simple, abstract cover image is indicative of the abstract style of covers that would dominate *Meanjin* covers in the 1960s, but one of the later examples of Aboriginal-inspired covers. Like Beck, Ostoja- Kotkowski's later work displays no engagement with Aboriginal culture, so this cover also seems to have been designed specific for *Meanjin*.

Inside, *Meanjin* featured a few reproductions of paintings and drawings by Australian artists, and particularly after 1945, drawings, paintings and photographs became regular features. In 1950, Aboriginal art appeared for first time in an article titled 'Aboriginal Art from Central-Western Northern Territory'.[32] Captions for the reproduction of bark paintings included no names of artists, dates or regions. Articles by anthropologists during the 1950s also appeared in the magazine, including the one by Berndt noted above. Importantly, writing by Aboriginal people did not feature in *Meanjin* during the 1950s and it was not until the 1960s that writers such as Oodgeroo Noonuccul (Kath Walker) gained some recognition.

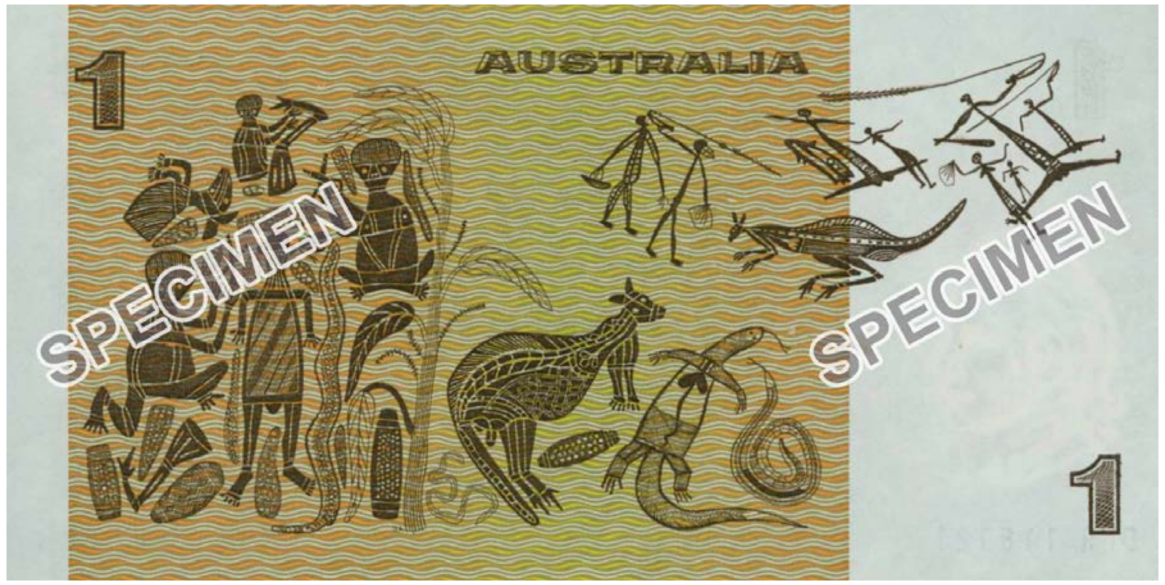
The dichotomy between visions of modern Australia in the 1940s and 1950s as urban, modern, and technologically-progressive seemed in conflict with a nationalism that could incorporate the mythical bush and pastoral visions. While the latter idea was rejected by modernists, both ideals measured Australian culture in relationship to European standards. Alternatively, *Meanjin* and the modernist designers' visualisation of Aboriginal bark painting, rock art, and even the exotic imagery of Northern and Central Australian people might, in this context, be seen as a modernism that projected a distinctive sense of place. Even if – as the final example graphically illustrates – designs were literally stolen from Aboriginal people.

The Flip-Side of a Dollar Bill: 1963-66

In 1963, Treasurer Harold Holt announced Australia would convert to a decimal currency in the near future. The Reserve Bank approached seven designers to produce a set of banknotes, of whom four produced a set of sample notes. Of these, Gordon Andrews' designs were selected to become the new Australian bank notes. The original set of two, ten, twenty and fifty-dollar notes featured the head of a prominent Australian man on each side – were celebrated as bold, colourful and distinctive designs.

The one-dollar note featured the Queen on one side and Aboriginal imagery on the other. Andrews later wrote that by including Aboriginal art on a bank note, 'I hoped to celebrate their culture through something all citizens would handle and come to respect. The idea, back in 1964, was unlikely to be accepted by the Bank, but I knew I would have an ally in the Governor, Dr Coombs.'[33] He noted that the images came from photographs of Karel Kupka's collection of bark paintings. At the time, Andrews knew nothing about the artist or the meaning of the art, and assumed the artist was long dead.[34]

This was soon proved incorrect. After the notes were released in 1966, Alan Fidock, of the Milingimbi Mission in Arnhem Land, recognized the image on the dollar bill as belonging to the Gurrumurringu story, which he knew belonged to David Malangi Daymirringu. It then became clear that Malangi had not given permission for the design to be used and 'Fidock wrote to H C Coombs, then Governor of the Reserve Bank, suggesting that a suit might be brought on Malangi's behalf for breach of copyright. Coombs investigated the matter and found that indeed Malangi had received



Right
The $1 banknote, showing designs based on a bark painting by David Malangi and stylised Aboriginal imagery designed by Gordon Andrews.

neither recognition nor reward.”[35] In 1966, Coombs ensured Malangi was paid a fee and received a commemorative medallion, the first public acknowledgement of an Aboriginal design being used without permission.

However, as an Aboriginal man in the 1960s, Malangi was not a citizen but a ‘ward’ of the Northern Territory and not technically allowed to sell his art so these negotiations were mediated through the Northern Territory government administration and mission bureaucracy. Since the late 1950s, Malangi had been painting barks for sale through the Mission.[36] This was at a time when Aboriginal people were beginning to produce art and artefacts for sale or exchange, and encountering a wider market than just anthropologists. In the 1950s, collecting Aboriginal material culture was shifting from an anthropological pursuit to a practice popular with tourists.

Malangi developed his art growing up on Milingimbi Island in the 1950s and learned stories from elders preparing ceremonies. The bark painting used on the one-dollar note illustrates part of the story of Gurrmirringu, the Ancestral Hunter of Malangi’s country in Central Arnhem Land, and depicts the mortuary ritual that Malangi painted numerous times (and his barks of this ritual now reside in Canberra’s National Gallery of Art and Sydney’s Museum of Contemporary Art). Belatedly, Malangi was recognised as one of Australia’s most significant artists, represented at the Biennale of Sydney in 1979, and by a solo exhibition at the National Gallery in 2004 (unfortunately after his death in 1999).[37]

While the Malangi case was clearly theft of an Aboriginal artists’ design by a non-Aboriginal designer, the authors and meanings – if any – of the rock art and the X-ray figures are unclear. Whether these were appropriated from a specific bark or rock art place (most likely a photograph) or were inventions of Andrews is now unknown. But Andrews intended the ensemble as a whole to be wholly decorative, and, like Preston in the 1920s, showed no interest in the cultural or spiritual aspects of the design.

Conclusion

Artefacts produced by Aboriginal people in the 1940s and 1950s, most famously Albert Namatjira’s watercolours, occupied a realm ranging from fine art to tourist souvenirs.[38] For some contemporary Aboriginal artists, such Aboriginal-inspired souvenirs, formerly dismissed as kitsch, ‘have become, collectively, a repository of memory and a reminder that Aboriginal culture had the first claim on what it is to be properly Australian’.[39] But the creation of a modern Aboriginal art in the 1970s and 1980s – exemplified by the artists of Papunya Tula – and the attention it has garnered since then has downplayed the more conflicted, earlier use of Aboriginal art by non-Aboriginal artists and designers.[40]

Whether understood as theft or misguided homage, it was in the decorative and commercial realm that Aboriginal culture remained visible in Australia in the 1940s and 1950s. But for Aboriginal people, the unauthorized appropriation of certain designs constituted not only theft but desecration.[41] With all of these examples by non-Aboriginal designers, there was no question of observing Aboriginal protocols for image-making and authority to use certain designs. Nor was there any appreciation of the cultural knowledge embedded within such designs and their relationship to country. For Aboriginal people today, the visual realm constitutes part of an ongoing struggle for recognition, not only culturally, but in its relation to the custodianship of land, Indigenous law and knowledge.

Endnotes

1 A recent challenge to this is Nicola St John, “Australian Communication Design History: An Indigenous Retelling,” *Journal of Design History*, [advance access] 2018. For briefer accounts, see Anne-Marie Van de Ven, “Images of the Fifties: Design and Advertising,” in *The Australian Dream: Design of the Fifties*, ed. Judith O’Callaghan (Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing, 1993), 28-41; Steve Miller, “Designs on Aboriginal Culture,” in *Modern Times: the Untold Story of Modernism in Australia*, eds Ann Stephen, Philip Goad and Andrew McNamara (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2008), 30-35.

2 See Patrick Woolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: the Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999) and Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

3 See Mitchell Rolls and Anna Johnson, *Travelling Home, ‘Walkabout Magazine; and Mid-Twentieth Century Australia*, (London: Anthem Press, 2016); and Lynette Russell, ‘Going *Walkabout* in the 1950’s: Images of ‘Traditional’ Aboriginal Australia’, *The Olive Pink Society Bulletin* 6, No.1 (1994): 4-8.

4 Jackie Dickenson, “The Past in Australian Advertising, 1906-2010,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 36, no.1 (2012): 73.

5 Margaret Preston, “The Indigenous Art of Australia,” in *Modernism and Australia*: *documents on art, design and architecture 1917-1967*, eds Ann Stephen, Philip Goad and Andrew McNamara (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2006) 156.

6 Preston, “The Indigenous Art of Australia,” 158.

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9 Marcia Langton, “Introduction: Cultural Wars,” in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, ed. Michele Grossman (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 91.

10 Marcia Langton, “Aboriginal Art and Film: The Politics of Representation,” in *Blacklines*, 119-120.

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12 A.P. Elkin, “‘Foreword’, *Australian Aboriginal Decorative Art*, 1938,” in *Modernism and Australia*, 378.

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14 Richard Haughton James, “The Designer in Industry: A Serious National Need,” *Australia National Journal* 1, no.1 (1939): 87-91.

15 See Denise Whitehouse, “Richard Haughton James: Australia National Journal and Designers for Industry,” DHARN, 2017, http://dharn.org.au/richard-haughton-james-australia-national-journal-and-designers-for-industry-author-denise-whitehouse/ (accessed September 1, 2018).

16 Roman Black, in his interview with Annand, in *Old and New Australian Aboriginal Art* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1964), 130.

17 *Australia National Journal*, 1, no.2 (1940): 26-28.

18 See Ann Stephen, “Designing for the World of Tomorrow: Australia at the 1939 New York World’s Fair,” *reCollections: Journal of the National Museum of Australia*, 1, no.1 (2006): 29-40.

19 *Exhibition of Australian Aboriginal Art and Its Application*, catalogue (Sydney: Australian Museum, 1941), 3.

20 Nicholas Thomas analyses this exhibition and its reception in *Possessions*, 120-125.

.

21 Michael Bogle, *Design In Australia, 1880-1970* (Sydney: Craftsman House, 1998), 133.

22 Clem Christensen, “Note”, *Meanjin*, 1, no.1 (1940): 1.

23 F.J. Watson, “Meanjin: It’s [sic] Meaning,” *Meanjin*, 1, no.6 (1941): 24.

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28 A.P. Elkin, “Step into the Dream-time,” *Meanjin*, 2, no.2 (1943): 15.

29 Elkin, ‘Step into the Dream-time’, 17.

30 These included: 8:1, 1949 by Peter Burrowes; 8:3 1949 by unknown; 8:4 1949 by W.E. Green; 9:1, 1950 by Douglas Annand; 9:2, 1950 by Eric Thake; 9:4, 1950 by Eric Thake; 9:4; 1951 by Richard Beck; 11:2, 1952 by Douglas Annand; 12:1, 1953 by Ostoja-Kotkowski (this cover was repeated for the next three issues), 13:1, 1954 by Douglas Annand.

31 Anne McDonald, *Douglas Annand: The Art of Life* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2001), 32.

32 *Meanjin*, 9, no.3 (1950).

33 Gordon Andrews, *Gordon Andrews: A Designers Life* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1993), 145.

34 David H. Bennett, “Malangi: The Man Who Was Forgotten Before He was Remembered,” *Aboriginal History*, 4, no.1 (1980): 42-47.

35 David H. Bennett, “Malangi: The Man Who Was Forgotten Before He was Remembered”, *Aboriginal History* 4, no.1 (1980): 45

36 See also Stephen Gray, “Government Man, Government Painting? David Malangi and the 1966 One-Dollar Note,” in *Indigenous Intellectual Property: A Handbook of Contemporary Research*, ed. Matthew Rimmer, (London: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), 133-154.

37 See Susan Jenkins, ed., *No Ordinary Place: The Art of David Malangi* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2004). Malangi died in 1999.

38 A lesser known example is Bill Onus’ Aboriginal Enterprises, an Aboriginal-run outlet for art and crafts, founded in 1952 in Belgrave, Victoria.

39 Adrian Franklin, “Aboriginalia: Souvenir Wares and the ‘Aboriginalization’ of Australian Identity,” *Tourist Studies*, 10, no.3 (2010): 197.

40 This idea is taken up by Chris Healy in *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2008), especially 65-100.

41 Nicola St John notes the ‘cultural and physical distress’ caused by such theft. St John, “Australian Communication Design History,” 7.

RB NOVEMBER 18, 1981

MENTHOLATUM

1982 "DEEP HEAT" CREATIVE

We need more than one creative idea to take to Client.
If we simply take the American "There's no beating Deep Heating" theme back to them we are not earning our Service Fee.
I think we need a number of creative theme/executions/ideas - and Gurney (who is the boss from Jan. 1) is strong on the circle of relief visual idea (not necessarily these words).

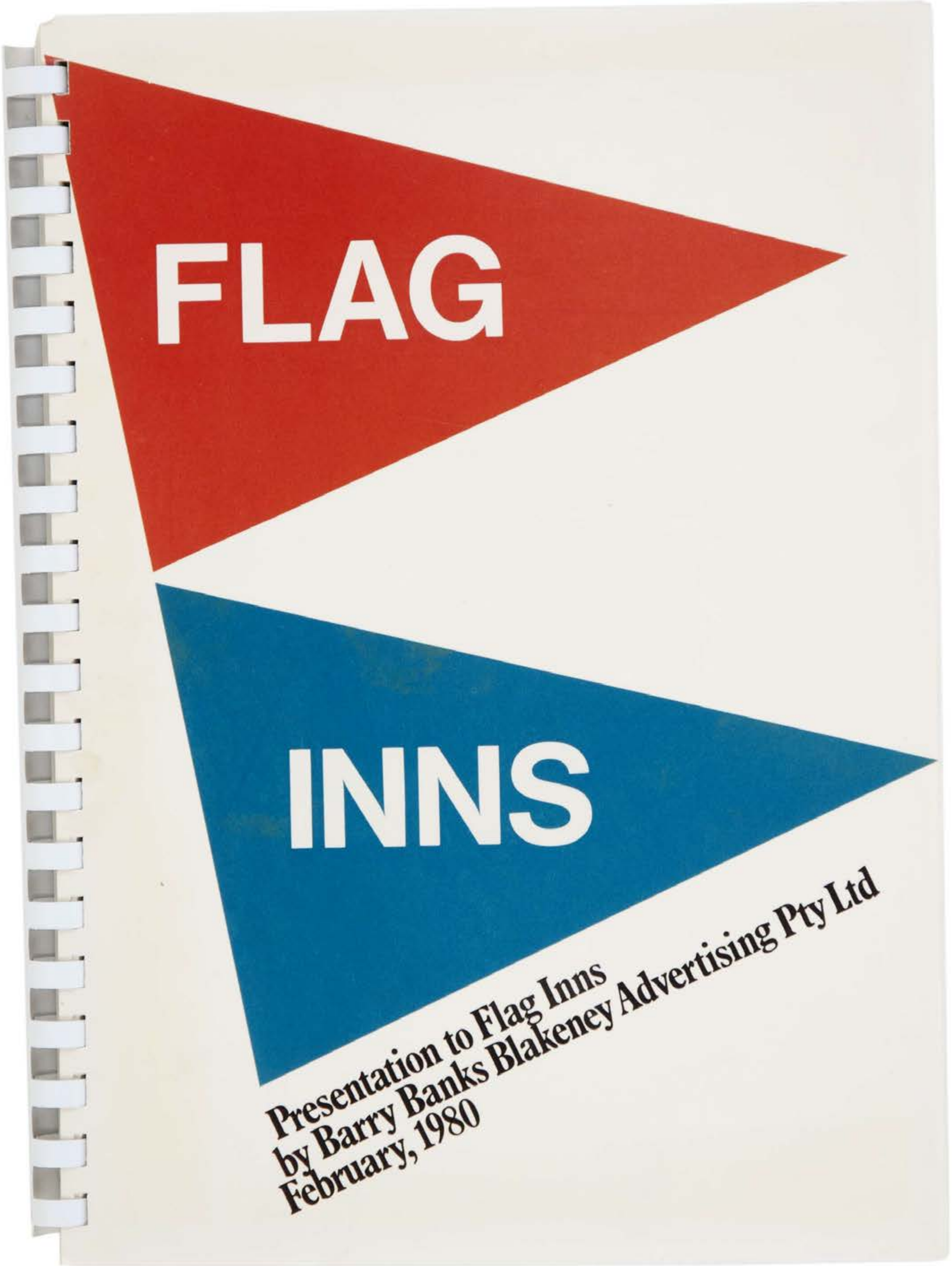
Consider:

1. The zone of relief idea
2. Testimonials from sufferers

Gurney back November 23.

Material required for meeting with him approx. Nov. 25

URGENT



FLAG

INNS

Presentation to Flag Inns
by Barry Banks Blakeney Advertising Pty Ltd
February, 1980

More than meets the eye: Advertising process and the Barry Banks Blakeney Archive

Robert Crawford

The popularity of television programs such as *Mad Men*, and more locally, the *Gruen Transfer* revealed the public's fascination with the inner workings of the advertising industry. While such programs have helped demystify some of the industry's tricks and practices, their focus on the more dramatic aspects of the advertising profession, such as the inspirational genius behind a campaign or the winning of a new account, tends to reinforce the image of advertising as a glamorous business. The reality, however, is somewhat more ordinary. This paper seeks to redress this imbalance by providing an insight into the everyday practices of a small Melbourne-based advertising agency, Barry Banks Blakeney, which operated in the second half of the twentieth century.

For the greater part of the twentieth century, the traditional advertising agency consisted of three key departments – the accounts department, the creative department, and the administrative department. Staff in the accounts department dealt with clients. They were responsible for ensuring that the agency was meeting the client's interests on the one hand, and pitching the agency's ideas to them on the other. Led by creative directors, the creative department was home to the so-called creatives, the copywriters and art directors, who collaborated to produce words and images to solve the client's problems. The administrative department was responsible for agency's business side. Larger agencies also operated a media department, which was responsible for buying media space. From the 1970s, smaller agencies could engage media agencies, which would buy space on their behalf.[1] Over the course of the twentieth century, agency services would branch out into other areas, including market research, public relations, and television commercial production.

Within the traditional agency structure, advertising campaigns typically commenced in the account service department, where account executives were established and maintained connections with the client. Once a clear outline of the client's needs was established, the account service team provided directions to the creative department, which then sought to develop creative responses. The account service department identified the most appropriate ideas and took them to the client for approval. Approved campaigns were then produced by the creative department. The final advertisement was forwarded to the media department, which placed the advertisement in the appropriate media outlet. The process, however, was rarely this straightforward. Interviewed shortly after he retired from advertising in 2014, the creative director of Barry Banks Blakeney, Rod Blakeney recalled a more convoluted process:

> An account executive would come, and give you a brief, and tell you a deadline … You would write the ad. When it was done to your satisfaction, not necessarily to his [account executive], you would go and talk to an artist, and get a rough of what an ad should look like. Remember, this is pre-computer. So the studios were awash with artists … You would have some copy and a layout and you would show it to the account executive. He would either say: "Yes, that's just what I wanted" or "This is a pile of cocky-poo, go and do it again".[2]

Far from being the product of a linear process, an advertising campaign was informed by a series of instructions, evaluations, negotiations, and collaborations.

As Liz McFall notes, academic studies of advertising have largely prioritised the advertisement, paying scant regard to the processes and influences both informing and underpinning them.[3] A handful of cultural historians and sociologists have recognised the importance of understanding and unpacking these processes. In their pioneering studies, Stuart Ewen and Roland Marchand unpack the ideological context in which advertising agencies operate and its impact on advertising imagery.[4] Sean Nixon and Brian Moeran's respective ethnographic studies of British and Japanese agencies similarly illustrate the ideologies affecting agency practices.[5] Building on these studies, Robert Crawford and Jackie Dickenson's *Behind Glass Doors* used oral history interviews alongside documentary materials and the trade press to examine Australia's advertising agency structures and operations during the period spanning the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, advertising's so-called 'golden age'.[6] Such studies, however, have tended to focus on national or multinational agencies.

Small advertising agencies with staff numbering fewer than 25 have attracted relatively little attention from scholars.

Previous Spread
Rodney Blakeney, memo regarding Mentholatum Deep Heat, c. 1989 Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016
0012.2016.0003

Opposite
Presentation to Flag Inns by Bary Banks Blakeney Advertising February 1980, bound report, Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016
0012.2016.0009

Opposite Page
Top Left
Chem-mart, We'll Look After You advertisement, c. 1986, Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016
0012.2016.0001

Top Right
Mytton Rodd, Sales conference July 19, c. 1982 Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016, p. 19
0012.2016.0008

Bottom Left
Chem-mart, Model chemist portrait, c. 1986, Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016
0012.2016.0002

Bottom Right
Barry Banks Blakeney Advertising Pty Ltd Staff profiles, page from Company brochure, Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016
0012.2016.0006

However, as Jackie Dickenson's *Advertising Women in Australia in the Twentieth Century* has shown, such firms have been important sites of innovation. These firms not only offered employment opportunities to individuals who fell outside of the professional mainstream (ie. women), their modest size meant that they were more likely to experiment in terms of creative approaches, technique, and execution.[7] Studies of present-day small advertising agencies indicate that innovation remains a hallmark of their operations. As Jenny-Maria Astrom *et al.* reveal, small agencies continue to possess 'higher levels of competitive aggressiveness and risk-taking because of the wish to expand, and vulnerability to their larger clients'.[8] In addition, 'the speed of the decision-making process can be faster and communication skills better in a small agency' facilitating 'higher levels of proactiveness'.[9] Such agencies therefore provide a unique insight into the advertising industry.

The materials held in the Barry Banks Blakeney (BBB) collection in the RMIT Design Archives are an important resource that offers an opportunity to delve deeply into the practices and processes of a smaller advertising agency, particularly over the late 1970s and early 1980s. An examination of the BBB materials as well as oral history testimony reveals the more pragmatic side of advertising agency operations and their creative processes. Far from being separate to the agency's creative process, the BBB materials reveal that the 'business' of advertising informs and infuses all aspects of a campaign – from securing the business to final production.

(Re)Creating the Agency

BBB's origins can be traced back to 1937, when Lewis 'Les' Leyshon, abandoned his bookkeeping career to establish his own advertising agency, Leyshon Publicity Service. The firm's founder passed away in 1946, aged 57. Although radio manager, John Clemenger, had been designated as Leyshon's successor, the agency was sold to an external buyer, E.W. 'Ted' Best, a former athlete and future Lord Mayor of Melbourne. Clemenger took revenge by taking the majority of the agency's clients and staff to form his own agency, John Clemenger Advertising.[10] (Clemengers would go on to become one of the most successful agencies in Australia.) Despite this setback, Leyshons continued to operate, trading under its founder's name until 1954, when it was rechristened Best & Co. By the mid-70s, Best was considering retirement and looked to sell the business.

In 1976, Best & Co. was sold to Keith Barry, Rod Blakeney, and Richard Banks and was duly renamed Barry Banks Blakeney. 'Dick' Banks had worked at George Patterson for a decade before joining Best & Co in the early 1960s, where he had risen to the position of director. His partners, Barry and Blakeney, were new to the agency. Both had significant experience with large multinational firms. Barry had worked for Unilever's marketing department as well as its agency, Lintas, before becoming the managing director of USP Needham. Blakeney was the creative director. He had worked at USP Needham in Brisbane before moving to S H Benson in London. Upon his return to Australia, he worked as a creative director for Grey Advertising and the significantly smaller Connell Longwill & Dean.

Reflecting on the BBB's leadership team, Blakeney recalled that 'We were all fairly big agency people' and noted that this affected the agency's self-perception. In his view, BBB was 'a high quality boutique agency, if you like. ... We were a small agency with big agency people, providing big agency expertise, experience, knowledge, service'.[11] The agency's publicity materials contained in the archive actively emphasised this stance. Such materials declared that the firm was a full service operation, which could 'cover the management of a total marketing mix, including creative services, media placement and scheduling, corporate communication and design, marketing, research and public relations'.[12] BBB's services later extended into packaging design. However, size remained a key selling point in the agency's publicity, where it preferred identified itself as 'a medium size advertising agency'.[13] Such proclamations sought to assuage larger clients:

> We are large enough to provide in depth a thoroughly professional range of creative, media, account management, research and marketing services. We are small enough to make services the personal concern of the people who own the company.[14]

Building on the personal touch argument, BBB promotional materials also argued that 'Unlike many of the biggest agencies, we are not an ad factory, but a professional service organisation. We are not a 'formula shop''.[15] Such appeals all seemed to pay off. By 1986, BBB was operating with a staff of 12, who were servicing 17 clients. Its billings were around $4 million – placing it in the lower reaches of the top 100 billing agencies in Australia.[16]

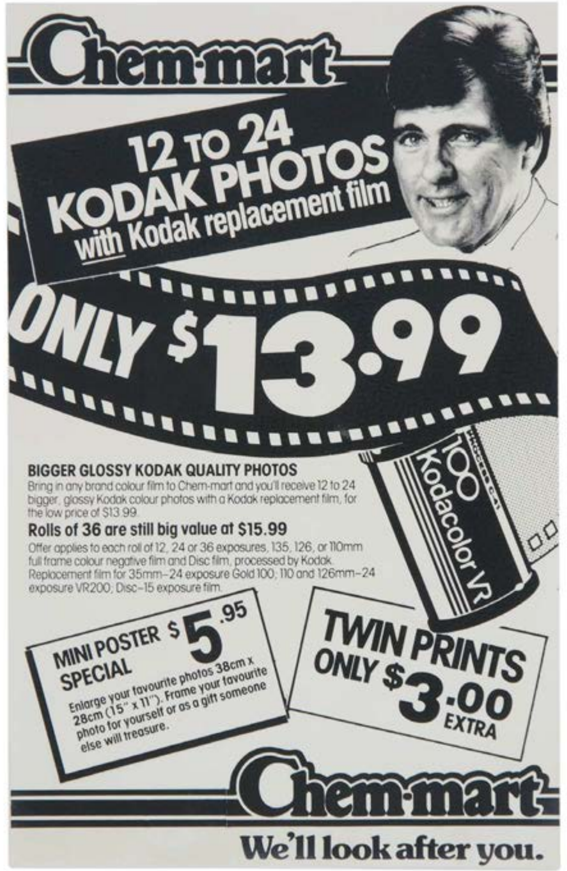
Getting Business

BBB's executive understood that grand philosophical statements and bold publicity materials would not attract business in themselves – new accounts could only be landed if the agency could successfully demonstrate that they possessed the strategic nous and the creative flair that clients needed. The BBB materials pertaining to current and prospective clients, such as Mytton Rodd, Flag Inns, and Chem-mart, not only illustrate the important and often confidential process of wooing the client, they also reveal the degree to which advertising practices are informed by broader social and cultural norms.

The campaign to win over the state managers attending a national sales conference of the Melbourne-based cutlery and steel manufacturer Mytton Rodd in 1982 called for a strong and engaging pitch.[17] Script notes for the presentation reveal the presenter's pitch along with the strategies he deployed to cultivate a connection with his audience. The speaker's opening sought to establish a connection with the audience:

> Gentlemen, it's said there's no such thing as a free lunch, and today is no exception. Pat has asked me to lunch and now I'm going to pay for it. Many imagine than ad man's luncheon looks like this. Slide 1 (Lunch) As you can see I'm not as old as all that and she's not as pretty as my girl. Slide 2 (Girl)[18]

The self-deprecating opening sought to counter the stereotypical view of the glitzy advertising executive. Sexism is then used to develop a further rapport with the male


Chem-mart
12 TO 24
KODAK PHOTOS
with Kodak replacement film
ONLY $13.99
100
Kodacolor VR

BIGGER GLOSSY KODAK QUALITY PHOTOS

Bring in any brand colour film to Chem-mart and you'll receive 12 to 24 bigger, glossy Kodak colour photos with a Kodak replacement film, for the low price of $13.99.

Rolls of 36 are still big value at $15.99

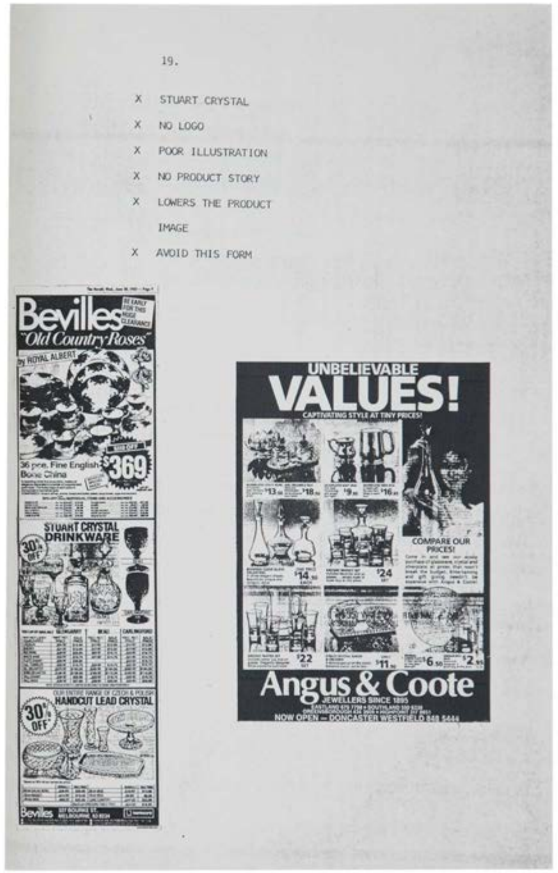
Offer applies to each roll of 12, 24 or 36 exposures, 135, 126, or 110mm full frame colour negative film and Disc film, processed by Kodak. Replacement film for 35mm–24 exposure Gold 100; 110 and 126mm–24 exposure VR200; Disc–15 exposure film.

MINI POSTER SPECIAL $5.95

Enlarge your favourite photos 38cm x 28cm (15" x 11"). Frame your favourite photo for yourself or as a gift someone else will treasure.

TWIN PRINTS ONLY $3.00 EXTRA

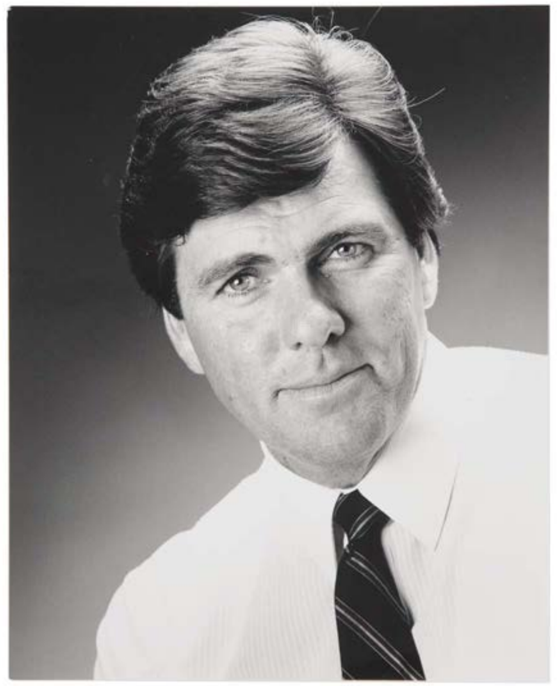
Chem-mart
We'll look after you.

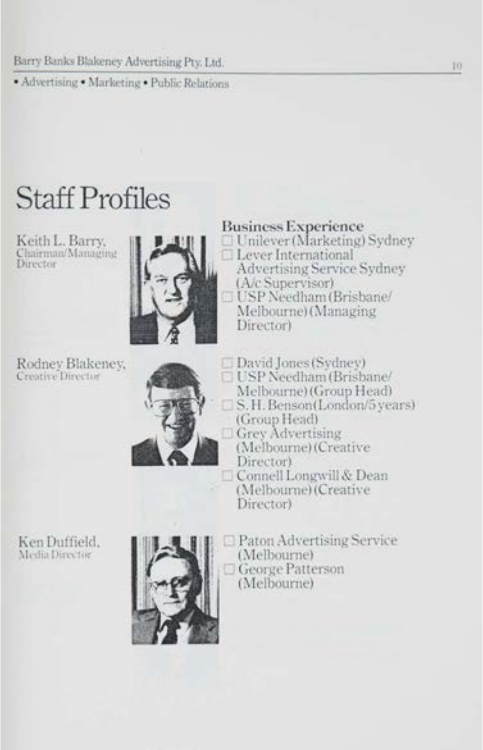


19.

X STUART CRYSTAL
X NO LOGO
X POOR ILLUSTRATION
X NO PRODUCT STORY
X LOWERS THE PRODUCT
IMAGE
X AVOID THIS FORM

Bevilles
"Old Country Roses"
by ROYAL ALBERT
36 pce. Fine English Bone China
$369
STUART CRYSTAL DRINKWARE
30% OFF
HANDCUT LEAD CRYSTAL
30% OFF
UNBELIEVABLE
VALUES!
CAPTIVATING STYLE AT TINY PRICES!
COMPARE OUR PRICES!
Angus & Coote
JEWELLERS SINCE 1895
NOW OPEN — DONCASTER WESTFIELD 848 5444





Barry Banks Blakeney Advertising Pty. Ltd. 10
• Advertising • Marketing • Public Relations

Staff Profiles

Business Experience

Keith L. Barry,
Chairman/Managing Director
☐ Unilever (Marketing) Sydney
☐ Lever International Advertising Service Sydney (A/c Supervisor)
☐ USP Needham (Brisbane/Melbourne) (Managing Director)

Rodney Blakeney,
Creative Director
☐ David Jones (Sydney)
☐ USP Needham (Brisbane/Melbourne) (Group Head)
☐ S. H. Benson (London/5 years) (Group Head)
☐ Grey Advertising (Melbourne) (Creative Director)
☐ Connell Longwill & Dean (Melbourne) (Creative Director)

Ken Duffield,
Media Director
☐ Paton Advertising Service (Melbourne)
☐ George Patterson (Melbourne)

audience. Such jokes not only underscore the homosocial nature of 'doing business' in marketing, they also illustrate the way that sexism within the advertising industry went well beyond the stereotypes depicted in advertisements. The speaker's attempts at humour are then followed by an attempt to establish empathy with the audience's business nous: 'On a more serious note advertising today is a very exacting business,' he declares, 'Gone are the halcion [sic] days of spending someone else's money and hoping for the best.'[19] The presenter goes on to discuss communication theories in greater detail, noting that 'Verbal language, body language, colour, shape, typography, and music are among the many symbols used in advertising communications'.[20] A discussion of audiences and their capacity to recall media messages follows, which then segues into the role of advertising and its importance to the marketer. The presentation then displays poorly produced campaigns where faults include the lack of a logo, the lack of a product story, and inferior illustrations. Such examples are then contrasted against BBB's work, where the speaker is given space to ad-lib about the campaigns' strengths and strategic aims. This enables the speaker to connect the campaign back to BBB and its ability to understand the needs of manufacturers working with retailers: 'We are believers in the strategy that makes retailers a part of our client's own planned and controlled promotional adverting rather than just becoming a part of the retailer's advertising budget.'[21] The presentation concludes with a call to arms and an appeal aimed at the heart and mind: 'I would like to leave you with this thought. Strategically, the best time to attack is when the enemy retreats.'[22]

Other documents in the BBB archive, such as the 1980 pitching documents for the Flag Inns hotel chain, outline the agency's approach to developing strategic plans for prospective clients. The client brief for Flag Inns called for a campaign that would highlight the hotel chain's national locations, the quality of its accommodation, its range of facilities, and the value for money that it offered to consumers.[23] In its effort to win the Flag Inns account, BBB produced two volumes of material. The first outlined the context for motels, the agency's strategic approaches and its creative responses to the client brief, whilst the second provided detailed statistics on the Australian accommodation market and the summary findings of interviews with the consumer market.

BBB identified radio as the most cost effective and relevant medium for reaching two key Flag Inn markets – family travellers and businessmen. Its creative solution centred on the proposition: 'Have a Happy Stay'. Described as 'open ended and emotionally-charged' that drew on the 'West Coast American greeting "Have a happy day" ', BBB argued that its proposition created a 'friendly, "make you feel good" mood' that had ' "high visibility" on radio'.[24] Songwriter Mike Brady, whose 'Up there Cazaly' promotion for Channel 7's football coverage had become a chart-topping song, was employed as a freelancer to write the jingle. Illustrating the agency's production abilities, recordings of 10 radio advertisements were provided to stimulate 'a journey from Melbourne to Surfers Paradise'.[25]

Intriguingly, the pitch document concludes with a statement declaring the need to undertake more research: 'Without answers to a lot of these questions we are flying blind to some degree. Our observations and proposed strategy must be viewed against this lack of information'.[26] Although these concluding comments might appear to be a cynical strategy, they in fact reinforce BBB's credentials as a client-focused agency. Moreover, they address an issue that the agency encountered – the clients' reluctance to invest in research. Blakeney recounts this challenge:

> I spent a lot of my time trying to persuade clients to spend a few thousand on research and to save themselves hundreds of thousands because it's very easy to be addressing the wrong audience, saying the wrong things to that audience. … A lot of clients at the level we operated, which was not the multimillion dollar account level, were very careful with their pennies and they were loath to spend a couple of thousand when what they wanted to say was obvious to them but was not necessarily obvious to the market that they were addressing.[27]

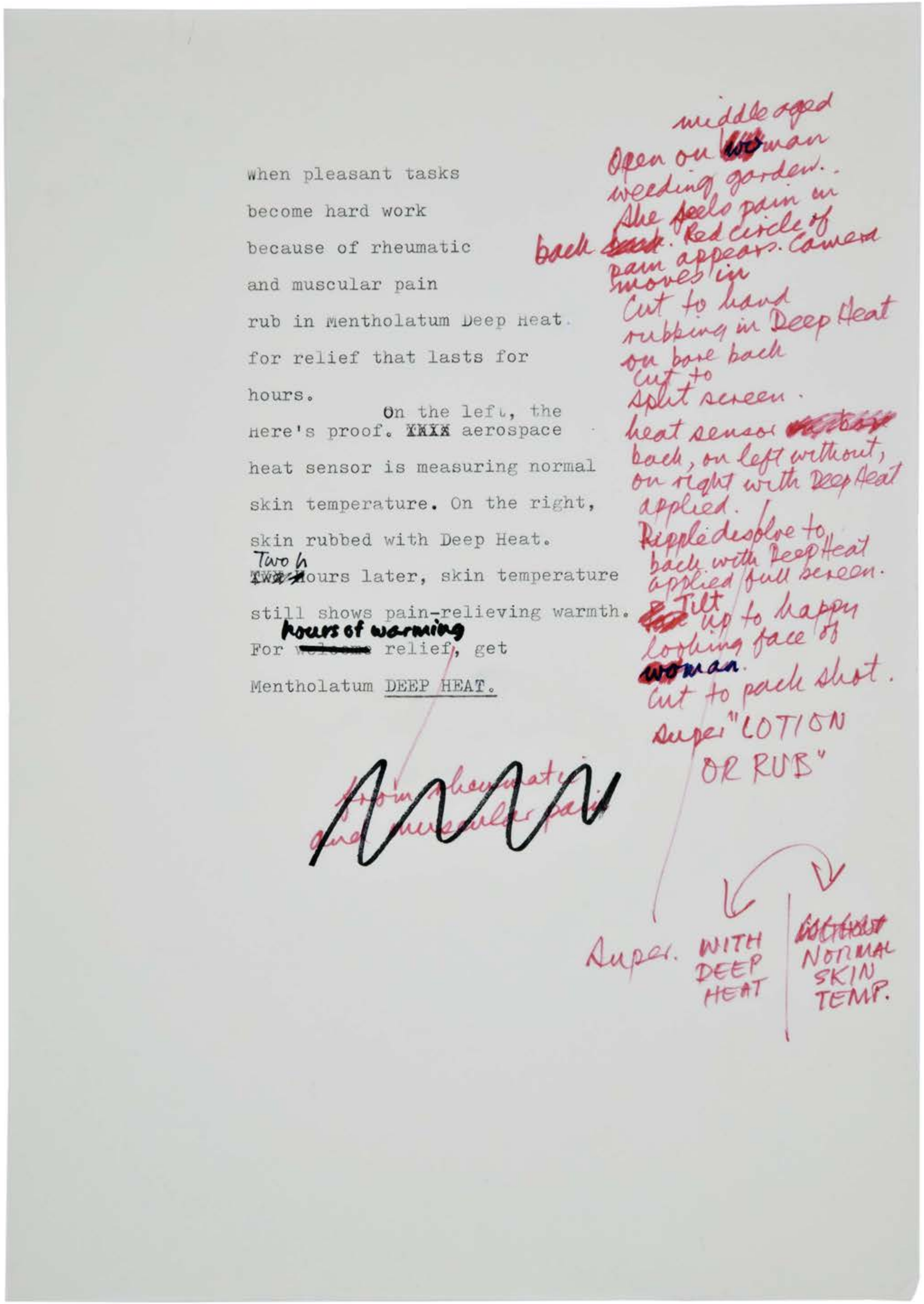
The extensive number of research studies held in the BBB archive underscores the firm's commitment to using research to guide its strategic approach and creative thinking. However, in this case, the research was not enough to win the account.[28]

The 1986 pitch document for the Melbourne-based national chain of budget chemists, Chem-mart, covered similar territory, albeit with some discernible differences. It opens with an overview of the marketing context, outlining current trends in the chemist retail sector as well as the retailer's current and past marketing strategies, before undertaking a market analysis. Based on these insights it offers various recommendations, from positioning 'Chem-mart as the consumer's choice in term [sic] of price, range and friendly helpful professional advice' to attracting 'new customers from designated affluent segments' and generating 'more profits for the Chem-mart group members'.[29] Within this strategy, advertising's role was threefold: to increase consumer awareness; to 'establish favourable consumer attitudes towards Chem-mart'; and to entice consumers to develop their photographic films at Chem-mart.[30]

BBB hoped to differentiate Chem-mart from competitors by drawing attention to its 'professionalism and competitive pricing'.[31] This would be encapsulated in the campaign's central theme: 'Chem-mart: We'll look after you'. Describing it as an 'open ended promise that can be fulfilled on in so many ways', the pitch document presents various examples of how this proposition could be executed.[32] It also introduces the chemist whose role was 'to reinforce to your predominantly female customers the image of friendly caring professionalism'.[33] The model is described as 'the ideal Chem-mart Chemist – old enough to be responsible, young enough to be up-to-date, a man with a sympathetic ear, a friendly smile and an approachable disposition'.[34]

Mock catalogues and pamphlets, replete with the Chem-mart chemist, were created, as well as the storyboards for various television commercials. These sought to illustrate

Opposite Page
Barry Banks Blakeney, script for The Mentholatum Company, c. 1986, Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016
0012.2016.0005



when pleasant tasks
become hard work
because of rheumatic
and muscular pain
rub in Mentholatum Deep Heat.
for relief that lasts for
hours.
On the left, the
Here's proof. XXXX aerospace
heat sensor is measuring normal
skin temperature. On the right,
skin rubbed with Deep Heat.
Two h
~~TWO~~ hours later, skin temperature
still shows pain-relieving warmth.
hours of warming
For ~~welcome~~ relief, get
Mentholatum DEEP HEAT.

~~from rheumatic and muscular pain~~

middle aged
Open on woman
weeding garden.
She feels pain in
back ~~back~~. Red circle of
pain appears. Camera
moves in
Cut to hand
rubbing in Deep Heat
on bare back
Cut to
Split screen.
heat sensor ~~[illegible]~~
back, on left without,
on right with Deep Heat
applied.
Ripple desolve to
back with Deep Heat
applied full screen.
~~[illegible]~~ Tilt up to happy
looking face of
woman.
Cut to pack shot.
Super "LOTION
OR RUB"

Super. WITH
DEEP
HEAT

~~WITHOUT~~
NORMAL
SKIN
TEMP.

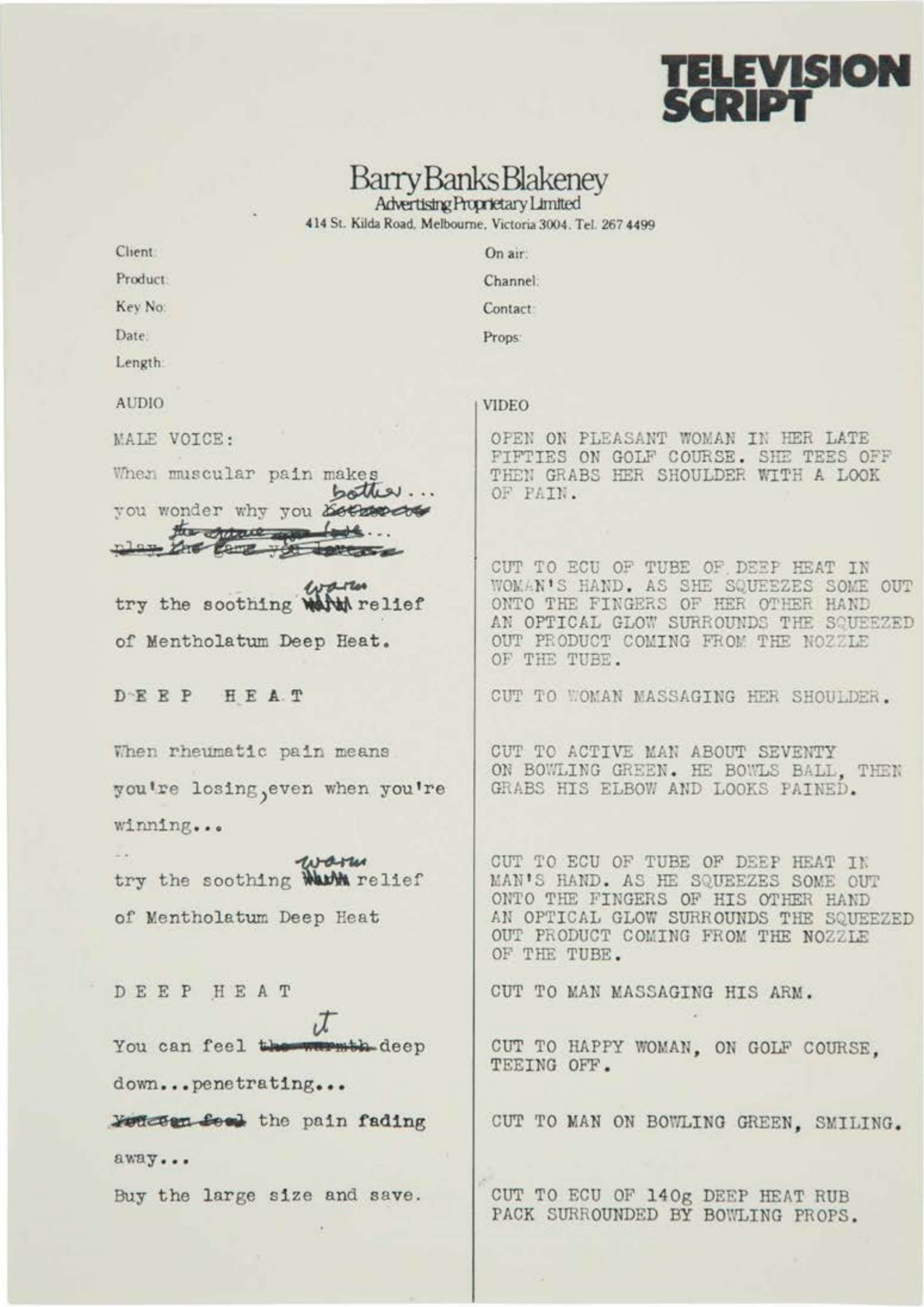
the central idea's capacity to move 'from print media to television and radio' as well as its capacity to implement 'easy and low cost changes' for items on special without losing 'continuity of the theme'.[35] Media costs and strategy are then discussed in great detail, indicating again that Chem-mart were as budget conscious as their customers. Like every good advertisement, the document concludes with its call to action. In this case, it returns to business side of the pitch, concluding with further details about BBB, relevant staff, and the agency's mode of operation in terms of payment.

The 1989 strategic plan for Mentholatum's Deep Heat line of analgesic rubs differs from the previous documents insofar as BBB was not trying to win the account: Mentholatum was an existing client. It approached BBB to launch a new product into the market and to counter the impact of a new competitor by updating existing lines. The document follows the set pattern of opening with background details on the market and the brand's current marketing strategies. It moves into the agency's creative ideas, beginning with packaging. As Deep Heat packaging had not changed since the 1950s, BBB provided a detailed explanation of the new packaging and the ideas underpinning its design:

> The DEEP HEAT GEL RUB lettering has been specially developed to give the pack a unique look. It is not an existing typeface so it will never be seen on any other pack. The lettering run almost the full length of the pack for strong on-shelf recognition. ... Typeface, apart from the special DEEP HEAT lettering, is Helvetica. It's clean, modern, won't date and has a desirable "ethical" feeling.[36]

The advertising campaign aimed to introduce the new product centre with a simple promise: 'Extra strength for hours of temporary relief from arthritis and muscle pain'.[37] The execution of the television commercial was no less straightforward. Opening with a shot of the new product and packaging, its attributes are highlighted. Mindful of the need to maintain consistency, the commercial uses 'The distinctive DEEP HEAT sound ... to reinforce the newness and extra strength: DEEP HEAT GOES DEEPER'.[38] Typical users are then shown enjoying life and the commercial closes with 'another look at the new pack and tube so it will be clearly recognised at point of purchase'.[39] There were no storyboards, suggesting that the campaign did not deviate too far from previous campaigns.

Asked to comment on BBB's relationship with its clients, Blakeney explained that the agency paid close attention to meeting the client's needs. He also cites the longevity of many of BBB's relationships as evidence of their successful client service. Reflecting on the agency's philosophy towards clients, Blakeney states: 'What the client really is buying, I think, is creative product and it has to be something which he understands and which works for him'.[40] The pitch documents certainly underscore this relationship and BBB's efforts to cultivate it. In each case, the agency is speaking directly to the client with a view to persuading them that the creative concepts are consistent with client experiences and expectations on the one hand, and consumer needs on the other. Successfully negotiating these different and often inconsistent and even competing interests was integral to getting the business.



TELEVISION SCRIPT

Barry Banks Blakeney
Advertising Proprietary Limited
414 St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, Victoria 3004. Tel. 267 4499

Client:
Product:
Key No:
Date:
Length:
On air:
Channel:
Contact:
Props:

AUDIO	VIDEO
MALE VOICE:	OPEN ON PLEASANT WOMAN IN HER LATE FIFTIES ON GOLF COURSE. SHE TEES OFF THEN GRABS HER SHOULDER WITH A LOOK OF PAIN.
When muscular pain makes you wonder why you ~~[illegible]~~ bother... ~~play the game you love~~	
try the soothing ~~warm~~ warm relief of Mentholatum Deep Heat.	CUT TO ECU OF TUBE OF DEEP HEAT IN WOMAN'S HAND. AS SHE SQUEEZES SOME OUT ONTO THE FINGERS OF HER OTHER HAND AN OPTICAL GLOW SURROUNDS THE SQUEEZED OUT PRODUCT COMING FROM THE NOZZLE OF THE TUBE.
DEEP HEAT	CUT TO WOMAN MASSAGING HER SHOULDER.
When rheumatic pain means you're losing, even when you're winning...	CUT TO ACTIVE MAN ABOUT SEVENTY ON BOWLING GREEN. HE BOWLS BALL, THEN GRABS HIS ELBOW AND LOOKS PAINED.
try the soothing ~~warm~~ warm relief of Mentholatum Deep Heat	CUT TO ECU OF TUBE OF DEEP HEAT IN MAN'S HAND. AS HE SQUEEZES SOME OUT ONTO THE FINGERS OF HIS OTHER HAND AN OPTICAL GLOW SURROUNDS THE SQUEEZED OUT PRODUCT COMING FROM THE NOZZLE OF THE TUBE.
DEEP HEAT	CUT TO MAN MASSAGING HIS ARM.
You can feel ~~the warmth~~ it deep down...penetrating...	CUT TO HAPPY WOMAN, ON GOLF COURSE, TEEING OFF.
~~You can feel~~ the pain fading away...	CUT TO MAN ON BOWLING GREEN, SMILING.
Buy the large size and save.	CUT TO ECU OF 140g DEEP HEAT RUB PACK SURROUNDED BY BOWLING PROPS.

This page
Barry Banks Blakeney, television script for The Mentholatum Company, c. 1989, Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016 0012.2016.0004

Creating Ideas

The advertising industry venerates the creative process. Stories of copywriters and art directors drawing inspiration for successful campaigns from the unlikeliest of sources are legion. At BBB, creative director Blakeney recalls that: 'I had a great deal of autonomy on the creative side. Keith Barry was the new business getter ... he was the business head and I was the words and pictures'.[41] However, the archival material documenting the agency's relationship with the Mentholatum account over the 1970s and early 1980s suggests that Blakeney's creative autonomy was far from complete – creative execution appeared to stem more from a series of collaborations than an individual bolt of inspiration.

Mentholatum's Deep Heat muscle rub was an important client for BBB. As a multinational firm, Mentholatum did not need to be convinced of the importance of marketing and advertising for any of its brands. However, the multinational also appreciated the economic advantages of adopting a single marketing strategy across the globe. While this uniform approach was certainly a key part of the firm's marketing approach, BBB was not automatically bound to follow it. Documents reveal that Mentholatum's approach was consultative. In 1976, BBB was asked to respond to a new product line – Deep Heat's 'Nighttime Strength'. Its response reveals that it was not just in the business of creating advertisements:

> Agency recommends adherence to the successful and distinctive US Pack in 4 colour design. Client intends to have Australian labels printed on adhesive plasticised labels for fixing to pack supplied from US ... Client requires mock-up urgently for presentation to Vic. Health Dept.[42]

The final statement in BBB's response to its client's query also illustrates the impact of other influences on the marketing strategies. Marketers operating health-related fields needed to pay close attention to government regulations. In a 1978 letter from the American headquarters to its Australian office, Mentholatum noted that American authorities posed a similar challenge in forbidding the use of the term arthritis. The same letter also revealed the degree to which competitor's campaigns affected marketing strategy. Noting that 'In the USA we were pre-empted in the 'Extra Strength' category by three other competitors', the Americans observed that this did not preclude its Australian team from laying claim to the title: 'However, in your market we could be first in with the 'extra strength' which is most important'.[43]

In 1977 Mentholatum was looking to implement a new campaign in Australia that drew on overseas examples. Correspondence reveals that British and American approaches and views were being canvassed. In writing to Mentholatum's Australian team, Blakeney offered his experienced viewpoint:

> The reservations expressed by the United Kingdom on the advisability of using the Heat Sensor commercial for the Australian market prompt me to add my own thoughts ... It seems to me that there is a strong argument in favour of retaining the pulsating circle ... You have made a considerable investment in a distinctive visual device and you would be building on an already established foundation by retaining it ... By combining the pulsating circle and the Heat Sensor we are making an extremely complex communication which perhaps does not allow sufficient time to do justice to either theme.[44]

Two years later, Blakeney was again advising his client on the appropriateness of using overseas campaigns in the Australian market. Commenting on two American storyboards (for different Mentholatum products) that had been dispatched to Australia, Blakeney suggested that Australia adopt one 'in a format close to the U.S. version'. His rationale was based on experience:

> The opening mood and treatment of 'Window Pane' is unique among television commercials ... entertainment is blended with relevance to create a persuasive selling vehicle that will sustain interest and not create irritation after multiple exposures ... Product launch news value is not sacrificed. Within the first 15 seconds we see the product pack and the product in use. The word 'new' occurs in the script three times ... Purpose, related to product name, is reinforced by demonstration.[45]

Conceding that his comments were based on 'subjective opinion', Blakeney counselled his client to invest in market research: 'In this way, at a cost of around A$2000 a qualitative conclusion could be reached and a valuable benchmark for subsequent advertising established'.[46]

Although the archive clearly illustrates the impact that the client had on the creative process as well as BBB's apparent acquiescence, the agency was not simply content with functioning as mere a translator of overseas campaigns. In a 1981 internal memo labelled 'urgent', Blakeney expressed concerns about the agency's creative credentials in the lead up to a meeting with its client:

> We need more than one creative idea to take to Client. If we simply take the American 'There's no beating Deep Heating' theme back to them we are not earning our Service Fee. I think we need a number of creative theme/execution/ideas – and Gurney (who is the boss from Jan.1) is strong on the circle of relief visual idea (not necessarily these words). Consider: 1. The zone of relief idea 2. Testimonial from sufferers.[47]

Evidently, the meeting with Mentholatum went well, with minutes noting: 'Agency presented alternative approaches; Client approved "Testimonial" series in principle. Agency to refine both print and radio executions'.[48]

Creative Processes

The BBB archive provides few direct details on the actual creative process. However evidence of creative thinking can nevertheless be discerned in mark ups and approvals for scripts and proofs. In order to ensure that clients remained fully abreast of each campaign, typed scripts for television commercials were dispatched for final approval. Such alterations varied in size and scope. In 1976, the script stating 'Rheumatic and muscular pain are relieved by...' was changed by the client to 'Rheumatic and muscular pains *may be* relieved by...', indicating the client's wariness of using absolute claims as well as an abiding concern for government regulations.[49] A different script produced around the same time was similarly amended from 'Deep Heat Lotion brings welcome soothing relief' to 'Deep Heat Lotion *helps* bring welcome soothing relief'.[50] The commercial that went to air in 1981 contained much of this script.[51]

Not all script changes were driven by clients. A script for a television commercial that was broadcast in 1980 was changed from 'When muscular pain makes you wonder why you bother to play the game you love' to the shorter 'When muscular pain makes you wonder why you bother'.[52] The shortening was presumably done by Blakeney, who could see that the economy of words would enable the audience to insert their own challenges.

The scripts for the same campaign also reveal the agency's role in the production process. An alteration to the script stipulated that the actors were to be younger – the woman thus goes from being in her 'late 50s' to being 'mid-50s', while the man similarly goes from being in his '70s' to '65'. The man's location is also moved from a bowling green to the potting shed. While no explanation is given for either change, both were presumably done with a view to depicting 'healthier' people doing a wider range of activities. Such changes were consistent with Blakeney's philosophy on consumers, which held that 'A consumer is someone that is looking for a solution to a problem ... for a way to make life easier, more comfortable, more pleasant ... I think being able to target the market accurately is vital to doing successful advertising'.[53]

Conclusion

At a glance, Blakeney's claim that 'Advertising has to reflect the taste and judgement of the people it is addressing' seems logical and relatively unimpressive. [54] But when it is considered in relation to the materials held in the BBB archive, we begin to see the ways that advertisements are in fact addressing multiple audiences and are doing so well before they reach the consuming public. Advertising agencies must firstly address their clients, whose views are informed by a vast range of factors – from head office decrees to government regulations to board members' individual tastes. The BBB archive similarly reveals the agency to be an audience. Campaigns must therefore reflect an agency's philosophical approach to advertising and, in the process, the creative team's own taste and judgement. Within this framework of constant filtering, the image of the inspired creative who singlehandedly creates the award-winning campaign emerges as something of a myth or, at least, the exception that proves the rule.

Although creativity is an essential component of advertising and the advertising industry, the BBB archive demonstrates that advertising is fundamentally about business. The efforts made by agencies to sell the client's business, in pitches and promotional materials, illustrate the commercial reality of the advertising industry – an agency simply cannot exist without clients. Small agencies like BBB were particularly sensitive to the arrival or departure of an account. Within this environment, innovation and risk-taking have been identified by small firms as a hallmark of their operations, providing a point of difference to their larger competitors. However, the BBB archive challenges the sense that small agencies are inherent risk takers or somehow predisposed to doing things differently. BBB thus prided itself on its ability to service the client's wishes – a small agency with big agency experience. In terms of the Mentholatum account, this meant reshooting overseas commercials. At other times, it recommended further research to ensure that the campaign was founded on solid ground rather than innovative gut-feeling. Creativity and innovation were important, but only if and when the client required it. The fact that the Blakeney had to encourage his agency to come up with new ideas underscores the degree to which BBB's 'big agency' client-service approach permeated its work.

The BBB archive ultimately documents the unseen, neglected, and all too easily forgotten aspects of the creative process. In the process it offers a candid and unique insight into the world of advertising practices. It also records the experiences of smaller and less glamorous advertising agencies, a topic that has attracted significantly less attention from scholars and archivists alike. Finally, the BBB materials present an important resource to design historians. By illustrating past processes, the archive illustrates key aspects of advertising design practice as well as the influences affecting them.

Endnotes

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12 'Barry Banks Blakeney – MM Cables Pitch Document', c.1977, Box 23, Rodney Blakeney Archive, Barry Banks Blakeney (BBB) Collection, RMIT Design Archives, RMIT University.

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27 Blakeney, interview.

28 The successful campaign can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIXfJQ-ASsU (accessed 12 September 2018).

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33 ibid., 'Meet the Chemist'.

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42 'Client Meeting Notes', January 23, 1977, The Mentholatum Company, Box 23, BBB Collection, RMIT Design Archives.

43 ibid., 'Letter from Robert Crandall to Noel Moore', December 27, 1978.

44 ibid., 'Letter from Rodney Blakeney to Noel More, March 21, 1978.

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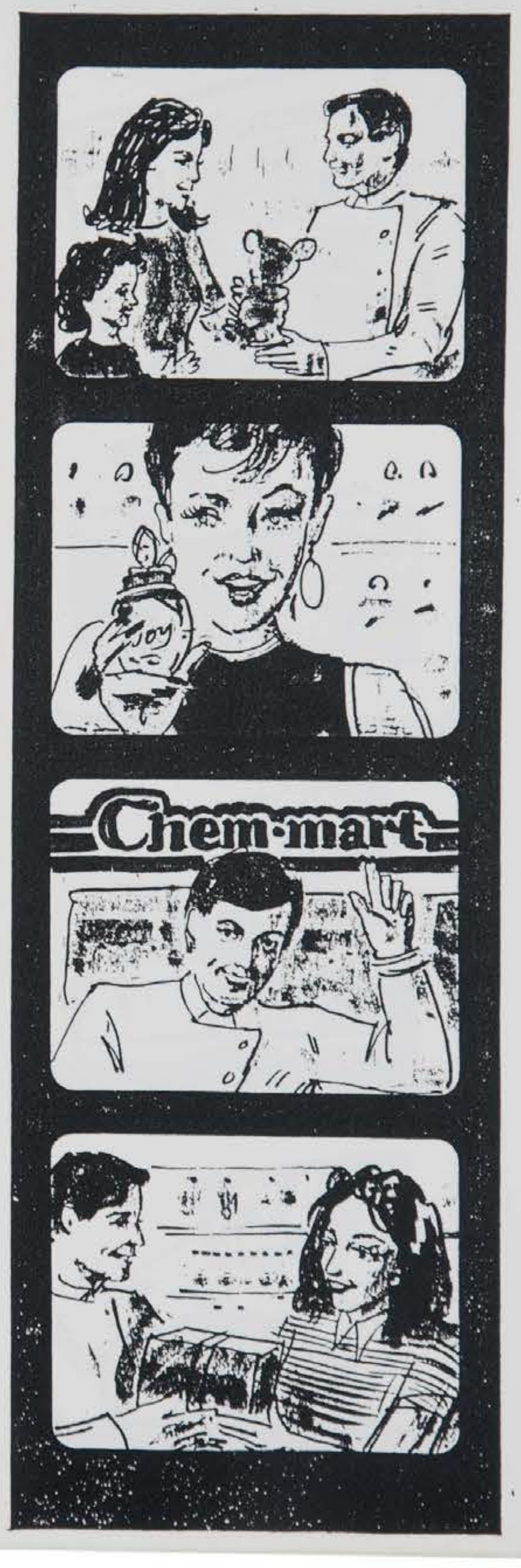


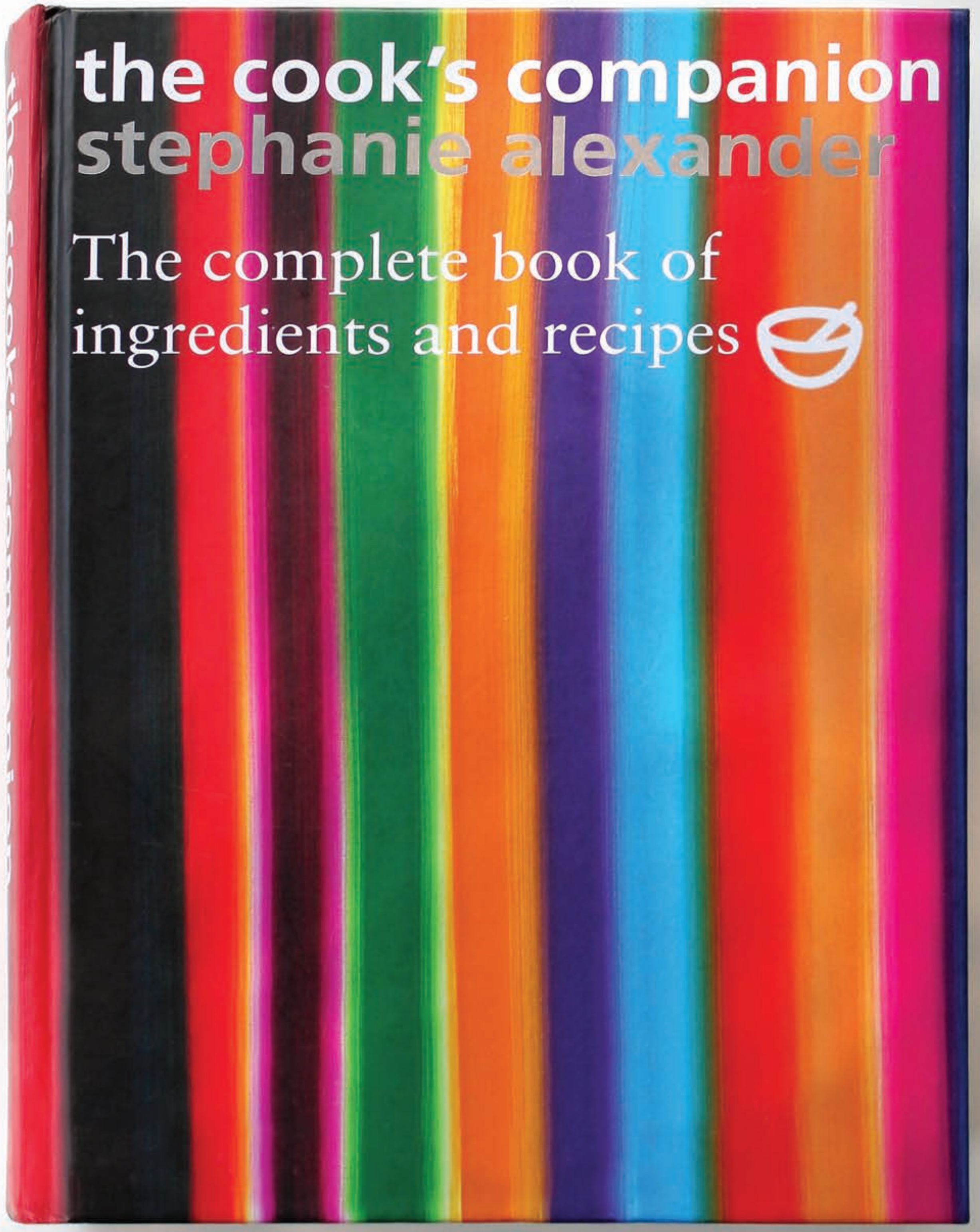
SONG:

Friendly advice

A bargain price

At Chem-mart

we'll look
after you.



Opposite
Sandy Cull's re-designed cover of Stephanie Alexander's, *The Cook's Companion* in 2005, with permission from Sandy Cull.

Previous Spread
Barry Banks Blakeney, television script for The Mentholatum Company, c. 1989, Barry Banks Blakeney collection, Gift of Rodney Blakeney, 2016
0012.2016.0007

PEER
REVIEWED
ESSAY

Blind Embossing:
The (in)visibility and impact of women across Australia's advertising, graphic design and publishing industries

Jane Connory

Blind embossing is a term used by communication designers to describe a finishing process utilised in printing, where a design is raised in relief from a particular surface without the use of ink or colour. The motif makes a physical impression on the card, which becomes more visible through the shadows cast when light is directed on to it. It can take focus and attention to notice. Blind embossing offers a useful metaphor for the contributions made by women in the Australian advertising, graphic design and publishing industries, as their careers often leave an impression that remains invisible until someone actively looks for them. There is also a complexity in this metaphor, as it simultaneously represents the invisible and visible in a lived experience. By undertaking direct dialogue with professional women working in these industries, it is possible to develop further insights into these experiences and to explore the complexities that lie therein.

Much research has concluded that the contribution of women in other professional environments, like corporate boards, management teams and professional workplaces, can have a high impact on profits, competitive advantages, effectiveness and innovation.[1] However, the impact of creative women across the advertising, graphic design and publishing industries has attracted less attention. Industry bodies representing creative directors and designers offer an important, if underutilised, avenue for identifying these women and, indeed, assessing the nature of their contribution to their respective field. The Australasian Writers and Art Directors Association (AWARD), the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) and the Australian Book Designers Association's (ABDA) respective Hall of Fame platforms and national award programs paradoxically raise the visibility of these women while obscuring other aspects of their experiences. They therefore provide clear statistics for measuring these women's contributions, yet at the same time, they omit their personal experiences of visibility as professional creative directors and designers.

This article seeks to establish a context for the gendered imbalance on these platforms and programs by examining the experiences of three women, whose careers have been identified and celebrated by their peers. It explores the way that gender informs their professional work through contextualising their individual experiences of visibility. In 2016, the online 'Invisible: Women in Australian Graphic Design' survey was conducted. The survey asked design professionals, educators and students across Australia to name women who had made significant contributions to the post-1960 history of Australian graphic design. Michaela Webb, owner and creative director at Studio Round, and Sandy Cull, a senior designer in the publishing industry, were two of the 140 women identified by participants. This list of women soon snowballed through word of mouth, and grew to include Fiona Leeming, the owner and creative director of Honey Communications. Interviews with these three women form the basis of this article. Through these interviews, Webb, Cull, and Leeming offer important insights into their respective careers as well as their respective industries. Such interviews also underscore the blind embossing metaphor as a way of conceptualising women's experiences and contributions to the broader commercial design field.

Women in Advertising

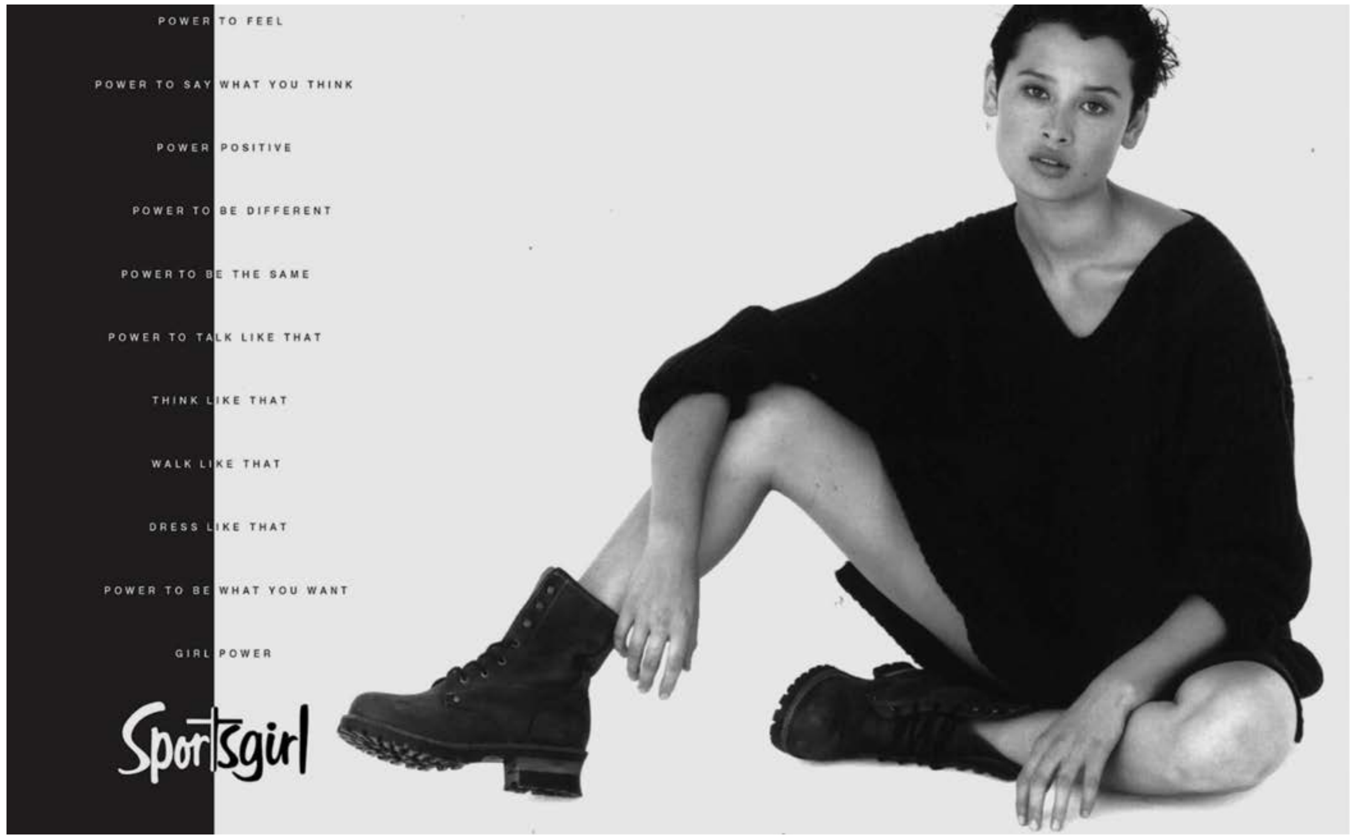
When examining the impact of women working as creative directors and art directors in the Australian advertising industry, it is important to quantify their visible presence. The nature of their visibility can be demonstrated through a gendered analysis of the AWARD awards. Running in Australasia for 40 years, AWARD's charter aims to 'set standards of creative excellence, to promote this concept in the business arena, and to educate and inspire the next creative generation'.[2] When analysing the gendered data of the elite Gold Pencil winners in the most recent awards (the 39th), men were more visible than women as both creative directors and art directors – 80 per cent were men, while 20 per cent were women. The jury for these awards was equally

Right
The Sportsgirl campaign from 1993, where Fiona Leeming pushed the 'girl power' messaging, with permission from Fiona Leeming.

revealing, comprising 87 jurors across 11 categories – including 'Print, Poster and Outdoor' and 'Craft in Advertising'. Of these, 43 per cent were women. AWARD also established its Hall of Fame in 2009. By the 39th AWARD awards, there had been 17 inductions – 16 men and one agency. To date, no women have been inducted. Such statistics not only demonstrate that women are altogether absent from this award platform, they also reveal their underrepresentation in creative roles. The presence of women in the advertising industry was measured at only 29.9 per cent in 2014, which is closer to the 20 per cent figure for women AWARD winners.[3] However, these statistics only tell a part of the story. Women's levels of participation in the awards, their perception of AWARD's relevance, and how the diversity of their significant contributions is judged and celebrated are equally important issues that are absent from this data.

Fiona Leeming has both won AWARD awards and been on the jury for them in the 1990s. Her experiences illustrate some of the complexities surrounding visibility for women in advertising. Since graduating from Swinburne University in 1979, Leeming has worked in creative positions for 36 years. During this time, she has managed to build an illustrious career in a male-dominated environment. She describes her industry placement while studying at an agency called USP Needham as 'an incredible experience' where the 'cut and thrust of the creative department was all-male'.[4] Her final year at Swinburne, also opened her eyes to the world of design through an international student trip – to Japan, London, France, Italy and Germany. The experience inspired her so much that she dismissed her initial intention of pursuing a career as an art teacher. At her graduate event, Noel Delbridge from 'a big agency on St Kilda Road' called Masius, invited her in for an interview.[5] Opening her portfolio on his large mahogany desk, Leeming was nervous but had no need to be – Delbridge offered her a job on the spot. She began work on the Butter Better campaign and the Australia Consolidated Glass campaign – 'Where good things come in glass' – which included a huge geodesic dome being built in the deserts of Fraser Island. At only 21, this opportunity led to Leeming working at Young & Rubicam in London, DDB Worldwide, Ogilvy International and Nitro, in Melbourne, before she opened her own agency in 2008 called Honey Communications.

In addition to being awarded by AWARD in the 1990s, Leeming has won many other accolades, including a D&AD pencil in the late 1980s, the 2015 National Marketing Program of the Year, and the Veuve Clicquot Advertising Woman of the Year in 1996 (the one and only time it was held). Yet, what is unique to her work is her strong, female empowering voice, in an industry that has been accused of misogyny, sexism and promoting negative stereotypes to women.[6] In her interview in 2016, Leeming distanced herself from such messaging, saying 'I'm not consciously fighting someone. I would not represent a woman as a bimbo at home. That would not be a part of … how I would approach a job'.[7]



In 1993, she reversed the trend of the objectifying women, by launching the 'girl power' messaging through the Sportsgirl brand – a decade before the British girl band, the Spice Girls, became famous for doing the same. Her continued presence in the Australian advertising industry has also seen her further push the message of inclusivity, as evident in the 2016 Porter Davis #CampaignForRespect, where she directed a creative team including Joanne Bradley, Nick Leary and Rob Walker. This outdoor campaign celebrated diversity through the use of emotive portraiture. It featured heavily along the American Eastern seaboard and in New York's Times Square, during a time when racial tensions were high due to the US election campaign. Leeming's perspective and presence as a woman appears to effect the positive messaging she generates, something that is not particularly visible through the awards she has received. And although her resume reads like an accomplished professional, worthy of entry into the AWARD Hall of Fame, Leeming's proven merit remains overshadowed by the dominant male creative directors in the industry. Her ethical representation of diversity, for example, runs parallel to the ethical stance of AWARD Hall of Famer John Bevins, whose independent agency famously took an active stance against tobacco advertising. Similarly Leeming's impressive list of senior appointments in Melbourne's most reputable agencies, together with her many awards, make her comparative to other Hall of Fame inductees, including Ron Mather and Tom McFarlane.

RESPECT
"I grew up learning to respect my elders."
Carlotta and Grandma Pat
PORTER DAVIS

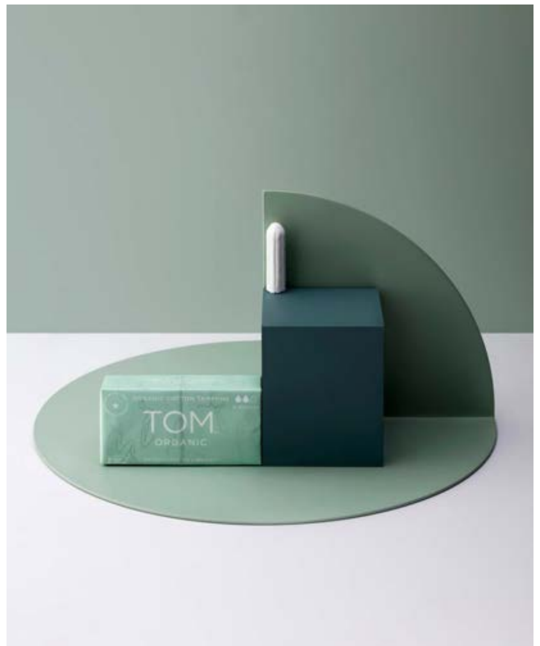
Women in Graphic Design

Founded in 1988, AGDA describes itself as 'the peak national organisation representing the Australian communication design industry'.[8] Like AWARD, AGDA runs its own awards scheme and has been also inducting graphic designers into its Hall of Fame since 1992. The statistical visibility of women as judges, award winners, and Hall of Fame inductees is also very low. Data collated from the 1994 to 2015 AGDA awards, shows that only 33 per cent of the 129 jurors were women. The data also reveals that of the 4, 878 designers awarded during this time, only 23 per cent were women (71 per cent were men and 3 per cent were named as entire studios).[9] Since its inception in 1992, AGDA's Hall of Fame consists of 26 graphic designers. Only two women feature on the list – Dahl Collings and Alison Forbes.

This representation of women is not only alarmingly low for this sector of the Australian creative industries, it is also at odds with the gendered pipeline of graduates and the profile of an average designer. Since 1970, the number of women completing graphic design degrees at Melbourne's Monash University has steadily increased to 71 per cent.[10] The Design Institute of Australia's Fees and Salary Survey from 2017 also demonstrates the preponderance of women in the industry – notably in the role of graphic designer (60.3 per cent of survey respondents were women).[11]

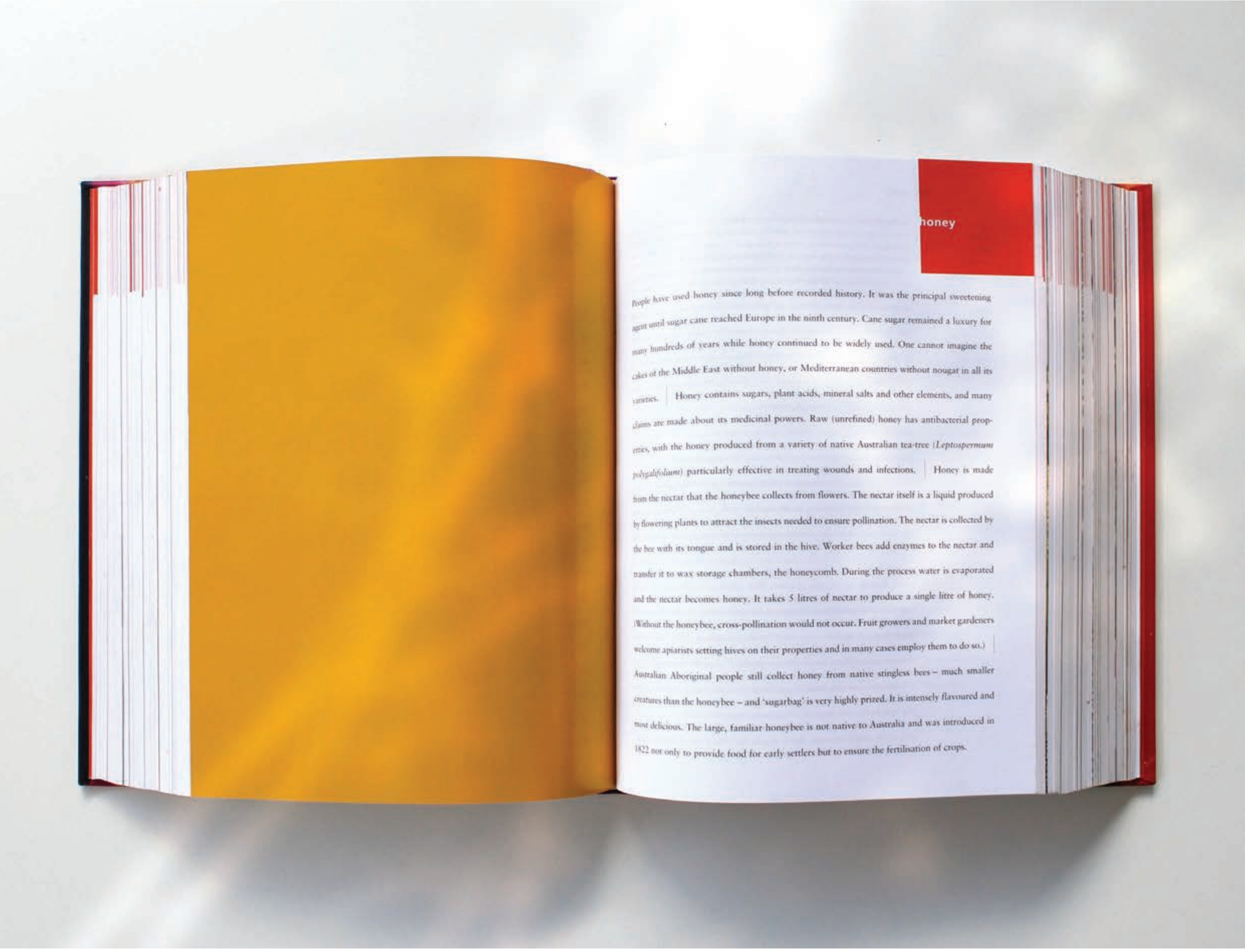
Unlike the advertising industry, where the low representation of women in advertising's creative ranks is reflected in the AWARD winner statistics, the AGDA data altogether fails to demonstrate the presence of women in the Australian graphic design industry, let alone the scale of their contribution to it.

Michaela Webb, creative director and owner of Studio Round in Melbourne, has won and judged AGDA awards and has also served on the AGDA council. As the most mentioned woman in the 'Invisible: Women in Australian Graphic Design' survey, Webb makes it a high priority to visibly advocate for women in the creative industries. Webb studied in New Zealand and received a Bachelor in Media Arts (Graphic Design) in 1994. She initially had few women to model what a successful graphic designer could be. Eventually, she was introduced to Lisa Grocott (who was then a lecturer in New Zealand). This enabled her to finally 'see a senior woman in that role' and provided her with the impetus to plan her own way forward.[12] Webb's encounter with Grocott fuelled her growing ambition, which took her to London, where she gained a position at the Wolff Olins studio. Working for Wolff Olins on the branding for the arts sector including the TATE identity, Webb moved on to Spin Communications, also in London. She would spend over two years at Spin Communications, taking a leadership role across similar arts projects, including Channel 4. During this time, she was the only woman amongst seven men. Although her team grew to 25, she nevertheless remained the only woman there. Returning to Australia in 2002, she founded Studio Round, where she continues to positively influence the visibility of women as graphic designers.



Left
The packaging for TOM Organic tampons was designed in 2016 by Michaela Webb and her team at Studio Round, including Leah Procko and Talia Heron, with permission from Michaela Webb.

Right
Sandy Cull's re-designed Stephanie Alexander's, *The Cook's Companion* in 2005, with permission from Sandy Cull.



honey

People have used honey since long before recorded history. It was the principal sweetening agent until sugar cane reached Europe in the ninth century. Cane sugar remained a luxury for many hundreds of years while honey continued to be widely used. One cannot imagine the cakes of the Middle East without honey, or Mediterranean countries without nougat in all its varieties. | Honey contains sugars, plant acids, mineral salts and other elements, and many claims are made about its medicinal powers. Raw (unrefined) honey has antibacterial properties, with the honey produced from a variety of native Australian tea-tree (*Leptospermum polygalifolium*) particularly effective in treating wounds and infections. | Honey is made from the nectar that the honeybee collects from flowers. The nectar itself is a liquid produced by flowering plants to attract the insects needed to ensure pollination. The nectar is collected by the bee with its tongue and is stored in the hive. Worker bees add enzymes to the nectar and transfer it to wax storage chambers, the honeycomb. During the process water is evaporated and the nectar becomes honey. It takes 5 litres of nectar to produce a single litre of honey. (Without the honeybee, cross-pollination would not occur. Fruit growers and market gardeners welcome apiarists setting hives on their properties and in many cases employ them to do so.) | Australian Aboriginal people still collect honey from native stingless bees – much smaller creatures than the honeybee – and 'sugarbag' is very highly prized. It is intensely flavoured and most delicious. The large, familiar honeybee is not native to Australia and was introduced in 1822 not only to provide food for early settlers but to ensure the fertilisation of crops.

Webb's experiences with few female role models and colleagues reflects the low visibility of women in the AGDA awards and Hall of Fame. However, these experiences have also had a positive effect on the way she runs her own studio and the way she interacts with the industry more generally. Webb makes herself available to judge awards, including the 2015 D&D awards, and is keen to make her voice heard at conferences, panels and seminars, including the agIDEAS conference in 2006 and the Sex, Drugs & Helvetica conference in 2014. Although she does not actively seek these opportunities, she understands that visibility breeds visibility, and when invited does so 'For my studio, and for females'.[13] However, Webb's willingness to put herself forward to inspire others comes with many negative effects – like being perceived as token and being open to criticism. Webb often finds herself the only woman on stage, resulting in this perceived tokenism, and has spoken transparently about whole projects, processes and personal opinions on design, leaving her vulnerable in this token light. Although Webb did not raise these issues in her interview, these themes were common in discussions with other women who work in Australian graphic design studios. Webb's visible impact is often viewed as brave, and unattainable by many other women who are not willing to be so vulnerable or representative of women as a whole, adding to the complexity of visibility for women in design.

Webb is also conscious of keeping a gendered balance in her studio, but finds it interesting the jobs that men and women gravitate towards. In 2016, she was working on a packaging design for an organic tampon brand and found that the most effective work and interest in the job came from the women in her studio, including Leah Procko and Talia Josie Heron.[14] They were not chosen specifically to work on the brief because of their gender but, in the end, their empathy with the brand resonated in their design work, including the organic line illustration. The packaging successfully reflects the client's brief as a sophisticated and minimal design, and it has gone on to become the leading personal care brand in Australia.[15] Without such a gender diverse studio of designers to draw upon, this project may not have had such a successful outcome.

Women in Publishing

In contrast to the low visibility of women in advertising and graphic design on the AWARD and AGDA platforms, the publishing industry is readily recognised as female-dominated workplace. Women were calculated as 67 per cent of authors across all genres in Australia in 2015.[16] While women working in publishing houses often report that they are amongst the majority of those employed, the top positions continued to be occupied by men.[17] Sandy Cull, an Australian book designer with 12 years' experience at Penguin, explains that 'Most of the people on the road are women. Intelligent, incredibly able, clever women'.[18] The majority of readers are also women – approximately 55 per cent in 2017.[19] Although it is difficult to obtain data to quantify the presence of women working within the specific role of graphic design in the publishing industry, a gender analysis of winners in the ABDA award archives offers some important insights.[20]

The data collected from the ABDA awards reveals that by 1990, the male dominance of jacket, cover and internal design was in decline. In 1990 women represented 53 per cent of the winners. A decade later in 2000, women accounted for 68 per cent of award winners. This figure dipped to 53 per cent in 2010, and in 2017 it had increased to 60 per cent. Associated with this increase was an elevated perception in the quality of the book designs. According to the 2014 Man Booker Prize winner, Richard Flannigan, 'Australian book design has come on in leaps and bounds in recent years'.[21] ABDA judge's comments similarly shift from being negative around this pivotal point in 1990.[22] A judge in 1960, for example, had complained that 'In many cases jacket designs bore no relation to the contents of the book'.[23]

By 2000, the judges were expressing significantly more positive views: 'To look through the catalogue is to get a taste of the richness, quality and diversity of work being undertaken by Australian book designers'.[24] The dominance of women within the industry ranks appears to have coincided with the improvement in the overall aesthetic and crafting of book design in Australia.

Gender representation on the ABDA awards juries also shifted in the 2000s. In 1990, there was one woman and two men on the jury. A decade later, there were seven women and six men. Yet this improvement is offset by other data. Over the seven years that book designers have been inducted into the ABDA Hall of Fame, only 30 per cent of the inductees have been women. Inducted in 2011, Cull is one of three women who have been recognised by their peers (the others being Deborah Brash in 2007 and Alison Forbes in 2018). Cull's cover designs have twice won the Best Designed Book of the Year (these being *Plenty: Digressions on Food* in 2004/05 and *Italian Joy* in 2006). Cull, like Leeming, graduated from Swinburne University, albeit with a Bachelor of Art (Graphic Design), in 1984. Upon graduation, she stepped straight into the publishing industry. Her resume spans over 34 years, and includes roles at Thomas Nelson Australia, the Rankin Design Group, Southerland Hawes Design in London, the Australian Consolidated Press and Penguin. However, since 2005 she has been working for herself, under the name of Figure. Her success has been fuelled by the visibility she received re-visiting the design of *The Cooks Companion* in 2005 – an iconic cook book written by Stephanie Alexander. Cull's brief for this book, under the guidance of Julie Gibbs (who was the director of the Lantern Books imprint at Penguin at the time), was to 'do something contemporary that would sit well in the stainless steel kitchens popular in the food-literate population'.[25] The colours were inspired in part by Matthew Johnston, Paul Smith and the warmth of food and were incorporated into the pages alongside photography by Earl Carter. The book, in all its iterations has now sold over 500,000 copies.[26] Thankful for the opportunities and longevity the visibility of *The Cook's Companion* has given her, Cull does little to enhance her professional profile: 'I don't like being visible actually … I prefer to be in the background'.[27]

This paradox of both appreciating and disliking visibility is not uncommon for designers – another complexity in the embossed metaphor. There is a popular school of thought that the designer should not be evident in their work and instead be a conduit for pushing forward the author and the story held with in the book. In 1956, Beatrice Warde famously devised a metaphor for good design and typography, describing it like a delicate and transparent wine glass – designed to showcase its contents rather than draw attention to itself.[28] This benevolent attitude, although focused on the skill involved in crafting a good piece of graphic design, devalues the contribution of the singular graphic designer and the personal context which they bring to their work.

Despite Cull's admission that she is neither 'comfortable' nor 'confident' with fame or self-promotion, she nevertheless feels that it is important that individual designers receive the credit they are due. During her career at Penguin, she saw colleagues rally the publisher to ensure the names of individual cover designers were accredited inside the printed editions of their work. This began to happen, but it has not become a consistent practice across Australia. Making the graphic designer invisible adds to the probability of women's contributions in the workforce going unacknowledged.

However, Cull has also worked in other ways to ensure that the community of book designers in Australia have visible outlets for their voice and their work. She has therefore been a founding committee member of ABDA, which also included Alex Ross (President), Zoë Sadokierski (Vice President), WH Chong (Secretary), Andrew Egan (Treasurer), Jenny Grigg, Evi Oetomo, Daniel New and Miriam Rosenbloom. This group of designers, 56 per cent of whom were women, continued to organise the awards even after they had been discontinued by the Australian Publishers Association (APA) in 2013. While cementing Cull's stance towards visibility as welcomed to celebrate designers achievements in the publishing industry, her personal distaste of being in the spotlight demonstrates an inconsistency in how both impact and visibility can work against each other in the career of a designer.

Conclusion

The metaphor of blind embossing conveys the often obscured yet palpable impact of women across the design sector. When the individual careers of women working as creative directors and designers are examined, we not only begin to see the size and scope of their contribution but also their complex multiplicity.

Fiona Leeming's challenge to the negative stereotyping of women and its empowering messages across the world, for example, illustrates that while women in advertising may be a minority with low visibility, their impact has been significant. In contrast, Michaela Webb's high visibility in Australian graphic design demonstrates the importance of studios having diverse perspectives within their teams and the urgency of instilling confidence in the many female students graduating from the education pipeline. Sandy Cull's career in the book publishing industry demonstrates a further paradox in the presence and visibility of women in the design industries. Although women make up the majority of those working in the publishing sector, Cull has played an essential role in giving distinct authorship to designers in the field while simultaneously being uncomfortable with such exposure.

An examination of the careers of Leeming, Webb and Cull in parallel with the gendered data of the AWARD , AGDA and ABDA national awards and Hall of Fame platforms, collectively demonstrate that the numerical visibility of women offers a partial or obscured impression of the significant contributions they have made. By identifying and contextualising individual careers and experiences felt by women within these scenarios, we are able to obtain deeper and more meaningful insights into their experiences and contributions, as well as the paradoxes they encounter and embody.

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This Page
RMIT Design Archives special event: Prue Action in conversation with Michael Reason, Curator, Museum of Victoria, RMIT Design Archives, 26 April 2018, Photography by Sarah Lay

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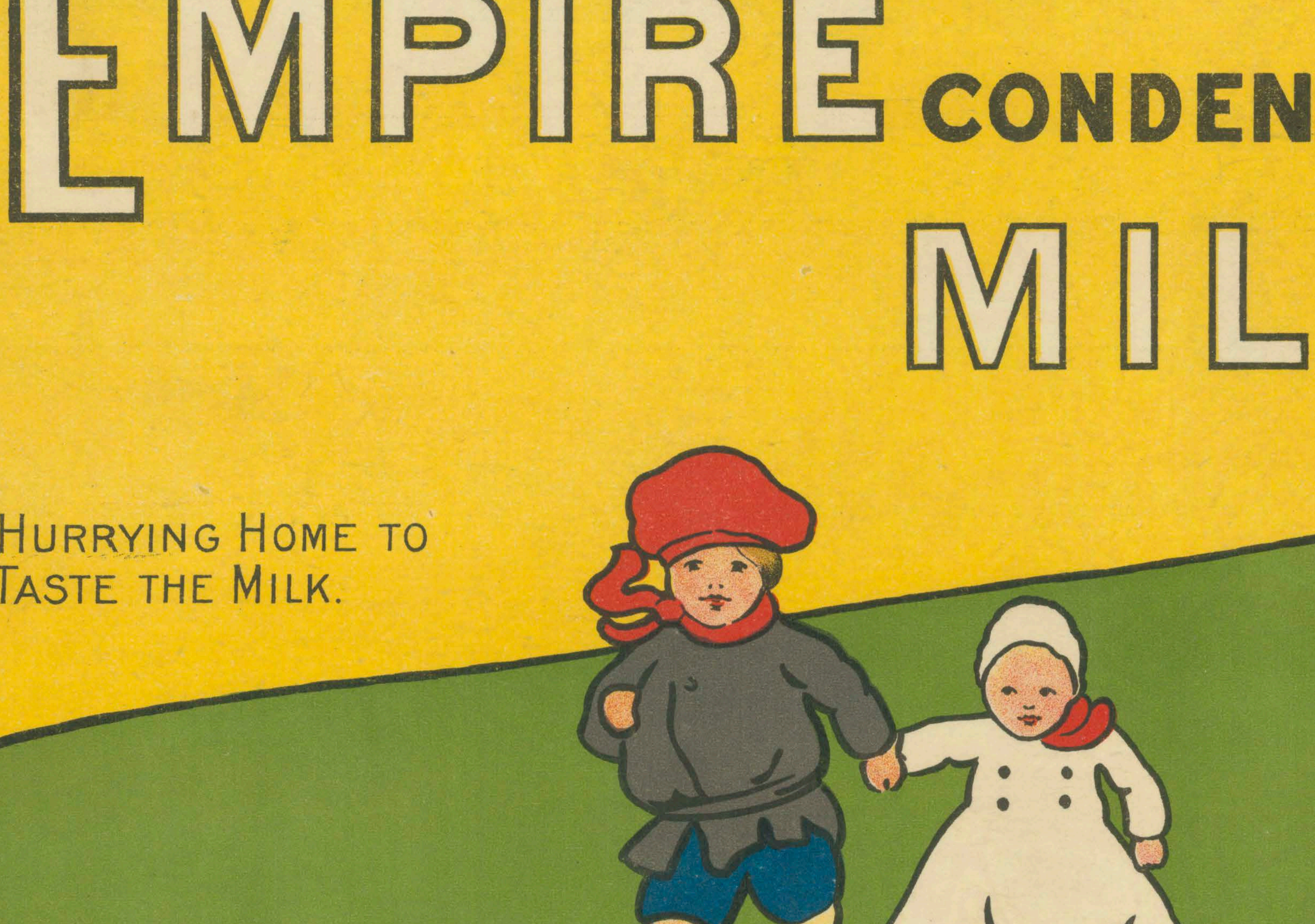
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