Advertising

History of Information, July 30, 2010
Why Advertising?
The Infinite Image

- What would Berger say about Eisenstein’s notion of standardization and the idiosyncratic?
The Infinite Image

- What would Berger say about Eisenstein’s notion of standardization and the idiosyncratic?
  - The infinitely reproducible nature of an image (standardization) removes it from its original context and renders it unique (idiosyncratic)
  - The meaning is no longer derived from the work itself
Advertising – A 30-second History

- “Signs over shops and stalls…go back to the remotest portions of the world’s history”
  - Signboards in ancient Greece (Aristophanes)
  - Early Christian era: Scrolls advertising passion plays
  - Roman tavern signs
- Street hawkers, public proclamations
- 17th C. A haberdasher’s handbill deemed “a dangerous innovation”
- 18th C. British newspapers proliferate and begin to contain advertisements
- 19th C. Billstickers, Flagstone stencils

Src: Sampson, Henry. A history of advertising from the earliest times, 1874
Dark Matter

- “Advertising is a subliminal pill designed to massage the unconscious.”
  - Marshall McLuhan (quoted by Wilson Brian Key)
Sense Ratios

- Aural
- Tactile
- Visual
- Subliminal?
Seeing Is Not Reading

- “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.”

- How does this inform/complicate this course’s “conventional wisdom” about oral culture?
The Mechanical + The Subliminal

- Tachistoscope
  - 1957: Vicary’s experiment

- Radio/Audio/TV
  - Sound/light/message manipulation

Src: http://www.psychologytoday.com/files/u690/Popcorn.jpg
Desire and Insecurity

- Not a new selling point

Roman face cream discovered and reproduced

*Cosmetic face cream used by fashionable Roman women has been analysed by scientists at Bristol University, UK, and then reproduced.*

Iconography

- Advertising icons can create/reinforce ways that we perceive ourselves as a society
- Symptomatic approach benefits from this
Iconography, Cont.

- Advertising icons also create/reinforce negative stereotypes within society
Spokespersons
Spokespersons Can Backfire
Political Advertising

- At what point does the political image turn into propaganda?
Targeted Advertising

- Not new, but new modes/methods
- Not perfect
- Largely opaque
- Drive to track as much consumer behavior as possible
"If you went to" a shopping mall "and stopped at Chipolte's, then Nordstrom's...then a jewelry store, then, maybe, Annie's Pretzels, then a bookstore where you bought Rolling Stone, Better Homes and Gardens and How to Make a Nuclear Weapon," Dorgan said.

"And someone followed you every step of the way, just over your shoulder, making copious notes on your behavior. Anyone would find that unbelievable," he continued. "They'd say who are you to be following me around taking notes? Yet that sort of thing is happening every day to people using the Internet.”

Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-ND, Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee's hearings on Consumer Online Privacy
Spam

- Email
- Click Fraud

- Fierce competition for your senses in the “Age of Attention”
  - But is there a point of diminishing return? Have we already reached it?