Art in Advertising

Unless you live in Antarctica, you're exposed to some kind of advertising every single day – on TV, on the radio, in magazines, on the Internet, at the mall, even driving down the road. Advertising is a multi-billion dollar industry. Tens of thousands of artists and other creative people earn a living through advertising.

Like art, advertising exists in many different forms. These include print advertising, TV advertising, outdoor advertising (billboards), and point of purchase advertising (displays and signs inside stores). Many companies combine a number of these different forms to create advertising campaigns. A campaign is a series of ads (using one or more forms of advertising) that work together to accomplish a specific goal. Have you ever seen a series of different TV ads for the same product that share some common element (maybe they all feature the same celebrity or characters)? That's an example of a campaign.

Good advertising captures your attention quickly. It communicates a message in an interesting, memorable way. And it moves you to action, such as trying a specific product or service. Specific ideas for accomplishing those things are called concepts. Advertising concepts can be funny, thought provoking, startling, or even controversial. But they should have something that keeps you from turning the page or flipping the channel.

For example, most print advertising includes a visual and a short bit of text called a headline. To capture your attention and communicate a message quickly, the visual and headline have to work together to catch your eye, make you laugh, make you think, or surprise you.

Most advertising is created at advertising agencies. These businesses are made up of writers, graphic designers, artists, researchers, and business people. Every agency has at least one art director on staff responsible for using art elements and design principles to create effective, interesting ads.