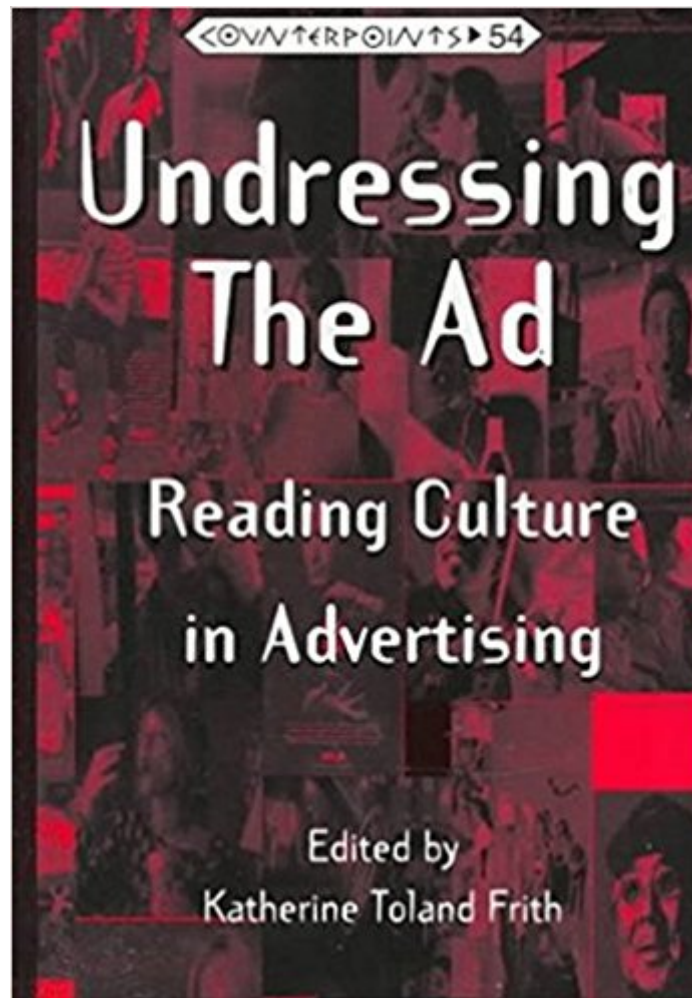




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# Undressing The Ad: Reading Culture In Advertising



## Synopsis

Undressing the Ad aims to empower readers to become media literate through the work of deconstructing the consumer culture that surrounds them. By introducing critical scholarship on advertising in a way that is accessible, the book attempts to show how issues of race, class, and gender are expressed in contemporary advertising. The readings in this book take a decidedly critical political perspective and explore how representation in advertising upholds certain economic and political structures and subverts others, and exposes the myth that advertisements are merely messages aimed at selling goods and services. Rather they are texts that shape contemporary culture and shape our images of ourselves.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Katherine Frith’s *Undressing the Ad* is a richly engaging and refreshing collection of essays on advertising and contemporary life. Throughout, the contributors steadfastly point us beyond the sometimes rarefied air and mythopoetic world of cultural criticism to the unequal and stratified social worlds in which advertising participates as a powerful and kinetic cultural force. A major feature of this volume is the concerted efforts of Frith and her collaborators to avoid the narrow-minded parochialism and insularity that has marred a good deal of recent writing on the cultural forms of life. *Undressing the Ad* is a rare treat: an anthology of essays written against the grain of mainstream and radical discourse on popular culture.”  
(Cameron McCarthy, Institute of Communications Research, University of Illinois at Champaign)

“Teachers will find that its eleven essays provide common ground for the introduction and examination of ideas about what ads mean and how they shape their meanings. All of the chapters in this book are original and written with undergraduates in mind - and it shows. From Frith’s opening titular chapter through Angharad N. Valdivia’s analysis of gender, class, and sexuality in lingerie catalogs, the audience is clearly kept in mind and spoken to with intelligence and insight.” (David Slayden, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*)

The Editor: Katherine Toland Frith is associate professor and past chair of the advertising department in the College of Communications at the Pennsylvania State University. She has a doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts. Before joining academia she worked in New York as an advertising copywriter for J. Walter Thompson, N.W. Ayer, and Grey Advertising. She taught advertising as a Fulbright Professor in Malaysia in 1986-1987, in Indonesia in 1993, and recently published her first book, *Advertising in Asia: Communication, Culture, and Consumption*.

Ever wonder what those ads in Victoria’s Secret are really all about? Or, what about the psychology behind the "This is your brain on drugs" public service announcements? Or, what’s the deal with Danny DiVito walking around munching on Dunkin’ Donuts all through the movie "Other People’s Money?" (Yep, he brings up Dunkin’ Donuts nine times during the movie.) Read "Undressing the Ad," edited by a former J. Walter Thompson advertising copywriter, Katherine Toland Frith of Penn State, and you’ll never look at advertisements the same way. You’ll be scanning the background of ads for consumer-motivation clues, looking at the racial identities of actors in television ads, noticing product placements in movies, and listening to ad dialogue to peg the consumer segment that advertiser is going after. This is a well-written anthology, presented in a larger font than most such texts, thus making it a fast and interesting read. Exploring how ad agencies "sanctify, mythologize, and fantasize...[to] uphold some of the existing economic and political structures and subvert others..." the contributors introduce undergraduates to excellent advertising scholarship on a wide variety of topics - all intended to empower readers to see through the spell of Madison Avenue spin-doctors - to become "media literate" to the point that they can deconstruct the consumer culture that surrounds us all. Topics are as wide-ranging as their chapter titles indicate: (1) *Undressing the Ad: Reading Culture in Advertising* by Katherine T. Frith, (Penn State) (2) *Finding the Path to Signification: Undressing a Nissan Pathfinder Direct Mail Package* by Elizabeth Pauline Lester (University of Georgia) (3) *Sponsorship, Globalization, and the Summer Olympics*, by Matthew P. McAllister (Virginia Tech) (4) *The Paco Man and What is Remembered: New Readings of a Hybrid*

Language, by Morris B. Holbrook (Columbia) and Barbara B. Stern (Rutgers)(5) As Soft as Straight Gets: African American Women and Mainstream Beauty Standards in Haircare Advertising, by Ernest M. Mayes (Student in copywriting program, Portfolio Center, Atlanta)(6) We Can't Duck the Issue: Imbedded Advertising in the Motion Pictures, by Linda K. Fuller (Worcester State)(7) Ideology in Public Service Advertisements, by Chemi Montes-Armenteros (Penn State)(8) The Cultural Politics of Prevention: Reading Anti-Drug PSAs, by Michael J. Ludwig (Winthrop University)(9) The Diesel Jeans and Workwear Advertising Campaign and the Commodification of Resistance, by Daniel R. Nicholson (Ph.D. candidate, University of Oregon)(10) Cultural Capital: The Cultural Economy of U.S. Advertising, by Christian Vermehren (Ph.D. candidate, University of Cambridge)(11) The Secret of My Desire: Gender, Class, and Sexuality in Lingerie Catalogs, by Angharad N. Valdivia (University of Illinois) Teaching faculty will want to consider this text as a supplemental text for marketing and advertising classes. Highly recommended for college and university libraries. Please be sure to indicate if reviews are helpful... R. Neil Scott Middle Tennessee State University

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