


Airbrushing 'bad ads' from public life

Adapted from an article by Nathalie Rothschild

- 1 When, during the 2008 US presidential race, *Newsweek* published a picture of Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin, conservatives over at Fox News were outraged. They claimed that while *Newsweek's* cover of Barack Obama had been flawless, the magazine had presented Palin in an unflattering light by *not* airbrushing her photograph. There was a clear message here, said Fox: showing Palin like this meant that she was denied the idealised, flattering presentation that the liberal media offered to their political favourites.
- 2 Airbrushing has become a controversial point: celebrities crave it, politicians apparently deserve it, and experts claim that it creates unrealistic images of perfection that impact on young people's self-esteem. And so a group of experts has bizarrely called on the UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to 18 the use of airbrushing in ads aimed at teenagers and children.
- 3 This group of academics, doctors and psychologists has argued that airbrushed images promote unrealistic expectations of perfect body images. The group claims that these images encourage eating disorders and self-harm amongst girls in particular, but boys, too. The idea that altered images can do this, displays a rather crude understanding of how advertising affects people, and a complete disregard for the intellect of young people. Advertisements reflect ideals that are grounded in contemporary social relations, ideas about beauty and material needs. Such ideals cannot be airbrushed from society or negotiated by discussing what sort of pictures are acceptable and which are not.
- 4 The campaigners are looking for a quick fix to what they see as a damaging influence on young people's psyches and well-being. And what quicker fix is there than asking the ASA – the UK watchdog that spends its time considering complaints about ads from the public – to step in and "Do something". The watchdog sees its role as keeping public space 'safe'. But the red thread that runs through ASA's decisions is that it applies censorship on moralistic and prudish grounds in the name of avoiding offence. And so, if a bunch of experts can put their case convincingly to the moral custodians of the ASA, then they have a far greater chance of getting images removed from advertising billboards than they would if they tried to win public support for their cause.

- 5 This bizarre campaign shows up the futility of censorship as a means of fixing social problems (or alleged social problems). The experts believe that media images that depict ultra-thin, digitally altered women can apparently cause 'unhealthy dieting regimes, cosmetic surgery and extreme exercising'. No doubt there are many girls and boys who take drastic measures to alter their looks, but it is 21 to suggest that advertising can be held singularly responsible for everything from dietary choices to exercise habits and women's decisions to undergo cosmetic surgery. Yet the experts both vastly overstate how many young girls and boys are depressed about their physiques, and also vastly overstate the negative influence advertising has on young people. The fact that most – if not all – young people *know* that advertisers try to sell not just products but lifestyles and ideals means that they are not likely to be as naive about advertising images as these experts suggest.
- 6 Because some young people do have issues with their body image, perhaps the experts should peel their eyes away from glossy magazines and billboards for a minute and consider what effects the 'War on Fat' might be having on kids. The UK government campaign against obesity has done more to demonise chubbiness than any advertisement ever could. These days we have, for instance, lunchbox inspections and routine weighing of schoolkids. Talk about screwing up kids' minds and encouraging an unhealthy relationship to food and exercise...
- 7 It is true that, today, chubbiness is demonised and slimness is celebrated. But the misguided campaign against airbrushing does not have a fat chance of changing that, because it is focusing on the wrong thing. Instead, if successful, the anti-airbrushing campaign will severely slim down free expression in the world of advertising and reinforce the idea that – young or old – we are all victims and suckers who fall for the exaggerated images projected by guys in advertising.

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Tekst 5 Airbrushing 'bad ads' from public life

- 1p 17 What is the main purpose of paragraph 1?
- A To criticise *Newsweek* for the way it presents some politicians.
 - B To introduce a discussion on the use of manipulated pictures.
 - C To make clear that the media are regularly influenced by politicians.
 - D To show why famous people often ask for their pictures to be altered.
- 1p 18 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 2?
- A ignore
 - B outlaw
 - C permit
 - D research
- 1p 19 What point does the writer make in paragraph 3?
- A Banning airbrushed images from advertising will not change the way young people perceive themselves.
 - B Boys suffer less from the negative effects of airbrushed images than girls.
 - C Experts rightly claim that some youngsters will be misled by airbrushed images.
 - D Publishing airbrushed images should be forbidden to keep teenagers from adopting unhealthy life styles.
- 1p 20 What does Nathalie Rothschild make clear in paragraph 4?
- A ASA appears to have limited power over the advertising media.
 - B ASA's decisions on whether advertisements are inappropriate are based on solid judgements.
 - C Experts usually exaggerate the unsuitability of the advertisements they complain about to ASA.
 - D The experts might sooner gain ASA's support for their point of view than persuade the public.

- 1p 21 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 5?
- A profitable
 - B ridiculous
 - C sensible
 - D uncivilized

“they are not likely to be as naive about advertising images as these experts suggest” (laatste zin alinea 5)

- 1p 22 In welke zin in een eerdere alinea gebruikt Nathalie Rothschild een soortgelijk argument?
Citeer de eerste twee woorden van deze zin.

- 1p 23 Which of the following can be concluded from paragraph 7?
- A Anti-obesity activities must also be supported by schools and sports centres nationwide.
 - B In the fight against obesity, cracking down on airbrushing will not have the intended results.
 - C The movement against obesity may loosen the advertising world’s tight grip on the public.

In alinea 7 worden twee verschillende uitdrukkingen gebruikt die als woordspeling verwijzen naar het onderwerp obesitas.

- 2p 24 Citeer deze twee uitdrukkingen.

Bronvermelding

Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.