

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

How the Mad Women Changed the Face of the Ad Industry

by Linh Tran

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Introduction

Purpose

As an ambitious young female professional who wants to pursue a career in advertising, I wanted to explore the pivotal role that ad women play in evolving the industry.

Inspiration

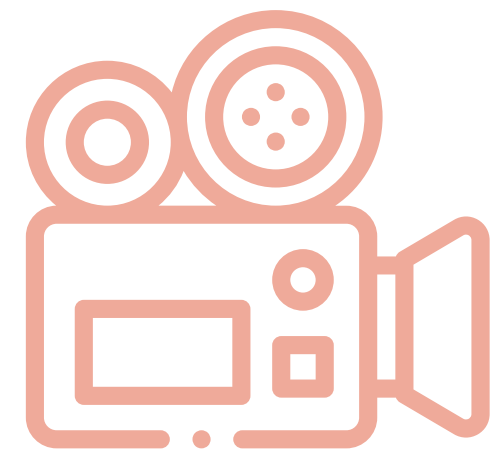
My interest in advertising sprung from watching the popular TV show, *Mad Men*, and the documentary on the U.S. ad industry, *Art & Copy*.

Impact

This project explores the progression on the achievements that ad women have accomplished and the challenges that they are still facing.

Research

Process



Documentaries/ docuseries and period drama



Scholarly articles on industry and *Mad Men*



Gender statistics



Autobiographical and historical non-fiction



Read and conducted interviews with ad women

Interview Quotes

“I’m very much aware of the problems with it [inequality], problems especially in the past... I do think they are disappearing and women are taking over the world.”

— Mary Wells Lawrence
Wells, Rich, Greene

“What I always wanted was not to be treated like a woman, I wanted to be treated just like me and... be recognized for what my strengths and weaknesses are.”

— Katherine Kern
Leo Burnett

“The women of that [Mad Men] era really changed things. They were change agents, and I think that’s what the expectation should be of all of us . . . continuing the change.”

— Tara DeVeaux
BBDO New York

Themes Identified

Ad Women
Work-Life Balance
Family Inequality
Marriage
Old Boys' Club
Fashion Misogyny
Feminism
Gender Wage Gap
Women's Movement
Household Products

Discoveries

Inspirational to Aspirational

The hard sell wanes as The Creative Revolution spurs innovative, modern advertising.

Working women shift focus from support roles to more client-facing and creative positions.



Dese(x)gregation

Female advertisers began to take on male-dominated roles.

Women make up >80% of household purchasing decisions and are given work almost entirely for their own demographic.



The Working Woman

Transition from traditional, nuclear family to two-income model.

Ad women prioritize work over marriage and child-rearing, yet are still paid less than their male counterpart.



Catch N° 22

“Damned if you do, damned if you don’t.”

Female employees sleeping their way up the ladder was common. Most promotions carried this implication, regardless of the reality.



Show Some Skin

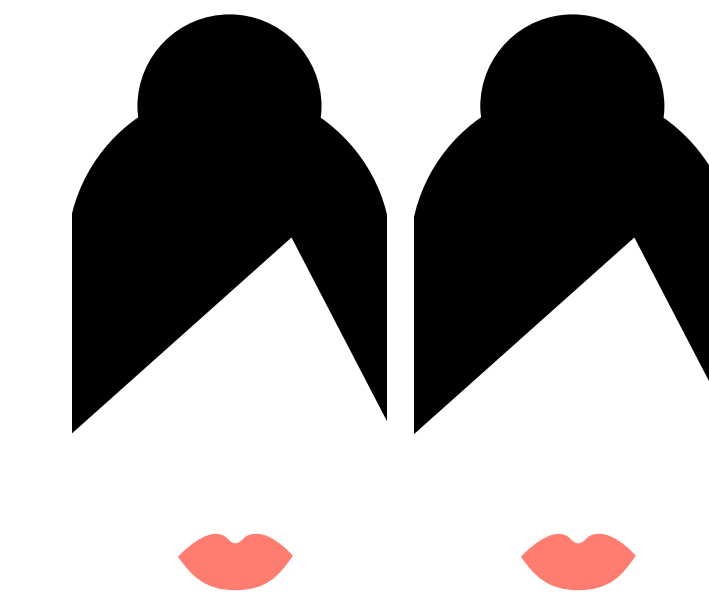
Workplace attire is expected to leverage female features.

Less skin signals less desire to succeed, implying a correlation with desire to be pursued.



The Industry Today

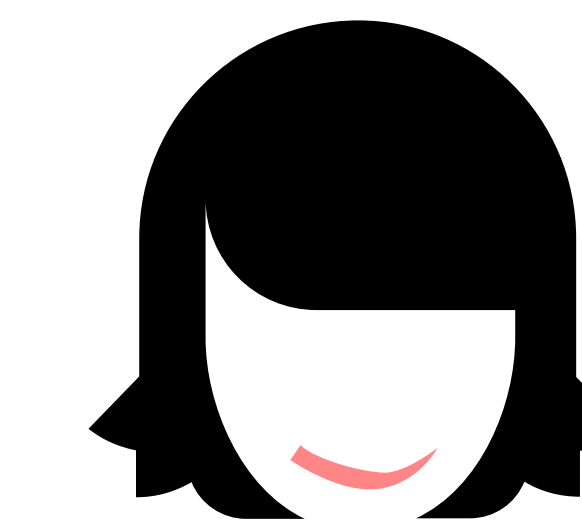
Females



Executives

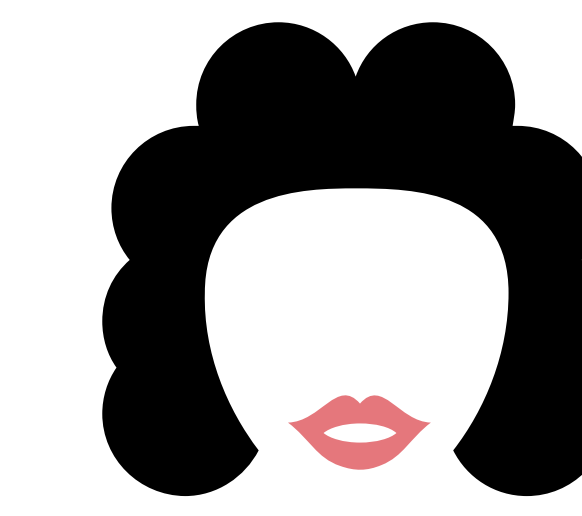
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Creatives



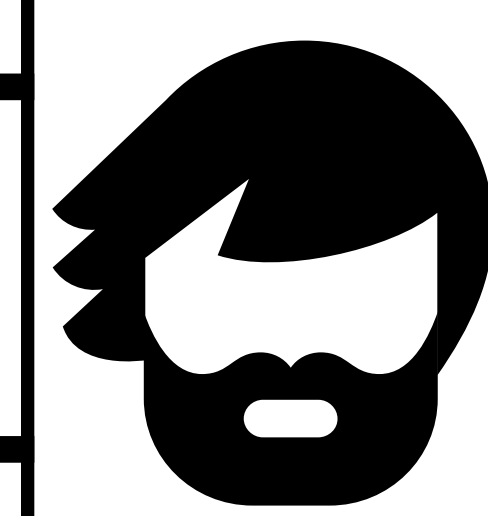
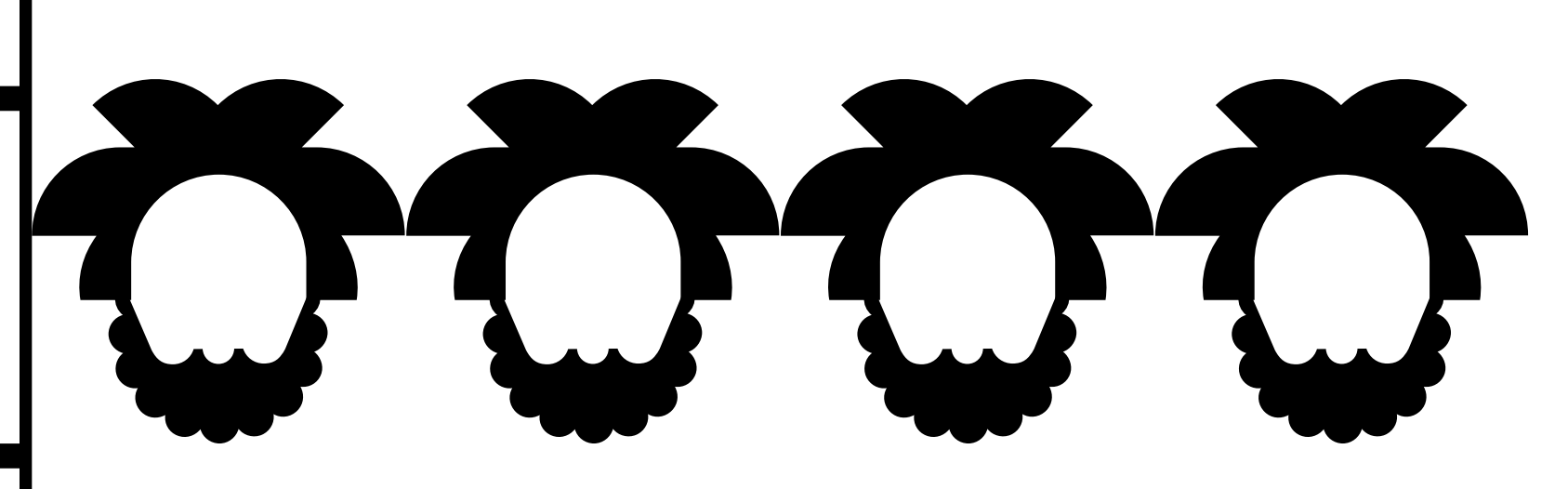
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Workforce



1:1

Males



Conclusion

Achievements

Ad women’s roles directly impact the culture and push the envelope of workplace equality.

Merit now has merit, and protected classes have united to combat advertisity.

Challenges

Among other issues, paid maternity leave, sexual harrassment, and wage gaps have yet to be effectively addressed.

Progress

Society must persevere in addressing these issues.

Balancing maternal and professional obligations is a unique challenge made more difficult by the stubborn remnants of tradition.

Women must take risks in solidarity towards a bright future for the ad industry workforce.

No one will tell you this, but you can't be a man. Don't even try.

Be a woman. It's a powerful business when done correctly.

— Bobbie Barrett in *Mad Men*