

OFF THE SHELF**SOCIETY****A History of Advertising**

Stephane Pincas and Marc Loiseau

Taschen, \$75

Reviewer *Owen Richardson*

THIS picture book was originally produced privately to mark the centenary of the birth of Marcel Bleustein-Blanchet, the founder of French advertising firm Publicis. I'm not in a position to judge if the text gives Publicis more than its due, but it's handy to keep in mind that the book is a corporate souvenir, and while the tone isn't vulgarly rapturous, you can be sure it's upbeat. Not to mention facile, and translated into unidiomatic English.

Coming as it does from the inside, the book gives you the angle you wouldn't get from a Frankfurt School Marxist or even the more fun-loving kind of postmodernist, the angle of straightforward pleasure in the creative. The text tells us that advertising is part art, part science, and then just gives us the art. There's almost nothing here about market research or psychological testing: the boys and girls in white lab coats are well out of view, so that phrases such as "cold-blooded manipulation" won't interfere with our enjoyment of freckled Norman Rockwell urchins, the de luxe minimalism of the Silk Cut ads, the cute dog cutely saying "Bugger!"

The book also represents the discursive side of advertising, with an IBM ad from the early 1970s earnestly explaining that automation does not destroy jobs.