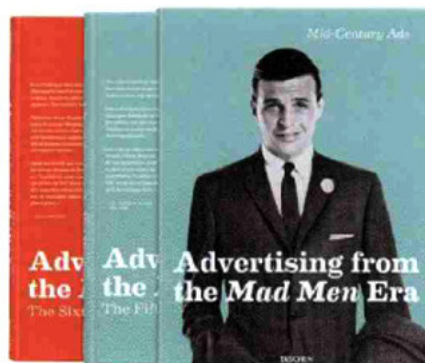


"Mid-Century Ads. Advertising from the Mad Men Era," edited by Jim Heimann, introduction by Steve Heller, published by Taschen, 720 pp, £ 34.99, US\$ 59.99, € 39.99



I approached this undoubtedly impressive two-volume publication by Taschen with a certain sense of trepidation. I have seen too many carelessly-thrown-together collections of dreadful advertising from days long gone by, apparently for readers who are happy to be spooned off with a big dose of nostalgia and/or camp, showcased without the slightest bit of context and documentation, since readers would probably have rolled their eyes in exasperation at the ads in their heyday; or, perhaps, targeting an audience that likes to wal-

low in condescension for the past and what seemed normal back then ("Look! They're all smoking like chimneys/drinking like fish!" or, "Look at the representation of women as totally male-oriented simpering fools."). It's the kind of thing that, for my taste, the otherwise excellent Mad Men series also tends to overdo a bit. So I was pleasantly surprised when I went through these pages to find an excellent selection of ads from the



1958 ad for Martini & Rossi. All images from "Mid-Century Ads," published by Taschen.

50s (which may strike us as mostly horrible – grotesque even – but that's just the way advertising was, for the most part, in those days – until, that is, Bill Bernbach arrived on the scene in the late 50s. Incidentally, I got stuck and kind of gave up on Mad Men in Season 3, having up to that point failed to discover a single ad campaign done by the agency in the series that I would have liked to feature in Archive). The volume showcasing ads from the 60s is, of course, much better as it features – for the time – lots of exciting stuff, as befits the decade that was dominated by the Creative Revolution in the ad business. There are excellent introductions to each volume by Steve Heller, who gives a superb overview of the time and the context. The only thing that annoyed me a bit (but which is perhaps understandable given that the books are intended for the mainstream market rather than ad specialists) is that the captions of individual ads give just the name of the client (which we can, in most cases, glean from the ad itself anyway) and the year it came out. No mention of the agency, let alone any creatives behind it. That said, these two volumes are surely worth adding to one's collection.



1953 ad for American Airlines.



1960 ad for Coldene by Papert Koenig Lois, New York.

– Michael Weinzettl