

# Mediated Histories of Advertising. Museum Exhibitions and Digital Archives

**Anamaria TOMIUC**

Senior lecturer. PhD  
University of Art and Design Cluj-Napoca  
Department of Theoretical Subjects  
Email: anamaria\_tomiuc@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** *We are facing a contemporary boom of museums that actually re-write the history of humanity by displaying their collections and sharing multiple experiences with their visitors, but very few are dedicated to advertising. In this particular context, the purpose of this article is to investigate the manners in which the history of advertising is actually written, by discussing two types of representations - within the curatorial practices of museum exhibition displays (set both in real spaces and online, in virtual museums), and within the online advertising archives, stating that we are faced with multiple histories of advertising mediated by the particular device of their settings. Our approach is focused on the creative part of advertising, or, more specifically, of advertising as a form at the borders of art.*

**Keywords:** *history of exhibitions, the exhibition as a mediating device, mediated histories of advertising, virtual museums, digital archives.*

## Introduction

We are today in the midst of a golden age of contemporary museums with new ones opening at short intervals and playing a popular role in the cultural life. A global phenomenon, in cities large and small, museums are settled in new signature buildings, are expanding their existing facilities or reconfiguring their current places. We are facing a contemporary boom of the cultural institutions that actually write / re-write the history of humanity, by displaying their collections and

sharing multiple experiences with their visitors. From unique sites to expanding global networks, museums have nowadays become worldwide brands that attract millions of visitors annually. Contemporary art museums (Tate Modern), science museums (Science Museum London, Arts & Metiers Paris), fashion or design museums (V&A London, Design Museum London), ethnology museums (Tjibaou Cultural Center Noumea, Musée du Quai Branly Paris), history museums (Osaka Museum of History) are just some of the types of cultural institutions that deliver both information and entertainment to their viewers.

Still, in this array of arts and sciences, we find very few institutions dedicated to advertising: *Musée de la Publicité* in Paris, *Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising* in London, *The Canadian Advertising Museum*, *The Advertising Museum* Tokyo are the most important institutions of the kind and their activities in terms of exhibition programs (excepting maybe the Parisian museum) are highly problematic. We find it paradoxical, as advertising has already had a long history and it is also extremely popular (a whole series of public events such as *The Night of the Ad Eaters* or festivals like *Cannes Lions* or *The Golden Drum* in Portoroz dedicated to advertising are reaching massive audience and attendance). Yet, taking in consideration the multiple approaches on advertising there might be found several reasons and implications for this situation.

First of all, there is huge research on advertising that investigates it from different humanistic areas: sociology, psychology, communication or marketing. The most influential definitions of advertising are set from communication theories (O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 1998) (Arrens & Bovee, 1994) and marketing (Kotler, 1994), that discuss advertising as either a communication process or an economic process, both categories describing it as a dynamic, continuously developing activity. The very status of advertising has been thoroughly debated, as well as its relation with other areas such as art, media, promotions, public relations, economics etc. This leads to infinite approaches on advertising, and a difficulty of configuring a unitary vision necessary for the existence of a museum.

Next, the massive amount of advertising creations, the numerous advertising agencies and the international competition between them, the globalization process and the quickly transformations of the area, as well as the constant need of Immediate responding to these developments, generate difficulties in documenting and archiving this endless ongoing information (taking in consideration qualitative and quantitative aspects that concern its evaluation).

Last, but no least, with the rapid expansion of Internet and the enormous possibilities of stocking information in digital forms, the construction of professional digital platforms with the purpose of documenting advertising leads to a seemingly lack of necessity for dedicated institutions (such as museums).

In this particular context, the purpose of this article is to investigate the manners in which the history of advertising is actually written, by discussing two

types of representations – within the curatorial practices of museum exhibition displays (set both in real spaces, based on different type of works/exhibits and online, in virtual museums), and within the online advertising archives (based on infinite quantity of digital content), stating that we are faced with multiple histories of advertising mediated by the particular device of their settings. We have to specify that our approach is focused on the creative part of advertising, or, more specifically, of advertising as a form at the borders of art.

With this in view, we will relate to issues like the history of exhibitions, the exhibition as a mediating device, mediated histories of advertising, virtual museums and digital archives.

### **History of Exhibitions / Histories of Advertising**

There is a complex relationship between advertising and art which has found its research in aesthetics, semiotics and hermeneutics, or art history, several studies (Ouvrard, 1990) (Gibbons, 2005) (Athanasopoulos, 2009) pointing out the intersections between modern and contemporary art and advertising, the shared practices, appropriations, exchanges, encounters, overlaps, crossovers and convergences between them that lead to a continuously elastic relationship. I have dedicated a whole study to these interferences (Tomiuc, 2014), investigating both the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of advertising and that of art, stating that roots of European advertising are found in art (the first advertising posters / prints had been created by signature artists such as Toulouse Lautrec or Alphonse Mucha), that the distinctions between “high art” and “low art” were either faded away or reinforced throughout this century of intersections and that besides the essential distinctions between the two fields of practice, it is the very nature of this relationship that counts. This permanent inquiry, the crossing borders and the conceptual transitions seem to join in one major similarity: the reference to the artistic, visual creativity, based not only on originality, imagination, spectacle but also on the complex knowledge of the human being and of the society. The research started from a selection of important exhibitions (both of art and of advertising) that revealed the various types of intersections between the two areas.

The history of exhibitions already evolves as a central research field of museology and raises an increasing interest in the world of art. Taking into consideration the nature of the contemporary art exhibitions, where, most of the times, the event itself is constituted as a work of art, such an archiving approach is most required. The majority of the discourses about art (art critics, philosophers, artists, and public) are concentrated on the art works, on their autonomy. Sill, (Staniszewski, 1998) a first study was dedicated to the history of exhibition displays, discussing the case of MoMa (New York) in between 1929-1970, underlining the fact that „art historians have analyzed the works of an exhibition and the exhibition’s effect

within the frame of the aesthetic, social and political discourse. They very seldom took into consideration the fact that a work of art, when publicly displayed, almost never stands alone: it is always an element within a permanent or temporary exhibition created in accordance with historically determined and self-consciously staged installation conventions". Obviously, placing a work of art in an exhibition does not have to be ignored because, in fact, the work of art's reception is made depending on its integration in the exhibition: „The exhibition is part of the most ambivalent entities which may exist: it is both a material entity, because it represents a singular and contextual presentation of something and it is also an immaterial entity because it involves an ensemble of relations between the objects, between these objects, a place and a public and even between the members of the public [...] To exhibit is to produce an enunciation (an exhibit), but it also means discovering, unveiling, endangering. It also means to permit a revelation and to reveal: to denounce and to give an example." (Glicenstein, 2009)

Although the concept of exhibition is being used from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries a series of major exhibition events had been built (Universal exhibitions, the Beaux-Arts Academy Salon, Salon of the Refused, Salon of the Independent, Armory Show), it is only in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that an explosion of the exhibition phenomenon is produced. Artists will be the first to reveal the art exhibition's factor and the determinant character of the museum / institutional context in which the work of art is placed and made public, positioning themselves in the situation of an exhibition and in the relation with it. In fact, even if in 1919 Marcel Duchamp places the *ready-made* object within an exhibition situation reducing the artistic gesture to the announcement of a work of art („this is art"), the awareness of the institutional determinations and the study of the exhibition factor is a phenomenon which was stimulated by the artists of the 60's (the minimalist artists and the ones belonging to the "institutional critics" category have introduced and discussed the matter of the exhibition context and of the museum categories).

A series of papers had been dedicated to the investigation of the *history of exhibitions* as a research phenomenon, (Souriau, 2010) observing that there are three types of possible relations between the art history and the history of exhibitions: first, a *relation of opposition* between the two fields (Poinsot, 2008) (Glicenstein, 2009), next, an independent relation that studies *the history of exhibitions as a distinct, autonomous research field* (Altshuler, 2008), and third, a *relation of complementarities* between the two fields and the existence of an epistemological field where the art history can include the history of exhibition (Glicenstein, 2009), (Souriau, 2010).

Within the frame of the first relation, the autonomy of the artistic object illustrated in the art history is opposite to the integrative plurality of the objects in the history of the exhibitions. The exhibition integrates within the study of the art

works a series of contextual spatial and temporal categories, the art works being presented in temporal situations and becoming the central element within the act of signification. In an exhibition, the art works and the artists are part of a unitary whole, as they are the elements which constitute a discourse. The object of art is taken into consideration only if it is an integrant part of that particular exhibition; the constitutive relations (the relations between the objects, between the art object and its author, between the object and the public, between the exhibition space and the public, etc.) are essential for its reception.

The second relation, which involves the study of the history of exhibitions as a particular research field, encounters some methodological problems: the chronology of the exhibition (when does such a history begin?), the criteria according to which the selection of these exhibitions is made and the sources of documentation (catalogues, photographic reproductions, press releases, press articles, critical studies). Obviously, this way archiving and the sources of documentation may represent the selection difference, the poorly documented exhibitions or the ones lacking the documentation being excluded from the history.

The third relation that includes the history of exhibitions within the larger field of the art history underlines the placing of the exhibitions within a communicational dynamics which belongs to the art scene and to the “network” instituted here. This way the exhibition becomes a socio-symbolic device, a place to interpret a discourse and the ideal scene where this network activates. Within the exhibition the works of art are constituted in an interactive system of relations and mutual determinations. This way the history of exhibitions appears as a continuous field which positions itself in a relation of continuity and of contribution to the art history becoming a „meta-history of art”, questioning it, completing it, illustrating new data and composing new lectures on it. The factor exhibition imposes itself as an essential element in creating and reception of the art works.

In this context, the history of advertising (if we consider advertising as art) might be written / built up throughout different exhibition displays, within various curatorial approaches that would render multiple perspectives and interpretations on the works chosen and inserted in that particular exhibition. No single view on advertising would be built, as these settings would only deliver the subject for further consideration and interpretation. With these in mind, we plead for the use of the plural form when discussing the history of advertising mediated through exhibitions and digital archives.

### **Exhibition displays. The exhibition as a mediating device.**

In order to also use a conceptual clarification regarding the term „exhibition”, I will focus on three studies (Davallon, 1999), (Glicenstein, 2009), (Merleau-Ponty & Ezrati, 2005) which define the concept of “exhibition”. For Davallon,

the exhibition is a device that results from the placing of certain things in a space with the (constitutive) intention to make them accessible to the social subjects, the moment or the place in which the objects are presented to the public with the purpose of initiating a discourse. This device is characterized by the work in space, the physical installation of the visitor within this space and the producing of significance and information. By its nature, the exhibition always initiates a direction for its reception and orientates the interpretation. Jean Davallon talks about two types of intentionality in constructing an exhibition: the constitutive intentionality and the communicational intentionality. The first refers to what the effective construction of an exhibition really is and the second distinguishes the manner in which a series of communicational strategies are being used in order to make the work of art easily accessible to the public. In this sense, the exhibition is not reduced to a simple instrumental device used to put the visitor in relation to the exposed objects; its function will involve a comprehension activity from the visitor's part, developed within a communicational context and offering him / her the information and the communicational structures necessary for understanding the meanings. Consequently, a third type of intentionality should be integrated into the exhibition: the comprehensive intentionality. Davallon emphasizes three levels of analyzing an exhibition: the manner through which the communicational functioning of the exhibition finds its efficiency within the communicational strategies by becoming a "communicational device" similar to the advertising mechanisms; the manner through which the exhibition appears as a "socio-symbolic device" related to a symbolic operability of the fact that the exhibition is both a social practice and a language one; the manner through which, with its intervention in the public space, the exhibition has the capacity to create a mediation situation by becoming a "mediating device". Three forms of the exhibition are being identified: the exhibition as a *communicational device*, the exhibition as a *socio-symbolic device* and the exhibition as a *mediating device*.

Jerome Glicenstein underlines four forms of analyzing an exhibition. He states that „an exhibition, either temporary or permanent, with one or more authors, either aiming at objectivity or being narrative open, always reveals a form of fiction using, in its own interest, the works of art. It should be considered both object and gesture revealing certain persons' concerns: every time a vision of art is at stake". So, the first form of the exhibition's existence is fiction, this proposing a fictional universe which reflects a subjective vision of art. The second form of an exhibition is that of *language and device*, according to which the exhibition builds and arranges both the internal relations between the objects it contains and the external ones, by anticipating the viewers' reaction. The exhibition is a communication situation and a medium allowing the relation between the objects and the public in a certain time and place.

The third form of an exhibition is that of *event and society game*. The exhibition always involves a great number of thinking frames, starting with the horizon of expectations of different potential audiences. But the exhibition will only be understood as a singularity event that reflects the interaction protagonists (artists, curators, art critics, public, etc) and their experiences.

The last form illustrated by Glicenstein is that of the exhibition as a *privileged place of art*, emphasizing the comprehension action's instantaneity: „not the works of art, but their presentation sets free the thinking about the art – or about the world – within a given situation. Unlike the work of art, the exhibition necessarily addresses specific audiences, whose experience is limited in time and space. A work of art may appear different within more successive presentations; on the other hand, an exhibition can be reduced to its context.” This way the exhibition will be the “witness” of an ensemble of relations which are permanently established and modified, relations modified by the exhibition's operators, who are differently placing the focus on the viewers, on the works of art or on their interpretations.

For Claire Merleau – Ponty and Jean-Jacques Ezrati (Merleau-Ponty & Ezrati, 2005), the exhibition is a form of cultural expression, a system of communicating culture through the works of art. The exhibition is both a place where objects are put together and a moment in which these objects are being presented with the purpose of their distribution to the public. More than a language, the exhibition is a cultural creation, perhaps even a work of art, which recontextualizes the works of art by giving them new meanings. So, the exhibition is a discourse and an invitation to a performance which provokes sensations, questions and a process of reflection. The exhibition is a medium through which the viewer experiences both an intellectual and emotional activity which determines the creation of the feeling of pleasure: the pleasure of the discovery, the aesthetic pleasure, and the pleasure of the intellectual effort. There are four functions given to exhibitions: *the ideological function* – exhibitions are social events carrying an ideology, that transform the society by knowledge and participation, the exhibition's producer becoming socially responsible; *the identification function* through which the interpretation of the world's cultural testimonies is guaranteed because the exhibitions bear the character of certain carriers of a cultural identity, witnesses of an era, of a social meaning, of certain cultural and artistic tendencies; *the education and knowledge function* through which the public becomes aware of the society's cultural values and of the world's patrimony; *the communication function* belonging to the exhibitions which are a communication support for the cultural institutions and through which the positive image of an institution or an artist is created, thus transforming the space in a place for cultural exchange.

All three theories underline the communicational character of the exhibition stressing its reception activity and the impact created on the level of the viewer

/ the receptor (a cognitive and comprehensive process along with emotion and aesthetic pleasure). They also emphasize the exhibition's inherent relational character that involves the interaction between the author of the exhibition, the exhibition's factors and its public. Last, but not least, the three theories exploit the role of the exhibition at a social level, the singularity of the event and the specific vision of art of each exhibition event. Taking into consideration these definitions, and in the particular context of discussing a larger approach on advertising, we will use the exhibition as both a communicational element and a mediating device at the intersection between the world of art and the one of advertising.

### **Advertising museums and exhibitions**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is marked by a rapid increase in museums of modern and contemporary art and ever since the 60's there has been a boom in museum building. The principles followed by museums in establishing and ordering their collections, in terms of both exhibitions and storage, have had strong aesthetic and conceptual significance, as they got to influence the very essence of contemporary art (Putnam, 2001). The museum transformed, it became a medium for contemporary art where the artistic intervention had endless possibilities of expression. There are very few important museums in the world that dedicated exhibitions to advertising: V&A London had exhibitions focused on poster design (from their 10,000 prints and drawings collection), MoMa and Centre Pompidou had important exhibitions concentrating on artistic movements famous for their influence on advertising and graphic design, and also on the relationship between advertising and art (*High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture's* MoMa exhibition and *Art & Pub*, Centre Pompidou's exhibition in 1990) and fewer museums consecrated only to advertising.

The *Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising* in London is a private collection of Robert Opie that includes 12,000 items that document the history of supermarket brands trying to explore the contemporary relationship with brands. With its opening in 1984, it is a permanent exhibition that renders the activity of a private collector (50 years of evidence of consumer culture that render the major shifts in our "throwaway" history), whose approach is besides that of an archive or a deposit of packages and brand products, that of creating special exhibitions dedicated to different consumer products. Advertising is a crucial piece in what Opie describes as the "jigsaw of consumer behavior". As he states, "You have to put it into a historical context to see why it is important. Is one commercial an important artifact? No, it isn't. Is the totality of advertising important? Of course it is". (Tungate, 2007) This museum brings forth the power of advertising, relating the collection to the viewer's personal experience: "To wander through his small but dense museum is to experience the Proustian power of brands. *I remember that*



board game! My mother used that washing powder! At the end of it all, you stand riveted before a screen showing a reel of old TV commercials. It's amazing how many of them you remember – the situations and jungles come bubbling out of some distant corner of your memory to pop with a shock of recognition in front of your eyes". (Tungate, 2007)

*The Museum of Advertising and Marketing in Tokyo* is dedicated to promoting the importance of advertising and marketing studies – both to the academic community and to the general public and was established in 2002 by the Yoshida Hideo Memorial Foundation to commemorate the centennial of the birth of the late Yoshida Hideo, the fourth president of Dentsu, with a collection of 150000 digitally archived advertisements and a display that includes a permanent exhibition tracing the history of advertising in Japan (a chronological display, on the one hand, that reinforces the main periods of Japanese advertising and an authorial display, on the other hand, that focuses on five pioneers of Japanese advertising, on the other hand) and a series of 12 temporary exhibitions each year that present award-winning advertisements from Japan and around the world and, occasionally, specially planned exhibits with items from the museum's own collection. Through this approach this museum is both a medium for experiencing the history of Japanese advertising and a set for international contemporary advertising, mapping the trends in nowadays creativity in advertising.

*The Advertising Museum (Musée de la Publicité) in Paris* (Caméo, 2008) has opened in 1999 (by transforming the former *Musée de l’Affiche* that was functioning from 1978) and contains a collection of 50,000 posters from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the Second World War and 50,000 contemporary posters from 1950 till present days, more than 20,000 audio-video commercials from 1930's on to the present day, more than 30,000 press layouts, radio spots or promotional objects. It is concentrated on the international history of advertising, visual creativity and poster techniques. The collections are set in various temporary exhibitions that focus either on historical periods, different brand or famous authors / creative artists. *Tout est Pub 1970-2005*, *250 ans de publicité*, *Les années glorieuses de la publicité 1950-1970*, *L’art dans la pub*, *De la réclame à la publicité 1920-1950*, *L’affiche chinoise 1921-2002*, *La belle époque de la pub 1850-1920*, *40 ans de pub à la télé* have been some of the curatorial approaches that set through exhibition displays the history of advertising. These exhibitions construct subjective memories on the development of advertising; investigate the correlations with the socio-political and economic environment of different periods of time, focusing on advertising's impact on both society and individuals; create author profiles or trace individual creative approaches that marked the development of advertising; re-trace the history of trademarks and the creation of brands. The exhibitions become conceived interpretations of the works selected that may offer a variety of perspectives to the viewer. As Robert

Storr mentions (Storr, 2006) "exhibitions have a definite but not definitive point of view that invites serious analysis and critique, not only of the art but of the particular weights and measures used in its evaluation by the exhibition maker". In the same time, exhibitions are commonly said to tell stories, and within these particular cases histories of advertising are being released to the wide public. Showing is telling, emphasizes Storr. "Space is the medium in which ideas are visually phrased. Installation is presentation, documentation and interpretation."

These three institutions, as museums, have assumed the mission to make their collections available for their public, to preserve the works, to inform, educate and entertain their public. The particular approaches deliver the works in various settings and combinations, the exhibitions themselves offering the possibilities of ample interpretations and multiple perspectives on the collections. No single history of advertising can be traced, but multiple histories presented in particular stories mediated by the very essence of the exhibition display.

### **Virtual museums and advertising**

With the expansion of Internet, the virtual museum appeared and it was defined as "any shared device or environment, real or virtual that enables a digitally structured organization of audio-visual data to be locally and / or remotely engaged by a large public" (Shaw, 1991), as "...a logically related collection of digital objects composed in a variety of media which, because of its capacity to provide connectedness and various points of access, lends itself to transcending traditional methods of communicating and interacting with visitors...; it has no real place or space, its objects and the related information can be disseminated all over the world" (Andrews & Schweibenz, 1998) or as "an attempt to use the great power of visual media created by the development of visual-interactive technologies to enable and enhance the appreciation and understanding of the specific cultural patrimony of the real museum [...] the virtual museum is the communicative projection of the real museum." (Antinucci, 2007). The virtual museum started to create controversies over the so called real – virtual divide with a series of issues such as: the original art object versus its digital reproduction, the immediate experience of the visit versus the mediated online experience, or the vision and the selected content of information communicated to the visitors through the real exhibition versus the infinite array of possibilities put at the disposal of the digital visitor (Chalmers & Galani, 2008) (Schweibenz, 2012 ).

An interesting study, which classifies them by their focus, describes four types of virtual museums. (Gesser & Niccolucci, 2012) A first type is the *content-centric variants* that invite the visitor to access and explore a large number of digitized or "born-digital" collection items and authoritative information on the museum. They evolved from the first static websites that presented in a brochure-like style

information about the museum such as mission, history, collections, exhibitions, educational programs, opening hours, contact details, etc. to websites which introduced online exhibitions of collection highlights or a digital extension and teaser for a temporary exhibition. More recently they aim to “democratize” the museum holdings by providing access to fully digitized collections. Sometimes such collections also include 3D representations of artifacts and “virtual tours” which reproduce mimetically visiting galleries and allow the inspecting of the displayed paintings, statues and other museum objects. A second type is the *communication-centric variants* that aim at promoting cultural learning, knowledge and enjoyment through providing context rather than just access to collection objects. These virtual museums are websites providing *environments for storytelling* that deploy a variety of media to narrate what is known about historic events and artifacts, their meaning and relevance. These media include narrative texts, images, timelines, maps, animations or videos used for including historical documentaries, oral history interviews, demonstrations and explanations by subject experts and historians, and, more recently, *virtual reality* applications. A third type, *collaboration-centric virtual museums* that involve a two way communication is still rarely found. It is mostly based on the growing use worldwide of Web 2.0 or *social software* applications such as Weblogs, Wikis, bookmark and content sharing platforms (such as Flickr, YouTube), and social networking services (Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn) and they are focused on the need to explore multiple forms of communication and collaboration to their public. The two main experimental forms of Web 2.0 based collaboration focus on tagging of content on top of museum public access catalogues and participation through activities on content sharing platforms. Both aim to promote user engagement but the activity is usually set apart from the museum’s own website. A fourth type, *the recombinant virtual museum* is presented by the cited authors as the future for virtual museums. This virtual museum fully adopts the network logic of the Internet and operates as a node in information flows that create, both externally and internally, added value related to different purposes such as research, education or leisure activities.

Virtual exhibitions are attributed to virtual museums and their defining is a continuous process in the scientific literature. Virtual exhibitions are viewed as dynamic entities as they often undergo ongoing change in terms of design, activity and content, including encouraging users to contribute towards its collective memory, thereby adding to its dynamism. (Foo, Theng, Goh, & Na, 2009) A more detailed definition states that a virtual exhibition is a Web-based hypermedia collection of captured or rendered multidimensional information objects, possibly stored in distributed networks, designed around a specific theme, topic concept or idea, and harnessed with state-of-art technology and architecture to deliver a user-centered and engaging experience of discovery, learning, contributing and being

entertained through its nature of its dynamic product and service offerings. (Foo S. , 2008)Therefore, virtual exhibitions are much more than the presentation of a digital collection. They offer content in various contexts, in user-friendly databases that include digital storage of collections and involve curatorial processes that are assuming conceptual structures similar to the exhibition set in a real environment and invite the viewers to explore the collection according to their own interests.

If we find very few traditional museums of advertising, surprisingly, virtual museums are even less. *The Canadian Advertising Museum* has been established with the declared purpose to identify, gather, catalogue, archive, and display distinctly Canadian creative advertising and it was supposed to be a virtual museum that uses its collection and makes it public through exhibitions and seminars on various topics of interests. Although it identified itself as a virtual museum, the website is not updated, therefore we cannot investigate its existence. Another private institution, The Eisner American Museum of Advertising and Design, opened in 2000, was supposed to be recreated in digital form, after the closure of its headquarters in 2010, but the website is again not updated, so the closure became obvious also in the online environment.

Nevertheless, the histories of advertising are being built in the virtual environment within a different form of display that gathers and organizes digital material that parallels the virtual museums, with stronger power to attract wider audience and to use the new technologies of preservation and representation: the digital archives.

### **Digital archives / Digital histories of advertising**

The digital presentation of history has become a growing area of activity in academic research, as we no longer use the history as a unique perspective on the evolution of humanity, but multiple, fragmentary and deterritorialised worlds of digital content. Infinite databases are open-ended, updatable, ever-changing forms of content, set against the finality of printed books or, in the museum context, the conventional exhibitions (Arthur, 2008). Thus, digital history represents a new kind of historical aesthetic, a new means of conveying historical experience, and a new way of recording and remembering. Digital archives provide the resources to select, structure, offer access to, interpret, distribute, and ensure the preservation over time of collections of digital works that can be readily used by the viewer. The building up of an archive implies an origin (based on the archiving principle of provenance, or source), a selection process (based on the archiving principle of collective control) that leads to a classification (based on the archiving principle of original order) and a construction of a digital collection (Theimer, 2012). The archiving practice as a mechanism that generates a collection involves a dialectic process of selection issued by a professional author(ity) on a set of axiological criteria and principles.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the advertising archives have expanded. Regularly, three types of archives are set. The first type are the digital archives that digitize content primary based in other formats (e.g. prints, posters, newspapers, magazines etc) such as The Advertising Archives established in 1990 by Larry and Suzanne Viner in UK , or Ad\*Access Project of Duke University's Digital Library that includes more than 7,000 US and Canadian historical ads from 1911 to 1955; archives that provide access to information that is mainly digital and include mainly contemporary advertising from 1980's to the present day.

The second type is archives that have become digital after years of functioning in traditional forms such as library, magazines, books, or institutional archive. An important example would be *arrowsarchive.com* that has been launched by The History of Advertising Trust UK, holding over 3 million items representing every form of UK advertising and PR material, from working papers to extensive collections of TV, poster and print, as well as a library of over 5,000 books. This archive (HAT) was institutionally founded in 1976, for educational purposes and to keep evidence of UK advertising heritage, and the online archive provided greater access to the collection which is founded on various digitized materials. The Lürtzer's Archive is maybe the most famous archive of advertising in the world, launched in 1984, first as a magazine, then as a collection of printed volumes, next as a website and the consequent apps. (Lürtzer's Archive magazine; Lürtzer's Archive 200 Best Specials; luerzersarchive.net). The digital form focuses as declared on their "principle of curatorship of inspiration", that is providing content for research use and for individual interpretation. Boasting striking graphics, the chance to view all new agency submissions, and online features designed to both inform and inspire, the website is supposed to complement the prestigious magazine, which presents the most interesting new print campaigns, TV commercials and, more recently, digital designs from all over the world. (GmbH, 2014)

A third type includes the exclusively digital archives like *adsoftheworld.com*, *advertolog.com*, *coloribus.com* that provide millions of international advertising items from various media structured according to information on the advertiser, product, brand, release date, country of origin, creative credits, industries, media and many more. They join the advertising producers and consumers, by setting up digital platforms destined for easy browsing, uploading and downloading content according to every user's interests.

While the first type of archives have been initiated with the purpose of documenting and gathering information that preserves "historical" ads for the use of study and research, the second and third type are more complex and multi-purposed. Research and creativity are focal points for these digital environments and they become subject to the personal inspiration and interpretation of the user.

In the same time, they reveal the latest trends in the international advertising industry and are constantly updated with new items. Therefore they function as mediating devices that build up advertising collections providing the chance for all users to select and utilize this content to their own choice. Thus their primary purposes would be to collect, to inform and to inspire through building up what we call multiple mediated histories of contemporary advertising. More precisely, the multiple histories are generated by the infinity of users that could interact with these platforms and to the manners in which they make their own selection and use the informational content within a continuous update, while the mediated profile is linked to the actual mediating device that provides the content (the digital archive itself). Their secondary purposes would be to ensure that digital records of contemporary advertising are preserved and protected, retaining their context, integrity and authenticity on the long term, thus constituting primary sources for the development of contemporary advertising, so that the digital content could be accessed, interpreted and used in the future, providing the resources for building up future histories of advertising.

Thus, through this type of digital content, and considering the enormous quantity of advertising content that is created every day, the digital archives provide a wider spectrum of activities that involve the storage and the building up of advertising collections. Their worldwide use in the detriment of virtual museum collections is generated by their force of actuality, by their power of updating and of collaborating with the user, reinforcing the need for the upgrading of advertising museums.

### **Conclusions**

Starting from the consideration that even if we are surrounded by advertising every day and everywhere, when faced with its history, there is no unanimity in defining or describing it, we explored a series of areas that could withdraw larger research interests in their relation to advertising. We chose to discuss the museum environment, both traditional and virtual, as well as the exhibition display as mediating devices for the construction of multiple histories of advertising on the one hand, and the contemporary digital archives of advertising that collect and share it to infinite users, on the other hand. We shortly investigated the state of fact when talking about advertising museums and advertising archives and we observed the small quantity and quality of museum services in this area, as well as the increasing number of digital archives that not only better record the infinite content in the field, but also better respond to needs of the users. Still, we believe that, on the long term, the existence of virtual museums dedicated to advertising could reinforce the development of the field and could better construct multiple perspectives on the history of advertising.

## References

1. Altshuler, B. (2013). *Biennials and Beyond: Exhibitions that Made Art History: 1962-2002 (Salon to Biennial)*. London: Phaidon Press.
2. Altshuler, B. (2008). *Salon to Biennial. Exhibitions that Made Art History*. Vol. 1, 1863-1959. London: Phaidon Press.
3. Andrews, J., & Schweibenz, W. (1998). The Kress Study Collection Virtual Museum Project: A New Medium for Old Masters. *Art Documentation*, Vol. 18, 19-27.
4. Antinucci, F. (2007). The Virtual Museum. *Virtual Museums and Archaeology*, Vol. 1, 79-86.
5. Arrens, W., & Bovee, C. (1994). *Contemporary Advertising*. Burr Ridge Illinois: Irwin.
6. Arthur, p. (2008, March). Exhibiting history. The Digital Future. *reCollections: Journal of the National Museum of Australia*, Vol. 3, no.1, 33-50.
7. Athanassopoulos, V. (2009). *La publicite dans l'art contemporain. Esthetique et post-modernisme*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
8. Chalmers, M., & Galani, A. (2008). Blurring Boundaries for Museum Visitors. In P. F. Marty, & K. B. Jones, *Museum Informatics. People, Information and Technology in Museums* (pp. 157-177). New York: Routledge.
9. Davallon, J. (1999). *L'exposition a l'oeuvre, Strategies de communication et de mediation symbolique*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
10. Foo, S. (2008). Online virtual exhibitions. Concepts and design considerations. *DESIDOC Bulletin of Information Technology*.
11. Foo, S., Theng, Y., Goh, H., & Na, J. (2009). From digital archives to virtual exhibitions. In Y. Theng, S. Foo, & H. N. Goh, *Handbook of Research on Digital Libraries: Design, Development and Impact* (pp. 88-101). Hershey, PA: ICI Global.
12. Gesser, G., & Niccolucci, F. (2012). Virtual museums, digital reference collections and e-science environments. *Uncommon culture*, Vol.3 no. 5/6 , 12-37.
13. Gibbons, J. (2005). *Art and advertising*. London - New York: I.B.Tauris.
14. Glicenstein, J. (2009). *L'art: une histoire d'expositions*. Paris: PUF.
15. Kotler, p. (1994). *Marketing Management*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
16. Merleau-Ponty, C., & Ezrati, J.-J. (2005). *L'exposition, theorie et pratique*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
17. O'Guinn, T., Allen, T., & Semenik, R. (1998). *Advertising*. Cincinnati: South Western College Publishing.
18. Ouvrard, N. (1990). *Art&Pub*. Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou.
19. Poinot, J. M. (2008). *Quand l'œuvre a lieu: l'art exposé et ses récits autorisés*. Geneve: Manco.
20. Putnam, J. (2001). *Art and Artifact. The Museum as Medium*. London: Thames & Hudson.
21. Schweibenz. (2012). Museum exhibitions, the real and the virtual ones: an account of a complex relationship. *Uncommon Culture*, Vol. 3 , 39-52.

22. Shaw, J. (1991). *Virtual Museum. Installation at Ars Electronica*. Linz, Austria: ZKM, Karlsruhe.
23. Souriau, J. (2010). *L'histoire des expositions: une nouvelle histoire de l'art? Etre historien de l'art aujourd'hui*. Paris: Associassion Thes-Arts.
24. Staniszewski, M. A. (1998). *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
25. Storr, R. (2006). *Shoe and Tell*. In P. Marincola, *What Makes a Great Exhibition*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative.
26. Theimer, K. (2012). Archives in Context and as Context. *Journal of Digital Humanities*, Vol. 1 / 2 Spring.
27. Tomiuc, A. (2014). *Artă, publicitate, branding. Interferențe și rupturi*. Cluj-Napoca: Eikon.
28. Tungate, M. (2007). *Adland: A Global History of Advertising*. London and Philadelphia: Kogan Page.

### Websites

29. <http://adsoftheworld.com/?media=All&country=All&industry=All>. (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from <http://adsoftheworld.com/>.
30. <http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/adaccess/about/>. (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from <http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/>.
31. [www.admt.jp/en/introduction/index.html](http://www.admt.jp/en/introduction/index.html). (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from [www.admt.jp](http://www.admt.jp).
32. [www.advertisingarchives.co.uk/en/pages/about-page.html](http://www.advertisingarchives.co.uk/en/pages/about-page.html). (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from [www.advertisingarchives.co.uk/](http://www.advertisingarchives.co.uk/).
33. [www.advertolog.com/about/](http://www.advertolog.com/about/). (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from [www.advertolog.com/](http://www.advertolog.com/).
34. [www.arrowsarchive.com/about.pl](http://www.arrowsarchive.com/about.pl). (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from [www.arrowsarchive.com](http://www.arrowsarchive.com).
35. [www.canadianadvertisingmuseum.com/](http://www.canadianadvertisingmuseum.com/). (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from [www.canadianadvertisingmuseum.com/](http://www.canadianadvertisingmuseum.com/).
36. Caméo, D. (2008, November). [www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/publicite/collections-97/](http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/publicite/collections-97/). Retrieved 2014, from [www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/](http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/).
37. [www.coloribus.com/about/?utm\\_source=coloribus&utm\\_medium=banner&utm\\_campaign=big-banner&utm\\_content=topline](http://www.coloribus.com/about/?utm_source=coloribus&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=big-banner&utm_content=topline). (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from [www.coloribus.com/](http://www.coloribus.com/).
38. GmbH, L. (2014). [www.luerzersarchive.net/en/metanav/about-us.html](http://www.luerzersarchive.net/en/metanav/about-us.html). Retrieved 2014, from [www.luerzersarchive.net/](http://www.luerzersarchive.net/).
39. [www.museumofbrands.com/about-us/](http://www.museumofbrands.com/about-us/). (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from [www.museumofbrands.com](http://www.museumofbrands.com).
40. [www.theeisner.com/](http://www.theeisner.com/). (n.d.). Retrieved 2014, from [www.theeisner.com/](http://www.theeisner.com/).