NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

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Advertising

Madison Ave. Grapples With Post-Sept. 11 Era

By STUART ELLIOTT

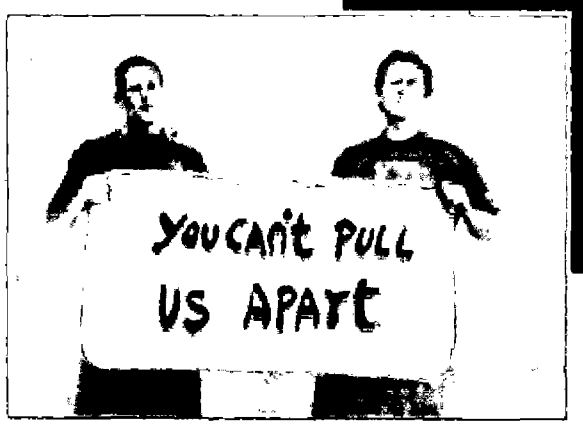
Three months after Sept. 11, Madison Avenue continues struggling to determine the right tone, approach and content for post-attack campaigns. The result has been advertising that is often strained or off-putting, even inappropriate.

Only a handful of ads have managed to strike evocative chords by walking the fine line between exploitation and empathy.

Compared with the high-minded work that agencies created during World War II, much of it demanding sacrifice from citizens, today's advertising relies far more on reassurances that victory is achievable through sybaritism. The mantra of the booming economy of the 1990's, "Shop till you drop," has been replaced with a millennium mutation: "Shop till Osama drops."

Consumers, moreover, could be excused for thinking they are shopping in a parallel universe, or perhaps more accurately, a series of parallel universes.

In one universe, patriotism is paramount as marketers paint their brands red, white and blue and proclaim, "My country, right or wrong" — usually wrongly.



Who will ever forget, try as they may, when the Miller Brewing division of **Philip Morris** ran a commercial in which people held up signs with messages like "We are all New Yorkers" and "I will not be terrorized!" or the day **Kmart** ran an American flag as an ad, which urged readers to "embrace freedom" by tearing out and displaying it ("This side up").

In this universe, the product being peddled in a jingoistic spot or star-spangled banner ad can be patriotism itself, in the form of tasteless American flag Post-it Notes from **3M**; tacky "Promise of Freedom" eagle figurines from Franklin Mint, a unit of **Roll International**; or tawdry "patriotic thong panties" from **Frederick's of Hollywood**, festooned with flags and the

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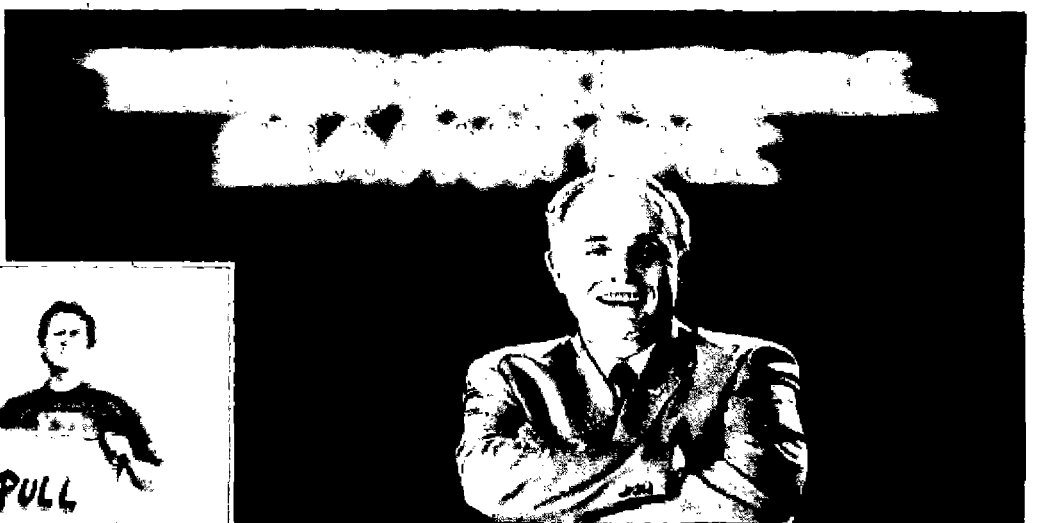

A Miller Brewing spot, left, by Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, was part of a series run in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, above, did a pro bono commercial from BBDO New York.

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