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The First Golden Age of British Advertising

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- An account of early advertising agencies, their entrepreneurial directors and original graphic designers and the development of a profession that ascribed to itself not only a crucial role in the economy of the UK but a moral role in advising government and educating the people

The ‘golden age’ of advertising is usually seen to be the last decades of the 20th century, centred on Fitzrovia, vast in quantity, swamping the plethora of magazines and newspapers appearing (and disappearing) at that time, and making optimal use of the novelty of commercial television. But the true ‘golden age’ of British advertising was in the decades immediately after the First World War, when zealous entrepreneurs banded together in local clubs and in national bodies to take the activity from the back room of jobbing printers or from being sketched on the back of envelopes on ego-driven managers’ desks to becoming a valid profession.

It was in the inter-war years that Titans in the field, such as William Crawford and Charles Higham, not only built their own empires and taught the government how to publicise itself, but even morphed the concept of advertising and publicity from something rather shady and disreputable to having a moral status of being a crucial arm of the nation’s economy and an educator of the masses. This book tells the story of some of these early agencies and the contribution they made.

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