INTRODUCTION
The Culture Sell

A man walked into the spacious lobby of a Park Avenue building, worked his way thru a maze of paintings and asked the receptionist:

“What gallery is this?”

“This sir,” she replied, “Is the Pepsi-Cola company.”

CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE, 1961

URED BY THE PROMISE OF A PUNCH LINE, we are instead served the cold sparkle of public relations. Like so much of what passes for news, this anecdote from the early sixties sounds very much like something concocted by a publicist, even what we might now call an “advertorial” or “sponsored content.” Its author was certainly not going to miss the opportunity to plug the prestigious address of Pepsi-Cola’s gleaming new “world headquarters,” designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and dedicated in February 1960. And even if our apocryphal visitor did overlook the company’s name that was sprawled across the foyer wall, his misrecognition was more than just an excuse to demonstrate the company’s good taste. To momentarily confuse a multinational corporation for a modern art gallery was precisely the kind of shift in perception that was essential to sophisticated consumer marketing in the 1960s. Pepsi-Cola could not merely be a carbonated beverage, nor its maker just a company. It had to stand for something more.

For Pepsi-Cola and many other large corporations, articulating these intangible meanings coalesced around the idea of corporate
image, a term that began to dominate design, marketing, and public relations practices in the late 1950s.¹ "Corporate image—or corporate personality," explains one of the period’s many marketing and management texts on the subject, is "merely the picture which your organization has created in the minds of your various publics."² It was a concept that seemed both new and timeless, simple and infinitely multifaceted. "Esthetic elements and nonverbal symbols . . . say things about a product or a store that could never be said in words," explained Pierre Martineau in Motivation in Advertising (1957).³ According to Martineau, the “affective meanings and subjective imagery” of such approaches promised nothing less than “permanent brand loyalty.”⁴ Crucially, corporate image extended beyond straightforwardly visual forms like logos and advertising layouts, and indeed beyond consumer marketing itself, to encompass the wider range of ways that business could “communicate effectively with its various publics in the discharge of its rapidly proliferating responsibilities to the larger society.”⁵ Building the corporate image was about trying to sell more stuff, for sure, but it was also more broadly understood as a means to help secure the long-term social and political legitimacy of the large-scale corporation.

This book explores how, in the 1960s, works of art contributed to such efforts to shape the corporate image. My study reconstructs a series of case studies that span the interactions between postwar art and the advertising, public relations, lobbying, and personnel strategies of big business. In the 1960s, Pepsi-Cola was one of many companies to operate exhibition spaces in their corporate headquarters. Many firms bought or commissioned artworks to display inside their offices and factories, while others hosted artists in residence. Some reproduced art in their advertisements and annual reports and profiled it in press stunts and photo ops. Their promotional art exhibitions toured across the country and around the world. Even when these encounters were fraught, or were regarded to have failed, they left an indelible impression on 1960s art and culture. Both tax advantages and the investment potential of art in a booming market, itself buoyed by business purchases, undoubtedly contributed to the boom in corporate art patronage in this period. But it was still the potential of art to shape the corporate image that I argue was the prime concern for these companies and the “persuasion industry” professionals that advised them.⁶ Through such activities, works of art were drawn into the expansive efforts of business to shape consumer behavior and influence social and political discourse, bolstering the standing of corporate enterprise in a global market.

Over the past decades, scholars of “corporate modernism” have provided rich accounts of the contributions of big business in fields such as architecture and design.⁷ Modern art is crucial to the stories they tell, but corporate patronage itself remains a subject “conspicuously absent from the art historical canon,” as the authors of a recent edited collection observe.⁸ This is especially true in histories of modern and contemporary art, where corporate capitalism is still often understood as a corrupting influence, the antithesis of a properly radical avant-garde. Research into the capitalist
engagements of the 1960s counterculture has certainly helped complicate such clichés, as has scholarship exploring artistic engagement with the systems of Cold War technocracy. Some art historians have even begun to reveal the generative power of capitalism for the 1960s avant-garde. Here, I seek to recover the direct engagements between 1960s art and the promotional machinery of corporate capitalism. Far from sovereign statements of independent creativity, or emancipatory expressions of resistance against the cultural norms of midcentury society, the artworks I describe might be better understood as advertorials of sorts. Like Pepsi-Cola’s gallery, they also stood for something more.

To be clear, my focus is on not just any kind of profit-seeking business interested in art—which could include galleries, most museums, and indeed artists themselves—but rather large-scale, increasingly multinational, and usually shareholder-owned corporations like Pepsi-Cola, a company to which I will return throughout this introduction. Such corporations were characterized by complex managerial hierarchies, multi-industry interests through diversification and conglomerate structures, and sophisticated bureaucratic systems for managing policy, strategy, labor, distribution, sales, and marketing. Many of these traits date, in varying degrees, from the late nineteenth century, but it was in the postwar decades that they reached their full potential, assuming the pinnacle of their international scope and complexity in the so-called golden age of capitalism. In this form, corporations would become the most powerful social and cultural force of the second half of the twentieth century—an influence that art and artists were engaged to help secure.

CONTEXTUALIZING COMMERCIAL PATRONAGE

This history is far from unique to the 1960s. The cliché of corporate patrons as modern-day Medici might lend a patrician aura to frequently more pragmatic business decisions, but it does at least register the continuities of this field with the longer intersections between the histories of art and capitalism. Nevertheless, this is also an essentially modern story, as the rise of the mass media and mass markets vastly expanded the communicative possibilities of art patronage. Since the late nineteenth century, photography and other seemingly “rational” forms of realism would become especially essential to capitalism’s imagery, helping to represent and reproduce the forms of organization and efficiency upon which it relied. Works of fine art would find a unique niche in the visual cultures of consumer persuasion, first in the artistic bill posters of early outdoor advertising and eventually in other forms of prestige advertising that reproduced fine art to, as T.J. Jackson Lears has put it, “surround mass-produced goods with an aura of uniqueness.” Michele Bogart’s landmark *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (1995) has surveyed this field as it came to operate across the full gamut of commercial visual cultures in early twentieth-century America, showing how such claims to the category of “art” not only functioned as a “means of acquiring authority and influence in their fields and in the broader culture”
but also ultimately reinforced the construction of a modernist avant-garde premised on its separation from commercial concerns.14

Pepsi-Cola had, in fact, played a significant role in this history. Bogart’s study concludes with a section on Pepsi-Cola’s wartime art competitions from which works by modern American painters, such as Stuart Davis and Max Weber, were used to illustrate promotional calendars. For Bogart, this represents the “one last prominent advertising campaign of the 1940s” that remained committed to the convergence of fine and commercial art.15 “By the end of the 1950s,” she writes, “advertising commissions for ‘fine art artists’ had all but dried up.”16 There was indeed a shift away from fine art in advertising as television campaigns took the creative lead, but this should not be mistaken to mean that the relations between art, business, and the persuasion industry changed into anything so simple as an arrangement of “separate spheres.” Instead, my study will suggest that such engagements expanded beyond the limits of the advertisement into the more affective, amorphous, and dispersed field of corporate image making.17

Like many consumer brands, Pepsi-Cola had begun to shift from product-centric marketing efforts to a more expansive personality-based approach characteristic of corporate image campaigns in the late 1950s. “Once this brand stopped trying to be an economy cola and moved to establish a distinctive product image, sales soared,” records one marketing commentator of the company’s efforts to project a more modern, elevated brand personality.18 Pepsi-Cola shifted its account to BBDO in 1960, hiring photographers such as Bert Stern and Irving Penn to help cultivate a more natural, youth-oriented image for the product, one that was, as the company boasted, “exciting without being frantic, a look that was highly artistic but at the same time as real as life itself.”19 Works of art might then have disappeared from Pepsi-Cola’s advertising, but as the company promoted a “gallery director” from the ranks of its public relations department, modern art became one of many forms of cultural production it used to cultivate a vivid, authentic corporate image.

Although my study focuses on painting, sculpture, and other works of “fine art,” it is important to acknowledge that these were only a small slice of the creative practice—including music, theater, literature, film, television, and more—drawn into the field of corporate image making. Sometimes, the results defy classification. Take, for instance, the enormous swirling wave of twenty-five thousand Christmas tree ornaments designed by Robert Brownjohn for the Pepsi-Cola foyer in December 1959 (fig. 1). This giant curl of candy-colored ribbon installed to mark the arrival of Pepsi-Cola’s gleaming new architectural jewel box appears to have been the company’s first lobby display. Brownjohn’s wave of lurid iridescent spheres danced across the foyer like a Disney fantasy, disregarding the building’s restrained crystalline geometry. The motion of viewers around the object further animated its multicolored sparkle as it reflected light from both the grid of ceiling lights above and the high-gloss white floor. This was at least as much a sculpture as it was seasonal decor: a sprawling installation that transformed
cheap plastic ornaments into a spectacular branding gesture and required neither product nor promotion to achieve its experiential image of buoyancy and sparkle.

To situate this object among its sculptural contemporaries helps reinforce the shared genetics of modern art and commercial design. In Brownjohn’s case, such relations originated at Chicago’s “New Bauhaus,” where his student design of an undulating plastic ribbon of tactile spots and grids is known from its inclusion in László Moholy-Nagy’s Vision in Motion.20 As it swoops across the floor and bounds into the air, the enveloping effects of his Pepsi installation certainly echo those achieved in Herbert Ferber’s landmark Sculpture as Environment (1961) installed at the Whitney Museum a year later (fig. 2). There are, of course, many differences between such works, but both anticipate the shift from objects to spaces that would define the decade’s sculptural legacy. Brownjohn’s object also preempts the large, eye-catching abstractions that would begin to permanently ornament New York’s other fishbowl foyers, such as Beverly Pepper’s Contrappunto (1963), commissioned for the entry to the United States Plywood Corporation (fig. 3). Contrappunto might be more formally contained than either Ferber or Brownjohn’s curlicues, but as a hidden motor turned its suspended upper loops, its animated abstraction also chimed with the lobby’s immersive Muzak soundtrack.21 Like Brownjohn, Pepper cited the influence of Moholy-Nagy on her early practice (encountered, in her case, through classes with György Kepes), but her first career as an art director in New York advertising agencies must also have sharpened her perception of modernism’s marketing potential.22
By the 1960s, blurring the boundaries between art and advertising could itself serve persuasive ends. When Pepsi-Cola displayed award-winning advertisements for a 1962 exhibition, for example, the promise that visitors could watch television commercials “uninterrupted by crass entertainment” was not just a tongue-in-cheek inversion of mass media critique; it also sought to affirm the expressive force of consumer culture itself. More fundamentally, the persistence of such cultural distinctions could help camouflage the contours of corporate strategy. Critic Stuart Preston might then have thought that the exhibition Twenty Young French Painters (1963) seemed “incongruously sheltered in the gleaming, Muzak-reverberating hall of the Pepsi-Cola building,” but his judgment failed to register that this exhibition was—on the heels of the company’s new bottling agreement with French manufacturer Source Perrier—barely less commercial than the company’s displays of declaredly commercial art. Given the
importance of Latin American markets to Pepsi-Cola, the same could be said of the interactive abstractions of Lygia Clark or the early pop constructions of Marta Minujin, both artists for whom Pepsi-Cola exhibitions represented their first New York City showings. Whether displaying folk carvings from Puerto Rico, crafts from the Philippines, or modern paintings from the Congo, these displays were all invariably tied to the company’s ever-fluctuating relations with the international governments and licensees upon which global expansion relied.

As large corporations began to behave more like countries—the “Republic of Pepsi-Cola,” quipped one journalist in 1965—corporate image programs equally sought ever-wider expressions of social relevance and legitimacy. This was why Pepsi-Cola’s public relations department, responsible for the company’s image-building activities in the arts and beyond, claimed that its goal was to create “subtle but beneficial interminglings of Pepsi sociability with the nation’s life.” Sometimes this comprised entirely predictable elaborations of the red, white, and blue of the Pepsi-Cola brand identity, such as the exhibition *The American Flag* (1962), drawn from the Library of Congress collection to show the “many imaginative uses” of the flag in the history of advertising. But how should we understand the decision to host *Guns*, another 1962 exhibit that showcased two hundred firearms lent by the Winchester Gun Museum and that began with an image of the Pepsi logo peppered with bullet holes? Critic Brian O’Doherty thought the show was a “reminder of a more gracious age when killing was a more polite and personal matter,” but within a few years his joke, and indeed, the exhibition, would surely have been unthinkable. In seeking to locate their products at the center of everyday life, and to animate their brand with all of the complex identity of a real person, corporations necessarily had to engage with the tumultuous social and political contexts that surrounded them. By the end of the decade, as the example of Pepsi-Cola will so unmistakably suggest, it didn’t always seem worth the trouble.

While the activities of corporate art patrons in the 1960s have not yet received a dedicated historical study, several accounts of corporate involvement in the arts since the 1970s have been published in the last two decades. Unlike the direct interactions between artists and companies that characterized earlier practices, such activities were increasingly controlled—especially in the United States, but eventually elsewhere around the world too—through the auspices of museum sponsorship. Like the earlier decline of art in advertising described by Bogart, such a shift was far from complete, but the rising prominence of these institutionally brokered unions did help the borders between art and business appear to remain intact. The desirability of this separation is fundamental to the accounts of Mark Rectanus’s *Culture Incorporated: Museums, Artists and Corporate Sponsorships* (2002) and Chin Tao Wu’s *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s* (2003), books that take a critical perspective on the operation of museum sponsorship as an effort to use cultural capital to legitimize corporate power and, ultimately, privatize the sphere of art.
Scholars advancing such perspectives rarely detail the specifics of the encounter between artists and patrons and have even less to say about its influence on works of art themselves. Such condemnations of the corporate exploitation of art can, in my view, too readily romanticize the undiluted and uncorrupted culture of an imaginary past. As Erika Doss has observed, “Artists who desired visibility and recognition depended on some form of patronage, be it private, public or corporate. And such patronage usually involved some degree of compromise; ‘complete’ aesthetic freedom was more often ideological fiction than social fact.” The inevitability of such accommodations seems to me a more useful framework than models of “recruitment” or “co-option.” In seeking to understand the direct engagements of art and business as they unfolded within the social fabric of everyday life, I regard their relations in more ambivalent terms, proceeding on the contrary belief that art has long constituted its forms in relation to trade, consumption, reproduction, and mass media. Building on a now-rich field of scholarship that has revealed the mutuality and confluence of fine and commercial art, high and low, I treat such categories not as fixed or opposing positions but as an infinitely graded “continuum of visual production,” as Patricia Johnson has termed it, an unstable terrain within which artists continually calibrate and recalibrate their practices.

My approach also owes less to the many accounts of the organization of modern and contemporary art markets than it does to what I regard as the more nuanced scholarly approaches to patronage in earlier periods. In particular, I concur with Francis Haskell’s conclusion that the transactions between artist and patron do not suggest “the existence of underlying laws which will be valid in all circumstances.” In his work on seventeenth- to nineteenth-century art, Haskell pays close attention to the “mechanics” of patronage and the status of the artwork as “a form of social and financial investment.” Michael Baxandall goes further still in demonstrating the centrality of the patron’s influence in the form of the artwork itself. He famously treats Renaissance patrons as “clients,” demonstrating how their requirements and interests profoundly shaped the appearance of Italian Renaissance painting. Elsewhere, Baxandall shows how early modern artists mimicked their patrons’ commercial strategies by adopting subcontracted production and branded styles to bolster their businesses. In these and other writings by Haskell and Baxandall, and in more recent scholarship that has absorbed their lessons, patronage emerges as a sharp lens through which to see the entanglement of works of art in the dynamics of the commercial world and the long history of consumer marketing.

Each of my chapters embeds particular artworks within their corporate histories. Beginning with the artworks that most visibly engage with the iconography of big business in the 1960s, Part 1 is titled “Repackaging Pop” and considers the role of pop art for the packaged consumer goods industry. Chapter 1 explores the inexplicably little-known commercial relations between Andy Warhol and the Campbell Soup Company. Reconsidering the implications of Warhol’s famous appropriation of the image of the
company’s product, I suggest that pop represented a paradoxical force for its corporate subjects: at once an exciting marketing opportunity and a problematic interference with their control over their own brands. Chapter 2 examines the pop commissions of the Container Corporation of America, a paperboard packaging and design firm. Focusing on paintings produced by Warhol and James Rosenquist for the company’s advertisements, I explore how these canvases bear the traces of their patron’s efforts to shape the meanings of the works they commissioned. Chapter 3 surveys the foray of tobacco giant Philip Morris into this field. Considering the portfolios of pop prints commissioned by the company and its public relations agency Ruder & Finn under the direction of influential publicist Nina Kaiden, I examine how the production and exhibition of these works powerfully register the company’s marketing imperatives, including its interest in the visual effects of packaging and the need to work around new regulatory restrictions on cigarette advertising. All three of these companies were seeking to build global brands in the 1960s, and throughout this section I highlight the cultural dimensions of their internationalizing enterprises.

In Part 2, titled “Abstraction at Work,” I focus on the role of art within the workplace, moving away from particular works of art to consider instead corporate art collections as a multidimensional unity, carefully planned environments designed to shape corporate image. Chapter 4 considers the artworks selected for the offices of Chase Manhattan Bank in New York. Here, I argue that the collection juggled contradictory goals: balancing executive tastes with corporate identity and countering the drive for efficiency with the individualistic and humanistic values that the company understood modern art to exemplify. Chapter 5 examines the collection of large abstract paintings commissioned for the Turmac Tobacco Company factory, the Dutch manufacturer of Peter Stuyvesant cigarettes. My account of the history of this collection, the role of European integration in its formation, and its subsequent international tours to Canada and Australia explores the public relations and personnel functions it served for an expanding multinational brand.

In the third and final section of the book, “Marketing Materials,” I turn to the industrial patronage that I suggest buoyed the status of steel as a sculptural material in the 1960s. Steel is only one of the industries that turned to modern art as a kind of product placement vehicle, but its engagements had an unparalleled impact not only on the material meanings of postwar sculpture but also on the self-image of its makers. Chapter 6 examines the residency of a group of international sculptors in the factories of Italian steel giant Italsider in 1963, recovering the context of postwar Italian reconstruction and industrial change that shaped the works of Alexander Calder, Beverly Pepper, and David Smith made in Italsider’s factories. Chapter 7 examines U.S. Steel’s involvement in creating Pablo Picasso’s monumental public sculpture for the city of Chicago from the company’s proprietary alloy marketed under the brand name Cor-Ten. Finally, chapter 8 considers Richard Serra’s 1969 residency at Kaiser Steel in Fontana, California. Reconstructing Serra’s fraught relations with Kaiser staff to
complicate his identification with the figure of the steelworker, I reinterpret his temporary sculptural installations as materializations of the collapse of this company and, more generally, of the idea that artists might directly contribute to the shaping of a corporate image.

This is a diverse territory to cover, but by considering a range of patrons, sectors, styles, and, albeit to a necessarily more limited extent, international contexts, I aim to provide a synthetic account of 1960s art that puts patronage at the center of its history. At the same time, I also want to examine works of art themselves, regarding their material form as essential evidence for understanding their engagements with corporate image and the persuasion industry. My selective focus on many well-known artworks (beginning with Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Cans* and ending with Serra’s *Skull-cracker* series) is not intended to reinforce the canons of American art with which it mainly conforms, but rather to avoid the trap of presenting the corporate art phenomenon as a matter of only marginal significance for the established artistic legacies of the decade. Indeed, the fame of many of the artworks I consider reflects the efforts of business to promote them, interests that are frequently embedded within their received histories. Here, I am especially interested to shine a light on agents other than artists who shaped the form and meanings of these works: the art directors, advertising creatives, public relations advisers, and other such producers of commercial culture whose very power so often depended upon the maintenance of their public invisibility.

In positioning artworks as something more than the stuff of individual creation, I seek neither to diminish their significance as works of art nor to deny the agency of their named creators. But as David Nye notes in his pioneering study of photography at General Electric, the corporation’s “very mode of operation places a structural limit” on assumptions about individual authorship. It is thus crucial to attend to the varying degrees of collaboration and control within which specific works were made and circulated. Commissions differ from competitions, for instance, and both significantly differ from company purchases of existing works. While I regard all of these situations as forms of patronage that shaped corporate image, I have tried to not smooth over their practical differences. Some of my case studies were chosen because of the availability of corporate archives. I have also made considerable use of sources from the popular press, reading between the lines of such sources (often closely based on press releases) to reconstruct the persuasive agendas they advance. Works of art themselves can sometimes round out this correspondence in visual terms, providing material evidence of the strictures of patronage in both their content and their form.

The international orientation of corporations makes it impossible, in my view, to strictly limit my subject to the art or artists of a particular nation. My focus is thus primarily on companies then based in the United States, but I have sought to engage with the international artistic and commercial contexts their businesses involved.
further suggest the multidirectional dynamics of this field, I devote sections to Dutch and Italian firms, and these case studies were selected not only for their exemplary status among 1960s corporate art patrons but also for the multinational imagination that they reveal. My scope is therefore motivated less by the idea of a global art history than by the conditions of postwar commerce, the complex multinational supply chains and marketing strategies that, in the 1960s, American corporations developed to pursue global expansion. Indeed, these companies could, on occasion, even take credit for the purported international triumph of postwar American art, boasting that it was their “aesthetic and financial support that has helped to make this leadership possible.” This is an exaggeration, but the cultural and economic influence of the United States in Europe ensured by the Marshall Plan did provide important conditions for the global circulation of American art. And as scholars of the “cultural Cold War” have begun to recognize, this history was commercial as well as ideological: waged on billboards and in supermarkets and, as works of art were drawn into its system of consumer choice, in museums and art magazines as well.

While it is important to recapture the genuine and mutual enthusiasm for collaboration between artists and corporations that ran through much of the sixties, many of the examples I recount focus on particular moments of friction within these relations. Such disputes help clarify the motives of artists and executives alike by raising the veil of PR spin by which the reception of these projects was, for the most part, so effectively managed. Smoothing over problems was what business did best, but the works of art explored here often manage—sometimes quite unwittingly—to document the complexities of the commercial imperatives within which they were entangled.

THE POLITICS OF PERSUASION

In 1959, economist John Kenneth Galbraith delivered a lecture at New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) that helps articulate the socioeconomic frameworks that would come to underpin the field of corporate art patronage in the following decade. Galbraith explained to his audience that “improving economic well-being requires an increasingly close relationship between the artist and economic life.” Alluding to the problems he had already described in The Affluent Society (1958), Galbraith argued that “artistic perception is as necessary to the modern manufacturer of consumers goods as engineering skill.” The aesthetic standard of American products had “fallen below both European standards and our own tastes,” he suggested. America’s weakened balance of trade therefore manifested the failure of business to pay attention to modern art. “The businessman, having accommodated himself to the scientist in the course of accommodating himself to the twentieth century,” he declared, “must now come to terms with the artist.”

In a more general sense, corporate enterprise would become obsessed with creativity in the 1960s, and a burgeoning management literature would imagine its expertise as a kind of humanist art. The advertising business would cast its innovations as
nothing less than a “creative revolution.” At one level, this was a matter of prestige. “A businessman who reads Business Week is lost to fame,” Galbraith noted in The Affluent Society. “One who reads Proust is bound for greatness.” The cultural interests of corporate liberals sought to consolidate the position of the multinational corporation at the very center of human civilization and to combat the persistent reputation of American business as materialistic and uncultured. “Business—the great soulless corporation,” summarized one journalist, “is being looked to more and more as the source of the wealth and power and taste to support the projects . . . which the rest of our civilization neglects.”

Artists too recognized this shift. Many were enthusiastic about the possibility of working with large-scale corporate enterprise, even if they and their interpreters later disavowed such interests. After the prescriptions of state-sponsored schemes in the thirties and forties, and the restrictions of McCarthy-era political persecution in the fifties, the idea of stable patronage from American business was far from an unattractive prospect. Further, as Bogart and Doss both point out, the focus of many left-wing artists on reaching the masses found renewed, if reconfigured, utility in the field of mass marketing. Disillusioned with the trope of the marginalized artist (though, as always, still happy enough to deploy its clichés) and fed up with the risks of making art “on spec,” artists began to see big business as a viable pathway to achieve professional stability, a change manifest in the pronounced valorization of corporate identity among many artists of the period. Advertising and merchandising had long provided paying work to writers and creatives of all varieties, and even for those who eventually rejected the profession (or suppressed the history of their involvement in it), the techniques they learned were not easily forgotten. And as art history and criticism were assimilated by public relations discourse, modern art itself would become necessarily shaped by press releases and other forms of spin-doctoring.

The interest in image making that brought business and artists together corresponded with a broader public visibility for the techniques of the persuasion industry. The first edition of Pierre Martineau’s Motivation in Advertising (1957) featured a generically modern dust jacket with an abstract design of three intersecting curving lines. By 1971, when his volume was reprinted as a cheap paperback, these wavy curves had proliferated into the wafting smoke of a cigarette, a psychedelic tangle of luridly colored shapes and fragmentary images (fig. 4). This is an illustration that metaphorically condenses a decade of advertising but also confirms the Medusa-like image of the persuasion industry itself as seductive but dangerous. By the end of the 1960s, consumers came to recognize that the pervasive, intermingled impressions of mass marketing were swirling around everything they consumed. Repositioned for a readership beyond the professional marketers it had so influenced in the late 1950s, Martineau’s book was repackaged for a public fascinated by the images they too understood to be manipulating their behavior. As Daniel Boorstin explained in his acutely perceptive book The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America (1961), “The more we know about
the tricks of image-building, about the calculation, ingenuity, and effort that have gone into a particular image, the more satisfaction we have from the image itself. The elaborate contrivance proves to us that we are really justified (and not stupid either) in being taken in.  

Above all, however, it was Vance Packard’s *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) that had sparked popular interest in the tricks of the advertising business. Providing mainstream exposure for the techniques of Martineau and others, the book reignited the consumer activism of the Depression era and focused new attention on the industry’s alleged manipulations of human psychology and vision. Not only did the book give impetus to a host of new consumer regulations, but it also sharpened artistic
perceptions of such practices. Packard followed this best seller with a steady stream of books that considered the impact of business culture on American behavior. These included his account of American class barriers in *The Status Seekers* (1959) and his tract against consumer excess and “planned obsolescence” in *The Waste Makers* (1960). Packard’s books shed new light on the impact of commercial values on the possibility of a fulfilling and democratic society, and their claims are echoed in the work of countless social critics and commentators of the period. While his books are breezy and occasionally sensationalist, their period significance to sixties arts and letters should not be underestimated.

Packard’s critiques of business were a key influence on the more profound attack on the “corporate system” mounted by the New Left in the 1960s. The Students for a Democratic Society’s *Port Huron Statement* (1962) was a landmark articulation of such beliefs. “Government influence is marginal to the . . . basic structure of distribution and allocation which is still determined by the major corporations with power and wealth concentrated among the few,” explained this foundational treatise. Such attacks on business and its values provide a crucial background for this study and remain central to contemporary criticisms of unchecked corporate power, but such activists were more moderate than is sometimes assumed. Initially, at least, the Students for a Democratic Society, as one historian has put it, “aimed not to destroy capitalism, but to reform it.” It is within this constructive and liberal spirit that the widespread artistic enthusiasm for corporate collaboration in the early to midsixties should also be understood.

Even if by 1960 it was possible to claim that business “never enjoyed a more favorable climate of public opinion,” corporate threats to a free society remained part of a well-established folklore of capitalism. From the perspective of business this was a matter of combating fears of not only bigness and monopoly but also cultural irrelevance. One executive worried about the “bland image” of big business, complaining that even those who thought highly of a company “don’t so much as write a postcard if the government threatens to break up its corporate structure.” Emerging concerns over the dehumanizing effects of corporate organization and increasing attention to corporate disregard for health and the environment required further rebuttals. As historians Kenneth Lipartito and David Sicilia observe, the postwar corporation faced a “host of new challenges to its reputation, and responded in ways that reached well beyond the earlier techniques.” Above all, the widespread impacts of Packard’s critique of the manipulations of the persuasion industry itself meant that, as the editor of the *Harvard Business Review* observed in 1960, “advertising is obviously suffering from (to use one of its own favorite new words) ‘image’ trouble.” As the following chapters will show, all of these concerns were ones that works of art could help mitigate.

It was also in the 1960s that ideas like “corporate citizenship” and “corporate social responsibility” emerged as frameworks for the image problems faced by big business. Richard Eells’s *Corporation Giving in a Free Society* (1956) was among the first efforts to