Brand new research into advertising history

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What were your shopping basket favourites of yesteryear and what do they tell us about changes in the consumer society? Whether or not your grandparents were Ovaltineys, your mum used OMO or you remember the ‘international passport to smoking pleasure’ when glamorous cigarette advertising was permissible, a new project looking at branded products from Victorian Times to the present day will jog your memory, thanks to a grant of £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Notting Hill-based Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising will focus on a range of 72 everyday products to see how they have developed through time and what they tell us about consumer habits, communication strategies, popular culture and how advertisers have used packaging materials, design and graphics to influence our purchasing decisions over a period of a century.

Museum director, Robert Opie, looks forward to this challenge. He says: “This is probably the first time that such a wide survey of the public’s memories and ‘relationships’ with branded products has been carried out.”

Volunteers will interview local people about their memories of how they stocked the kitchen cupboards of their past, which will then be compared to those of the elderly in community groups and care homes. To help this along, a selection of ‘shopping basket favourites’ using replica brands and photographs will be used as prompts. The general public will also be asked to help broaden the Museum’s collection by donating some current packaging from home. This will help attract examples from a diverse mix of cultures.

The project will also engage with schools, responding to ongoing requests from teachers for material that can form the basis of classroom sessions in the history, art and design, and citizenship syllabus. Intergenerational interest will be boosted by the creation of family-friendly heritage trails through the Museum. The grant will also help the digitisation and cataloguing of the material being used in the project.

Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, Sue Bowers, said: “This project will help chart the history of our consumer society and changing social attitudes. It will encourage a range of personal stories associated with familiar household products and will also provide an educational resource and ensure that the Museum’s collection is catalogued and conserved.”

Notes to editors

The Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising was established in Notting Hill in 2005, having relocated from Gloucester. Its founder, Robert Opie, began collecting product packaging from the age of 16 and his collection now contains more than 500,000 separate items.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK, with over £850 million granted in London alone.

Celebrating 15 years of making a difference to people and communities across the UK. This year marks The National Lottery's 15th Anniversary. Since 1994 over £23billion - that's £25million each week - has been raised by Lottery players for the arts, sport, heritage, environment, education, health, charity and voluntary sectors.

Further information

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