

TV commercials, made with vast amounts of money that sometimes rival production costs of motion pictures, reflect the times and national characters of countries.

The Advertising Museum Tokyo, located in the headquarters of Japanese advertising giant Dentsu Inc. in the capital city's Shiodome area, keeps visitors entertained for hours on end. This unique, admission-free museum is intended to familiarize visitors with the history of Japanese advertisements from the Edo Period (1603-1867) up to the present day.

The first thing visitors notice on entering the museum is huge billboards for a paper fan shop and a writing brush maker of the late Edo Period. At a glance, the billboards tell the line of business of the advertisers. It can be said that today's advertisements can trace their roots back to the billboards of that era. The museum's Advertising Library, the only Japanese library devoted to the marketing / advertising industry, possesses about 130,000 kinds of digitized advertisements, which visitors can view freely.

In the radio & TV commercial corner, visitors can watch and listen to various commercials from around the world, including win-



The Advertising Museum Tokyo displays a wide range of ads, both old and new.

one. He finds himself hard pressed to make a choice. Depending on the card they choose, customers can see on the Internet how relations between the man and the woman developed. I found the drama more interesting than ordinary TV dramas.

On the other hand, a TV commercial by Toyota Motor Corp. attracted attention with its focus on images without any spoken lines.

TV Commercials Are Fun

By Ogata Shinichi

ners of the coveted Clio Award, one of the three most important advertising prizes of the world, and those which won prizes at the China Advertising Festival, launched in 1986.

These commercials give visitors an insight into the global trend of commercials. In addition, visitors can see and hear valuable Japanese TV and radio commercials such as the best 100 commercials of the Showa Era (1926-1988) that produced various catchwords, the best 100 commercials of Naniwa (Osaka), and radio commercials broadcast in the 1940s and 1950s.

Is there any difference between Japanese and Western commercials? According to a Japanese commercial planner who has served as a judge at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival, launched more than 50 years ago, Japanese commercials entered in the festival in recent years tend to focus on the pleasantness of word exchanges and spend less time and money on music.

I once served as a judge at an advertising competition, which involved sorting through nearly 100 TV and radio commercials in a short time. They had been all short-listed and so most of them were worth seeing. Their focus was indeed on the pleasantness of spoken lines.

Among the prize winners of the TV division of the contest was a commercial by a professional baseball team, which featured long, funny conversations between players and fans. A commercial by a credit card company, which won the grand prize, was in the form of a drama. A man meets a former female classmate, who was the girl of his dreams in his school days, at their 10th anniversary graduation reunion. The woman shows him three cards, respectively titled "Adventure," "Friendship" and "Sealing Off," and tells him to choose

In the animation-like commercial, the front seat of the car is personified as an engineer-like middle-aged man. When the driver enters the car, he sits on the lap of the man after adjusting the head rest by pulling the man's head. The character wraps his arms around the driver to imitate a seat belt. When it rains, another cartoonish man, soaked to the skin, moves the wipers with his hands. The Toyota commercial conveys the carmaker's message: "We see to it that you can drive safely." The commercial was highly evaluated overseas and won the Silver Prize at the Cannes advertising festival.

A TV commercial of Sony Corp., which won the Gold Prize at the same advertising festival, similarly used only images and contained no spoken lines. With the theme "beauty of color," it was produced by rolling 250,000 colorful balls down a sloping road in San Francisco. It took two days and cost more than 1.4 million euros (¥200 million) to shoot the scene. It is enjoyable to watch the image of colorful balls bouncing randomly down a hilly urban road.

As I watched old, memorable TV commercials, I felt as if I had been transported through time to my childhood days: the pleasant smells emanating from the dinner table or the girl I adored. The first phonographic record I bought with my own money was of music used in a commercial for cosmetic products.

We usually watch TV commercials with half interest in interludes between programs. But, as I served as a judge at the advertising competition and watched the competing commercials with greater attention, I found that they remain in our memory more firmly than I had imagined before. Good TV commercials enrich our daily life just as good music and motion pictures do. **JS**

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