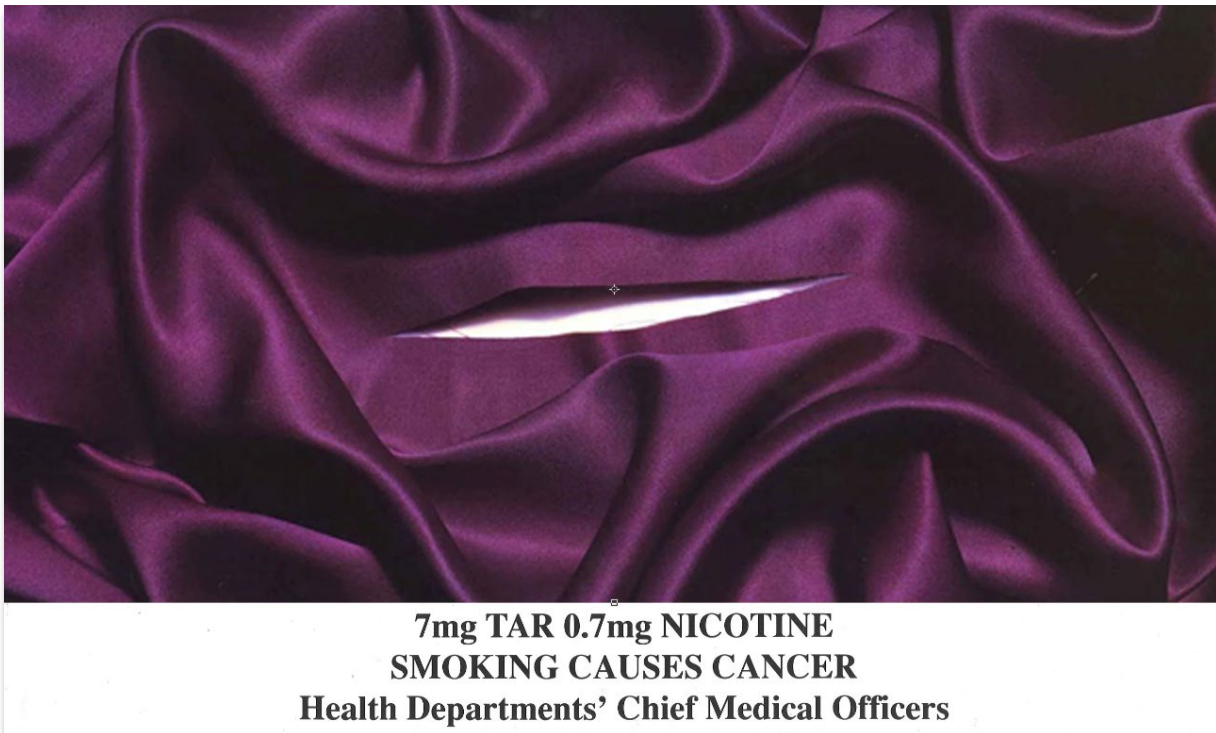


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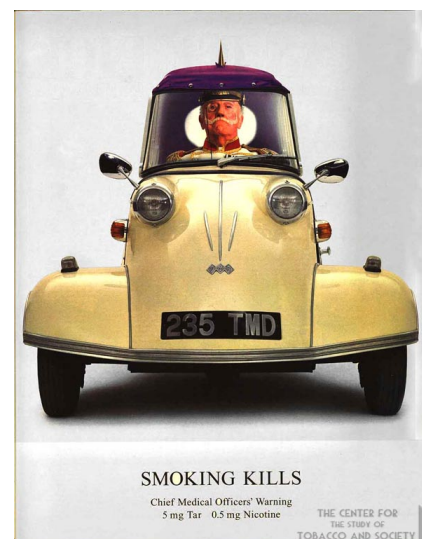
Silk Cut: Surrealism as Subversion

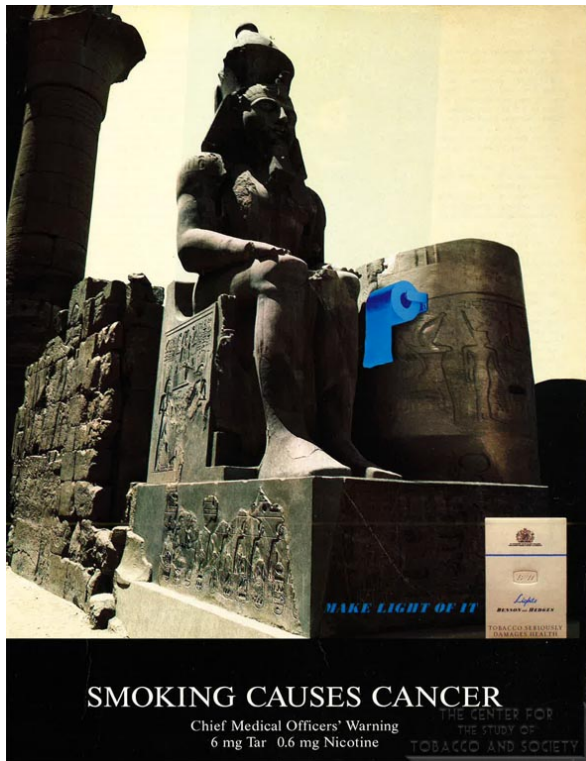
New online exhibition <https://csts.ua.edu/silk-cut/> by the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society explores the creative ways tobacco companies have circumvented restrictions on cigarette advertising



For more than 50 years since the publication of the landmark Surgeon General's report on smoking and health in 1964, lawmakers and regulators have tried to restrict the content and placement of cigarette advertising to deter teenagers from starting to smoke.

Cigarette ads were banned from television in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1965 and in the US in 1971. Cigarette advertising came down from billboards in 1998 in the US, and tobacco sponsorship of sports was dramatically curtailed by 2004. In 2012 the Food



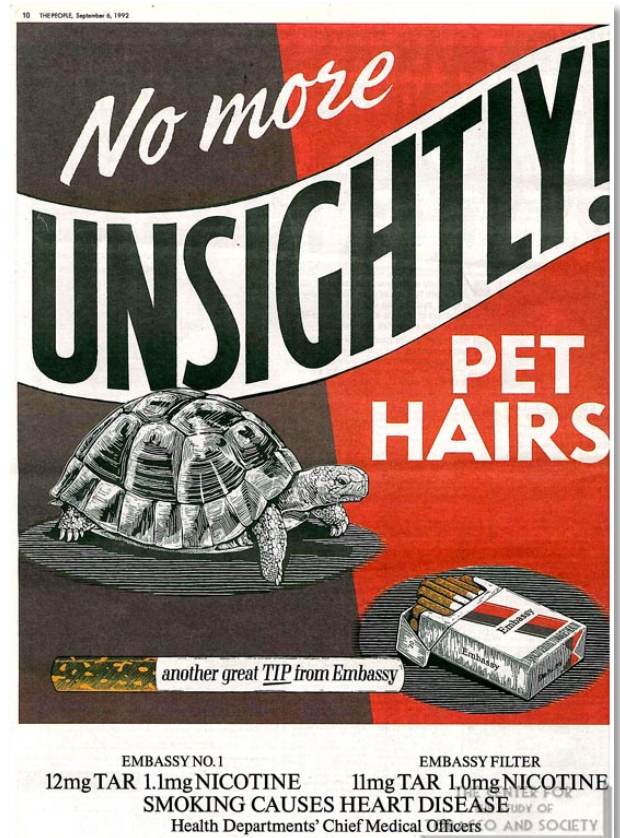


and Drug Administration attempted to put large warning labels on every cigarette pack with images of the diseases smoking causes, but the proposal was blocked by a US Appeals Court. In August 2019, the FDA announced it will try again to introduce graphic warning labels on cigarette packs.

A new online exhibition by the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society explores how cigarette marketers have looked upon each restriction on their advertising as a creative challenge to circumvent or subvert.

Silk Cut: Surrealism as Subversion (<https://csts.ua.edu/silk-cut/>) retraces the story of the British cigarette Silk Cut, which became the UK's leading brand in the 1990s even though the prominent health warnings were often the only words in the ads. Inspired by the slashed canvases and punctured metal sculptures of artist Lucio Fontana, advertising agency owner Charles Saatchi oversaw the creation of dozens of visual plays on the words "silk cut," produced by some of the world's foremost photographers.

This campaign led other cigarette makers to create hilariously absurd advertisements. The text of one RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company ad in 1985 for its Winston brand read, "We're not allowed to tell you anything about Winston cigarettes, so here's a stuffed aardvark." An ad for



Imperial Tobacco's Embassy One brand in 1992 showed a turtle beneath the headline, "No more unsightly pet hairs." In 2006 RJ Reynolds turned the cigarette pack into a canvas when it commissioned 13 tattoo artists to create 33 "mini-masterpieces" and even issued an entirely white "design-your-own" pack.

In spotlighting the enlistment of top artists, photographers, and film directors by the tobacco industry to create compelling cigarette advertisements, *Silk Cut: Surrealism as Subversion* is a sequel to the Center's most recent exhibition *Museum Malignancy: Tobacco Industry Sponsorship of the Arts* <https://csts.ua.edu/museum/>.

Both exhibitions were drawn from the collection of the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, which holds the largest archive of original documents and ephemera of the tobacco industry and the anti-smoking movement throughout the 20th century to the present.

The Center was founded in 1998 by Alan Blum, MD, Professor and Gerald Leon Wallace MD Endowed Chair in Family Medicine. The exhibitions were curated by Dr. Blum and designed by Kevin Bailey, the Center's digital archivist and collection manager.

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