

Nivea Film Advertisement “Katharine” (1938)

Abstract

After commercial advertisements were banned from radio broadcasts by Goebbels’ Propaganda Ministry in 1935, some of Germany’s big consumer brands invested more in ad-films to be shown in movie theaters. In this Nivea ad from 1938, designed and written by Elly Heuss-Knapp, wife of future West German President Theodor Heuss, we see a vision of acceptable femininity in the Third Reich that does not revolve around motherhood. In the ad, “Katharine” is a single, white-collar office worker who stays fit at the gym. Her “sporty, natural” style makes her a perfect model for a Nivea print ad, declares the fictional ad designer. Nivea’s creams and lotions that promised to protect skin from harsh weather conditions had been promoted as essential to a modern, active lifestyle for men and women already in the 1920s. After 1933 the parent company, Beiersdorf, felt no need to move away from this image, as physical fitness, outdoor leisure activities, and young dynamic Germans easily matched Nazi attitudes, which connected these characteristics to “racial” health and purity.

Source

This is Katharine, very dexterous on the typewriter. She is great at the high jump - she wants to win the championship. She can succeed. “How it is cold and wet! My nose is red, my cheeks are pale. Your complexion is always flawless, Katherine, what are you using?” “Nivea, of course!”

This is poster artist Kunterbunt with Trott, his assistant, and Rex the dog. “A model! A model! A kingdom for a model! Trott, now it's your turn to pose. I'll paint you as a nice girl. A nice model, the scrawny fellow, and not even well shaved!” “My beard grows so strong and my skin is so delicate, shaving is a problem.” “Gee, no problem at all, use Nivea cream before shaving!” A knock on the door. “Come in, but quickly!” “Oh please, you advertised for a stenographer?” “My model! This is not the time for typing, it’s time to take a photograph! Just what I need right now, stand there on the steps! Good, sporty, natural and not stilted, the red cheeks are real, too - not bad, not bad! Look this way! Now, what do you use for your skin?” “Nivea, of course!”

Nivea - good advice, for her, for you and for our poster!

Source: Film advertisement, 1938. Courtesy of Beiersdorf AG.

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