Photographs and illustrations are the pictorial elements in ads. Although type is powerful because it carries both visual and verbal messages, images are often the most arresting. They prompt the viewer to pause and read an ad instead of turning the page. Also, visual images generally are remembered longer than text.

And, while type does affect the mood of an ad design, imagery is an even more powerful force in doing so. It can create humor, drama, tranquility or frenetic energy. It can attract, provoke, stimulate and provide a frame of reference. It can take the viewer anywhere on earth and far beyond it, into fantasies and dreams, and even inside the human body. It can mirror reality, enhance reality, create new realities or take the viewer away from reality.

Computer technology has dramatically changed the world of pictorials in recent years giving designers and illustrators a whole new range of visual styles and special effects. The content as well as the appearance of photographic imagery can be manipulated. The distinction between photos and illustrations often blurs.

Together with type, pictures provide the bulk of the information contained in the ad. The question is: How do you present the information visually? Suppose you were creating an ad for Butterball Turkeys and had the three images at left to choose from. Which would you use? Did you make a selection? Too bad. The correct answer to that question is "I don't know." You haven't been given enough information to make an appropriate choice. You don't know who you're trying to communicate with or what message you're trying to convey. Any choice you'd make at this moment would be based on your own personal tastes and preferences. And that's not how advertising works. The target and the message always come first.

Once you have a message, you want to select an image that will convey it visually. You also want an image that will arrest the viewer's eye--stop him in his tracks--and make your ad stand out from others. Both the words and the image in the Instant Oil Change ad at right convey the concept of

An illustration made from cut and folded paper such as the turkey above is called a construction. You'll see more of them when you reach the Illustration lecture.
coldness so well they almost make you shiver...not to mention feeling a little sympathy for your car.

Although an art director at an ad agency is the most likely person to make the decision of what kind of image will be used in a particular ad, she may tap the talents of one or more other individuals to actually create the final visual. An illustrator or photographer who has a unique style may be hired. Or, as was the case of the ad for Texas Monthly magazine, she may choose a stock photograph.

Stock photo companies act as licensing agents for large numbers of professional photographers. To use an image in an ad, the agency pays a fee based on the nature and frequency of the use.

A digital artist also may have a hand in the final imagery. Today's computer technology affords the creative mind virtually limitless opportunities for photo-illustration hybridization. The background photo in the Shimano ad at left was digitally altered. Or is it a photo at all?