

Advertisers play on our insecurities and our sense of self. Carlson and Sedivy relate the story of a couple who decide that a Volkswagen Passat is the car that best suits their needs—but they buy a Subaru Outback instead, because they conclude they're just not "Passat people."

Advertisers employ tools such as puzzles and incongruities that attract our attention, and they use artfully condensed language that speaks to our unconscious, playing on similar words, evocations of words, memories of how words have been used before, and even the sounds of which they're made. The Edsel, that historic automotive failure named for Henry Ford's own son, was doomed not just by its unattractive de-


sign, Carlson and Sedivy contend, but by its name. At the peak of popularity, the name "Edsel" was given to just 220 American baby boys, and the word reminded car buyers of terms like "*pretzel*, *hard sell* and *dead cell*."

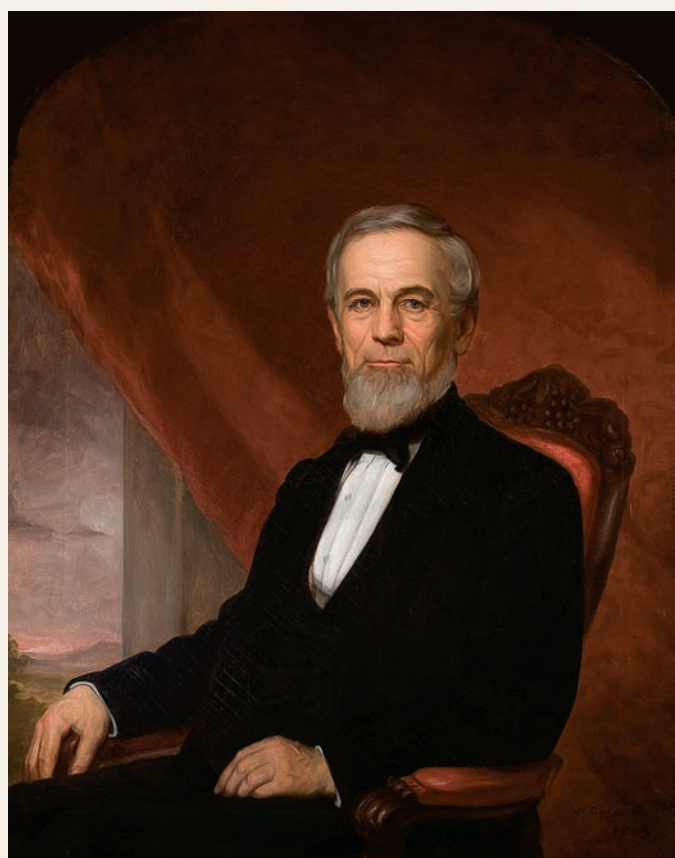
In the final chapter of the book, Carlson and Sedivy consider the implications of advertising for democracy. How do we reconcile participatory politics with the methods of subconscious manipulation that fill our public lives, and even our private sense of our own identity?

"So much of the political process is wrangling about the language we're going to use," Carlson says. Word choice and metaphors profoundly influence the way people view issues. Think, for example, about the

very different connotations of "tax cut" and "tax relief," or "estate tax" and "death tax."

For the past decade, Carlson has taught an undergraduate course on advertising and language. He hopes that the course, like the book, helps people to become more aware of the factors that influence their choices and to exercise a greater measure of control over how they make decisions. The difficulty, he says, is that our unconscious responses—those through which we're most effectively manipulated—are precisely those that are least visible to us.

"If something's important to you," he says, "try to think about what's going on in the messages and in your motivations—to the level that's accessible to you." 



#### MEMORIAL ART GALLERY

## Conserving University History

BURBANK STUDIOS: Portraits of 19th-century University benefactor and trustee Gideon Webster Burbank (1803-1873) and his wife, Mary Goodrich Burbank (1806-1888), are on exhibit at the Memorial Art Gallery. Thanks to a grant from the American Art Program at the Henry Luce Foundation, the oil paintings—donated to the University in 1973 by the Burbanks' great-great-grandson—have been restored by the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. The exhibition of the paintings highlights the conservation process itself, with before-and-after images and explanations of the steps involved in restoration.

The 1863 paintings are by William Cogswell (1819-1903), best known for his portrait of Abraham Lincoln, a work that's held in the White House art collection. A flour-milling magnate, Burbank gave the University \$20,000 in 1854, the largest gift in the then four-year-old University's history. Burbank also designed and operated a steamship on the Erie Canal, and he sent barrels of flour as Rochester's contribution to the first World's Fair, held in London in 1851.

The Burbanks, along with some of their 11 children, are buried in Mt. Hope Cemetery.