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# Advertising's Red Light

Heather Small

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# **ADVERTISING'S RED LIGHT**

by

Heather Small

B.A. New Media, University of Maine, 2004

## **A THESIS**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

(in Intermedia)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

August, 2012

### **Advisory Committee:**

Owen F. Smith, Director of Intermedia MFA, Advisor

Nate Aldrich, Assistant Professor of Intermedia

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# **ADVERTISING'S RED LIGHT**

By Heather Small

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Owen F. Smith

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Fine Arts  
(in Intermedia)  
August, 2012

This thesis paper discusses the theory and motivation behind The Advertising's Red Light, my thesis project.

Section 1 describes my personal methods for producing artwork that creates cultural commentary. The history of the usage of sex in advertising is described and explains how advertising today has become pornographed.

Section 2 discusses the conception of Advertising's Red Light as an artwork. The piece was developed as a method of creating cultural commentary about the world of advertising today and its implementation of pornography. My aim is to bring to the viewer's attention just how close today's advertising is to genuine pornography so that he or she will have a greater awareness going forward when viewing popular media. Media literacy programs have shown greater awareness results from educating women about sexualized advertising. If more of the populace gains a conscious awareness about the pornographic state that media and advertising has taken on, then the less cultural dopism (consumers susceptible to and manipulated by advertising) can win out. If awareness becomes so broadened in adults that I can impress upon them how important awareness

and understanding is, then hopefully a movement for a more media literate society can begin.

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# **1. INTERMEDIAL PRAXIS: METHODS FOR CREATING CULTURAL COMMENTARY IN ART**

## **1.1. Introduction**

Telling someone that sex sells will likely make roughly the same impact upon them as saying that the sky is blue. The general population would be hard pressed to deny that companies employ sexual appeals in their advertising. Sexual appeals refer to sexually suggestive clothing and poses, sexual double entendre, innuendo, subliminal sexual imagery, and sex-related promises (Reichert, 2003, p. 33). However, what does prove difficult is convincing someone of the impressive influence that the media and advertising has on their lives and those surrounding them. For the general public to admit how much advertising has a hold over our society could pose a threat to their free will (Reichert, 2003, p. 41). From in depth research and textual analysis, I conclude and will argue that the two most threatening elements of the dramatically dangerous and continuous rise of overt sexual appeals in advertising are that they create and perpetuate a gendered culture of unequal power (patriarchy) that may be socially harmful, and that as a result of so little action being taken to change this presence in our media system, it will be continuously perpetuated and could yield even more damaging social effects.

From trying to navigate the world of raising my 13-year old stepdaughter, I wholeheartedly concur with the statement made in *Adolescent Medicine: State of the Art Reviews (Adolescent Media)*, that “we have to start with the child to have an effect on the adolescent or the adult”

(Strasburgber, 1993, p. 506). Before we can educate the children, however, there needs to be enough of an awareness in adults, the “agents of socialization” (Reichert, 2006, p. xi), to come to grips with the kind of environment this culture creates in order to build a structure to instruct children against it.

Through my artwork, I aim to address these agents of socialization described previously, in a way that will recontextualize elements commonly recognized, to encourage viewers to examine what’s hidden behind the familiar. Through my thesis project, my objective is to make a cultural commentary of the world of popular media and advertising in order to create greater social awareness and/or reawakening of knowledge and information that the viewer may be pushing to the back of their consciousness. From a socially responsible consciousness about our visual culture, knowledge can then be passed on to educate today’s youth and hopefully initiate a change, if nothing more, than by gaining a mass understanding of the consumer culture in which we all operate.

## 1.2. The Society of the Spectacle

In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan declared “that technologies insinuate themselves into the collective psyche of any society that uses them, and once embedded, stealthily exert a powerful influence on cultural perceptions” (1967). This is a period in time with a multitude of diverse technological advancement and as a result of such technologies easing the labor that our ancestors had to endure in order to survive, we are now afforded more time

to pursue pleasure; and in the industrialized, consumer world, as I will demonstrate, pleasure has been commodified in order to fuel our capitalistic society.

We live in a visual culture, a consumer culture, that Guy Debord refers to as the spectacle. He describes the spectacle as the relationship between people that is mediated by images rather than the images themselves. The spectacle serves as a distraction to convince a society that they need to perpetuate it by disguising it as real life. Advertising operates within the spectacle using a system of visual representation (meaning production through language systems) with visual imagery creating meaning within the circuit of culture (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 68). In return, visual consumption is how the world is experienced and then how people represent themselves (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 67). This visual representation and consumption dialogue creates a visual language that the media and consumers participate in.

Advertising is a dominant force in communication today (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 83). A motivating concern in consumer behaviors is creating an identity from representation and image management (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 67). A consumer society constructs the spectacle through the commodification of products; convincing the public that the products provide their identities and provide pleasure, and from the monetary investment that fuels those purchases. It has become an endless cycle in its current construction, in that businesses are in constant pursuit of making greater profit (to satisfy their own individuals' needs for identity and

pleasure) from consumers' purchases. This results in an environment in which the consumer will never be satisfied or the construction would collapse from the end of consumer spending in pursuit of satiation.

Once the majority of society gained access to multiple forms of media (cross-medium and market advertising, sponsorships, and product placements—subsequently saturated by the media in daily life), one can see that the media gained control by channeling consumers' desires and narrowing the bandwidth of preferences. Advertisers must show consumers what about their brand stands above others when society is faced with multitudes of choices for the same product (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 133). The crisis then becomes how can someone choose and feel secure in that choice, as it seems a better object will always lurk around the corner (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 139). This ultimately creates a culture that can never be satiated, and must continue on to consume more and more to keep the spectacle running.

Research shows that strong emotions burn the events that cause that emotion into the memory (Heller, 2000, p. 16). Because of the emotional nature of sex, advertisers employ sexual information in their advertising in order to be successfully noticed (Reichert, 2007, p. 6). It is also notable that sex holds value because it is pleasurable, which makes it a natural medium of communication and exchange (Heller, 2000, p. 15). The media relies on sex to attract attention in a marketing environment that is becoming increasingly competitive (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 245). This becomes important for a brand, relying on the appeal that consuming the

brand will enliven the lifestyle of the consumer (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 245).

The concept that sex sells a product works by linking the product to images of sexuality that seem irresistible and create false desires for the product through that link. (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 133). The false desires for products stem from the implied promise of sexual benefits (sexual appeals) to the consumer for buying a product (Reichert, 2003, p. 38). Common sexual appeals promise that as a result of owning the product the consumer could likely become more attractive, become sexually aroused, and/or be more likely to engage in sexual behavior.

In an advertising class I took in the beginning of the new millennium, the text book, "Advertising, Second Edition," asked if sexual appeals would work as well as they do selling clothing and perfumes if they were employed for "cars, telephones, computer peripherals, or file cabinets? How about breakfast cereals?" Suggesting, "In general, no" (337). I argue that though certain products may apply sexual appeals more than others, that indeed, most if not all corners of the market do resort to sexual appeals in order to be noticed and gain a leg up on their competitors. So, in general, yes, it does seem to be working, if not for increasing sales, then for aiding in the shaping of society.

How has it come to this?

### 1.3. Evolutionary traits leading to Patriarchy

As previously stated, companies purposefully link their products with sexual information to get their product noticed. Consumers notice sex in advertising so successfully because of our biology, we can't help that we are drawn to sex (Reichert, 2003, p. 22). David Buss, evolutionary psychologist, explains that "sex is a drive to procreate that is represented by millions of years of psychobiological evolution" (Reichert, 2003, p. 22). Theories suggest that human adaptations that were not for means of survival evolved for means of sexual selection; to make them desirable to the opposite sex and be chosen to successfully procreate with and perpetuate our species. Sex is about finding someone to procreate with successfully, the drive towards genetic perfection (Heller, 2000, p. 33). Physical perfection, seen as beauty, is of high value even to this day in cultures where survival rates are lower (where there is a higher prevalence of parasitic disease for instance) as it denotes health, and a higher rate of survival (Etcoff, 1999, p. 50). As graphic artists design advertisements to show humans' drive for perfect bodies, the human body itself shows that our ancestors designed our bodies based on aesthetic selection for certain looks; "we like round. We like complex, intersecting curves" (Heller, 2000, 16).

English zoologist, Desmond Morris explains observations made in the ape kingdom that categorize some of the ways that our primate cousins use sex that also describes how sex is used to sell in advertising. "Occupational sex" is when sex combats negative monotonous environments that cause boredom. "Exploratory sex" comes from our natural curiosity for novelty, to explore and discover (which could explain why sexual innuendo in advertising

works so well, as it allows for the viewer to actively explore and decode the information). Finally, "status sex," in which the goal is dominance, and in this form, both males and females use masculine symbolism. Display of the phallus or submission to a more dominant monkey are no longer sexually motivated, they show threat, power, and superiority. This is the primary and nearly exclusive presentation of sex in advertising and popular media, taking on a patriarchal stance. According to the philosopher Santayana, beauty is "pleasure objectified," (Etkoff, 1999, p. 8), therefore in order to provide pleasure within advertising, it will be presented as a beautiful object. That beautiful object is saturated in the advertising world in the form of an overly sexualized, often dehumanized woman/object for a male viewer to feel he should obtain and possess and a female viewer to feel she should embody. Sex portrayed in media is almost exclusively heterosexual male sex; "the sex of car fenders, tall buildings, the grid: It is the sex of modernism, the sex of order, hierarchy, and control" (Heller, 2000, p. 32).

#### 1.4. History of the patriarchal male gaze in the media

The sex presented in advertising and popular media is predominantly and nearly exclusively of a patriarchal viewpoint where women are presented as sexual objects primarily important for fulfilling men's wishes and the status quo (Reichert, 2007, p. 177).

John Berger and Laura Mulvey have both written extensively about the "male gaze." According to Berger, men and women have a different social presence; "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women, but also

the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of women in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—most particularly an object of vision: a sight” (Berger, 1972, p. 47). Laura Mulvey insists that within cinema, this structure of men looking and women being the object invites the viewer to identify with the male gaze, so that an unequal power relation is perpetuated in a way that I argue also occurs within all media and advertising that makes up our visual culture.

The media can co-opt and convert old sexism into new forms and sexual objectification of women and in advertising this has been evolving since before the foundation of our country (Rakow, 2001, p. 44). Patriarchal views and writings are not new to our industrialized world, as Aristotle wrote within this stereotypical mindset in his ancient Greek treatise on the art of persuasion, “The Rhetoric,” discussing how men “are prone to desires and inclined to do whatever they desire. Of these desires of the body, they are most inclined to pursue that relating to sex, and they are powerless against this.” The Roman poet, Ovid, went on to prescribe compounds for beauty treatments for women’s faces in “*Medicamina Faciei Femineae*” (“Women’s Facial Cosmetics”). The first advertising campaign our country experienced was created to lure settlers to the new world. Women became currency, objects of trade as a planter could literally buy a wife from the Virginia Company in exchange for his best tobacco (Sivulka, 1998, p. 6). Though advertisers would use women in revealing clothing during Napoleon’s reign (1804-1821), overt sexual references did not become a focus of advertising until the 1920s (Sivulka, 1998, p. 63).



Prior to the Industrial Revolution and the development of technologies of mass production-daguerrotypes, photographs, etc,-the average woman could not have had the same feelings about "beauty" that modern women do, as the church was the primary avenue for exposure to such images and modern women now experience a mass-disseminated continual comparison to a physical ideal (Wolf, 1991, p. 12).

From the Industrial Revolution, manufacturers developed more efficient, lower cost methods of production, and needed to sell higher volumes of products. A need for marketing strategies arose to convince the masses to abandon homemade products and generic bulk merchandise for branded products, many of which they did not even know they had a need for, such as toothpaste or perfumed soaps. Advertising and commercial media was the key to creating a mass market (Hill, 1992, p. 2). Faster printing came from new publishing technology, photographs and illustrations easy to produce because of advances in image technology, which made them more widespread. Americans were, for the first time, swimming in images of both a familiar and unfamiliar world.

In a rapidly growing mass market of consumers, marketers tried to reflect what they thought were the aspirations of the public. Rather than showing people's actual circumstances, they had a greater vested interest in showing people's needs, desires, and anxieties (Hill, 1992, p. x). Target audiences began to appear.

Tobacco smokers were almost entirely men at the time, so tobacco companies employed images to speak a language common among men.

These images took the form of trading cards placed within their products, picturing nude or suggestively dressed and positioned women for the male viewer's enjoyment (Reichert, 2003, p. 49). It was noted that "men are always liberal spenders when their desires are to be appeased" (Reichert, 2003, p. 56). Since the nude in the trading card presents a classical high art appearance, it was thought that would get around viewers considering her risqué or uncouth (Reichert, 2003, p. 62). Advertising, however, was commodifying these depictions of women in an extreme way that art had not. The images were similar to women depicted in the high art of Greek sculptors and Renaissance painters, yet also represent the use of nudity to sell products, and their target audience might not appreciate the finer distinction between high art and titillation (Reichert, 2003, p. 45). The interpretations of the cards' imagery are drastically changed from high art by their contexts. A painting, for example has what Walter Benjamin refers to as an "aura" of unapproachability because it is a one of a kind that is part of a private collection and could only be viewed in a specific time and place (such as in a collection at a museum). The trading cards were mass produced and possessed none of uniqueness of the art works they tried to emulate.

Before women won the right to vote, they were considered men's property. When the right was gained and a Constitutional amendment ensured it, a new social and political threat to male superiority was posed by women (Heller, 2000, p. xii). As economic prosperity had extended to a large segment of the population and a middle class began to grow, this newly acquired affluence was accompanied by an anxious concern for social

acceptance and approval as women assumed a more public identity than had ever been bestowed upon them before. Women became the target audience for most advertising by the turn of the century, as an estimated 85 percent of consumer purchases were made by women (Sivulka, 1998, p. 96).

Admakers considered women more emotionally vulnerable than men, so they often planted the idea of women's fears, and then exploited them. One of the worst fears they exploited was concerning public etiquette which was being embraced more socially than ever before and it was that of giving offense. This kind of advertising manipulated women's desires to be part of the successful middle class, to be sought after and well liked (Sivulka, 1998, p. 150).

Prior to the 1920s gender differences didn't exist in many spheres such as personal cleanliness and men and women shared many of the tools for such realms (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 184). With women becoming the target audience for most advertising, gender became branded. The anxieties of ideal beauty, romance, civilization, and class mobility became deeply entrenched in the American collective consciousness, and advertisers played to them (p. 100 Globalizing Ideal Beauty). The threat of middle-class women's new literacy and leisure with their newly found freedom from material constraints was addressed by encouraging that beauty work take over from housework (Wolf, 1992, p. 16).

In her book, "The Beauty Myth," Naomi Wolf claims that images of female beauty are used as a political weapon against women's advancement, and titled this, "the beauty myth" (p. 10). I argue that corporations have

indeed created a beauty myth, yet it was created more to perpetuate the cyclical need for the consumer to continue buying products to support a rising corporate greed in the capitalistic modern age of the West. Radio programing, outdoor signage, and women's magazines surged, channeled, reflected, and perpetuated this outlook as quickly as it began, saturating the collective consciousness. The society of the modern industrial world depends upon consumer spending to support the economy and so it must promote spending on the beauty myth just as "an economy that depends on slavery needs to promote images of slaves that 'justify' the institution of slavery," (Wolf, 1998, p. 18).

Though not overtly aimed at the sex act, the ads were tapping into women's evolutionary instincts to "survive," by offering women aid in attracting a man (Sivulka, 1998, p. 53), since they were heavily economically dependent upon men. "Men can leave zero heirs or hundreds, even thousands. The average woman can produce no more than eleven children, whether she has one lover or a thousand. For a woman, quality of mates is more important than quantity,...it pays to consider the long haul" (Etkoff, 1999, p. 76). It paid for advertisers to promote products that would help a woman stand out above other women (their competition) to sexually appeal to that man whom she and her prospective children could depend upon. Women's achievement was measured by marrying successfully and building a family. Naturally, brands that could claim to help women accomplish these goals capitalized upon it. Advertisers used images and copy, emphasizing courtship, romance, and adoration (Reichert, 2003, p. 72). The patriarchal

male gaze was so pervasive that many of the most successful ad campaigns were created by women who knew first hand how women felt under the scrutiny of being watched and were able to design taking on that male perspective, "reflecting a picture of womanhood that is defined by men" (Heller, 2000, p. 168). Ads for soap showed that women who "made themselves lovelier than other girls" with their soap—symbolizing female cleanliness and purity (Sutton, 2009, p. 100)—were then able to obtain a husband. Listerine finally had a market, from its many failed attempts as cleaners and polishers, in curing bad breathe, giving rise to the anxiety of "halitosis," and providing kissing lessons in ads. Print ads for Ferris Good Sense Corsets taught young girls how to look attractive by appearing thin, as did the corset manufacturer, Warner Brothers Company, who distributed short films to movie theaters about their corsets (Reichert, 2003, p. 71).

The image of sexuality in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s was the lone, sultry woman whose sensual pose and guise invited men not to touch, but to gaze (Heller, 2000, p. xiii). Televisions began entering homes, bringing with them another avenue for advertisers to push their agenda onto the populace. Second Wave feminism arose in the 1960s with women burning bras in protest of their political inequality and of famous campaigns like Maidenform's "Dream" ads. The Dream ads pictured women in only bras from the waist up in exotic settings many people could only dream of being, which were supposed to play on women's secret wish to display themselves and be exhibitionists. Women were questioning what advertisers were selling them from the male gaze, and psychologist, Gardner Lindzey proposed that the

assumption of "beauty," in the current view was a cultural convention that may not actually be true (Etcoff, 1999, p. 22).

The use of sexual appeals in media and advertising was becoming so common place that in order to be noticed it needed to become increasingly explicit, causing it to toe the line of pornography. Pornography is defined by Tom Reichert and Jacqueline Lambiase as "material that depicts men and women as sexual beings with the purpose of arousing mostly male desire in a way that reflects and helps maintain the subordination of women,"-material created not for cultural enlightenment but for profit and power (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 202). In 1969, Congress even got involved with the President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography to investigate their effects (Reichert, 2003, p. 136). They ruled that children should receive sex education and that adults should be allowed to view whatever they wished in the privacy of their own homes, as they found no evidence that pornography effected an adult's moral character. I argue that this finding is a result of research conducted in too short a time stretch and that when confronted, people are less likely to admit the power of certain media over them (as with advertising).

### 1.5. Consequences

Photography theorist Michelle Henning claimed, "seeing through the camera is different from seeing without it, and, since photography, seeing is a changed practice" (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 238). Advertising is a "realm in which photography, fetishism, and cultural values intermingle"

(Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 83). Advertisers can create new associations for the circuit of culture by creating meaning with photographic techniques (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 83). Though images in advertising may seem natural, they are manipulations of visual elements that are not reality but create an appearance of reality. Those visuals make consumers desire to be a part of in the world they portray, as they arouse desire, fantasy, and longing (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 238).

Women are stereotyped visually by flattening the feminine into beauty-without-intelligence or intelligence-without-beauty; women are allowed a mind or a body but not both. Neither were women allowed to have an identity separate from their beauty if their beauty had no relation to their identity. Television demonstrated this through many fictional entertainment forms such as Ginger and Mary Ann in *Gilligan's Island* and Janet and Chrissie in *Three's Company* (Wolf, 1991, p.59). Shows like *The Bionic Woman* and *Charlie's Angels* presented powerful women, yet the strength of their central characters pointed out the weakness of all other women (Meyers, 2008, p. 226). Additionally, the women in those shows were not simply heroic, they were noted as beautiful, so women could not escape being categorized by their looks when their looks had nothing to do with the topic being covered.

Even journalists can not escape the male gaze, as their looks (whether pleasing to the audience or not) are never omitted from their professional credibility. Paula Zahn forced an ad for her news show that commented that she was "sexy" to be pulled upon airing, as her looks had nothing to do with

her ability to report the news. Fox News Channel's Bill O'Reilly endorsed the patriarchal perspective by commenting, "If Paula Zahn doesn't think she's there partially because she's good-looking babe, then she's in never-never land" (Reichert, 2003, p. 19). Sports casting perpetuates this problem above news journalism because sports are still an arena largely dominated by men. Networks enjoy a profit when their sportscasters are popular because their ratings and advertising revenue increase. Some of the first female sideline reporters for football had to be fired because they had been hired primarily for their looks and knew too little about the game (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 88).

Because target audiences can be such a large demographic, occasionally advertisers will push the envelope to the point of complaint by their non-targeted audience with little regard for that smaller population. As shock-jocks like Howard Stern have a target audience of 18-34 year old men seeking crude behavior, advertisers will pay a high rate to reach their audience with less regard for reactions of those outside that audience.

Magazines have the most exclusive target audience, as their advertisers know who is subscribing to the magazine and can advertise accordingly. Because their ads are not displayed on the streets as billboards and outdoor signage is, advertisers worry less about unintended viewers coming upon their ad accidentally and seem to be pushing the limits more than any other medium. Women's magazines capitalize on sex selling by including more and more explicit articles about sexuality, to the point where they are making up statistics in order to make a profit, claiming they are just



giving their readers what they want, though they rarely seem to focus on women's needs being met as much as accommodating men's desires. The content is also largely superficial, with tenderness and safety/responsibility coverage seemingly taboo (Heller, 2000, p. 92). By the 1990s advertisers also gained control over editorial content, as they would pull their ads (which would pull revenue from the magazine) if any editorial content seemed to go against their program and were submitting insertion orders that specified where their ad should appear in the magazine as well as instructions for other ads and editorial content (Hill, 1992, p.13).

The problem with advertisers only concerning themselves with their target audience is that their target audience are not the only viewers who may be exposed to their ads. This is evident in outdoor advertising, where advertisers may use sexual appeals because their target audience will respond to them, yet everyone passing by a billboard is exposed to the ad. The Hard Rock Hotel Casino had to pay a \$100,000 fine for its billboards that the Clark County Current Planning Division and Public Response Office labeled obscene. Calvin Klein has also had cancel ad campaigns due to the amount of negative publicity received for many of its controversial imagery. In such cases the punishment usually causes the company no financial harm, as the more attention a brand gets (as in each of the mentioned cases), the more revenue the company makes. The U.S. Surgeon General even stepped in in the mid 1990s, regarding this topic by asking beer manufacturers not to use sexual imagery in their advertising because it attracted underage drinkers (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 165).

The newest advertising venue has proven one of the hardest to track the effects from. The internet's prospective advertisers utilize cookies, intelligent agents, online surveys, and other information gathering tools, some of which are employed covertly, to profile consumers. Ads are then individualized and the most targeted that any avenue has yet allotted, making it the most difficult to study (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 143).

#### 1.5.1 Pornographication of Advertising

Jean Kilbourne, an author, speaker, and filmmaker, claims that because sex in advertising dehumanizes and objectifies people, especially women, it is pornographic. She claims that because it "fetishizes products, imbues them with an erotic charge" we are doomed to disappointment because products can never fulfill our sexual desires or emotional needs. Author Paul Twitchell wrote that if text were not present in advertising, the images would be decoded as pornography by viewers (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 23).

Women become objects, objects of sexual desire when they are fragmented and seen as only parts of a body, as is shown in pornography. They are also often portrayed as on display for the masculine, power wielding viewer, and usually positioned submissively so that the viewer relates to the protagonist and may take on the powerful role of glamorous fashion photographer or pornographer. In pornography, usually the more "hard-core" it is, the more people are depicted (usually more men are depicted), giving the viewer more opportunity to identify with the power and control of the

main male character/s (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 202). Even when a man pictured seems to be subservient to a woman, he is often dressed or positioned in a manner in which he actually radiates more power than she does undressed (as shown in a digital camera ad where an undressed woman is trying on clothes which a dressed man is pictured holding for her).

According to the Supreme Court, pornography is a subjective designation based on community consensus, and is viewed to have no redeeming social value. Sex in advertising, however, has social value if it successfully sells a product because that stimulates the economy, which is the "life force of the republic" (Heller, 2000, p. xiv).

#### 1.5.2 Confusing Adolescents

Paul J. Write explains that "while media messages play a role in adolescent socialization in many areas, the socializing impact of the media is particularly potent in areas where adolescents' personal experience is limited and young teens especially have limited personal experience with sex," (182). Other research has confirmed that the media is the number one sex educator in American culture (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 127). Children learn how to act by behaving like attractive role models (Strasburgber, 1993, p. 480).

On television, in ads, and even magazine's editorial content, sexual subject matter comprises much of the substance and even content (Wright, 2009, p. 191). Children obtain access to many mediums that were not intended with them in mind when created by advertisers and are seeing the

sexual imagery saturation in their mother's magazines, on billboards, and in video games and music videos. They are absorbing these messages presented to them as social scripts for what they translate as normal societal behaviors, as they cannot make the distinction between reality and fantasy in entertainment as adults can (Strasburgber, 1993, p. 500). They have an unrealistic comparison of themselves to models and actresses in order to evaluate themselves (Gulas, 2000, p. 19). Girls and boys are receiving messages that girls' primary worth in life is based on their sexuality (Meyers, 2008, p. 8). This is being pressed upon girls at younger and younger ages to the point where girlhood and womanhood is blurred, which can invite pedophilia. Males are stereotypically shown having self-worth only from power, wealth, and status and shown as coercive in order to achieve access to females (Wright, 2009, p. 185).

When they view pornographic imagery, the relationships between men and women, sex and commerce, and bodies and power become underscored and structure how they come to view an ideal life (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 225). Expectations of their looks and performance are misrepresented and form unrealistic expectations in these viewers. Sex is often presented as exciting and a harmless recreational act with little coverage being given to public health messages like "sexual maturity, condom use, preventing pregnancy, negative consequences of unprotected sex, and regret." Little coverage is also given to mature exchanges that explore the beautiful side of sex through committed relationships. A study of television programs was done, which counted only nine public health

messages out of 1,796 incidences of sexual messages (Reichert and Lambiase, 2006, p. 132).

Another study found that of the over 14,000 sexual references the American teenager views in a year, less than 175 deal with human sexuality responsibly. Adolescents are not learning about emotional relationships or the political or cultural complications of sex. Sex doesn't always have to be a moving experience, but children are not being shown the whole story, the beautiful side of sex, they are getting a shallow and often inaccurate view. They are being misinformed and confused to the point where the United States has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the industrialized world, with no more high a rate of sexual activity than other countries. "All this counters millennia of human understanding that sexuality is a way of knowledge and pleasure and a force that—in its intimacy, creativity, potency, ecstasy, and dynamism—reflects and participates in the cosmic energy that powers the universe" (Meyers, 2008, p. 31). As Jean Kilbourne noted, "individually these ads are harmless enough, sometimes even funny, but the cumulative effect is to degrade and devalue sex" (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 175).

### 1.5.3 Normalization/Desensitization

The more that consumers are exposed to the spectacle, the less spectacle itself affects them. As technologically sophisticated images become more mainstream, the less impressed consumers are with images that don't take the extra explicit step. The media culture fills with advertising at an unprecedented rate, and the public is increasingly desensitized to the

messages marketed to them (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 133). Because advertisers must stand out in order to be noticed and succeed in selling to fuel our consumer culture, "community standards" regarding sex in advertising are pushing the envelope further and further (Heller, 2000, p. xii), as something that was shocking one day becomes ordinary quickly through its over usage. Such a variety of sexual imagery choices are available to any viewer that it will take more and more to please them. When the sex shown becomes divorced from actual experiences it causes the viewer a disconnection with their own sexuality, which causes desensitization (Heller, 2000, p. 179). As viewers become more disconnected and less fulfilled by their real lives, advertisers offer a product to help them in their quest for perfection and to solve their problems; so the cycle continues.

Sex in all forms becomes naturalized into the world through the design of advertising. It has mainstreamed pornographic imagery and desensitized the public into accepting a patriarchal male gaze. The ideas that women are objects for the pleasure of men and the masculine viewer has become the standard. Sex in advertising is being positioned to violate taboos, which Jean Baudrillard claims, desensitizes the viewer to that violation and weakens the taboo violated so that the boundaries may be continuously pushed by advertisers (Baudrillard, 1990).

#### 1.5.4 Violence

Advertising aids in a sexist climate creation where women are objects of masculine desire, it is acceptable for men to be aggressive, and "that

violence is erotic, and that women who are victims of sexual assault “asked for it” (Killbourne, 1999, p. 290). Men want to retaliate against women who’ve rejected them and images of control and power over women provide that. Viewing a person (woman) as an object can be the first step to justify violence. Message processing includes cognitive tasks of encoding, storage, and retrieval (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 108). Adolescents rarely immediately or directly imitate what they see. Eron and Huesman conducted a 29 year study that concluded that aggressive behavior in 19 and 10 year olds was directly related to the amount of violent programming viewed in the third grade. Over 1000 additional studies and reviews confirm that exposure to heavy doses of television violence, especially with males, increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior (Strasburgber, 1993, p. 12).

The chief psychiatrist for the Massachusetts prison system in 1996, James Gilligan, found that men are more violent than women because of patriarchal gender roles with opposite and unequal sexes comprising the roles of the whole human psyche. These attribute women as sex objects and men as violence objects so that men are mortified by association with the feminine. Men often resort to violence to prove manhood and access social dominance (Meyers, 2008, p. 38). A convicted serial sex killer, Gary L. Ridgeway, referred to his victims as, “it,” turning his victims into objects, much like pornography and sexualized advertising turns women into objects.

“At best, pornography leads to a sexual callousness about violence against women, a loss of respect for female sexual autonomy and the disinhibition of men’s expression of aggression against women.” Domestic

violence is the most common cause of injury to women, and it is seen in pornography. Much explicit pornography shows rape and abuse, while even more mainstreamed pornography also regularly shows women in situations that suggest that they are about to be raped (Meyers, 2000, p. 8). Sex serial killers become heroes, video games like Grand Theft Auto encourage the killing of prostitutes after having sex with them, and movies, television, and print advertising glorify these views. Frank pornography must be less damaging to women than our current mediascape, as at least you know that is pornography and it is not as easily obtained by impressionable underage viewers.

#### 1.5.5 Cultural Dopism

Third person effect in mass media theory, also referred to as “cultural dopism,” proposes that nonacademic audiences are unable to contemplate their society as academic cultural theorists do, and therefore are more easily manipulated and susceptible to advertising (Reichert and Lambiase, 2003, p. 136). They would then also believe that they were autonomous and not effected by the media. Even in certain cases where they can plainly see that pornographic techniques are implemented, as in a Calvin Klein campaign that implied child pornography and pedophilia, seeing the ads as other than the “real thing” would be to admit that the advertiser is exploiting children and would negate pleasures of the consumer culture that are unacknowledged (Heller, 2000, p. 111). Maybe there is also a need for self-preservation, for



viewers to distance themselves from the problems in order to feel in control, like it “could never happen to me.”

#### 1.6. Possible combatant model: media literacy education

Extensive research has been done on the effects of media literacy programs to teach and combat the negative effects of today’s media. These programs, required in a number of countries’ school systems outside the U.S., educate about the media, “the profit motive, the use of sensationalism to attract audiences, the unrealistic use of violence as a staple because of its guaranteed audience” (Strasburgber, 1993, p. 507) and to be able to consider the ramifications of the media sending these messages. Programs at Yale and UCLA, along with a similar HBO program, have both had success in field studies for curricula developed for third through fifth graders (one of which showed a changed level of aggression as rated by peers in third graders) that uses popular media to teach “how tv programs are produced, how tv differs from reality, how stereotypes are portrayed on tv, and the unreality of tv violence” (Strasburgber, 1993, p. 485). In addition to mandatory educational programming, the British Broadcasting Corporation even imposes an annual tax on every television set to help pay for public television.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has repeatedly suggested advocacy for responsible media portrayals of sexual content and the introduction of media literacy programs in schools, claiming that they would do much to empower children and adolescents to make healthy sexual

choices. Studies have shown that media literacy in college aged students led to a prolonged raised consciousness amongst women who go on to view sexual advertising after the program and remain more sensitized to the issues. With a greater population of consciously aware women, changes to the outcomes of sexualized ad campaigns could be made. The men of the same study were shown to be unable to maintain the awareness that women did, affirming that education needs to start at a younger age when adolescents are forming ideals of their own personal identity and views of gender and sex roles.

## **2. ADVERTISING'S RED LIGHT**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Research has tested the reactions of men and women to many different types of sexual advertising. Though men tend to report a more positive effect from exposure than women, studies show that both male and female subjects exposed to ads with moderately explicit sexuality find it more entertaining than ads without such visuals, and those with highly explicit depictions make most uneasy (Reichert, 2007, p. 172). Many advertising campaigns that have been cancelled, found that using too much or too highly explicit material causes their viewers to be uncomfortable and have negative reactions to the advertising imagery (usually involving complaints and getting an ad pulled).

It has been noted that the male gaze can not be flipped to create a female gaze towards men. Sigmund Freud claimed that the suppression of male homosexual desire is one of the formations of the foundation of our society. Therefore, as Rosalind Coward proposes, that heterosexual men refuse to be the desired sex so the male body is not seen as desirable, men remain in control of desire and the activity of looking, and women even have trouble finding them attractive. This lack of a desirable representation of mens' bodies subsequently leads to a feeling of alienation from their own bodies and a need for dominance over women's. Neither can the style of the male gaze be co-opted by women, as the failure of *Playgirl* to bring women the same erotic feelings that men experienced with *Playboy*. Advertisers

attested to this failure, as they did not want to appear beside pictures of naked men.”

## 2.2. Pioneering Artists

Feminist artists before me like Laura Mulvey, Betty Page, Marcel Duchamp, Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Annie Sprinkle, Robert Heinecken, and Ryoko Suzuki, to name a few, have addressed many of these issues in their own work. As they did, I aim to “appropriate icons, objects, and stereotypes that speak to traditions of representing women as sexual creatures” to uncover the oppression and “subvert these methods and image types to assert the pleasure and power feminist women may find in them” (Buszek, 2006, p. 7). I argue that even pop artist Mel Ramos achieved this, though not setting out with a feminist agenda.

Previously discussed, Laura Mulvey published work addressing how the male gaze is used harmfully within cinematography, an argument that well applies to all media and advertising.

Betty Page was one of the first women to parody the pin-up genre while celebrating it. By exposing and revealing the control in pin-up imagery through her destabilizing parody and comedic body language in ominous looking situations she herself gained control of the viewer’s gaze and gains a strength that she passes on to feminist viewers to be able to laugh at images in a way many could not so as to not become a submissive victim.

Marcel Duchamp and Cindy Sherman both respond directly to the male gaze discussed in Laura Mulvey’s writings. Duchamp exposed the viewer’s

gaze, inviting the viewer to feel his participation in the voyeuristically erotic oppression. In *Étant donnés*, Duchamp utilizes the "projective gaze," described as another form of the male gaze. Cindy Sherman utilizes the projective eye through confusing "its potentially disempowering effects by throwing the gaze back on the viewer" (Cruz, 1997, p. 35). In her *Untitled Film Stills*, "the lure of voyeurism turns around like a trap, and the viewer ends up aware that Sherman, the artist, has set up a machine for making the gaze materialize uncomfortably in alliance with Sherman, the model," (Mulvey, 1996, p. 68).

Barbara Kruger "takes on mass culture and public opinion directly," (Wye, 1996, p.15) by speaking the language of advertising through graphic design pieces (where her background lies) that "critique the relations between the powerful and powerless" (15). She designs for advertising and media corporations and her art takes on the work that she is commissioned to create for magazines such as *Esquire* and *Newsweek* by subverting that very medium.

Robert Heinecken superimposed images from advertising and popular media depicting women's body parts to expose "the similarities between advertising and pornography, also the representation of women as sexual objects, and the peculiarities of American representations of race and gender as they appear in America's mass-media, product-driven, consumer-oriented culture" (Melano, 2011).

Annie Sprinkle worked to take back a female sexuality that feminism seemed to desire to eradicate. Many feminist views do not offer a way in

which women can appear sexual nor “find pleasure in the representation and performance of their sexual representation” (Buszek, 2006, p. 313). In her *Anatomy of a Pin-Up*, she “exposes the mythology with which women’s sexuality and beauty are associated” (Buszek, 2006, p. 313).

Ryoko Suzuki deals with similar topics to those discussed as they relate to her upbringing in Japan. In her *Anikora-Seifuku* series she creates images of women in uniforms commonly seen in Japanese animation. She explains, “I was wondering why a figure in such a uniform (made especially for teenage girls) looks more seductive to adult men than the same figures in a state of nudity. I came to the conclusion that this kind of specific social effect only exists for men, and for a time the girls being a certain age - reflecting a uniformed, female image they can control” (Suzuki).

In the 1964, Mel Ramos created the pop-art painting, *Miss Cornflakes*. This image was making a commentary on an ideal fantasy images of the 1960’s. In showing an overly sexualized Playmate type of woman standing in a cornstalk who looks fake and consumable, she embodies the the tone of the 60’s that was “antinatural nature, a perfectibility available through the miracle of plastics” (Heller, 2000, p. 73).

### 2.3. Personal experiences leading to the project

As a girl growing up in the 1990s, I was absorbed in a technological turning point; the last days before we became a completely digital world. The internet was not something people used until I was a young adult, and then only sparingly. It was the height of the supermodel era. The title of

supermodel became equivalent to superstar, signifying a supermodel's rising to fame from a personality. I, like so many of my contemporaries could not name a woman who had power of her own making outside of her looks, but I could name the five women who dominated the media; Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Christy Turlington, Linda Evangelista, and Tatjana Patitz; and recite which of them my friends and I each wanted to be. These women shared a 1990 Vogue cover, starred in George Micheal's video "Freedom," when MTV was one of the top watched networks, and they went on to endorse multiple products and brands.

After the women's movement of the 60s and 70s, women began climbing the corporate ladder by the masses in the 1980s, and were gaining workforce equality like never before through the 90s. Yet the representation of women in pop culture media and advertising continued to present a narrow view of women. I knew that it was important to gain knowledge and that intelligence would only aid in future career aspirations, yet only saw men praised for roles of intelligence and those that did not depend upon looks; politicians, sports stars, corporation heads.

There was no escaping the view that the media was presenting of women; that a woman's power lies primarily in her looks and what she can gain with those looks. And so like many adolescent girls my idea of an ultimate career goal was to be a supermodel.

Through my early 20s I started to explore the real world of modeling and began to obtain small modeling gigs. The feelings of inadequacy and poor body image created from years of seeing "perfect" women in ads and

media took on new meaning when seeing competition in the flesh. These other women modeling were no longer just competition for mates, but real-life competition for work; work that only those considered the most beautiful would get. Though everyone had their own imperfections, the imperfections that would be airbrushed out were not noticed by competing models, and measuring up to one woman's perfect waist, and other's perfect legs became impossible; there will always be someone with more perfect any and everything. The opinions that people outside of the modeling world may have about models being privileged and proud of their beauty for being the women coveted in media's images was not something I saw in the industry. I didn't realize I'd become entrapped in the net that our capitalist culture created to be circular and never ending for women; the unattainable pursuit to be the most beautiful, through images and products sold to improve that self image and for which the money spent upon would fuel an economy (the beauty myth). The women modeling were just as self conscious as those viewing fashion magazines in the privacy of their own home who were comparing themselves to the models on the printed page, yet we could see each other in person. I knew that I could end up killing myself in chasing perfection if I were to let myself continue the pursuit of that life.

So I took a different route and became a graphic designer. I worked on a different end of the same industry, no longer being the object for the viewer's gaze. I designed for magazines, ad agencies, and clothing stores and saw and learned the techniques employed to create the media that we see every day. I viewed the photo proofs and notes for the cover shoot of



Cosmopolitan, and saw the models chosen to portray the perfect couple for a Christmas time ad that I worked on designing and laying out. I couldn't escape the fascination of the world these components all worked together to create and I really began to realize the impact that they have on our society. However, I could see that it seemed that I could make little change in the enormous global industry, so as with modeling, I believed I would have to exit this world as well.

This led me to begin exploring that world through my own personal art. Knowing the tools and methods used to create layouts for advertising and popular media allowed me to use the actual techniques and visual language recognizable to the common viewer. However, through my own work I could create pieces aimed to encourage the viewer to consider the negative effects of sexually objectifying women in the familiar imagery seen every day.

#### 2.4. Advertising's Red Light Artwork

Anthropologist, Edward T. Hall said, "the artist does not lead cultures and create patterns: He holds up a mirror for society to see things it might not otherwise see" (Heller, 2000, p. 19). So I ask myself, as Barbara Kruger did, "How do I as a woman and an artist work against the marketplace of the spectacle while residing within it?" (Buszek, 2006, p. 7). Through my thesis project, Advertising's Red Light, I aim to employ the language of visual culture and create work that appears to be the constructed exactly the same as every day advertising, while exposing the reality of the existence of overt

pornography in such imagery. The title has a dual interpretation, in that a red light in common American culture is thought to be a stop light; to put a stop to something. The title can also be read as showing the how sex has been used to sell advertising as sex sells prostitutes who are known to reside in "red light districts" in some areas of the world. Copywriter, LeAnn Wilson-McGuire commented that "if it doesn't make some people nervous you shouldn't do it, because it will just be part of the general clutter," (Heller, 2000, p. 80). I utilize, magnify and amplify the explicitness in sexual advertising in order to cause the viewer the discomfort that has been reported from studies. Through this discomfort, I hope to awaken in the viewer understanding of what advertising is so thinly veiling, as media literacy education aims to do.

In my piece, "Bus Stop Advertising," I have printed and mounted a life-size image of a city bus stop shelter on the wall and where the ad appears on the bus stop architecture have mounted a monitor of the same size that will depict mock-advertisements that I have created to cycle through for the viewer as multiple ads rotate on display in a bus stop's ad frame. I display on screen for roughly 30 seconds each, a print ad from some of the top genres that have been shown to employ sexual appeals most; alcohol, cars, makeup, shoes, clothing, and fragrances. Periodically, a flash appears on the screen much the way subliminal messaging was tested in the past. The image that flashes on screen is a photograph taken from a pornography website that explicitly depicts what the ad on screen is hinting at for the viewer. The pornographic image takes the innuendo away and

displays for the viewer exactly what the ad is trying to convey. My aim is to show the viewer just how obvious sexual imagery in advertising has become and how close they actually are to pornography. In positioning the images as a bus stop shelter, the viewer will note that outdoor advertising is also seen by anyone walking by, and will hopefully see that a child viewing the chosen ad at a bus stop is not much different than them viewing the corresponding pornographic image.

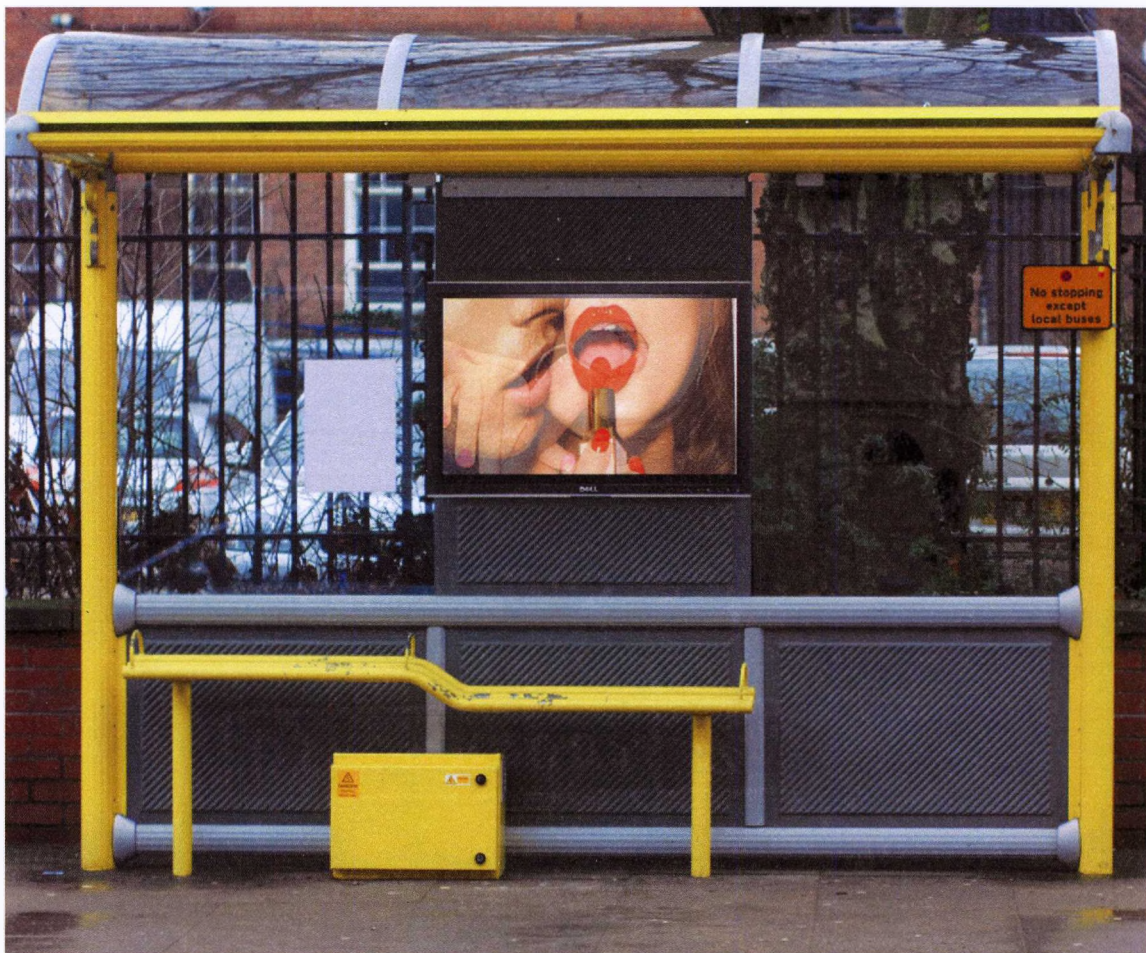


Figure 2.1: Mock up featuring a still frame from "Bus Stop Advertising"

In the piece, "Television Advertising," the viewer stands in front of an average American flat panel monitor and to help position the viewer in a mode of tv viewing, a clip from the television show, "America's Next Top

Model,” appears on screen. America’s Next Top Model is one of the top programs viewed by adolescents, and it’s main premise shows a contest in which young women compete to be the most and last attractive woman standing in order to gain a modeling contract with the advertiser, Cover Girl. This show provides young girls with narrow and unhealthy scripts for what is expected of women in today’s society and is the perfect juxtaposition to a mock commercial that I have created which comes on screen next. The commercial shocks viewers with it’s unexpected content—as the viewer can see that the show’s target audience is young girls—and it’s explicitness—as a “ad” clip I’ve created from an original pornographic film comes on screen to sell beer. The ad uses the same editing techniques as common beer commercials, yet the visual content is that of sexual acts portrayed in the pornographic film with small logos for the beer appearing over the most explicit parts of the sexual acts as black bars or blurs appear to cover inappropriate parts of nude images in photographs and advertising. When the ad is over, the following scene from “America’s Next Top Model” continues on screen, also showing the viewer how an ad may be created for an older audience, yet is still easily obtained by young viewers.



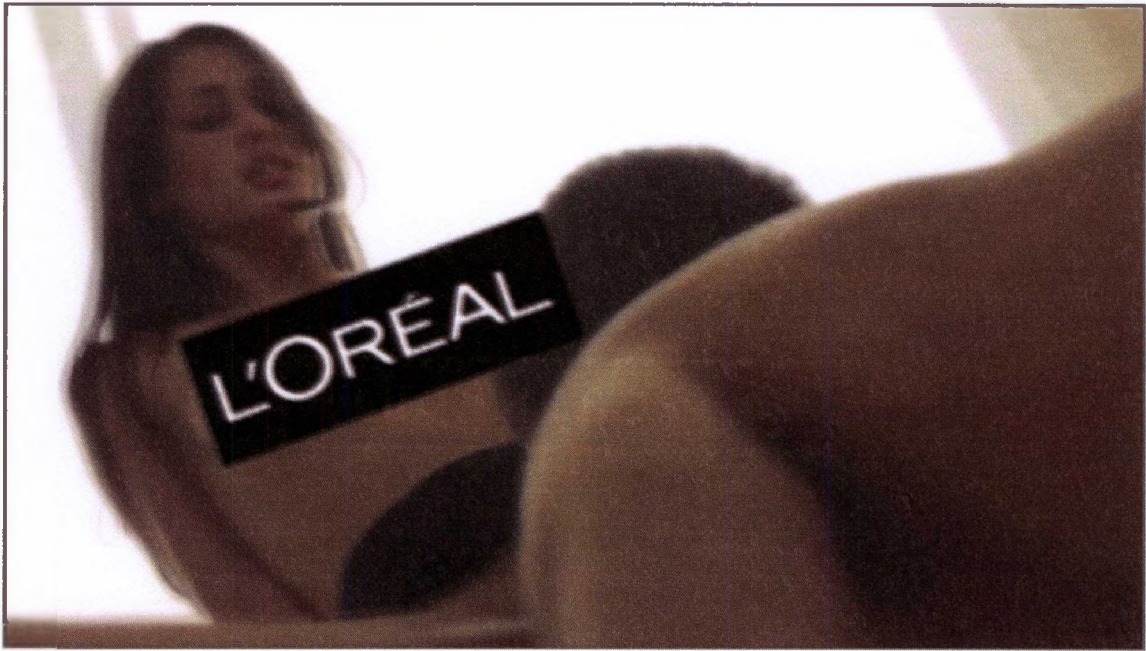


Figure 2.2: Still frame from "Television Advertising"

My primary goal with this work is to bring to the viewer's attention just how close today's advertising is to genuine pornography so that they have a greater awareness going forward when viewing popular media as media literacy programs have shown results from educating women about sexualized advertising. If more of the populace gains a conscious awareness to the state that media has taken on, then the less cultural dopism (consumers manipulated by advertising) can win out. If awareness becomes so broadened in adults that I can impress upon them how important awareness and understanding is, then hopefully a movement for a more media literate society can begin. If children can gain the awareness that media literacy would bring then maybe some day socially harmful ads will no longer work to sell their messages and changes in advertising will have to take place.

### **3. PORTFOLIO: SELECTED WORK FROM 2009-2012**

#### **3.1. Image (2009)**

Installation, mock clothing line, catalog, and commercial

Image is a installation piece with separate elements made up of a mock clothing line with catalog and commercial. The concept for the piece is made up of stereotypes commonly placed upon women, particularly stereotypes that have been placed upon myself at different points in my life. I created a mock clothing line with a different set of "looks" or outfits for each stereotyped character of the Image brand. The different looks were called, Stylish, Trendy, Powerful, Smart, Natural, Sexy, Sporty, and Elegant. The names were the more presentable versions of what I made the stereotyped characters into from their originals; Dumb Blonde, Hipster Artist, Career Woman, Hippy, Redneck, Jock, and Snob. Each look has a two-page spread in the mock catalog for the clothing line, in which I model the outfits with clothing and accessory descriptions that convey the limited and cynical view of those who assign others a stereotype in this way. A sample description for the Elegant look includes that of diamond jewelry; "Only the Finest quality, flawless diamond jewelry. Have your husband contact for pricing," alluding to the fact that some would view the woman pictured as a snobby trophy wife type of person who considers herself better than others because of her husband's money.

The accompanying commercial shows me modeling each of the outfits during the photo shoot for the catalog and included music with my voiceover saying each of the looks' names, ending with the tagline (which is also on the catalog cover), "Image, how will you be seen?" The tagline served as a play on words from the way in which stereotypes are just a way that others see people, yet may not be the reality. The installation for the project originally took place at the Class Action art show in December of 2009. The show's venue was the former Circuit City building in Bangor, Maine, so the project was installed near the entrance/exit of the building where the customer service desk had once been. A large monitor was mounted on the wall behind the desk and played the mock commercial along with four real commercials for clothing lines that appear as if they could possibly be spoofs or made up videos, though they were all real. This combination was set up in a way to be rather off kilter for the viewer, so that if they doubted that Image was a real clothing line they would then go on to view commercials of clothing lines that they were familiar with, yet seemed like more unreal videos. On either side of the monitor, standing like guards, were a dressmaker's dummy each showcasing one of the outfits of the Image line. The desk consisted of a cash register, return policy, mock gift cards, Trendy chocolates, Natural body lotion, Sporty body spray, and catalogs; for other Image as well as other clothing lines, to give the installation the appearance of a check-out desk in a single department of a large department store that also carries the other clothing lines.





Figure A.1: Photos of Image installation



### 3.2. Pecha Kucha: Blonde (2009)

#### Pecha Kucha formatted performance piece

Pecha Kucha: Blonde is a performance piece composed in the pecha kucha format of 20 slides presented for 20 seconds each. The slides for the piece were each an image of a famous work of art of a Venus or Aphrodite, as Aphrodite was the first woman in recorded history to be described as having blonde hair. This was a discovery made as a result of researching blondes, based on a deep interest in the "dumb blonde" stereotype. In needing an intellectual imagery for a background, slides of high art renderings of Venus were the perfect juxtaposition to my personal presentation. I arrive in a tight, short, Barbie doll pink dress, with matching shoes and accessories, holding a small pink handmade book. With the appearance of the first slide, I open the book and read to the audience one blonde joke in a dead pan voice with a serious face. At the appearance of the following slide, I turn the page and read another blonde joke with a dead pan delivery. This goes on for the entire 20 slides, while I maintain the same affect, then exit at the end of the 20th slide. The aim of this piece was to confuse the audience in a way that made them think beyond the surface of their situation and to see what maybe be hidden behind the familiar. I hope to impress upon people that though someone may appear to be one thing to you, that you "can't judge a book by it's cover." This point is furthered by the fact that the piece is performed in front of a live audience much like stand-up comedy, and so the audience feeds off of one another in their discomfort and being unsure of whether they should laugh or how they should react.



Figure A.2: Photos of Pecha Kucha: Blonde performance

### 3.3. Untitled (Vines/Hands) video (2009)

video with pastel drawing

Untitled (Vines/Hands) video is a piece made of found documentary style video footage and a hand drawn picture created with chalk pastels. The background video is multiple shots of looping footage depicting vines growing in the forest. The drawing shows the forearms of two hands, they are silhouetted and move up the screen with the vines to loop back to the original drawing, as if the forearm is connected to the next hand shown, which is connected to the next forearm shown, and so on. One hand depicted is grabbing onto the other hand which does not return the grip, but rather hangs lifelessly. The vines were chosen as background footage because vines constantly climb towards the sunlight, using surrounding structures as support, and occasionally choke those sources out if they are other plants. The aim of this piece was to evoke in the viewer the feeling of longing for something so much that he/she would grasp on even after there was no response from that which is desired.



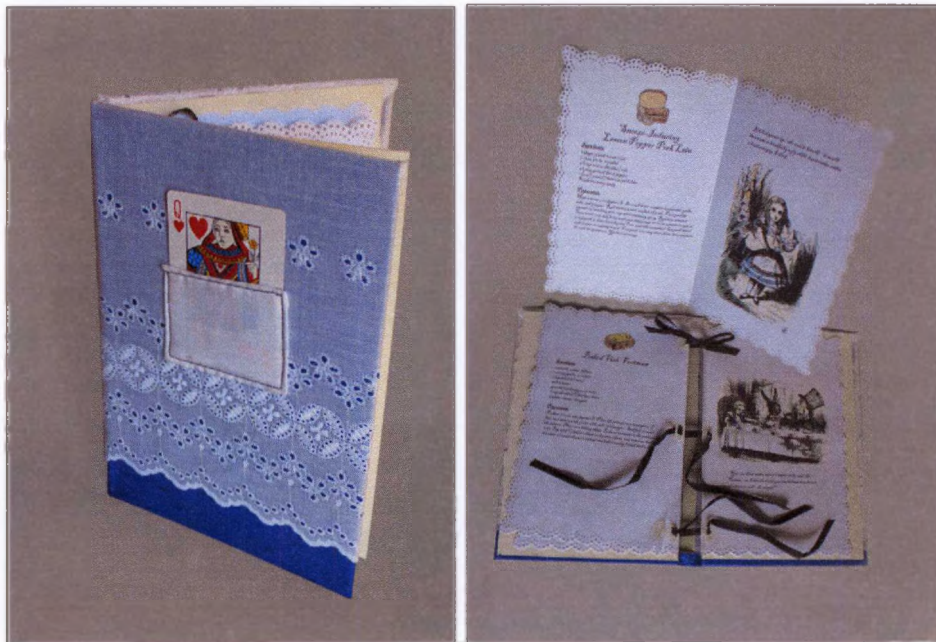
Figure A.3: Still shot of Untitled (Hands/Vines) video


3.4. Feed Your Head: Curiouser and Curiouser Concoctions from  
Wonderland (2010)  
Hand-made one-of-a-kind book

Feed Your Head: Curiouser and Curiouser Concoctions from Wonderland was a hand-made cookbook based on the Lewis Carol's story, Alice in Wonderland. Recipes were chosen to go along with certain pages containing illustrations by John Tenniel. The original illustrations with a caption or quote from the story were all printed on the right hand pages of the book, while the recipes were on the left. The recipes were accompanied by illustrations I then drew by hand with pen and ink, as Tenniel did, then imported to Photoshop where they were colored by sampling original colors used in Tenniel drawings. All of the pages were punched along the outside edges to appear as lace and were bound by black satin thread that could be untied so that the pages may be mixed and matched in the spirit of Wonderland. The book was hard cover bound and covered with blue cloth



followed by white cloth that had lace at the bottom to appear as though it were the bottom of Alice's apron over her blue dress. A pocket was sewn in the front and a Queen of Hearts playing card inserted to give a finishing touch of style from the story.





### Caucus Roast Duck Breast with Cherries in a Wine-Herb Sauce

**Ingredients:**  
 1 medium duck breast halves  
 Salt, pepper  
 1 lb Olive oil  
 1 red Onion, thinly sliced  
 2 Garlic cloves, minced  
 1 c Chicken broth  
 1 c Cabernet Franc (a lighter red)  
 3 Sprigs fresh thyme  
 1 lb Chopped Italian parsley  
 1/2 c Dried cherries  
 1 lb Honey  
 1 1/2 lb Tomato paste  
 1 lb Balsamic vinegar  
 Cooked pasta

**Preparation:**  
 With tip of sharp knife, pierce duck skin in several places. Season duck on both sides with salt and pepper. Heat heavy-bottomed skillet. Add duck skin side down, and brown five minutes or until fat is rendered from skin. Turn and brown second side one to two minutes. Remove duck and reserve. Pour off all but 1 tbsp duck fat. Add oil and onion. Add onion and garlic and sauté until onion is tender, about five minutes. Add broth, wine, thyme, parsley, cherries, honey and tomato paste. Bring to boil. Cook until liquid is reduced by one third. Meanwhile, remove and discard duck skin. Using sharp knife, cut duck into 1/2 inch thick slices. Season duck to taste with salt and pepper. To serve, arrange round of hot pasta on each of two plates. Top each with half of duck and half of sauce. Serve immediately. Serves 4 or 6.

It was high time to go, for the pool was getting quite crowded with the birds and animals who had fallen into it! There were a Duck and a Dodo, a Lory and an Eagle, and several other curious creatures. Alice led the way, and the whole party swam to the shore.




Figure A.4: Images of Feed Your Head: Curiouser and Curiouser Concoctions from Wonderland

### 3.5. BArSTuARDS promotional materials (2010)

Video, photograph, poster

The Bangor based band, The BArSTuARDS is an Irish rock band that wanted some original promotional materials with the feel of their band. To celebrate their hometown, I orchestrated and shot a photoshoot of the band appearing on the base of the historical Paul Bunyan statue. From the favored photo, I created a promotional poster in photoshop which pictured Paul Bunyan with a superimposed green beer in his hand and sporting a green shirt rather than his usual red, to join in the Irish fun. For the band's website, I created a music video in After Effects, which featured an Illustrator portrait I created of each member of the band, as well as lyrics to some of their songs being spelled out with falling letters that then dispersed to spell the band members' names as their portrait came on screen.

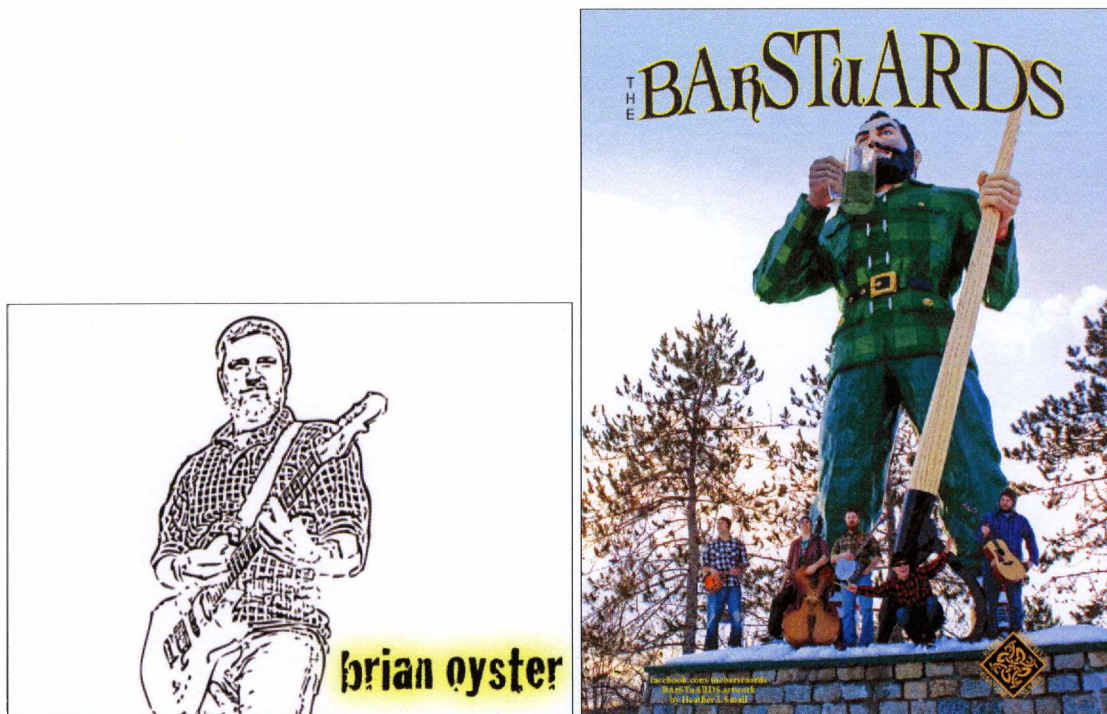


Figure A.5: BArSTuARDS promotional materials (still shot from video, poster)



### 3.6. Self Portrait in the style of Cindy Sherman (2010)

#### Photoshopped Photograph

As Cindy Sherman has been an inspiration to my work for some time, I embarked upon trying to create a self portrait in the style of Cindy Sherman. I took a photo of myself in which only the top right quarter of my head and my right eye were in the bottom right of the shot, and you could see the back of my head and shoulders in a mirror behind me. I spent hours in Photoshop adjusting the light and some of the small details of the photo, then really accentuating the eye so that it called attention to the viewer in the bottom corner. There is a bit of a voyeuristic feel to the photo as you can see the subject's back in the mirror, as if being watched, but like Cindy Sherman, the subject (myself) is aware of being viewed.



Figure A.6: Self portrait in the style of Cindy Sherman

### 3.7. Banana Republic (2010)

#### Installation

Banana Republic was an installation piece I created to bring attention to how little viewers question things in every day life. Banana Republic, founded in 1978, is a popular luxury clothing store that bought by The Gap Inc. in 1983. However, before the Gap bought the brand, it was a very different store altogether. The original store was a safari themed store with exotic store decorations and catalogs with fictional exciting back stories. Because of the exotic safari theme, the store was named after the negative descriptor of countries that are economically dependent upon the exportation of a limited resource (such as bananas in Central and South American countries). These countries are very poor, usually with an equally poor infrastructure and are usually unable to rise above such hardship. When the Gap bought Banana Republic they completely redesigned the clothing line and stores so that consumers no longer had a link to the name's original meaning. For my installation, I created two posters to serve as window signage as if for the Banana Republic store, using the treatment that the store uses for layout and typography. For the imagery, however, I pictured a photo of the president of Chiquita Banana in the 1950's when bananas became a major US import. The other poster, showed a painting for the cover of a popular Spanish language novel, *Prision Verde* (Green Prison), featuring main character, Lunch Lopez wielding a machete while in shackles. The novel, by Honduran, Ramón Amaya Amador, was a fictional story based on Amador's time spent in the exploitative working conditions on a banana



farm. Amador, a journalist as well as novelist, went into exile because of his controversial writings and political beliefs. In creating this piece, my aim was to reveal something hidden in a familiar sight to many viewers. I hoped that even if a viewer did not know exactly what was depicted in the posters, they would realize they they were so out of place with the normal design and typography of a Banana Republic store front that they might go home and investigate what it might all mean, to possess a greater awareness and understanding of a world that they may not think very deeply about.

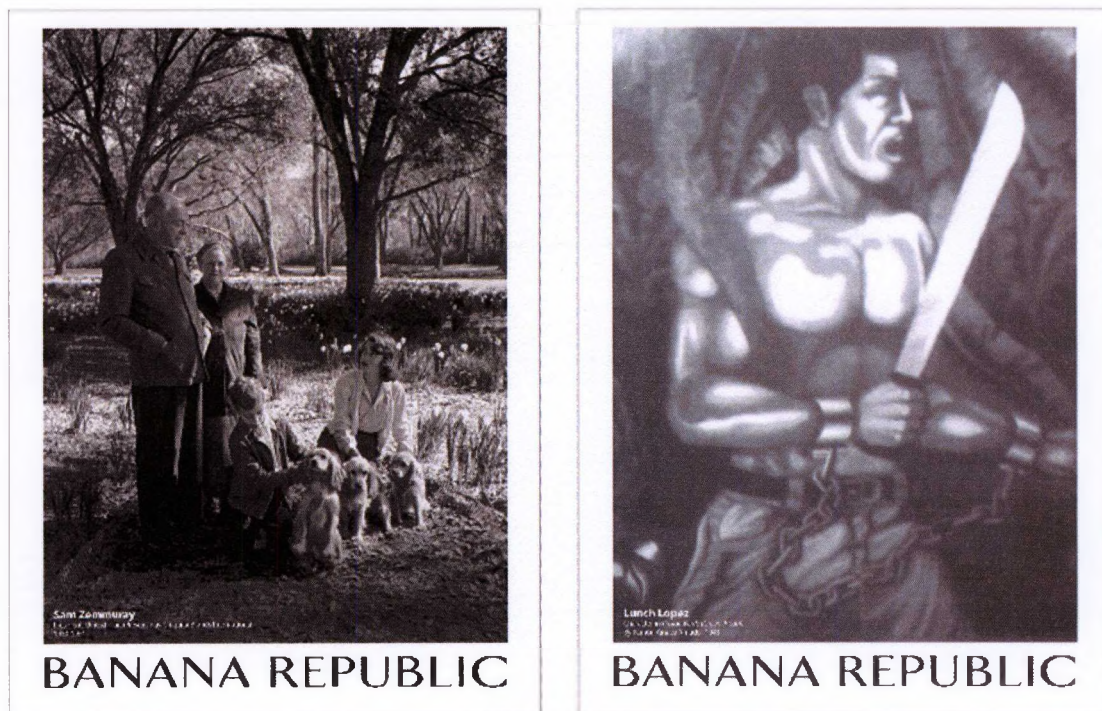


Figure A.7: Images of the two pieces created for Banana Republic

### 3.8. Jack-In-the-Box (2010)

#### Installation

My Jack-In-the-Box installation was a conceptual piece set up to give the viewer the feeling that they themselves are inside of a jack-in-the-box in a way. The piece is designed to be set up in a very small room in which a



small stand is set up with a toy jack-in-the-box on top. The lid of the box is glued open because the bottom has been removed and glued down to the stand which is as a whole the size of the box's bottom and a computer screen hidden underneath. As viewers enter the room lit by two dim lamps on the floor, they see light coming from within the box, prompting them to look inside, in which they see a video of gray storm clouds quickly blowing by with superimposed faces crying over the clouds to give a feeling of unease. Then a muffled rattling sound comes from speakers followed by a muffled sound of a jack-in-the-box handle being cranked to produce the tin music typical to all common jack-in-the-box toys. The catch to the music is that it loops back before the finale to make the viewer even more uneasy and unaware of what is about to happen. As the finale of the song plays, an eye level large screen lights up with a worm's eye view of daisy's blowing in the wind, as if the viewer just popped out of a box and this is what they see.



Figure A.8: Photo of Jack-In-The-Box installation

### 3.9. Mythology Self Portraits (2010)

#### Installation

When I began my thesis project, I was interested in connecting imagery and stories of ancient mythology to current culture. To begin I set out to create a series of self portraits in Photoshop to represent different myths. I created Phoenix Rising and Birth of Venus using existing images and photos taken of myself. For Birth of Venus, I represented the myth of Venus being born from sea foam by photoshopping myself into imagery of waves crashing on the shore. For Phoenix Rising, I combined three images of myself to represent different stages of the famed Phoenix, one crouched in the

ashes, one kneeling amongst flames, and one standing, triumphantly within the fire that was photoshopped around me.



Figure A.9: Mythology Self Portrait Series: Phoenix Rising, Birth of Venus

### 3.10. Living Dolls performances (2010)

#### Performance pieces

Living Dolls performances are a series of performance pieces created in collaboration with a troupe of three other girls. This is a series of living statue performances in which we devise a theme and try to convey a message to the viewer through costume and still poses. The first piece performed was in the theme of marionette dolls in which each of us dressed as a dancer with strings and wooden control crosses attached to our limbs. The second performance was for a 1930's Cabaret show in which we wore Cabaret style costumes from that era and held mirrors in front of our bodies to reflect the viewer's gaze back at them to create an awareness of the



objectification that occurs in staring at women's bodies as pin-up type of characters. One of the most recent performances was for another variety show based upon the theme of "selling out," and the dolls all costumed themselves as characters who have sold out for something, with price tags that describe the character. For example, I was a character wearing a bathing suit and hospital gown, with dotted lines drawn all over my body to represent how people sell out for physical perfection through cosmetic surgery. My price tags read the prices for the different surgeries I had lines drawn for and their names.



Figure A.10: Photos of Living Dolls Performances



Figure A.10 continued: Photos of Living Dolls Performances

### 3.11. Flesh (2011)

#### Photograph series

Flesh was a photographic series of diptychs. The photographs were an investigation into representation and context. I photographed macro shots of fruits and vegetables so close that you could no longer easily discern what was in the image. I then photographed close up shots of body parts that had similar looks as those of the food and paired them into diptychs. For the final four compositions I pictured a close up of the curve of a speckled pair with the curve of a freckled shoulder, a curve of the gluteus and hamstring of a leg with the curve of a pear, the fuzz on top of a kiwi with short cropped hair on top of a head, and a glistening onion with the curve of a bottom lip. Each



composition featured two different forms of flesh, one of the body, one of edible food. The aim of this piece was to show how the context of what a viewer sees shapes the way he or she sees it.

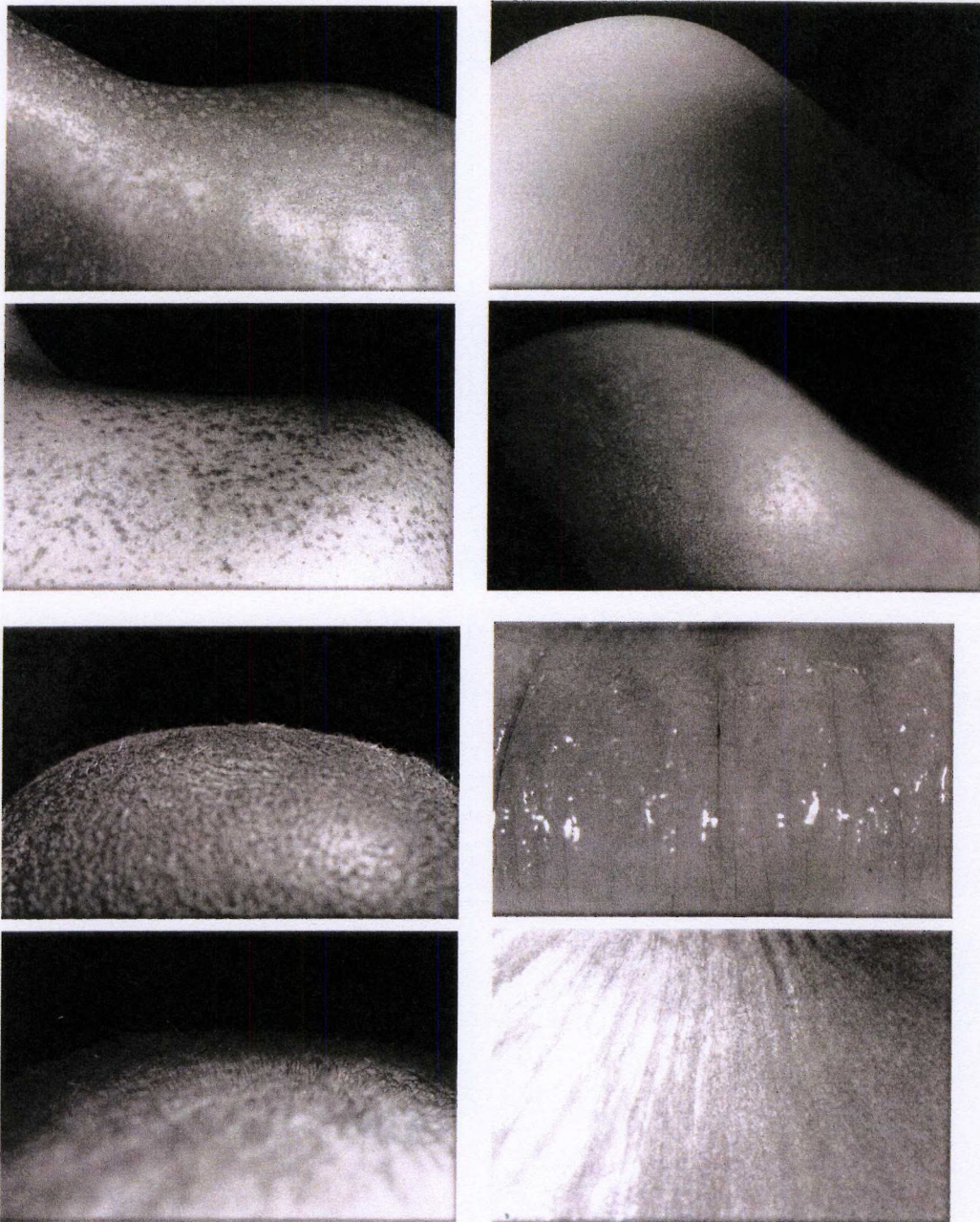


Figure A.11: Images from Flesh

### 3.12. Bangor Maine Designs (2012)

#### Illustrator designs

In 2012, Because of my personal connection to the town I have lived near almost my whole life and because I am a designer, I was approached to create a series of illustrations that could be used to promote Bangor, Maine to young adults. I created a series of designs that would either employ an inside joke for the citizens (as in the design featuring the dictionary pronunciation of the city, as many out of state residents mis-pronounce the last syllable), or that would employ a familiar design but would have Bangor elements recontextualizing them. I sampled one design after the "I (heart) NY" shirt made famous by John Lennon, in creating an "I (Maine outline) Bangor" design, as the state of Maine is shaped rather similarly to a heart and especially draws that connection when colored red. Bangor residents are proud of the fact that the city is mentioned in Roger Miller's famous song, "King of the Road," and so the line in which it comes up was put onto a black background in white lettering with flourishes around it to denote the lines that come up in silent movies. Finally, the Paul Bunyan statue is a famous landmark for Bangor, and so I created an illustration of the statue's torso, pointing at the viewer above the line, "Bangor Wants You," as in the Uncle Sam posters of World War II. Each of these designs are being printed on tshirts and posters to be sold in Bangor shops.

**Bangor** (/bəŋɡər/ BANG-gor)  
~~**Bangor** (/bəŋɡər/ BANG-ger)~~  
~~**Bangor** (/bəŋɡə/ BANG-gah)~~

**I**   
**Bangor**

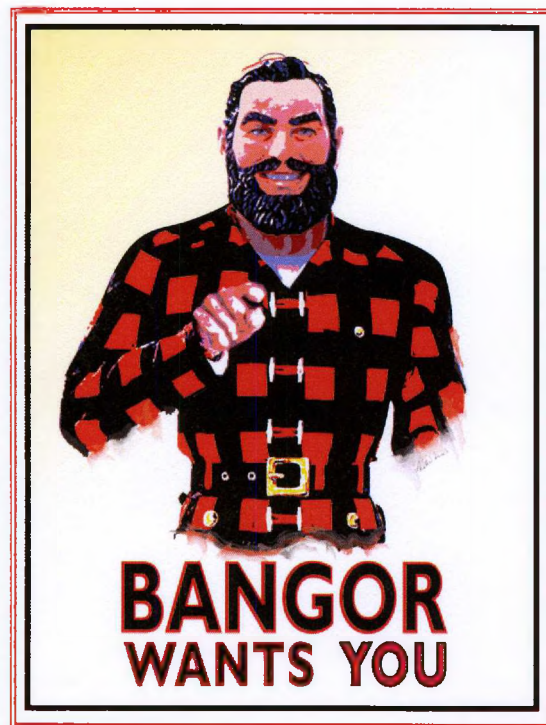
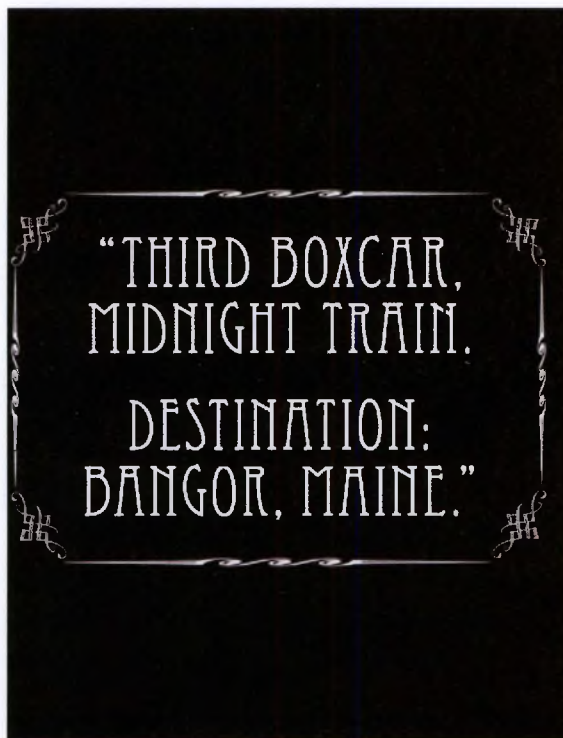


Figure A.12: Bangor, Maine illustrations/designs



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## **BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR**

Heather Small from Bangor, Maine, USA, explores contemporary visual culture through digital art, photography, video, drawing, sculpture, and installation. She graduated from Hermon High School in 2000, and then with a BA in New Media from the University of Maine in 2004, where she received the 2003 Ruth Stebbins and Edmund G. Schildknecht Art Honor Award. Before returning to the University of Maine to obtain her Intermedia Masters of Fine Arts degree, she was employed as designer and art director for the international magazine publishing company, Madavor Media, and created freelance designs for international companies such as Pearson Education, Proctor and Gamble and the TJX Companies (Marshalls and TJ Maxx). Heather has exhibited in the KahBang Arts Festival, Bangor Art Walk at the University of Maine Museum in Downtown Bangor, multiple Her Majesty's Cabaret productions, and University of Maine student shows. She is a candidate for the Master of Fine Arts degree in Intermedia from the University of Maine in August, 2012.