

# Images for sale

by Sandy MacKay

*Don't go bare, go natural!*

*You've come a long way, baby.*

*Because innocence is sexier than you think.*

The ads that used these slogans were exposed in a movie called "Killing Us Softly." The film, produced in the late 70s, examined a number of ads, and explained how these ads — indeed most ads — create a negative image of women. Advertisements constantly use sexuality to reinforce negative stereotypes.

According to Heather McLeod of MediaWatch, we are subjected to over 500 ads a day, through a variety of media; television, radio, newspapers, billboards, on buses and more. You may not pay



attention to them, but it is impossible to ignore them completely or remain unaffected by them. They sell much more than products. They sell images, values, goals, concepts, sexuality, normalcy and shape our attitudes and behaviour.

The film showed how women are constantly portrayed in these ads. If a woman is not deified as a

sex object, then she is a moronic housewife, with nothing better to worry about than the cleanliness of her oven.

The first type of woman is a constant in advertising. She is sensuous in all aspects — nail polish, hair, legs, skin. She has no pores! She exhibits absolute flawlessness that is impossible to achieve except in the studio, but "Killing Us Softly" proved this is the image that women attempt to live up to. The messages are like this: "Some girls have developed much more than their minds." She may be only a dismembered chunk of a body, she may be a twelve-year-old sex object.

Equally familiar are the portrayals of the dowdy housewife who would be fine, if only she used Product X. Product X turns the dowdy housewife from a non-productive foolish woman into a good wife and mother. The ads create the image that if you are spending too much time with your head in the toilet bowl/oven/washing machine, then you probably aren't a good wife or mother.

Ads have even usurped the women's revolution. One familiar ad asserts that women who smoke Virginia Slims have "Come a long a way, Baby." Advertisers have stolen the language of the women's movement and twisted it to their own uses.

"Killing Us Softly" also showed that the stereotypes extend to men. Cigarette ads, beer commercials and car ads all portray men as macho goofs who have nothing better to do than fix up their cars, drink beer and smoke. "I don't judge my cigarette by its length" says one actor in an ad, implying that one should not judge his sexual pro-

wess by the size of his penis — the link is obvious.

The movie made clear many such things — our fixation with age as taboo. Grey hair is distinguished on men, but wrinkles, grey hair and age spots are ugly on women. "I don't intend to grow old gracefully — I intend to fight it every inch of the way, with Oil of Olay."



Advertisements create images that we are expected to try and emulate. More importantly, the movie exhorted people to be aware of what they see, to look for these stereotypical images, and to see if that image of the "perfect woman" fits in with what we know to be reality.

Watch television one night, and pay attention to the ads. Try and count how many people in the ads look like anyone you know. When we start to realize that these are not real people in the ads, we start to realize that we have been duped all these years.

# Oi

Okay, so not everything has been running smoothly, so we have been as hypocritical as shit. I guess this means it is time to elect some new lucky fools to be responsible for the Gazette. Screenings of the editorial candidates will take place Tuesday, March 13 at 4 pm in the Gazette offices. The voting will happen on the 14, 15, and 16. You listed below are eligible to vote. So don't forget.

Trent Allen  
Sandra Bit  
Mare Jo Boyce  
Padraic Brake  
Alex Burton  
Dave Courtney  
Alistair Croll  
Ian Digby  
David Deaton  
Ken Faloon  
Marc Epprecht  
Janice Fiander  
Stuart Flinn  
Joey Goodings  
Erin Goodman  
Shannon Gowans

Sarah Greig  
Mike Gushue  
Jane Hamilton  
Jeff Harrington  
Jennifer Hough  
Heather Hueston  
Allison Johnston  
Bob Keeler  
Caroline Kolompar  
Miriam Korn  
Barbara Leiterman  
Brian Lennox  
Sabrina Lim  
Sandy MacKay  
Don Manson  
Lyssa McKee  
Robert Matthews  
Rochelle Owen  
Ariella Pahlke  
Erika Pare  
Matthew Rainnie  
Scott Randall  
Munju Ravindra  
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