

Sunday, May 12, 2002



June Bisantz-Evans, an artist and professor of art at Eastern Connecticut State University, in one of the pieces of artwork featuring herself.

The Ads Are Art

Some of the advertisements on Hartford buses and on billboards at Hudson, High and Church Streets and Airport Road, aren't what they seem. They are the work of June Bisantz-Evans, an artist and professor of art at Eastern Connecticut State University who is either tweaking the advertising industry, promoting herself, creating a politically incorrect art form, furthering the cause of feminism or all three. The pieces will remain in place through June 1.

Ms. Bisantz-Evans is featured in each of the works against a retro background: zooming along behind the wheel of a vintage car, as a waitress in a diner or as a Pola Negri-style goddess in a Hollywood setting.

She has a master of fine arts degree from Claremont Graduate University in California. Her commercial art and illustrations have appeared in *Esquire* and *Vanity Fair*, and her work has been exhibited at universities and in galleries in Boston, Los Angeles, Manhattan, Budapest and venues in Connecticut and New Jersey.

From June 3 through Aug. 9 the exhibit will move indoors to the Stevens Gallery of the Homer Babbidge Library at UConn in Storrs, with the title "Truth in Advertising." Information: (860) 486-4636.



JUNE BISANTZ EVANS

BILLBOARD ADS AS AN ART FORM

June Bisantz Evans, a digital collage artist, may well become the 21st century's Botticelli of buses, its Brueghel of billboards.

Starting Wednesday and running through June 1, the Willimantic artist's wry self-portraits with a cinematic twist will be displayed in Hartford on selected billboards and buses. The billboards are situated along downtown bus routes, creating an outdoor exhibition combining mass transportation with what Bisantz Evans, an art professor at Eastern Connecticut State University, hopes will have mass appeal.

The artist combines photographs of herself with vintage magazine images to create scenarios of what she calls "personal drama and gender-related significance." Each billboard work contains a single line of text, underscoring the message of the piece.

"Move Forward" portrays Bisantz Evans, scarf jauntily flying in the wind, cruising along life's highway, the absolute mistress of her fate behind the wheel of a vintage car. It's a billboard ode to liberty and the open road, the visual equivalent of Willie Nelson wailing away on "On the Road Again."

In "Don't Wait," she portrays herself not as the mistress of the universe but as a waitress in a diner smiling happily despite her labors. A smaller, alter-ego version looks on quite displeased with this role of servitude.

In "It's a Balancing Act," she casts herself as the silent-film comic genius Buster Keaton, precariously balanced on the edge of a swimming pool. Grappling with life's inevitable slapstick situations, she hopes to avoid another pratfall from grace. On a much loftier tone in "Be Your Own Goddess," Bisantz Evans transforms her protean personality into a Hollywood goddess. A chorus of movie extras dressed as gods and goddesses looks on at her tongue-in-cheek act of self-deification.

The billboard sites are: Hudson Street, at the corner of Buckingham Street; High Street, at Church Street; Church Street, at Spruce Street near the railroad station; and Airport Road, Exit 27 off I-91.

From June 3 through Aug. 9, Bisantz Evans takes her outdoor works indoors to show them in a more conventional setting. "Truth in Advertising," an exhibition of her bus and billboard works, will be displayed in the Stevens Gallery at the University of Connecticut at Storrs.