



## A Show Before The Show

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June Bisantz, a Willimantic graphic artist, has been creating works and exhibiting them for seven years. Now she's getting ready for her biggest audience yet: an average of 41,000 people a week.

Even better: The audience is captive.

Beginning today and running through June 8, three artworks by Bisantz will be shown on the screen before movies at seven cinemas throughout the state. They will be part of the standard advertising reel that precedes most film screenings.

"I'm very excited because I know my work will be seen by lots and lots of people," says Bisantz, who teaches digital art and design at Eastern Connecticut State University, also in Willimantic. "That many people don't go to galleries to see shows, that's for sure."

She hopes her innovative exhibition method will strike a chord with film audiences, who,

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polls increasingly show, are tired of seeing ads on the screen before movies.

"I think we need a break from advertising. We are constantly bombarded with a call to commercial action. That's tiring," she says. "I like to offer an alternative in the midst of it all."

Ironically, her artworks, all of which feature her own picture at the center of an old-style movie poster, can be perceived as advertisements for herself. She doesn't deny it.

"That's true, but still and all, there is nothing to buy," she says. "I am introducing myself."

Bisantz has placed her art in advertising spaces before: She has appeared on the sides of buses throughout the state, on billboards as far north as North Adams, Mass., and even in the text crawl on the Weather Channel.

The three posters — "Instant Success," "High Stakes" and "Hot Pursuit," with the series collectively titled "Coming Soon!" — are bright, simple and visually arresting, each paying homage to a distinct movie genre.

"Hot Pursuit," a "romance," also features her fiancé Harrison Judd, the photographer who takes her pictures for the posters.

"Quite frankly, I'm starring in my own drama, and he is starring in it, too," she says. "Everybody should do that, connect to the importance of their own work and their own life."

The simplicity of Bisantz's work was what first impressed Alan Surprenant, a senior account executive with Screenvision in Rochester, N.Y., the nation's largest company that sells advertising space on movie screens.

He was more than happy to



"INSTANT SUCCESS," top, and "High Stakes," left, by graphic artist June Bisantz.

slip in her works among ads for restaurants, car dealerships and local colleges.

"They're the best slides I've ever seen for a theatrical project. I like the old-world taste of them," Surprenant says. "They look like something from the '30s or '40s."

"One thing June understands that a lot of our clients don't is that simplicity works," he says. "People put a lot of info on the screen, and that tends to take away from the slide itself."

Despite his affinity for Bisantz's work, his welcome stance was not a gift: Bisantz is paying the same rate as all on-screen advertisers pay, which neither Surprenant nor Bisantz would specify. For the price, she is guaranteed three viewings of at least 10 seconds for each artwork per screen before each film showing.

Considering she is showing in Art@Cinema City in Hartford, Showcase Cinemas Buckland Hills, Madison Art Cinemas, the Crown Royale in Norwalk, the Crown Majestic Theater in Stamford, the Crown Plaza in Greenwich and the Bethel Cinema, that's a lot of screen time, 4,500 showings a week.

Bisantz loves the inclusiveness of the venues. People from all walks of life go to the movies, and that is the audience she wants.

"The audience for my art is everywhere. The art is easy to get," she says. "You don't have to have an art background to understand what I'm doing."

Tamara Dimitri of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, which gave Bisantz \$2,500 in fellowship money to pay for the public exhibition — Bisantz also got an unspecified amount of money from the Connecticut State University Research Grant to make up the difference — says jurors liked Bisantz's spirit.

"She has so much energy. She has that drive to really get her work out in the public space," Dimitri says. "They felt she deserved this grant because she would really go places with it and continue her work."

Bisantz is indeed energetic and enthusiastic when talking about her project, and welcomes input from the public at ArtReplacesAdvertising.com.

"I'm sharing my life with people and making a personal statement in the midst of a commercial venue. It humanizes the experience," she says.

"I think we maybe are in a time when everything is too commercial. The personal is empowering."

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