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COMING SOON!!
Starring
June Bisantz
INSTANT SUCCESS!
ArtReplacesAdvertising.com

Willimantic artist June Bisantz uses photographs taken of her by her fiancé to incorporate into retro advertisements to bring more art into the lives of those who don't consider themselves "gallery-goers."

Artist offers alternative to ads

June Bisantz's public work is 'Coming Soon' to movie screens

By **AMY LAWSON**
Norwich Bulletin

Chances are, you've seen June Bisantz's artwork.

Her pieces have appeared all across New England — on billboards, buses and coming soon to a theater near you.

"I used to show in galleries, and that's fine, but I started yearning for a larger audience," Bisantz said. "I have a lot of friends who aren't gallery-goers, but they're capable of understanding art and appreciating art. I came up with this idea, it amused me and I pursued it."

After 20 years of gallery shows, Bisantz, a professor of visual arts at Eastern Connecticut State University, decided to take her work and bring it to the masses. She began with a project called "Drive By Museum" that included her work — and her face — posted on four consecutive billboards in both Columbia and Hartford.

After receiving good response from the public, Bisantz took her show on the road — literally. She worked with the Connecticut Transit system to have her artwork displayed on the side of buses in the space normally reserved for advertisements.

"It offers an alternative to the advertisements and lets me put a personal statement in a public space," Bisantz said.

Her most recent project, "Coming Soon," in partnership with local movie theaters, will put her art on display for an even wider audience.

Slides of her work, based on vintage advertisements, will appear within a rotation of ads before the beginning of a movie. The pieces will show in the pre-movie presentations of seven theaters beginning today and running through June 8.



Bisantz

"We have a different audience than what other theaters have, so other types of people will be seeing her pieces than would in a mainstream movie theater," said Arnold Gorlick, owner of the Madison Art Cinemas in Madison. "Our audience is typically older, more mature and heavily involved in the arts."

The Madison theater also typically showcases the work of one artist each month.

"Her work will be on the screen at least three times before the beginning of the movie."

Bisantz said her students at Eastern love her work, and friends and family encourage and support her. Her fiancé, Harrison Judd, takes the photos photo of Bisantz posing, and Bisantz then digitally combines the photo with an already-constructed background and setting. For example, in "High Stakes," she appears in full Mexican-style uniform, complete with smoking guns, but only her eyes are visible.

"People are generally taken by the fact that it's not your usual ad," Bisantz said from her home in Willimantic. "Some will tell me it's funny, and I like that. I'm glad. I want it to be light-hearted and a good thing that happens in your day. I just wanted to show my work in public, and say 'howdy.'"

The arts division of the state's Commission on Culture and Tourism maintains a slideshow of area artists working to have their art appear in public places. Along with dozens of other prominent local artists, Bisantz's work will be visible through the commission's Web site later this



This billboard created by Bisantz was posted in Cheshire, Mass., in 2004.

year as part of a project to recognize the significance of public art.

Tamara Dimitri, a specialist with the division's Art in Public Spaces program, said the aim of the project is to expose residents who probably don't take regular trips to galleries.

"It's not the kind of thing you stumble on: it's something that finds you," Dimitri said. "It's accessible to anyone, and people may not even know they saw 'art,' but little by little, it educates the public about artwork."

Dimitri also said public art helps to foster more arts-based communities.

Bisantz said her next goal is to take "Coming Soon" to movie screens regionally and nationally. Currently, some public buses in Massachusetts sport her artwork.

Her next long-term project involves creating altered traffic signs in a parking lot on Orange Street in New Haven. In "The Lot," the public is encouraged to take advantage of the empty space. Instead of "No parking" or "Loading zone," Bisantz said the signs would read "Celebrate," "Rest," or "Meet here."



Another piece of art is posted to the side of a Connecticut Transit bus seen here in Hartford.

IF YOU GO

- **What:** June Bisantz art on display.
- **When:** Today through June 8.
- **Where:** At the following theaters:
 - **Madison Art Cinemas**, 761 Boston Post Rd./Main St., Madison. (203) 245-3456.
 - **Crown Theaters Art at Cinema City**, 235 Brainard Rd., Hartford. 549-0030.
 - **Showcase Cinemas Buckland Hills**, 99 Redstone Road, Manchester. 646-9800.
- **Bethel Cinema**, 269 Greenwood Ave., Bethel. (203) 778-2100.
- **Crown Royale**, 542 Westport Ave., Norwalk. (203) 846-8797.
- **Crown Majestic Theater**, 118 Summer St., Stamford. (203) 323-1690.
- **Greenwich Crown Plaza**, 2 Railroad Ave., Greenwich. (203) 869-4030.

ON THE WEB

- **June Bisantz's** official Web site, www.junebisantzevans.com

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