



## Taking art to new heights

June Bisantz Evans, an artist, professor and musician, has created bold, elevating artworks that are deliberately way over everyone's head. Nonetheless, she is hoping that her lofty billboard creations — three digital collages — will win her a mass audience.

Her new project — a mix of billboard hype, humor and art — gets off the ground Monday when her images will be put up on three billboards in Hartford and one in Columbia. They'll maintain their towering niche in the Connecticut art world through Nov. 1.

Despite their superior positioning, there's nothing haughty in her works, which take a wry view of how we see ourselves in a world of strain, struggle and career choices. "If there is a common thread that runs through all my work," she says, "it is my fascination with identity and message — who we are and what has made us that way."

In her billboard series, she makes collages using photographs of herself and images recycled from old magazines. In a touch of Madison Avenue, each billboard contains a line of text that underscores the meaning of the scenario, which features her front and center as the lead character.

In "Be an Artist," shown here, Bisantz Evans, like some luminously ecstatic actor in a toothpaste ad, promotes the glories of choosing the artistic life as a career option. "Earn extra money — plan you own career," the sign proclaims. It's an in-joke, of course, since becoming an artist, for most wannabes, is anything but a quick route to financial bliss.

"Try Not To Worry" portrays the angst-ridden artist trapped on a roller coaster. White-knuckle fear rules in her "Twilight Zone" of an amusement park. "Stay in the Struggle" portrays her in the company of tiger-skinned, stooge-like strong men tugging away desperately in a tug of war with some invisible, perhaps invincible force pulling at the other end.

Her paintings have been shown in many more conventional, down-to-earth venues, including the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the New Britain Museum of American Art. As a commercial artist and illustrator, her work has been published in *Esquire* and *Vanity Fair*. As a musician, she has produced three albums of original music with her ex-husband, musician and composer Steve Evans. When not making music or art, she teaches graphic design and studio art at Eastern Connecticut State University, Willimantic.

Pieces from her billboard series will be shown in Hartford at High Street, 5 feet west of Church Street (south side); Buckingham Street, 100 feet west of Hudson Street (north side), and Airport Road, 150 feet east of Locust Street (north side). In Columbia, it will be displayed on Route 66, 300 feet east of Cards Mill Road (south side). The work was funded with a Connecticut State University Research Grant.