



stagewrite

Sex, pugs & rockin' their roles

An Osborne Village billboard featuring fictitious Foxy Boxing porno star Crissy Virtue and the suggestive slogan, "My girl can't wrestle, but you should see her box," is likely to be as controversial as any art exhibition unveiled in Winnipeg this summer.



riva harrison

But local artist Christina Kirouac says she's hoping viewers will first see the humor and then the social conditions that inspired the billboard, a Plug In gallery project.

"Just because it's in a public place doesn't mean that everyone has to get it, agree with it or like it. But I hope it will provoke people to think about women in photography, about which images are acceptable and which aren't," says Kirouac, noting that models in mall ads often wear less than Crissy.

"It's that paradox I'm interested in."

Kirouac's provocative "boxeruse" figure brings several concepts together under a single artist's microscope.

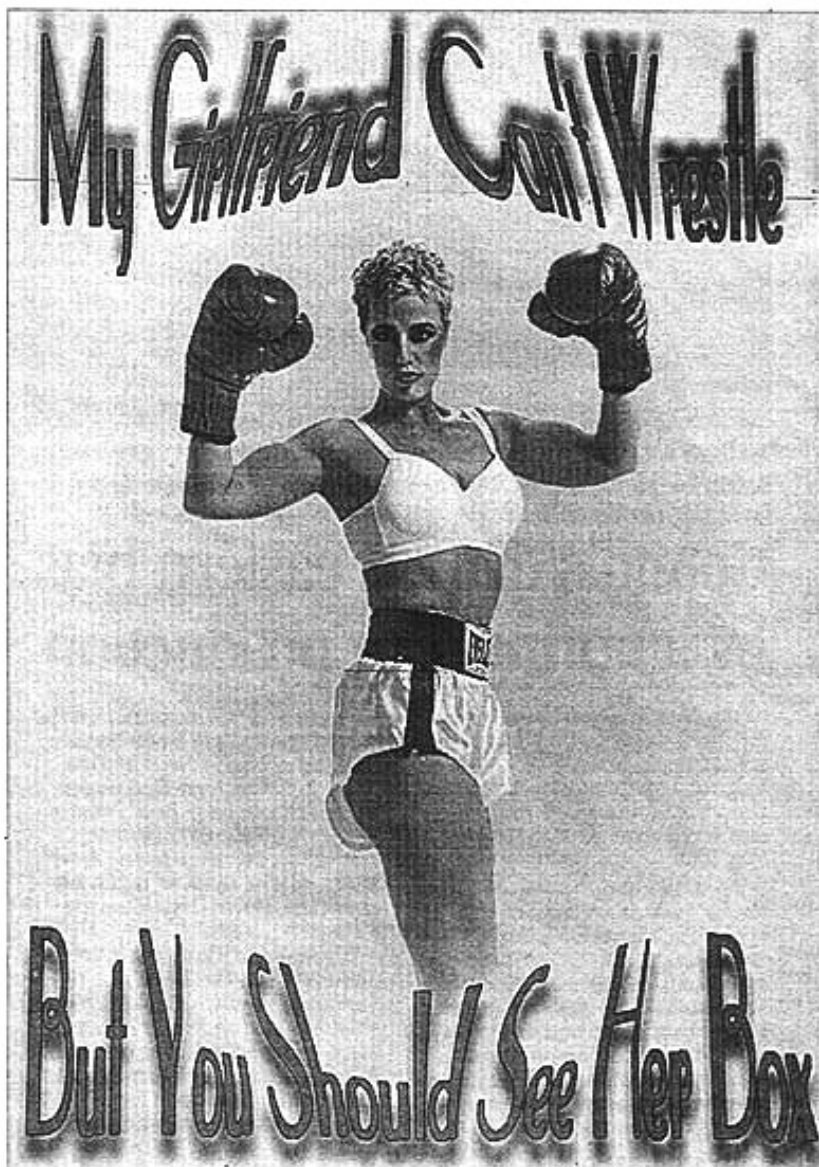
Body image, the beauty ideal and the sex-violence link in female-contact "sports" (such as topless boxing and nude wrestling) are some of the "layers" explored in the billboard's Amazonian character.

Crissy, a computer-altered image of Kirouac, is also the artist's way of confronting her own personal demons.

"It's about the image I have struggled with all my life as a female in our society ... struggling to reach an ideal that is unattainable."

A legitimate boxer, Kirouac says when she took up the sport,

Billboard skewers huge popularity of violence in so-called women's sports



OFF COME THE GLOVES: Kirouac's billboard battles ads & body image.

MY GIRL CAN'T WRESTLE, BUT YOU SHOULD SEE HER BOX

Daily till Sept. 10,
River Avenue and Osborne Street.

ters were already doing it for themselves. "It was the coupling of sex and violence that I found very interesting."

It's a coupling that exists not in the legitimate arena of women's sports, but in a "subculture of pornography" that began with mud-wrestling and continues today with such three-ring acts as topless punchups.

The genre — for lack of a better term — is increasingly popular in the United States, she adds.

"(The audience) fantasize that it might be real, but it's an illusion just like any porno movie. It's like watching AWA wrestling. You know it's not real but you still watch it. I think it's the same thing."

And the women who are "flailing and slapping at each other" are anything but athletic, she notes.

"The women who are boxing and fighting in pornography don't know what they're doing. It's kind of a joke. One of the producers I was talking to ... all he cares about it is pumping out hard-hitting action and making money. That's what it's about — making money."

Kirouac, who designed the billboard as part of a larger, multi-media project, says she hopes to bring all her works (photos, drawings and oil paintings on the same theme) together in one exhibit in the near future.

Until then, My Girl is part of Plug In's billboard project that continues Sept. 17 with Blair Marten's Insecurity, a spoof on "commodification."

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she wasn't interested in wading into the debate over whether women "should" or "could" box.

"It's a lot more than women just doing what men can do. That's not what this is about for me," she says, calling the discussion a "moot point" because sis-