

Spring 2014

\$5.99

The New Wave

Advertising in the 21st Century

Exclusive
Interview
with
**Sarah
Crowell**



What's **sexy** about a
hamburger?

The truth about **Maxim**

The New Wave



“Advertising pushes consumers to view societal perfection as thin, airbrushed and white.”
- SARAH CROWELL



“The more one realizes that one can talk back to the screen, the page, or the picture, the more one realizes that one is not merely buying a commodity.”

- DEFRANCISCO and PALCZEWSKI 261

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WHAT ABOUT THIS AD MAKES YOU
WANT TO BUY SKYY VODKA?



Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader,

Everywhere you look, media is there staring right back at you—billboards, newspapers, magazines, television, posters, and comics. Ads and messages are at the center of it all. What we sometimes forget is that media is even present where it appears to be absent. Even on that winding trail in the middle of nowhere, your very own thoughts and actions are influenced by portrayals that surround your everyday life. That's why we've created an entire magazine dedicated to analyzing the media and the ways in which it influences us throughout the past, present, and future.

In this month's issue, we've decided to focus in on a few forms of printed media. It may seem like a narrow category, but don't be fooled. For nearly every product on the market, there is some advertisement carefully designed to get you shopping. The media's influence extends beyond your urge to purchase a product, and into your subconscious understanding of the world. As one article explains, "Due to accessibility and interactivity of social media, it is regarded as one of the most promising tools of socialization and identity formation" (Khankhunova and Choyropov 117). Our journalists illustrate how the suggested response to images will not be what to buy, but what to perceive as sexy, significant, and normal in our society.

These secondary effects have the power to permeate into the deepest aspects of our identity. The authors of *Communicating Gender Diversity* articulate that media forms "influence social norms concerning gender, race, class, nationality, and all the other ingredients that constitute identity, for they provide models of what it is to be feminine or masculine, and encourage people to buy products that will make them more so" (DeFrancisco and Palczewski 238). Although aspects of our life, like gender or race, seem unmovable and concrete, the ways we understand them are actually altered over time by repeated interactions with our surroundings, from media to friends to family. So when minorities are absent from magazine covers, or women are consistently sexualized to sell food, ideas of such groups become skewed in their portrayals and in our perceptions. For feminist theorist Audre Lorde, this lack of diversity is further problematic since "we have all been programmed to respond to differences between us with fear and loathing [...] but we have no patterns for relating across our human differences as equals" (Lorde 289). By lacking exposure to realistic human portrayals, we have little opportunity to develop a deeper understanding or appreciation of diversity.

But we're here to help. Such a powerful tool can be used for good, with some conscious reinvention. Throughout our critiques, we strive to illustrate how we can reimagine and recreate media in order to expand our understanding of ourselves and our surroundings. Whether navigating the complex messages of media as an average adult, or creating new media portrayals, we hope this magazine will serve as your ultimate guide.

Enjoy,
Laurel Sebastian and The New Wave team
Editor



**Get your hands on
Buff-tergent today**

**Can Handle
the Heaviest
Loads**



Outside Perspective on the Effects of Advertising: An Interview with Sarah Crowell



Throughout this issue, we highlight various ways in which media creates or reinforces dominant and oppressed groups and provides unrealistic portrayals of such groups. Audre Lorde theorizes that, “in American society, it is the members of oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor” (289). While all involved parties should work to dismantle harmful discourse, Sarah Crowell is someone who goes above and beyond to proliferate more egalitarian ideals.

After growing up in Lake Forest, Illinois and attending the University of Windsor, she eventually went on to become the artistic director of Destiny Arts Center. Based out of Oakland, California, this community-based nonprofit imagined a place “where young people could learn to prevent violence in their lives and share a message of peace with their communities” (Philosophy & Curriculum). In addition to violence, dropout rates plague Oakland public schools. According to American Prospect, “in Oakland, the high school dropout rate is 40%. Nearly one quarter of all 18-24 year olds live in poverty” (Chang 2). The center helps youth combat these statistics by empowering them to create new forms of media through martial arts, dance, arts and crafts, and theater. Advocates like Crowell make this seemingly lofty goal not only possible, but successful. Her Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company, founded in 1993, is based on the idea that teens “co-create original movement/theater productions based on their own experiences” (Crowell). This dance troupe performs for over 20,000 audience members a year, allowing these youth to reclaim their identities and spread realistic portrayals of their experiences.



As an inspiring social activist and creator of such revolutionary new media, we asked Crowell to respond to our questions on the trends, effects, and necessary changes of today’s mainstream media.

Justin Haas, journalist for *The New Wave*, reveals Sarah Crowell’s perspective on the relationship between advertising, feminism, and sexism.

Haas: How have your views on advertising appeals to sex and gender changed from when you were younger?

Crowell: I think my views of advertising, when it comes to sex and gender, have remained similar over the last 28 years. When I was in university I took a feminist history class and we studied the way advertising sexualizes and objectifies women in subtle and not so subtle ways. I am still acutely aware of not only the way that women are demeaned in advertising, chopped up into single body parts and fed to the public, I am also aware of the way sex is sold: beer bottles bursting with liquid, scantily clad women taking a large bite of a hot dog. So much of it is about sex. I get it. Sex sells. I'm just disappointed sometimes that advertisers don't get more creative and that they don't play with expanding the notions of masculinity and femininity.

Haas: What are the effects of using women in advertising? Does it make a difference if the product is for women?

Crowell: I don't think that it matters what is being sold to whom. Women in advertising are mostly thin, airbrushed and white. They don't represent the reality of the population they're selling products to, and that is extremely damaging to people seeing them. It creates fertile ground for self-hatred in a world where "perfection" isn't even possible.

Haas: Is there a particular advertisement that sticks out to you/that you remember? Do they all fall under one product type?

Crowell: Beer ads in particular stick out as putting women in a subservient sexual position. I am sending some of the images. You judge for yourself!

Haas: How do you think the public will react to seeing advertisements that flaunt male sexuality?

Crowell: I think that a limited macho view of male sexuality is already portrayed in advertising and the public reacts to that positively. It's comfortable to have the genders separate and extreme. It becomes uncomfortable, or at least out of the "norm" to have men who are softer and more feminine in ads. Advertisements not only sell products, they sell values. And often times they sell values of extreme masculinity and extreme femininity, not leaving room for the shades of grey in between where most humans live.

Haas: What are the tools that you could use in order to dismantle provocative female advertising?

Crowell: Dove has done an amazing job at challenging the vision of women in advertising by mostly just showing "real" women in their ads. I think they have the right idea. They are using advertising not only to sell their product, but to challenge traditional images of beauty that oppress women who do not fit into an extremely narrow view of the way they should look, and to reframe the conversation about beauty.

Haas: What are the lasting psychological effects on women from male dominated advertising?

Crowell: I think mostly an unattainable beauty standard that leaves most women feeling inadequate and self hating, or at the very least constantly striving for something just beyond their reach.

“It becomes uncomfortable, or at least out of the “norm” to have men who are softer and more feminine in ads.”

Haas: What are advertisements suggesting to young women and how can this be rearranged for a more productive dialogue on gender expectations?

Crowell: Advertisements are often suggesting to young women that 1.) they should never get old, 2.) that thinner is sexier, 3.) that the way they look overrides all of their other qualities, 4.) that despite the feminist movement, they should primarily be cleaning toilets and cooking for their husbands and children, albeit in shinier more modern kitchens and bathrooms, 5.) that they should either be coy and sexual or subservient in the presence of men. A productive dialogue would challenge stereotypes in both serious and playful ways.

It would put women and men in roles that were different than the expected, individually and in relation to each other.

Haas: How is the intersectionality between race and gender portrayed in advertising?

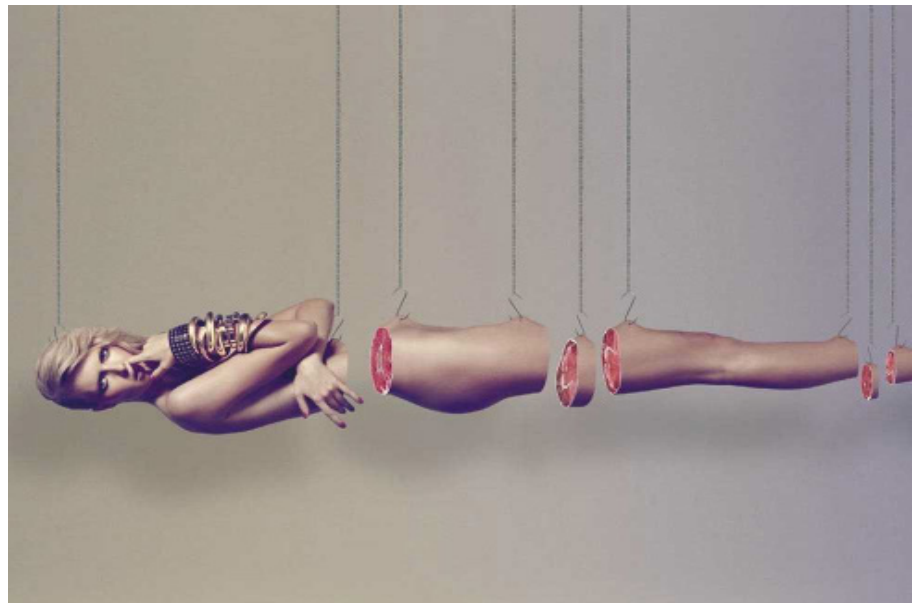
Crowell: I think there have been advances in my 48 years in terms of who advertising includes. There are more people of color in ads than there used to be. There are also more challenges to the traditional values that not only include extreme gender identification, but also racial separation. It's been okay for black folks to be on TV as long as they don't ever kiss a white person. And then came the ad for Cheerios that showed an interracial couple with a biracial kid. That's what I'm talking about! That was a rare moment. Let's hope we continue moving in that direction.

More with Sarah Crowell

Our interview with Sarah Crowell clearly highlighted both the dangers in advertising, and the positive steps the advertising industry has made in recent decades. However, one thing is made abundantly clear: advertising still has a ways to go in reversing the deep-seated objectification of women.

According to Crowell, the era in which women are “**chopped up into single body parts and fed to the public,**” is far from over. The push on consumers to view perfection as “thin, airbrushed and white” still creates a tough reality for any person who does not fit into that limited description. Crowell clearly calls for a drastic change in the rhetoric that has surrounded advertisements since her childhood. As a woman of experience in the creation of empowering media, her disappointment in the lack of creativity used to expand consumers’ minds seems well-founded.

Despite that disappointment, Crowell provides us with a strong case for believing in the possibility to change advertising. Crowell epitomizes an example of active recreation of stereotypical images through her teaching and creation of new performance media. Her work both diversifies and personalizes our media. As articulated by Belén Cambroner-Saiz, a shift towards these portrayals in our mainstream advertising “would empower women and increase the ability to establish the necessary measures for raising awareness and thus achieving social change” (5).



Said another way, Crowell echoes Joan W. Scott’s call for a “need to articulate alternative ways of thinking about gender without either simply reversing the old hierarchies or confirming them” (Scott 396).

Crowell distinguishes herself in advertising because she promotes the diverse beauty of all people as well as the idea that internal qualities are worth more than external ones.



Family Begins at Home With the Father



Call *FatherHood Hotline* to learn how
to best raise a child. **1-800-Fathers**

Advertising Your Body: “The Ultimate Guys Guide”

BY JUSTIN HAAS

What are you staring at? What part of the cover do your eyes gravitate toward? Why do you keep staring at her...? Any purchaser of *Maxim* magazine will come away with front covers and advertisements that are similar to the one above: a woman caressing an object or herself, wearing provocative clothing, and of course flaunting her long legs, tight butt, ripped stomach, full breasts and white skin. Do these images have any significance beyond pretty things to glance at before diving into the content? Where do they fit into the growing sea of more interactive media? Although magazines may be losing out to digital media forms, they still have the power to impact our understanding of our surroundings and ourselves.



Maxim has experienced serious financial decline in recent years, but the magazine still raked in over \$100 million dollars last year, showcasing the profitability of sexy photos and glossy covers (Lee). In his article entitled “*Maxim* Magazine Said to Fetch Bids of About \$20 Million,” Edmund Lee attributes the economic decline to “advertisers and readers [who] have shifted their attentions toward digital venues, where ad rates are cheaper and the content largely free” (Lee). This transition makes sense for everyone involved; people are more captivated

by moving images, and advertisers can capitalize on your attention to make you buy into what they are selling.

Usually what they are selling is not just a product, but also an idea. These advertisements can affect your perceptions of what is normal, preserving the dominant discourse. According to Susan Bordo, “with the advent of movies and television, the rules for femininity have come to be culturally transmitted more and more through standardized visual images [...] that tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behavior are required” (462). The traditional power of magazine to showcase what is stylish, accepted, or normal is now shared with every form of media out there. However, the growing power of other medias does not render magazines irrelevant. People are still scanning and buying magazines and the ideals that they sell. Magazines continue the status quo of standardization in which only mainstream wants and needs are being met.

These wants and needs are not just what we are supposed to desire as a society, but also how we are supposed to act and how we’re expected to view women. According to the article “Master your Johnson: Sexual Rhetoric in *Maxim* and Stuff Magazines,” “photographs that depict women as submissive and men as dominant normalize the sexual power dynamic and help to perpetuate it” (Krassas, Blauwkamp, and Wesselink 100). This suggests that when we see every single magazine cover with

The Guide Continues, Fellas...

a woman in some sexually obedient pose, we begin to internalize the idea that women are meant to be submissive receivers of sex. This commonality reduces our understanding of equality between the sexes, as women are not acting agents in control of their own sexuality. While women are portrayed narrowly in sexually submissive roles, the women themselves only represent a small demographic of women.

Not only does the media dictate the terms by which things can be considered normal, but also excludes those who do not fall into a standard category. Based on the aforementioned study, Krassas postulates that women with blonde hair, white skin, and pencil thin frames disproportionately make up the majority of the women being photographed (101) This detrimentally affects women of color. In their aims to achieve normalcy, they are bound to fail to fit into a perfect “white” standard, creating feelings of inadequacy. In a brief report written by Ann Brown, she revealed that 82 percent of all cover advertisements in male magazines feature white women only (Brown). The meager 18 percent of the time women of color are displayed on male magazine covers is far from a realistic reflection of our society.

When we focus on *Maxim*, the statistics get even worse. The viewers of *Maxim*'s thirteen issues in 2013 did not see a single woman of color on the front (Brown). As Brown delineates, this is particularly problematic since *Maxim*'s subtitle is “the ultimate guy’s guide,” supposedly featuring the hottest women from around the world for a diverse male audience (Brown). The reality is that the women of the world are aggressively excluded, and men are only exposed to a narrow beauty ideal. Choosing only white women to be the “standard” of all male magazines has manifested as a problem for the women of color who rarely get chosen. In her book, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, bell hooks reveals that the underrepresentation of women of color within male magazines misrepresents an entire race based off of one individual (5). If an entire race only has one or two magazine images to relate to, their public representation and identity is limited to that inherently narrow view. Hooks emphasizes the power of feminine images, and quotes the well-known filmmaker, Pratibha Parmar, in saying, “images play a crucial role in defining and controlling the political and social



power [... The] deeply ideological nature of imagery determines not only how other people think of us [African Americans] but how we think about ourselves” (5). Women of color rarely get the privilege of being seen on the cover of magazines, and when they are included, their bodies are still limited to unattainably perfect and sexually obedient portrayals. Such representation can lead to simplified perceptions of women of color as invisible beings only valued for their occasional sexual appearances.

Tragically, the dominant culture gets to decide what should be valued and what gets ignored. Serano advocates for the status quo to be reimagined when she suggests that “There is no such thing as a “real” gender—there is only the gender we identify as and the gender we perceive others to be” (548). This discussion extends beyond gender and into every aspect of our identity. We, as consumers of these magazines and media images, have the power to critique them and reject their unrealistic ideals. Purchase *Maxim* if you want, but remember that its content is harmful and misrepresentative of our extremely diverse country. Maybe with consistent critique and gradual recreation, these images will shift toward more realistic, inclusive, and egalitarian portrayals of the men and women of our society.

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Sexualizing Food

Objectifying Women in Fast Food Advertising

ANDREA MORE

When I look at this ad for Arby's, it's difficult to not think about sex. More and more, fast food is trying to sexualize their food in order to attract customers. In this Arby's ad, for example, two hamburgers are strategically placed so as to make them appear to be a woman's breasts (something to "really drool over"). Rather than simply showing a woman consuming food, in many advertisements women's body parts are conflated with the product itself, the implication being that sex is the ultimate objective. The problem with this is that women are only shown as objects of sex. The result? Values of male domination and consumption of female bodies are reinforced.

These advertisers are using more than sex to sell their products. Sex is always coveted by the man and in the female's possession, just like in the infamous Skyy Vodka advertisement. A headless man in a suit stands over a woman in a bikini lying on the beach. Based on body language, the man has the power; the vodka and cups are in his hands just as the woman is his object. This dynamic is especially rampant in fast food ads. In "The Sexual Politics of Meat," Carol Adams asserts that meat eating reinscribes male power. She explains that the "killed and slaughtered animal yields [...] imagery of ferociousness, territorial imperative, armed hunting [...] and aggressive behavior" (Adams 451). Not only do sexualized advertisements for meat portray women as only capable of eliciting sex (have you ever seen an ad of a woman in a business suit eating a hamburger on her way to Wall Street?), the symbolism based on killing animals conveys messages of violence and male dominance. In purchasing the food, male consumers are promised sexual power over women. Conflicting messages that fast food is both sexy and "masculine" only promote old gender norms for female and male viewers. These ads frequently target a young audience, who are especially susceptible to accepting these ideas about their world as truths. According to Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, not only do young people see a message that says the essence of a woman is her submissive appearance, but they internalize those ideas into their own perceptions of what "normal" means.



In presenting the notion of gender as performance in *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler demonstrates how seeing the same image of heterosexuality over and over again creates the illusion that someone who is born with certain genitals is always equated with a particular gender identity and that there is only one notion of beauty. This explains why the physical appearance standard that young women are trying to meet is a very limited one, characterized by "a low waist-to-hip ratio, clear skin, [and] large breasts" (NYTimes). As people become accustomed to seeing women as sexual beings, they understand that as the natural character of all women, rather than a socially constructed idea of what women should be in our society. Similarly, men see images of masculine domination, and believe that is how they should perform their gender as well. The way to fix this, of course, is to start featuring diverse advertisements with gay couples or women doing things other than performing femininity, such as participating in or civil service. Fast food companies are set on

been done before. Or, at least it's not a common sight. If advertisers don't try, they'll never know, and we'll be stuck with the same old images on repeat. It is understandable that sex has infiltrated our media. After all, the United States has become more relaxed about sexual matters in the past few decades, especially in advertisements. However, by portraying only females as objects of sex and not including men in this generalization as well, sexist attitudes work their way into our belief system. In a 2013 academic article titled "Sexy Food: The Ethics Behind Food Advertising," MacKenzie Sizemore explains that "strict regulation of the sexual appetite has been replaced with strict regulation of the appetite for food, and in this way food has been sexualized. Food has been equated with sex, which is evident in the many sexually-charged food advertisements that permeate our everyday lives" (7). The public sees these sexualized ads everywhere and their perception of women is quickly affected with enough exposure. In her book *Advertising and Society*, Carol J. Pardun writes that "[f]eminists have argued that decorative images of women—women shown as decorative objects presented merely to look

good—influence people's attitudes and perceptions about women's contributions and roles in society" (112). These limited and consistent portrayals provide only one image of what it means to act like and be a woman. Pardun goes on to argue that although one ad isn't enough to make a difference, sexualizing food has become a dangerous fad. Therefore, it might be futile to fixate on this one Arby's ad. Rather, this ad is indicative of the problematic ubiquity of adver-



tisements of its kind. It's not about whether Arby's sexualizes their burgers; it's about the fact that Arby's is not unique. With the kind of exposure to sex in advertising that we get, it's no wonder why both men and women typically put more value on a woman's physical appearance than on intellect, and why men aren't held to the same standards.

They say "sex sells," but does it always have to be men having sex with a woman that's being sold? There's got to be another way to sell a hamburger successfully. Both sexes respond

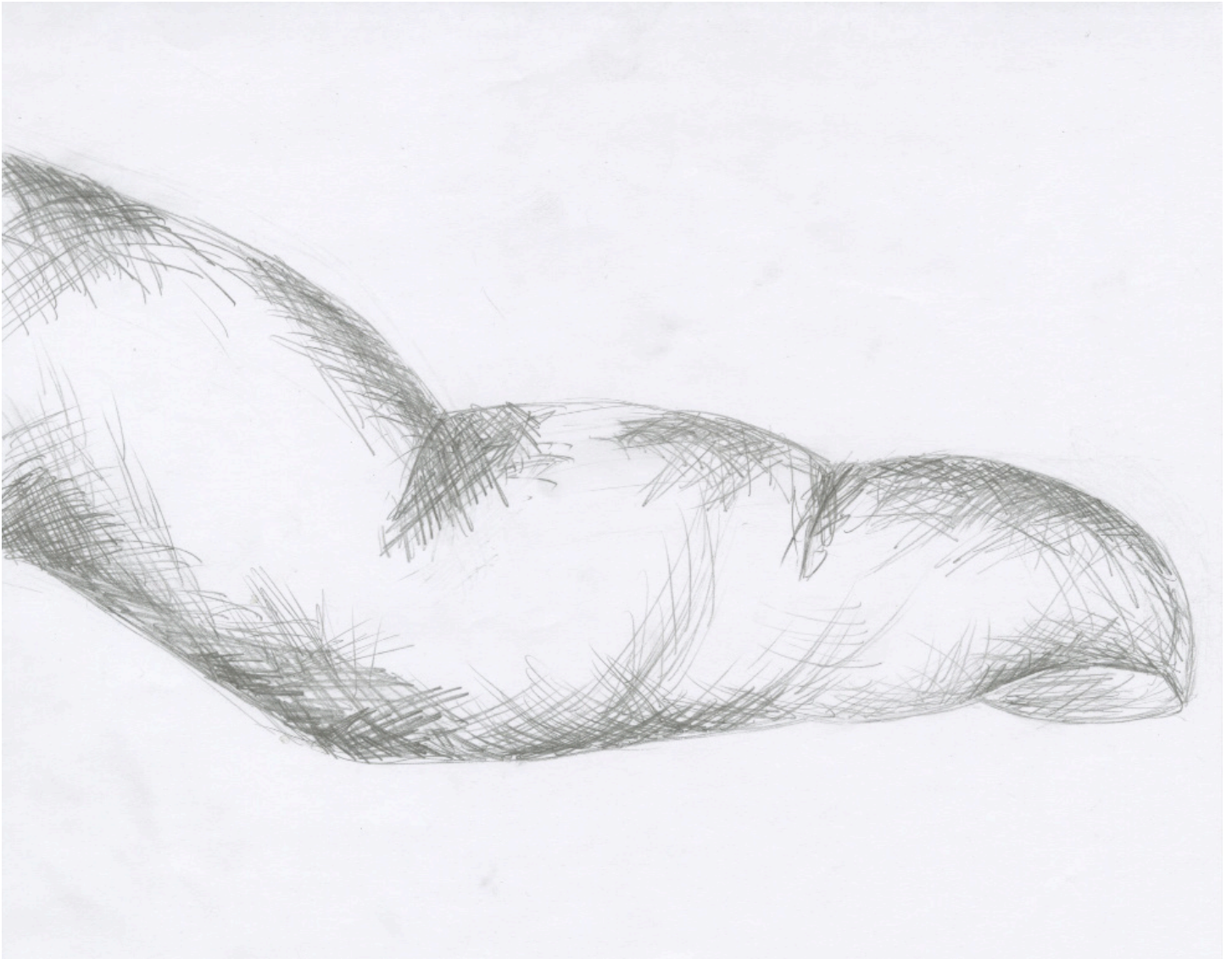
to humor and funny ads are memorable and do not rely on someone's sexual orientation for a response. With some creativity and humor, we could drastically alter the status quo of advertisements. By changing how we do advertising, we can change the way our culture views women.

“**Food has been equated with sex, which is evident in the many sexually-charged food advertisements that permeate our everyday lives.**”



Andrea More, assistant editor for *The New Wave*, analyzes food and sexism in advertising.

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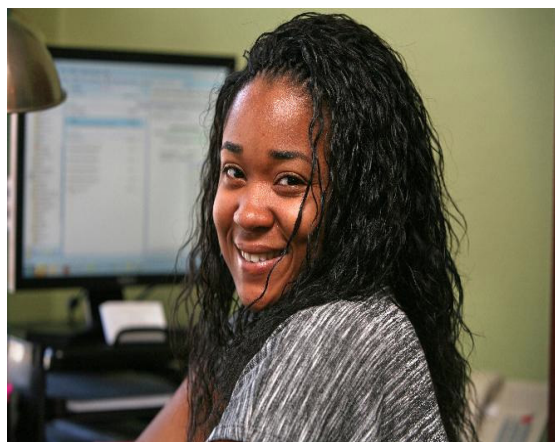


Thanks to our readership from *The New Wave* magazine team

Special shoutout to Heidi Lewis



Pictured above: Kat Geppert, graphic designer for *The New Wave*.



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Which forms of media influences your sexual identity?

