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AIDS - HOW IS IT AFFECTING THE IMAGERY OF  
CONTEMPORARY ADVERTISING ?

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Advertising has been an influential factor in shaping our society for many decades. It is understood that advertising has played the part of both reflecting and transforming our society. The aim of my thesis is to question how AIDS may be affecting the imagery of contemporary advertising. I wish to pay particular attention to sexual imagery in advertising and question if these images may presently be undergoing change. Could any of these changes be reflecting a society's need to review their sexual conduct as a result of the new dangers associated with AIDS ? Before directly addressing this question I feel it is necessary to trace the history of AIDS and also I will review some relevant research on the function and effectiveness of sexual imagery in advertising. In order to carry out my study of sexual imagery in advertising I decided to concentrate on the approach of one company, Calvin Klein Industries, and to trace the developments of their choice of advertising campaigns from the early '80s to today. The reasons and method of analysing Calvin Klein's advertising will be clarified later. I feel it is also necessary to study the direct effects of AIDS on advertising, this is quite evident in the advertising of both Benetton and Esprit. The comparison of government and voluntary groups' approach to AIDS awareness advertising is particularly interesting. I intend to illustrate their difference in approach to sexual imagery and indeed the difference in the information they provide.

The idea of using sex to sell products can be traced back to 1894 according to Hugh Orman in The Advertising Book. It is an industry that has had to react to many social changes. For instance, on today's T.V. screens





we are sold the idea that the newly divorced woman should be driving the new Peugeot 106 as a symbol of her newly found freedom and independence, an idea which even ten years ago would have caused acute public unease. However it is today accepted as a true reflection of society's changing structure. The present world of advertising must respond to the complexity and sensitivity of many of today's issues ranging from racism to sexism, it must be increasingly aware and subsequently careful of the type of imagery it employs. A number of these issues have been affecting the bones of our social structure for decades but have taken as long to come to the forefront of people's and in turn advertiser's awareness. Society's attitude to sex and the issue of AIDS in particular, is one which seems to be following the same direction.

It is necessary at this stage to take a brief look at the history of AIDS in order to map peoples growing understanding of the disease. The first known people to die from AIDS, then believed to be Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia (P.C.P.), occurred in June 1981. In 1982 the designation of the disease was G.R.I.D., gay related immunodeficiency. Then in autumn of 1982 the term AIDS came into widespread use. Initially AIDS was used to describe the disease which homosexuals suffered as a direct result of sexual practices and related 'lifestyles' for example the use of 'poppers' (amyl or butylnitrate). In late '82 it became evident that haemophiliacs and I.V. drug users were contracting the disease; however, it still became affiliated with sexual orientation. At this stage scientists knew that AIDS was caused by a Retrovirus now known as H.I.V., spread by direct contact with blood and semen. Sexual contact is not necessarily the cause but AIDS was characterised not as a viral transmitted disease but as





a sexually transmitted disease, such as syphilis. The initial picture of AIDS as a S.T.D. (sexually transmitted disease) was very specifically purely homosexual. The disease was then associated with various subculture's of our society ; haemophiliacs, Haitians, homosexuals and heroine addicts: the four H's. It has since been proven to be non-particular, however this was a very gradual process. Even in 1986 an article written by a group of prominent scientists in Discover Medical Journal stated that AIDS was of no threat to heterosexuals. Today AIDS is recognised as a truly global issue. Thanks to improved education and worldwide communication the true message of AIDS is now being heard. People of all races, sexual preferences, age, etc. are realising the mortal danger that they put themselves in if they share needles or have unprotected sex. It is quite ironic to think of how medicine changed mores and, while now it is illness which is now changing them back. Contraception and the assurance by medicine of the easy curability of sexually transmitted diseases made it possible to regard sex as an adventure without consequence. Now AIDS obliges people to think of the direct consequences of either suicide or murder.

It is interesting to consider that prior to the 1970's sexual behaviour was associated with so many taboos and prohibitions that the free discussion of sex, not to mention research into it, was totally prohibited in many situations. Freed, however, by the 'swinging sixties' the issue of sex became more tolerable, and open, with the 1970's witnessing a marked increase in the use of sexual imagery, particularly in advertising. Today it is becoming increasingly clear that after a carefree period of sexual spending, sexual speculation and sexual infiltration we are now in the early stages of a sexual depression. As Susan Sontag observes in her book AIDS and its





### Metaphors

*Looking back on the 70's has been compared to looking back on the wrong side of the 1929 crash.*

While it is understood how in recent years, other elements such as social and political climate, have undoubtedly affected society's attitude to sex, the advent of AIDS must be recognised as being a very influential factor of this change in attitude.

The effect which I feel AIDS is beginning to have on advertising is of particular interest to me. In the past, sexual images in advertising have been solely associated with cheap and questionable products unable to compete with established brands; but today sex is used to sell virtually every conceivable product. The choice of imagery has evolved with the years; the sight of a silk stocking was considered more bodily explicit in the days of Queen Victoria, whereas today we can observe considerably more bodily explicit sexual imagery in numerous popular advertising campaigns. While it cannot be denied that this sexual imagery is present in many various forms in advertising, it is my belief that changes are occurring in the sexual messages these images convey.





My study will be carried out mainly through detailed examinations of particular advertisements in order to decode their latent meaning. In recent years it has been recognised how advertising has become increasingly important, not just commercially but also socially. The study of advertising has previously been carried out quite extensively through the science of semiotics. Semiology originates in a discussion of signs, or more specifically of a 'system of signs'. A sign within a system of meaning may be separated into two components, 'the signifier' and 'the signified'. The signifier is the material vehicle of meaning; the signified actually 'is' the meaning. The signifier, according to William Leiss in Social Communication in Advertising, is the concrete dimension; the signified is its abstract side. For analytical purposes the two are separable.

Roland Barthes in Mythologies gives the example of the rose in our culture to explain this theory. The 'meaning' of roses in our cultural setting is associated with romantic or passionate love. In analytical terms, then, we have three elements in the communicative process, a) The signifier - the rose; b) the signified - passion ; c) the sign - their unity as 'passionified roses'. It is at this point that it is necessary to step outside of the science of semiotics and to acknowledge the important point of distinction between the signifier and the sign. They are not the same although they appear to be the same. Nothing inherent in roses limits their meaning to passion alone. In another culture, or in another system of meaning, roses could signify something totally different, perhaps even the opposite of passion. Semiotics, therefore, involves the analysis and decoding of signs





based on the idea that if something can be used to communicate, it is because it stands for something else. Like others, such as Judith Williamson, I wish to step outside the scientific semiotics approach and draw from a wider, more flexible approach. Semiotics, in just concentrating on the meaning of an individual sign, misses the meaning of the advertisement in its entirety. The nature and the history of the meaning of the advertisement escapes the semiotician as this process tends to concentrate on an analysis of the role of the sign in the particular advertisement. Although having said this, the science of semiotics is one which I intend to draw from during my analysis, although I will not strictly adhere to it.

My method of analysing the ads will follow a 'case study' approach. By concentrating and doing an analysis of one company, namely Calvin Klein, I hope to achieve a more indepth study. By basing a case study on one company, I hope to effectively execute a study of the company's advertising strategy. I hope to discover the changes that may have occurred in the company's approach to sexual imagery in particular. I will examine the manner in which these changes may be linked with the public's change in attitude towards sex possibly caused by the advent of the sexually contractible disease AIDS. Calvin Klein is a company which I believe would be particularly interesting to do a case on as they are a company which has had a strong history of using sexual imagery in advertising. It is important at this stage to acknowledge the limitations of a case study approach. In concentrating on the advertising of just one company I am unable to generalise and suggest these changes are occurring in advertising at large. However, I feel this limitation is balanced by the fact that Calvin Klein is such a prominent company and one whose advertising campaigns





have generated considerable interest.



## STRUCTURE OF CONTENT

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### CHAPTER ONE.

Presents a review of some empirical research on the function and effectiveness of sexual imagery in advertising. This section also deals with the advertising of Calvin Klein's 'Obsession' from the mid - 80's period. This is carried out through an indepth analysis of ads from this period with the specific object of analysing their content of sexual imagery.

### CHAPTER TWO

Deals with the question of change occurring in the sexual imagery of Calvin Klein's advertising. Does this imagery become less sexually explicit and more romantic ? Can this be linked with peoples heightened awareness of the dangers associated with unprotected sex in the light of AIDS?

### CHAPTER THREE

I will discuss the manner which AIDS has directly affected advertising imagery, specifically the campaigns of Esprit and Benetton. Also I wish to examine AIDS awareness campaigns done by government and voluntary bodies. How do their choices of imagery differ and in what way does their subsequent effectiveness or ineffectiveness compare?





# CHAPTER ONE

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SEXUAL IMAGERY IN CALVIN KLEIN'S ADVERTISING  
FROM THE 'PRE-AIDS' PERIOD.





In this chapter I will deal directly with the advertisements of Calvin Klein's 'Obsession' fragrance, which was directed at both a male and female audience. The fact that the imagery which I will be analysing appeared in the mid - 80's is of particular significance. It was a period when the full impact of AIDS on our society was unknown. The very real dangers associated with unsafe sex and the sharing of needles were, to many, unimaginable. In this section I hope to relate the choice of Calvin Klein's imagery to the sexual climate of this period of the mid - '80s. Proper analysis of this subject, however necessitates an understanding of the role of sexual imagery in advertising. Another important factor to keep in mind is of course people's attitude to sex in the mid - '80s period. In order to illustrate this I will refer to a number of prominent researchers who have done important work in the study of the function and the effectiveness of sexual imagery in advertising.

Sexual imagery in advertising can be traced back to before 1894 (Burton, 1990, p.87). It is a technique which in recent years has become adaptable to a wide variety of products. This is possibly due to a combination of ever-increasing competition for new products and the traditional worry that consumers are being inundated with too many advertising claims. Sex in advertising ranges from the blatancy of nudes and obvious double entendres to devices so subtle it would take a trained observer to notice them. There have been many instances where the use of sex in advertising has proven to be most successful. In other instances, such advertising proved either damaging or simply ineffective. (Schiffman, 1991, p.301) Therefore, it is understood that consumer reaction to advertisements with sexual appeal is difficult to predict. So why does advertising have such a





strong tradition of using sex ? The answer appears to be a simple one. There are few appeals in advertising that equal its attention getting value. Sex is one of the most basic of all human motives. (Leiss, 1986, p.39) Studies have shown that sex is one element that arouses immediate interest from both a male and female audience. However, although sexual themes may attract a readers attention, they rarely encourage curiosity about the product. One study of sexually oriented ads compared the recall scores of ads that used sexual elements: a) as an attention getting device, b) to display the function of the product, c) as fantasy imagery or d) symbolically. It found that ads that used sexual imagery solely as attention getting devices proved to have the lowest brand recall scores. (Yovovich, 1983, p.4). Ads in which sexual themes were used as part of a fantasy fulfilment enjoyed good recall scores. Still better recall scores were obtained by ads that used sexual elements in a functional fashion, such as ads for bras or lingerie. The ads that received the highest recall scores were those that used sexual images in a symbolic manner, such as an ad for Eve cigarettes that featured the picture of a lit cigarette lying across the top of an apple.

It is also relevant to my discussion to consider the basic differences in men and women's response to sexual imagery in advertising. Studies have proven that men's perception of what constitutes a 'sexy' ad depends on the level of nudity portrayed. For women, romantic content is the primary determinant of whether an ad is sexy. (Yuvovich, 1983, p. 5) Schiffman in Consumer Behaviour also claims that extremely sexy ads produced a dropoff in brand recall for women as well as men. Research showed that women could tolerate ads that produced a high level of sexual arousal and still recall the product names, whereas men who saw the same ads could





not remember anything about the product. (Schiffman, 1991, p.302). This ability of erotic ads to distract rather than to inform, especially when the audience is male, does suggest that many advertisers may well be wasting money when using this approach.

A study which compared sexual portrayals in magazine advertisements in 1964 and 1984 found that the percentage of ads with sexual content did not change over the twenty year period, but the type of portrayal did. The research shows how sexual imagery had become more overt, and there was greater reliance on the visual rather than the verbal sexual content in '84 than in '64. (Solely and Kurzbud, 1986, p.49). This fact becomes quite evident when I will discuss Calvin Klein's advertising technique. One thing that seems clear from all the research findings on sex in advertising is that the advertiser must be sure that the product, the ad, the audience and the use of imagery all match up. The advertising for products which touch the skin, cosmetics, fragrances and other accouterments of grooming, are geared toward reassuring the customer that these products will enhance sensual and sexual appeal. It is a product area which in the mid '80s seems to be relying increasingly on sexual imagery. In the case of Calvin Klein's 'Obsession' perfume the campaign relied on what Schiffman describes as the emotional arousal of needs. (Schiffman, 1991, p.79). The needs which will be clarified later on in this chapter, are quite obviously sexual ones.

Calvin Klein Industries is a company which has relied heavily over the years on the use of sexually explicit imagery. He has tested the boundaries of our increasingly liberal minded society. In 1980 Calvin Klein jeans produced what is still considered to be one of the most provocative of all jeans advertisements. The photograph, taken by Richard Avedon, shows





thirteen year old topless Brooke Shields wearing Calvin Klein jeans. Her legs are apart as she temptingly informs us nothing comes between her and her Calvins, sales were \$65 million, the following year sales were \$200 million. (Watkinson, 1980, p.49). In the mid - '80s, as with today, Calvin Klein clothes offer practical elegance and cool understated chic. His belief, that the modern woman already has enough to complicate her life, ensures this style in his clothing. However, it is his approach to the advertising of his succession of scents which is of special interest to me, in particular, the manner which he uses sexual imagery to satisfy these less tangible desires embodied in a fragrance. It is clear from Calvin Klein's extensive commercial success that he possess a deep understanding of the complexity of advertising. The basic theme upon which advertising works is to ensure that the imagery offers a certain form of interest and pleasure. However, crucial to the advertisement fulfilling its objective the imagery must in effect heighten people's own dissatisfaction and in turn offer their product as a means of fulfilling their subsequent desires. Like Schiffman, I believe the advertising of Calvin Klein's 'Obsession' is one which appeals to the emotional arousal of our sexual needs.

It is also important before analysing the advertisements of Obsession to place the ads in context and to consider the sexual climate at this time. The ads which I will be discussing in this section appeared in the mid -'80s. Obsession was first launched in 1984. During this period, unlike today, the only sexually related problems people may have encountered were unwanted pregnancy or treatable sexually transmitted diseases. It is necessary to discuss further the imagery utilised in the advertising of the '80s as it will later help relate the manner which I believe this form of advertising is





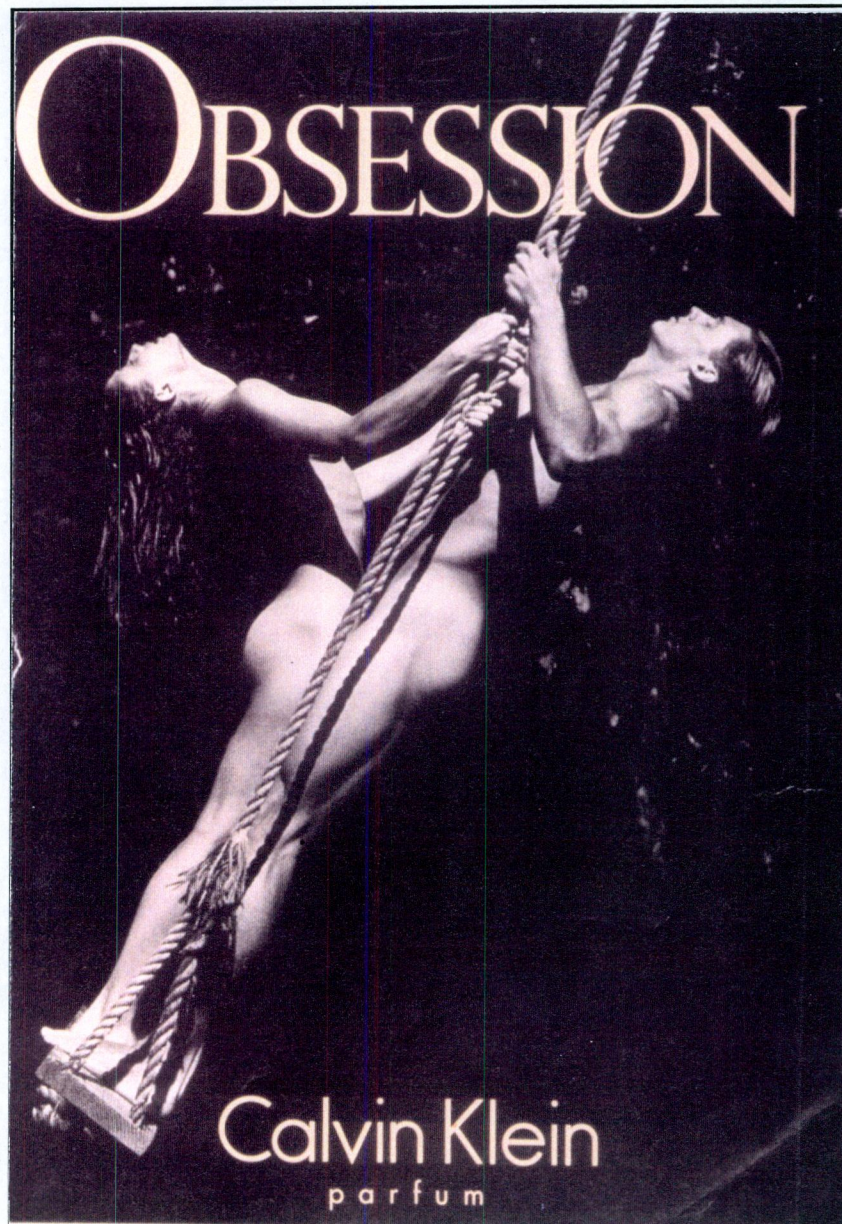


FIGURE 1



Fig 1



changing.

Figure one, which appeared in Elle magazine February '85, is an example of the early imagery used by Calvin Klein for Obsession perfume. Upon first consideration this imagery is one of raw sexual appeal and indeed this is exactly the intent of the campaign. The name Obsession - to haunt or invade the mind is extremely apt for such strong sensual imagery. Within this striking portrayal of intimacy there is a complex network of inter-connecting imagery which necessitates careful consideration. Nature is a commonly used device in advertising which has been used to connote numerous different qualities in products, some of which have been dealt with in Judith Williamsons book Decoding Advertising. In the mid '80s, like today, association with nature attributed many idealised properties to products. We live in a society whose view of nature and 'natural' is undoubtedly linked with our ever increasing distance from it. The farther we are distanced from it the more appealing it becomes. Nature, within this ad, appears in quite a subtle manner. It is our direct association with the swing as an outside object in association with the abstract organic forms of the background, which strongly suggest that these figures are actually out-of-doors in natural surroundings. The fact that we now see these figures in an out-door setting allows the positive attributes of nature to be appealed to. This association with nature acts as a correlative for what is pure and natural. In today's social structure what is considered socially acceptable is 'natural' and what is socially unacceptable, 'unnatural'. The progression within the ad of then transferring these natural qualities to the naked figures helps lessen the offense people may feel. The couples nakedness and the manner which they are submitting to their obsession for each other is therefore





explained, as they are merely partaking in what is perfectly free and 'natural'. The fact that this couple are engaging in such a free manner causes a heightening of the sensuality and eroticism. It is this lack of inhibition and compulsiveness which enhances the allure of the product.

The significance of the swing within the ad, also works on a number of different, but more contrasting levels. The swing image, associated with children, initially offers a suggestion of freedom, playfulness and lack of inhibition. On closer examination this image is clearly a signifier of sexual activity. The rhythmic motion of the swing within the context of this ad, coupled with the naked figures act as a correlative for the rhythmic movement during sexual intercourse. The height attained by the swing in conjunction with the facial expression and body movement of the girl in the photograph both act as signifiers of the sexual orgasm. The innocence initially associated with the swing is indeed starkly contrasted with these underlying sexual associations.

The swing itself, in particular the rope, acts as a means of visually connecting the couple. If one looks at the seat of the swing, upon which the couple are standing, the rope is separate. The point where the ropes meet, from the bottom and also from the top, leads the eye to the point of contact of the couple's bodies. However, in the same way that the rope draws attention to this physical point of contact, it also acts to shield our vision from this. However, through the use of lighting and careful photographing of the naked couple the actual point of contact of the bodies is concealed from us. Also the woman's breasts are hidden by her arm and shadows, therefore enabling the photograph to be more readily acceptable to the general public. The overall use of lighting helps to accentuate the muscles and curves of





these perfectly toned bodies. Indeed, the models themselves can be described as physical perfection; the 'obsession' they feel for each other is justified due to their attractive physical qualities. The manner which their bodies interact within this ad is quite erotic. The fact that the only physical point of contact is the lower body region seems to underline the sexual content of this ad. The fact that the heads are apart is of particular significance in my opinion. There is no suggestion of any other type of physical contact other than that already discussed; the hands do not even make contact. This has the effect of reducing the appeal of the ad to a purely sexual level. The romantic notion of a loving relationship is disregarded as the couple's interaction is based solely on what appears to be sexual desire, 'Obsession'. The facial expressions of the models are also worth noting. The woman's mouth is parted and her eyes are closed. This, in conjunction with her head being arched back, all work together to produce an extremely sensual image, which could be suggested to reflect sexual pleasure. The male too, with eyes closed and head arched, could also be analysed in a similar manner. I feel there is significance in the fact there is such distance between their heads, not only as their arched bodies tend to lead our eyes toward the point of physical contact, but there is also a suggestion that these figures lack concern for each other, again, that this contact is purely an obsessive physical one devoid of any real feeling.

Another important quality of this ad is its lay-out. It is completely mathematically logical in terms of the process by which meaning is transferred in all ads. The title refers to two different types of 'Obsession'. The first being the manner which the naked couple are submitting to each other; the second becomes clearer as our eyes are drawn towards the bottom of





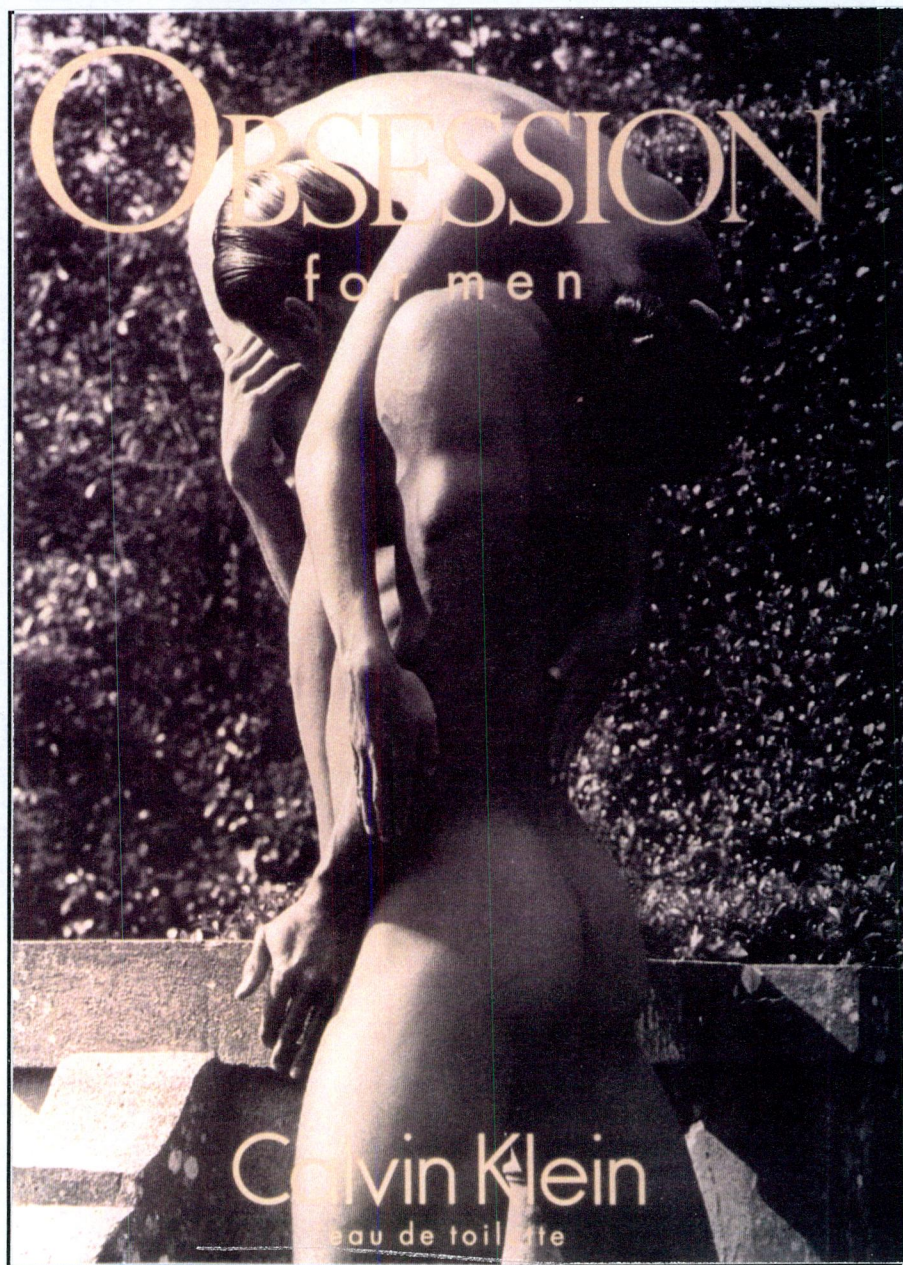


FIGURE 2



Fig 2

the page to discover that this obsession is Calvin Klein's perfume. The strong 'z' format of the ad gives quite a dramatic feel to the ad. The manner which our eyes read the ad may be devised to echo the movement of the swing. The proportional balance within the ad is one which I find particularly interesting. The manner which the swing divides the page suggests an equal division, however the male figure has more space and this could subtly suggest his dominance. Look at the positioning of hands and feet; his are both in the more controlling position.

The function of typography is also quite significant. The fact that the type is centred top and bottom acts as a means of balancing the form of the ad. The choice of the letterforms themselves are also a key element of the design. The choice of having Obsession set in an all caps serif typeface gives the product name a very stylistic appearance. The 'o's in this typeface, with their large rounded quality, are very attractive forms and prove quite strong characteristics of the name. Calvin Klein set in sans serif does not gain the same attention, not only due to its smaller point size, but also because of the lighter weight of the letters. The colour chosen for the letters is one which could be described as being quite close to skin colour. It is significant that the duotone photograph of the figures was done using tones of this colour. Also, it helps to bind the type and the image to form an effective overall image. This is an ad which can be described as sensually erotic and highly suggestive, an advertisement which as I hope to have clarified, uses more than overt nakedness and body gestures of the models to convey the powers of this 'obsession'.

The choice of imagery in figure 2, which appeared in Vogue magazine December '86, ties in quite closely with that which I have discussed in





figure 1. In this case the advertisement is not just for Obsession; the emphasis is on Obsession for men. Due to this need to target a male audience, we can see how the male figure has clearly been given the more dominant role. The man seems to have been momentarily captured in a scene as he is about to carry away his lover. This ad differs from figure 1 in that it contains much more physical contact: the figures are quite erotically interconnected and emit a feeling of sheer sensuality. However, it is interesting how the photographer has chosen to deal with the subject. I feel that through his choice of developing technique he has actually unified the naked entwined bodies with their surroundings. He achieves this through his use of colour; the entire image is a duotone, similar to figure 1. The tones found in the leaves, figures and the stone are all similar and in effect produce one unified form. Also, his handling of texture within the photograph, enables the figures' grainy appearance to tie in with their surroundings. This helps to create a sense of distance from these as human figures. However, I feel these techniques were utilised in order to lessen any public unease that may have occurred when being faced with such bodily explicit and sensual imagery in the form of advertising. By utilising this artful technique this message of emotional arousal of our sexual needs was able to be appealed to. These figures, despite the sense of distance achieved through photographic technique, portray a feeling of all consuming lust. The manner which these figures are interacting is highly suggestive of sexual satisfaction on a purely physical level. Here again, as in figure 1, the figures' heads are averted from each other. This again, in my opinion, tends to suggest a lack of real emotional ties with each other and suggest that the encounter is a purely physical one.





Here again the typography acts to balance the advertisement. The colour of the type also is a darker tone of the doughtone and subsequently completes the ad quite readily. The placement of the words 'Obsession for men' across the woman's body is interesting. In so doing there is a strong suggestion that women are the cause of this male obsession, she becomes directly linked with the word, just in case we needed a mental nudge to clarify the connection.

I have discussed how figures 1 and 2 relate and indeed differ from each other. Through my analysis I hope to have illustrated the manner which this imagery relied on the emotional arousal of needs - namely sexual ones. It is my opinion that the ads discussed suggest sexual dialogue and all-consuming lust.

Schiffman, in his book Consumer Behaviour, refers to these Calvin Klein ads as focussing on situations of feverish, all-consuming intensity. (Schiffman, 1991, p.79). The real significance of this study lies in its relation to the '80s, when these ads were first released; a period when sexual relations were not overshadowed with fears of contracting H.I.V. - AIDS; a period when it was inconceivable that sexual behaviour could have fatal consequences. It is this ad campaign's evolution in a totally different sexual climate which I find particularly intriguing.



## CHAPTER TWO

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CALVIN KLEIN'S ADVERTISING IMAGERY,  
HOW HAS IT PROGRESSED ?





*In 1988, sex had become less explicit in advertising, as the public's fear of AIDS caused advertisers to turn to more romantic and less overtly sexual-themes. (Schiffman, 1991, p.301).*

This is an idea which I wish to investigate in relation to Calvin Klein's advertising. Could Calvin Klein's advertisements, which had projected highly sexual and bodily explicit imagery in the mid - '80s, (now, with the change in society's attitude to sex), begin to express this in their choice of imagery? Through an analysis of a number of more recent Calvin Klein ads I hope to investigate this point. Later in this chapter I will also be examining the advertisements of other companies, in order to examine their reaction to the public's fear of AIDS. As this discussion will be dealing with ads from 1988 onwards, it is helpful to develop an understanding of the public's realisation of the dangers of AIDS at this period.

Heterosexual Behaviour in the Age of AIDS is a book which was printed in Glasgow in 1988. It claimed to be a type of guidebook illustrating the necessary care to be undertaken in order to escape contracting the H.I.V. virus. The book gave a precise outline of specific behaviours which could result in contracting the disease, such as sharing crockery, toilet seats and even kissing an infected person was believed to cause a transmission of the virus. It is clear to us now that this publication was nothing more than a hysterical and inaccurate reaction to the frightening condition of AIDS. Such ideas proved rampant for a period in our society. However, today through improved education and communication, the facts are becoming clearer. AIDS, as I have already illustrated in my introduction, has in its short history caused considerable confusion. Initially people found it easy to distance themselves from the disease as it was widely believed to be contained with-





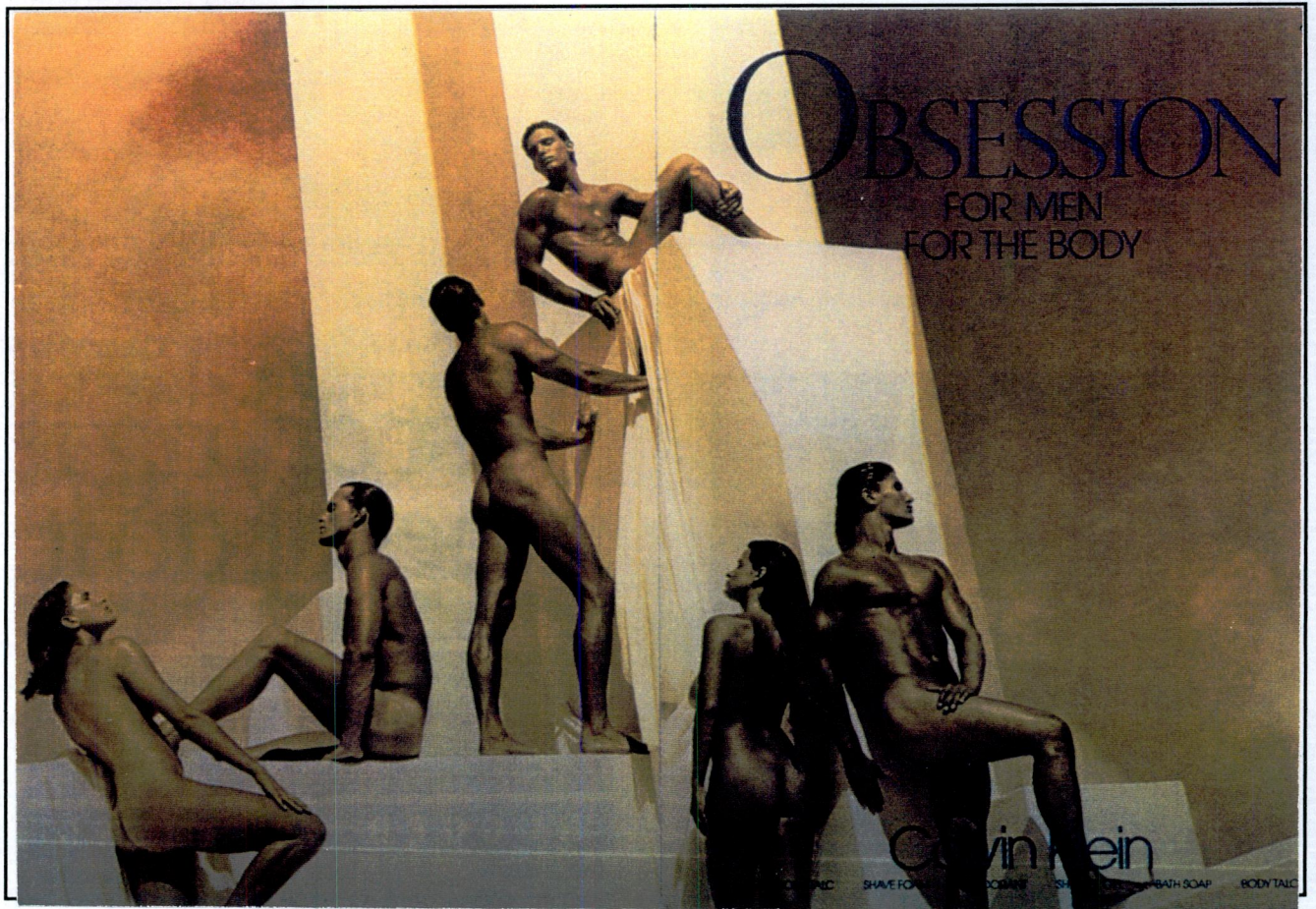


FIGURE 3



Fig 3



in minority groups such as gays and drug users. However, at the price of an ever increasing number of deaths within the white heterosexual non-drug using community, it became clear that AIDS knew no boundaries. The real issue of AIDS has since been overshadowed by a moral one. It is this subsequent effect which AIDS has had on people's attitude to sex which relates directly to this section. Discussion on sexual imagery found in today's advertising necessitates an acknowledgement of the change in society's attitude towards sex as a direct result of AIDS. We live in a society where it must be acknowledged that unprotected sexual behaviour may have serious repercussions. It is evident that we live in a society where advertising has become increasingly reliant on the use of sexual imagery to sell a wide variety of products. It is obvious, therefore, that the industry is not going to revise its tactics and embrace this new enforced sense of morality. However, there is increasingly a subtly connoted, latent awareness of AIDS which is integral to advertising's sexual messages. Calvin Klein Industries, a company which has grown in commercial success since the 1980s, is one company whose advertising I wish to analyse with this in mind.

The '80s campaign for Calvin Klein's Obsession and Obsession for men, as illustrated in chapter one, began with images which relied on the emotional arousal of sexual needs. These ads were among the most bodily explicit of that time. The subsequent progression of this theme in a society which has been forced to rethink the serious consequences of its sexual conduct is a particularly interesting one.

Figure 3 is an example of Obsession's advertising which first appeared in 1988. In the same manner as those ads which were discussed in chapter one, here these figures still figure among the most bodily explicit





in today's advertising. However, here is where the similarity ends. We can observe a new type of sexual imagery being used, one which could be described as in keeping with the times. The very positioning of the six naked figures within the advertisement is suggestive of three couples. The couple in the bottom left of the advertisement are visually connected by the position of the woman's arm and the man's leg. Also, the couple to the right are coupled due to their proximity to each other and their isolation from the other figures within the advertisement. The visual connection of the remaining couple is significantly looser than those of the other couples, possibly as the advertisers may not wish to inadvertently shock the public as these figures are both male. This admittedly subtle reference to gays is nonetheless quite significant. It shows a society's growing acceptance of this previously victimised group in society. These couples within the ad do not function in a manner which can be compared to those of the early '80s Obsession advertising. These models appear to be introspective, but also apathetic: a scenario which implies sexual denial in comparison to previous images of sexual dialogue. Body contact between the couples is non-existent. Even eye contact the essence of communication, is absent. The previous images of sexual intimacy have been replaced by images of sexual restraint. The actual setting of these figures again assist in producing this effect. It is a scene which seems far removed from nature. The white stone columns appear cold, sterile and contrast greatly with previous natural imagery. The effect of photographing these sexually silent models in an unnatural, almost clinical setting is quite a powerful one. The new emphasis within Obsession's advertising seems to no longer be sexually charged imagery but images of couples engaging in sexual conduct which is socially acceptable and correct,







FIGURE 4

Fig 4



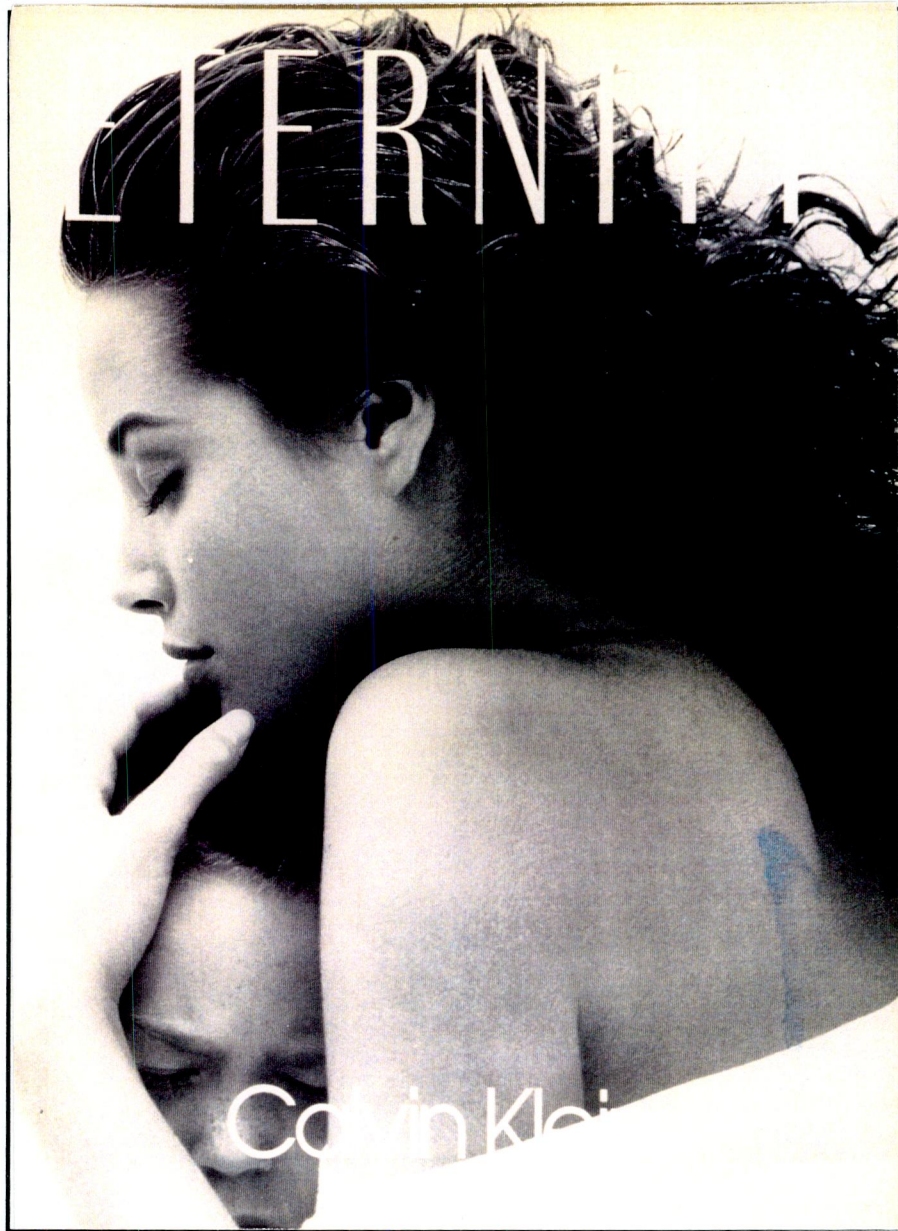


FIGURE 5



Fig 5.







FIGURE 6







one of sexual restraint, even celibacy. It is likely that the reasoning behind this change in direction of Obsession's advertising is linked with people's change in attitude towards sexual behaviour as a response to growing fears of contracting the AIDS virus. It could be seen as a company's response to this problem of AIDS.

Calvin Klein's follow up fragrance to Obsession, Eternity, entered the market in 1987. Eternity seemed to be a logical progression from Obsession. It is a fragrance which overtly projects images of monogamy. In an interview with Gentlemen's Quarterly, Pierre Dinand, designer of the Eternity fragrance bottle, said

*Calvin wanted the bottle to match the concept of eternity.... you think about silver, crystal, you think about marriage. I don't think eternity could ever have been black. (Stern, 1989, p.45).*

In a similar manner the magazine adverts for Eternity reflect these values. The wedding band in Eternity's ads is a prominent signifier of marriage. The main emphasis of the Eternity campaign is put on marriage and on the family. The imagery chosen represents, as can be seen from figures 4, 5 and 6, photographs of father and son, mother and son and father and daughters interacting lovingly - as a family. The idea of parenthood is glamourised and it is suggested that monogamy leads to happiness and contentment. In figure 6 father and daughters pose with glowing smiles as if for a family photograph. The prominence of the wedding ring is significant not only as it acts as a signifier of marriage but also as a way of underlying the absence of the mother figure. This in effect suggests that she remains absent as she is the one who is dutifully taking the photograph.

This advertising concept could be interpreted as a complete reversal from that of Obsession. However, from the analysis of figure 3 we under-





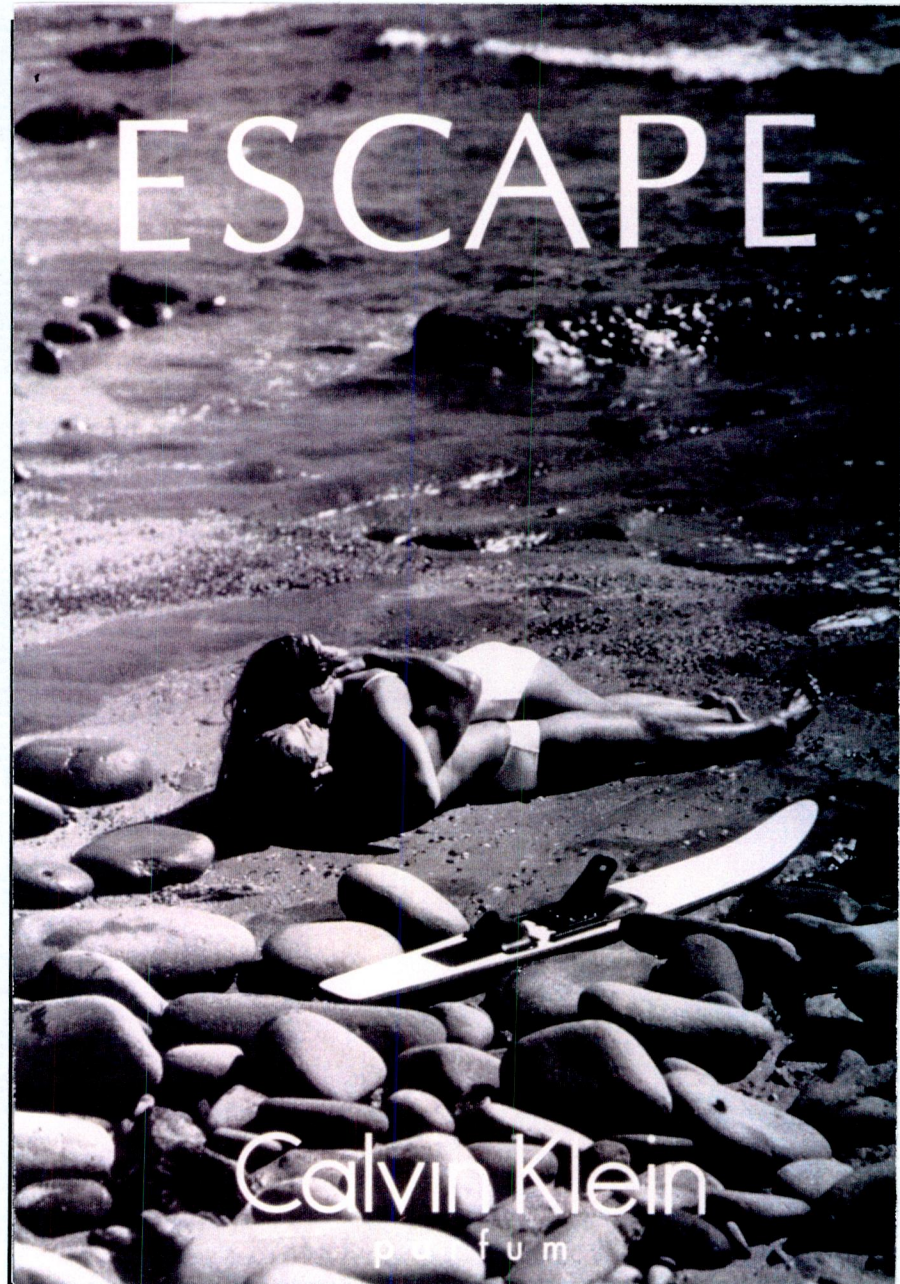
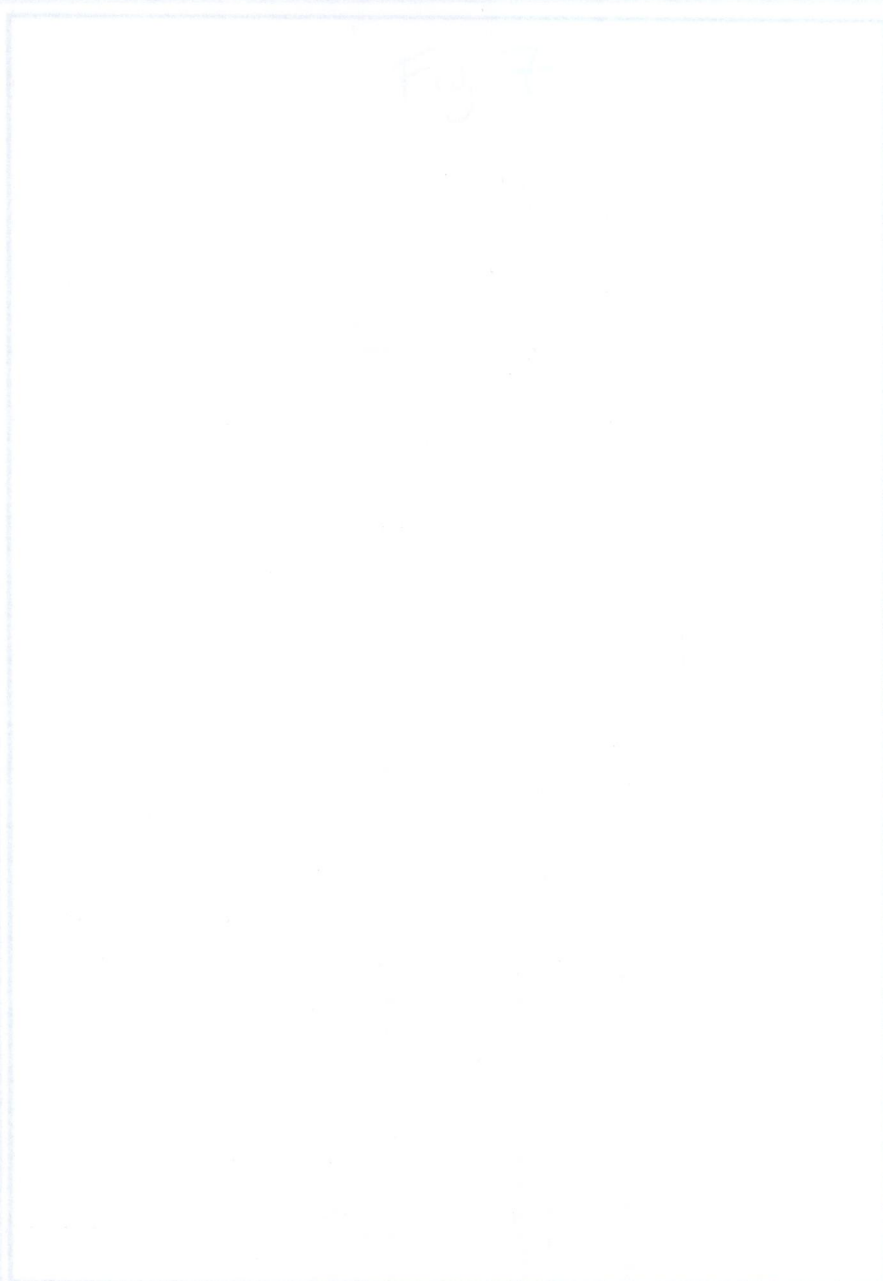


FIGURE 7





stand the shift in emphasis which had already been occurring in Obsession's advertising. The fragrance Eternity and its associated values in a way resolves the strain to be observed in Obsession's advertising campaign, as discussed in figure 3. Here I suggested the manner which the obsessive behaviour of the models was becoming more restrained. Aside from the advertising imagery, even the name Eternity implies marriage, 'till death do us part', and of course, the eternity ring.

Escape, Calvin Klein's most recent fragrance, is one which I also feel necessitates discussion at this point. The fragrance was launched in Spring '92 as a direct follow-up fragrance to Eternity. How does the marketing of this product relate to my discussion so far on the changes occurring in the direction of Calvin Klein's advertising? Calvin Klein explained his own personal thoughts on the subject during an interview with Ellen Stern where he stated that,

*Escape, this new perfume was created, because I was thinking, the last few years, how I need that. I need to get away I need to be able to play and I need to be able to Escape from all that work and all the other pressures of the world.*(Stern, '89, p.45)

The choice of the name 'Escape', to find a way out, to get off safely, to elude reality, is indeed a significant one. It is using the idea of fantasy, the idea of escapism, to find a world where no-one can interfere and disrupt the perfection, that allows Calvin Klein to re-introduce sexual imagery into his advertising. The insinuation is that to return to sexual imagery is now safe as the couple have eluded reality and entered a new fantasy world of health and perfection. This return to the use of sexual imagery (as seen in figure 7) by Calvin Klein is, however, quite different from that of





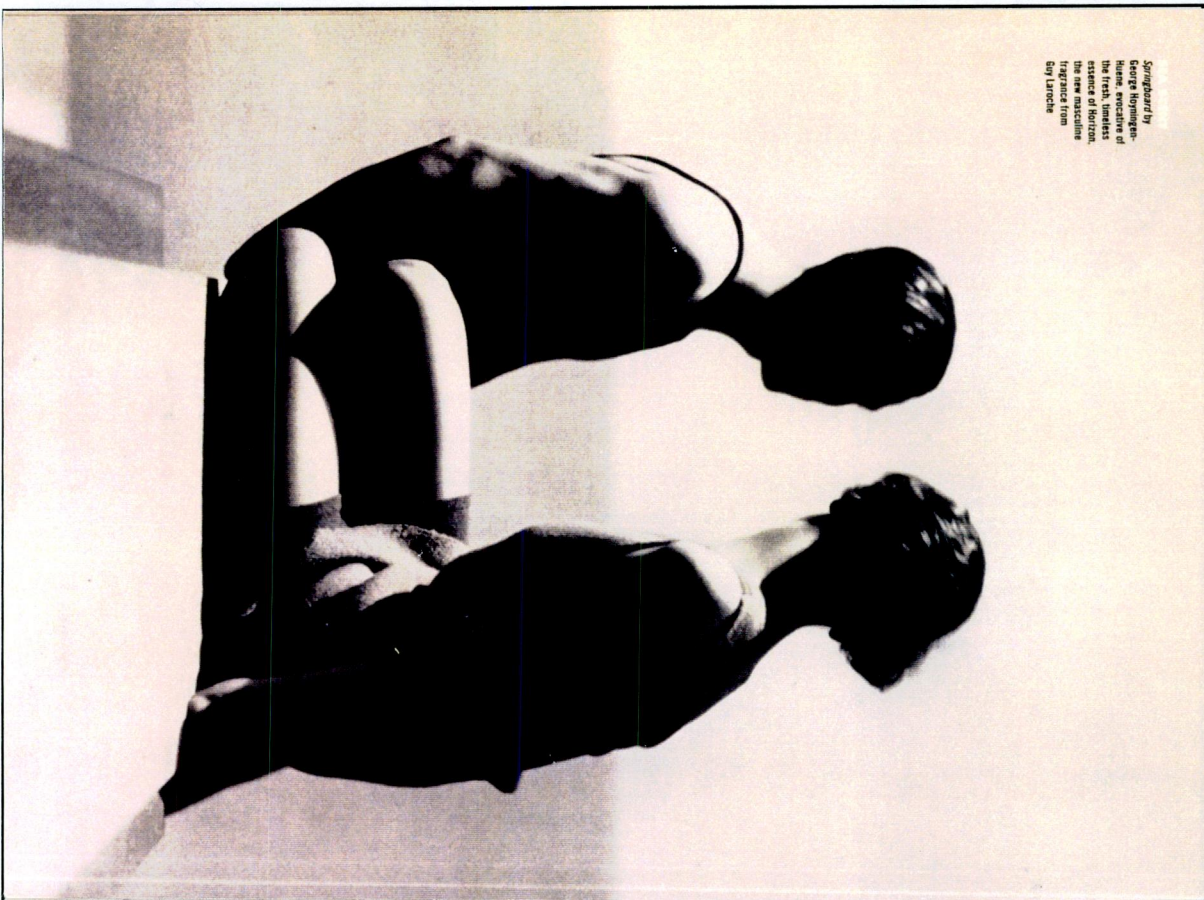


early imagery used in the mid-'80s to publicise Obsession. In the first place, it is not nearly as bodily explicit. The figures here are actually wearing bathing costumes whereas in previously discussed Obsession advertising the models were totally naked. The couple here also appear to be engaging in a more loving and sensitive embrace than that of previous purely sexual poses. The fact that the couple actually kiss in this advertisement is quite significant when compared to figures 1 and 2 where physical contact is perceived in a purely sexual manner devoid of any real emotional contact. The placement of the water ski in the foreground of this picture is again quite significant. Firstly it acts as a manner of explaining the reason for being where they are, beside the water. It also acts to inform us of the couple's common interests, their life together, the manner which they share their lives outside of the purely sexual context suggested in figures 1 and 2. The placement of the embracing figures in this beach scene is also an important feature of the advertisement. The manner which the camera had been angled when taking this shot is highly suggestive of how this scene would appear if someone were to accidentally stumble upon the couple while walking along the beach. The rocks in the foreground, particularly the out of focus ones, give a sense of distance and in a way act as a shield for the couple from unwanted intruders. Indeed, the entire feel of this ad, the intimate embrace and loving kiss, give us the feeling that we are intruders stealing a glimpse of a couple's time together. This point is significant when compared to figures 1 and 2. These two approaches contrast with Calvin Klein's approach to Escape. Our observations of the couple's interaction are uninterrupted; there is no sense of intimacy as we are quite openly invited to observe. The models are the main point of focus, these ads rely almost





Scripted by  
George Hoyningen-  
Hurne, evocative of  
the first, timeless  
essence of Horizon.  
The new masculine  
fragrance is from  
Guy Laroche



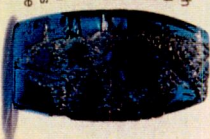
ELLE AD FEATURE



# THE NEW HORIZON

*The ultimate in sensory escapism: Horizon for men  
by Guy Laroche, an invocation for the senses that is much  
more than simply a new fragrance*

**Broaden your horizons** with the new masculine fragrance sensation from Guy Laroche. Combining lightness and warmth, the ingredients in Horizon help to reduce stress and induce relaxation. Horizon incorporates the concept of Aromachology™, a new science that has our psyche, concluding the power of scents on our psyche, concluding that the right combination of aromatic ingredients can alter moods, feelings and emotions. By blending fragrant plant ingredients - layering the stimulating wild



PHOTOGRAPH HOYNINGEN-HUENE

FIGURE 8





totally on their images to form the advertisement.

The basic differences which I feel have begun to appear in Klein's advertising for Eternity and Escape when compared to Obsession is the manner in which our emotions are appealed to. I have discussed earlier how the advertising of Obsession, has been referred to, by people such as Schiffman, as relying on the emotional arousal of our sexual needs. This, in my opinion, differs quite significantly from the arousal of our more romantic needs which are now being appealed to in Calvin Klein's advertising for his most recent fragrances, Eternity and Escape.

At this stage I feel it is important to show instances of this movement towards the more romantic content of ads in other companies. Figure 8 is an advertisement by Guy Laroche for his new fragrance for men 'The New Horiozon'. This is a fragrance which claims to be establishing a new trend in the 'future of fragrance' and one whose imagery I believe is doing likewise. The imagery is one which is quite similar in terms of photographic technique to that of Calvin Klein's. The sepia tone gives a hint of nostalgia to the image, which is also underlined by the couple's clothing which could be described as having a nineteen twenties feel. This in effect creates a sense of romance, a sense of intimacy as a couple are lost together in time. The couple through their positioning on the page appear as one; together they form a 'U' shape which visually links them to be the focal point of the ad. There is a sense of intimacy between the couple as they share a glimpse of this 'New Horizon'; however, it is more romantic than sexual. It is actually quite a sensitive approach to couples in advertising than say, that of the early Obsession ads. Could this be a deliberate sensitivity by advertisers to the depiction of sexual content in ads ?







FIGURE 9







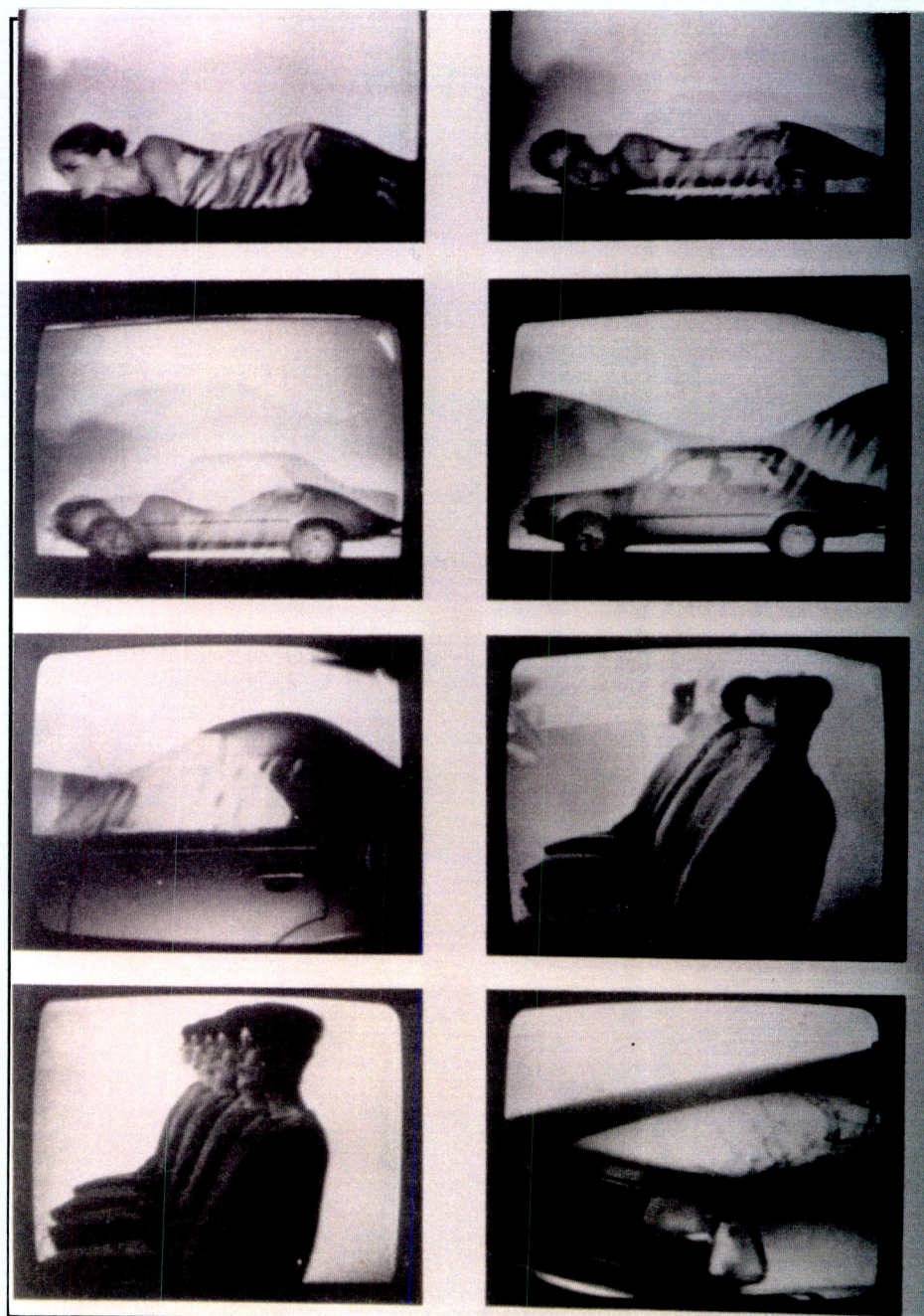


FIGURE 10



Fig 12

Figure 12: A photograph of a small, dark, rectangular object, possibly a piece of wood or metal, lying on a light-colored surface. The object is oriented vertically and appears to be a small, rectangular block or piece of material.





*Out of the blue, mid-tango,  
he says,  
"You're the most  
beautiful woman in the room.  
I'm absolutely crazy about you.  
I want you to come  
home with me now...."*

*Naturally, I fetched my wrap.  
It isn't every day your  
husband says that  
stuff to you.*

**SMIRNOFF**

*On a clear day  
you can see forever*

FIGURE 11



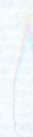




Figure 9 raises similar questions. This ad has many similarities to 'Eternity's marketing strategy. In the same manner, family values are upheld as we see father and son and mother and daughter interacting as a family. The car, which for years had been advertised by means of scantily clad females, has indeed taken a change in direction in terms of marketing strategies. By comparing figure 9 with figure 10 this point becomes quite clear. These stills of a T.V. advertisement from '82 illustrate the manner which the image of a woman is shaped and moulded like a car. She is displayed as a decorative, passive object available and controllable like a car. An image which is quite contrasting with today's family orientated imagery.

Figure 11, an example of Smirnoff's recent ad campaign (which appeared in Elle october '93), takes a similar approach. It is a 'safe' way of approaching sexual innuendo by doing so within the confines of marriage. In a similar manner to the advertising of Eternity the wedding band is prominent. Could this be a strategy through which advertisers have chosen to deal with the problems now associated with blatant sexual innuendo or is it merely a device to attract people's attention ?

From these examples of Calvin Klein's advertising there seems to be a change in direction of their approach to sexual imagery. Linking this with a growth in public awareness of the dangers of AIDS is one which I feel is quite valid. However, it is one I cannot conclusively prove. It is interesting, therefore, to analyse the definite reactions of advertisers to the issue of AIDS, namely Benetton and Esprit.





## CHAPTER THREE

---

THE DIRECT EFFECT OF AIDS ON COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING.  
DIFFERENT APPROACH TO AIDS AWARENESS ADVERTISING.





The year 1991 brought a new form of advertising: global issues were used to promote commercial products as part of socially-responsible business philosophies. Italian based Benetton and San Francisco based Esprit both, through work done by the same photographer, Oliverio Toscani, have decided to develop this corporate philosophy of social-consciousness as the central theme of their advertising. In this chapter I want to study the manner in which this new 'trend' in commercial advertising has approached the issue of AIDS. What have been their messages and how have people reacted to them? Following this analysis, I will discuss the approach of government and voluntary based organisations to educate the public on the dangers of AIDS. These are the groups upon which direct responsibility to educate people about AIDS has fallen; how do they deal with this through advertising?

Oliverio Toscani has worked with Benetton for a period of ten years. His choice of photographic subjects have formed the basis for the company's advertising campaign for as long. His imagery, which established the 'United Colors of Benetton' campaign of smiling happy mixed race children in Benetton's brightly coloured sweaters and jeans, undeniably made quite an impact and was quite an original approach. This strategy proved quite an effective one. Upon establishing the 'United Colours' message the shops even changed their name to fit in with the communication strategy (Blake, '92, p.31). However, as any one who reads the newspapers or watches the news realises, it is quite clear that Toscani has now chosen a much more radical approach to the advertising of Benetton. Toscani has basically chosen to expand on this theme and explore more controversial issues not directly linked to the products - Benetton clothes. Today those multi-racial





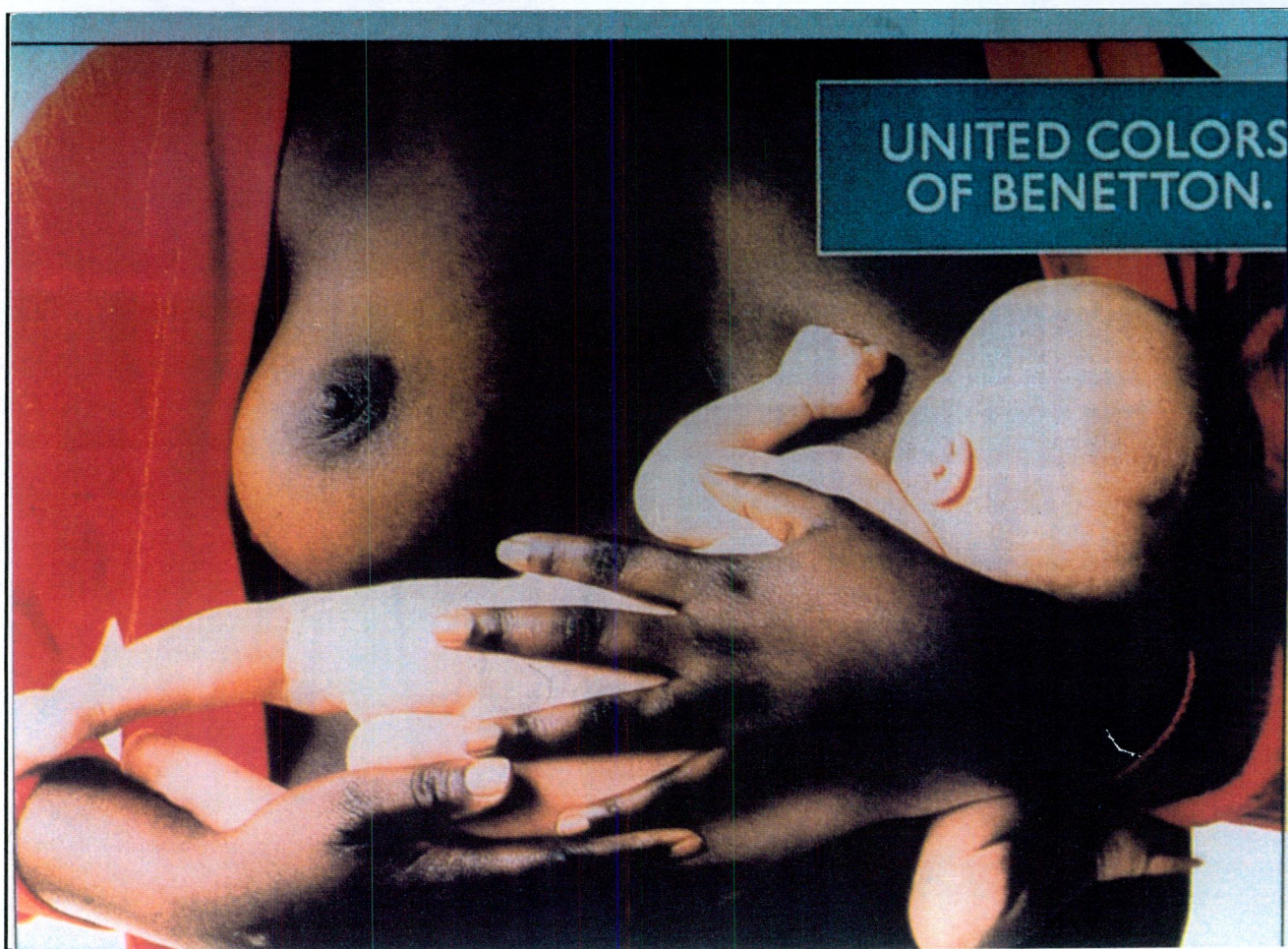


FIGURE 12







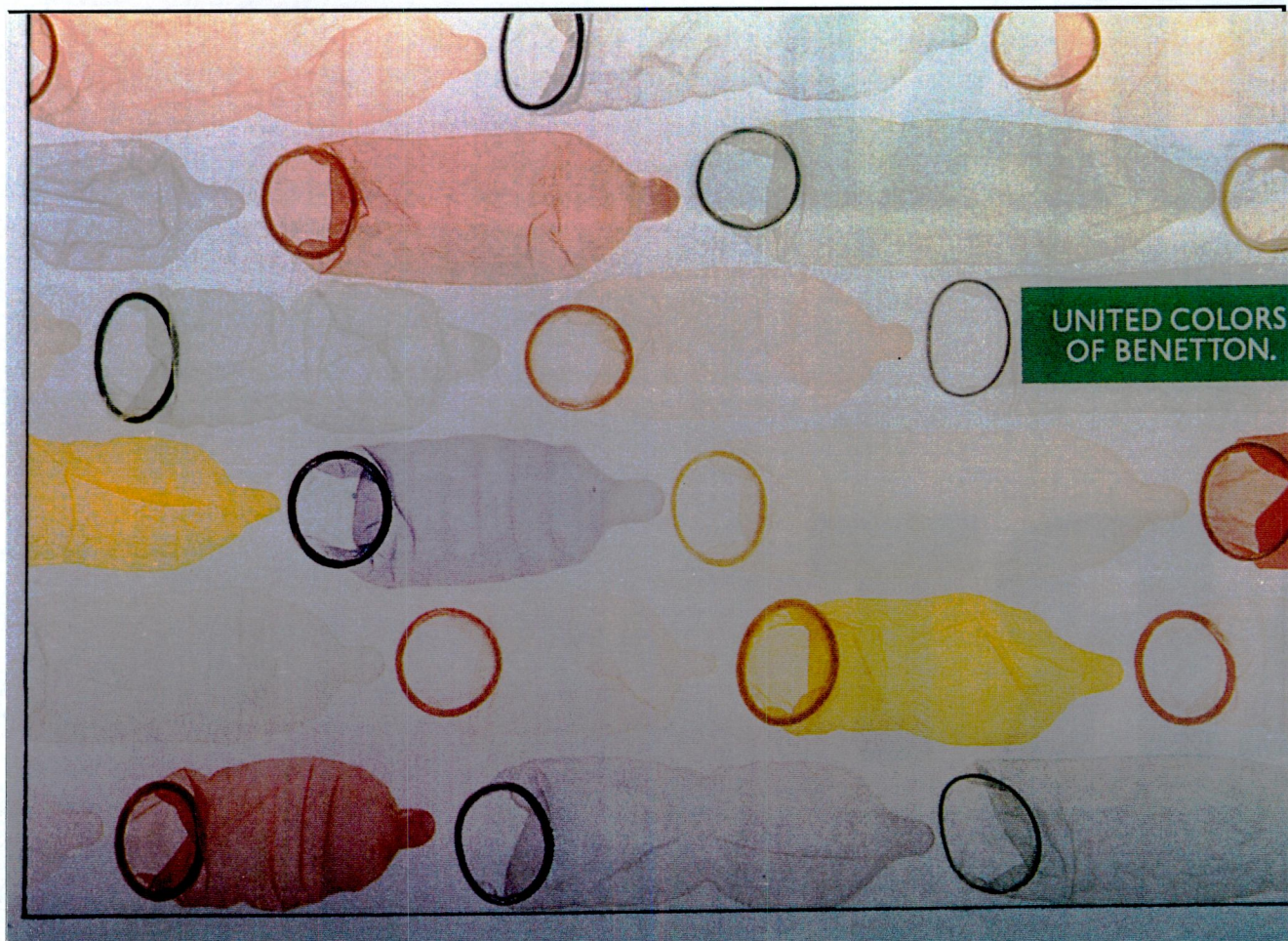


FIGURE 13







groups wearing the clothing are virtually contained to the catalogue. Instead, recent campaigns show a wide variety of highly controversial imagery ranging from struggling Albanian refugees attempting to board a ship already filled to beyond capacity, a close up of a soldier holding what appears to be a human thighbone, to a photograph of a dying AIDS victim surrounded by his family.

This shock factor of Toscani's Benetton advertising first came with the black breast/white baby poster. This image was banned in Britain and Ireland; however, continental Europe was able to handle it, (see figure 12). This public reaction to Benetton's increasingly controversial campaign seems set to continue. Oliviero Toscani's belief in his approach is quite an interesting one. He compares his relationship with Benetton with that of a Renaissance painter and the Pope.

*In the Renaissance, painting was the T.V. of that time. Lots of painters did not believe in God, but it was the imagery of the media which made Jesus Christ look like he did, it was because painters painted him like that. What we know about the world comes through these media channels. Everyone makes images in one way or another. I am documenting what is going on.... for a company with 4,000 shops in the world. (Blackwell, April 'p.20)*

This belief has caused Toscani to embrace many of today's sociopolitical issues in order to warn people of the truth as he sees it.

*Neither I nor Luciano Benetton, wanted to advertise sweaters....quite simply we used the space paid for by Benetton to project a message. (Blackwell, April '91, p.22).*

Quite a noble approach to advertising, but what were these messages the company felt necessary to convey to the public?

Figure 13 is an example of what could be considered Toscani's first attempt to address the issue of AIDS through Benetton's advertising. This







FIGURE 14







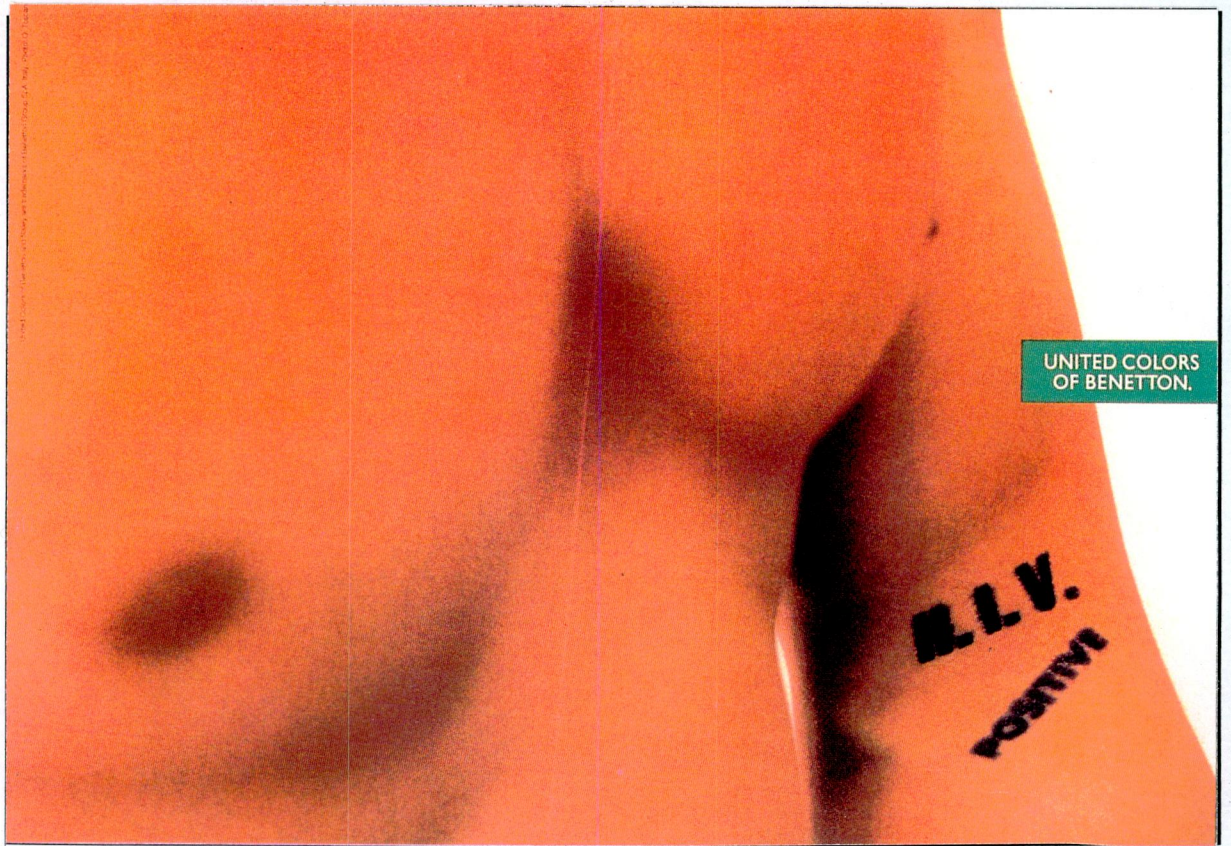


FIGURE 15







UNITED COLORS  
OF BENETTON.

NATIONAL AIDS HELPLINE  
0800 567 123  
24 hours a day - Free and Confidential

H.I.V.  
POSITIVE

COLORS, a magazine  
about the rest of the world,  
is available at Benetton stores  
and selected newsstands.

FIGURE 16







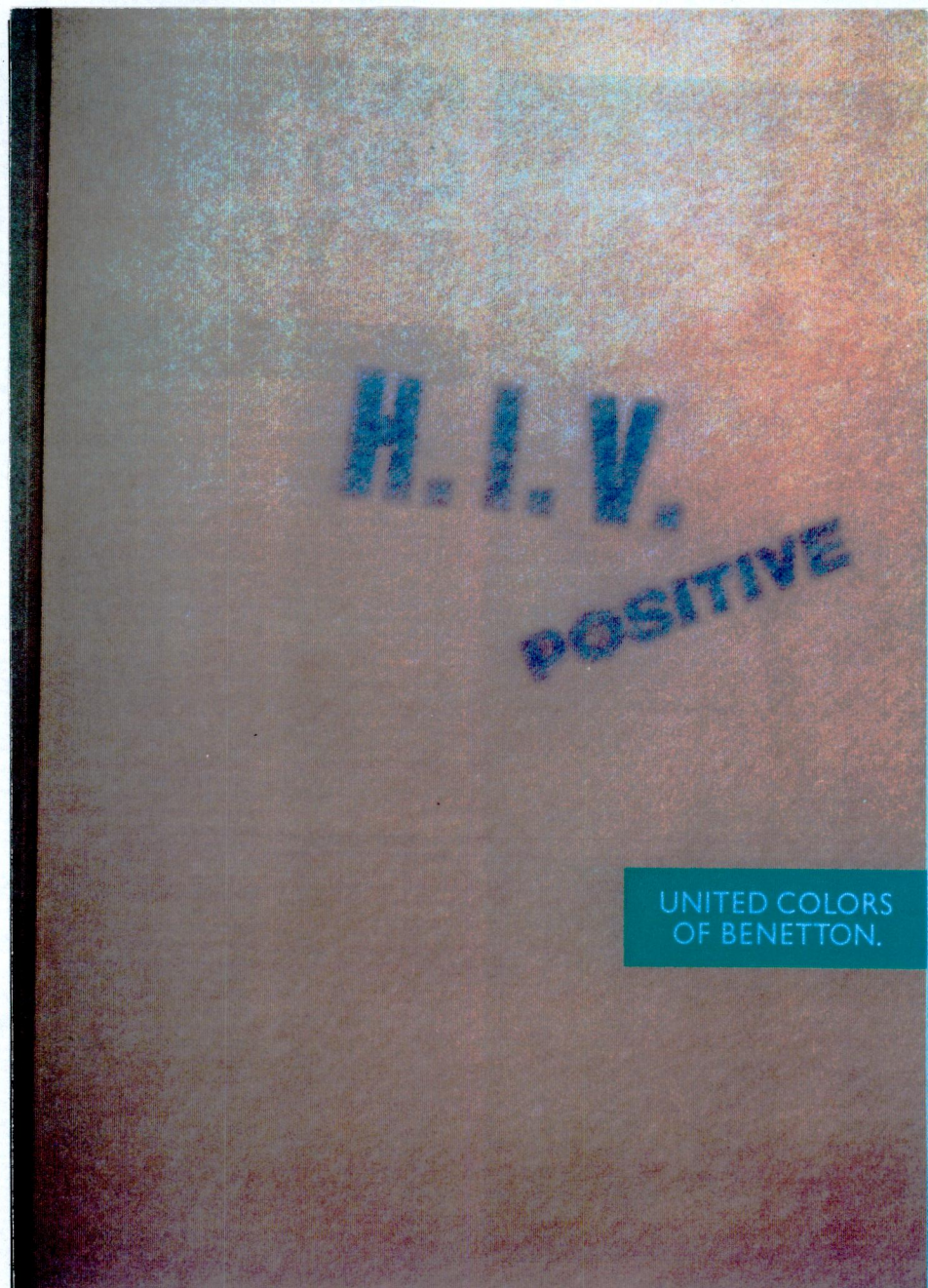


FIGURE 17







attractive display of coloured condoms received a firm recommendation against being run from the Advisory Standards Authority in Britain, as they feared the ad would cause offense. This image now, in the light of later imagery which I will be discussing, appears quite mild. It is an image which in itself says very little. It can be considered nothing more than an interesting use of condoms as photographic subjects. However it is the fact that this ad appeared in '89, a period when public debate was prevalent on the subject of condom availability, that it makes it clearer that this could indeed be seen as an indirect response to AIDS.

Figure 14, of a dying AIDS victim, first appeared on billboards and in magazines in '92. The ad was also quickly banned by Advertising Authorities. The image is of dying AIDS activist and AIDS victim David Kirby surrounded by his distressed family. This advertisement caused considerable distress to the public for numerous reasons, one being the manner in which the family's grief had been intruded upon. However the family actually wanted Benetton to use the image in the hope of some good coming from their son's death. The other reason was what was perceived as the company's sheer tastelessness in using such an image to advertise their clothes.

Figure 15, 16, and 17 all had similar effects on the advertising standards authority and the public as the previous ads. These images show a naked man, featuring different parts of the body through which H.I.V. can enter the bloodstream. On each of these areas of the body appears a tattoo H.I.V. positive. These images, like figure 14, are quite self explanatory. They state quite clearly their messages. Figure 14 shows how people die from AIDS and families suffer. Figures 15, 16 and 17 illustrate the areas through which AIDS can be contracted and the fact that the victim is com-





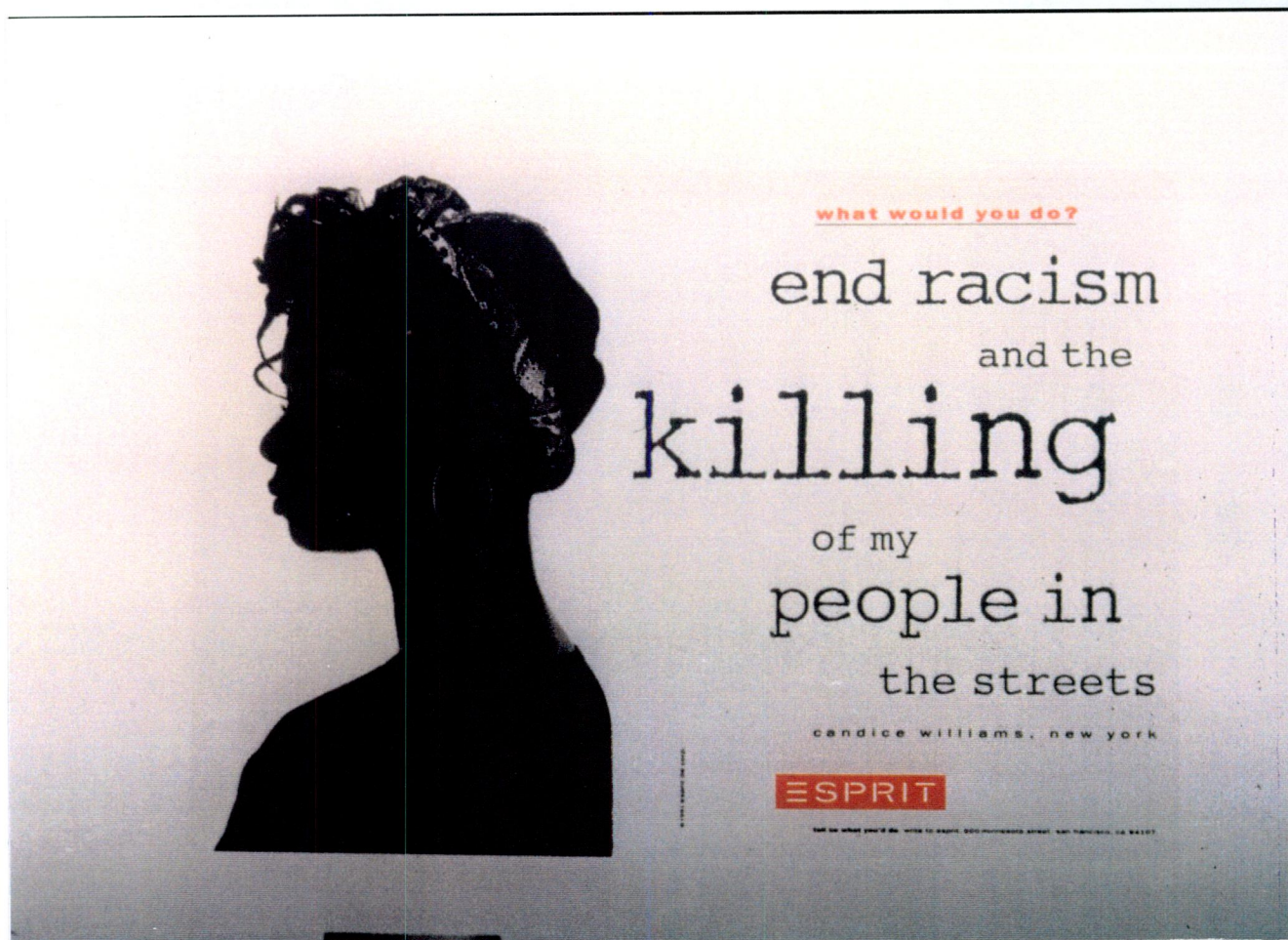


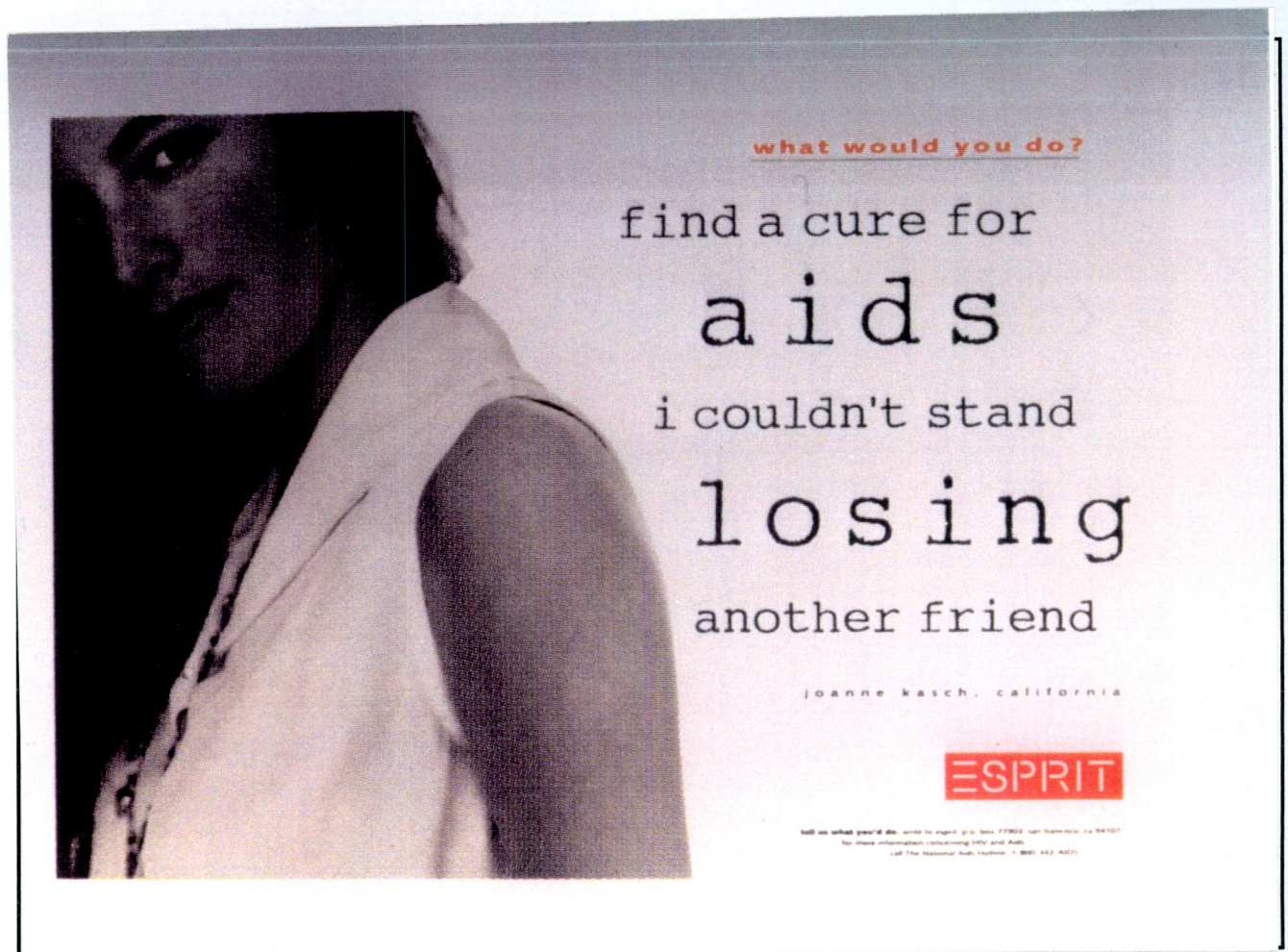
FIGURE 18





1870-1871





what would you do?

find a cure for  
aids  
i couldn't stand  
losing  
another friend

joanne kasch, california

ESPRIT

tell us what you'd do, write to: esprit, p.o. box 77903, san francisco, ca 94107  
for more information concerning HIV and Aids  
call The National Aids Hotline 1-800-342-AIDS

FIGURE 19







monly stigmatised, however they have to live with it until they die.

San Francisco based Esprit, one of the world's largest manufacturers of women's and children's clothes, decided to develop a dialogue with its customers through T.V. and print advertising by asking the question 'What would you do ? (to change the world)'. The responses they received were of course very positive changes ranging from figure 18, a plea to end racism, to figure 19, a need to find a cure for AIDS. This approach proved to be one which the public found quite acceptable. The company's approach was not quite as daring as Benetton's. However, it is still quite significant as a company's direct response to the issue of AIDS.

From this selection of Benetton and Esprit advertising it is clear that these companies have begun to realise the urgency of a need to react to this worldwide problem of AIDS. Through their direct approach to the issue they, in particular Benetton, have caused widespread debate. But the issue raised is not whether the political sentiment is offensive or not; it is rather that any overtly political message is deemed unacceptable in advertising. This is a debate which is set to continue for as long as Oliviero Toscani produces such controversial imagery. In the past, AIDS activists such as Act Up and the Gay Men's Health Crisis Centre New York have called for a public boycott of Benetton shops. However in other instances these campaigns were deemed worthy of poster awards, including Creative Review poster awards. The fact is that whatever your view on the subject and whatever the true motive of the company, the positive effects of this debate on the subject cannot be denied. AIDS has now become an issue about which people have become increasingly aware, it is now up to the proper groups - government agencies and awareness groups to educate the public about the





facts.

The complexity of the problem of AIDS, not only relates to the health care crisis but also to the communication crisis. The problem of how to change people's social and sexual behaviour after years of liberated permissiveness has become the ultimate education and information design problem. Despite the complexity and scale of this health problem, there is a general lack worldwide of national strategies for AIDS education. I have found through my research that poster campaigns are the most prominent conveyer of AIDS information; they commonly offer support and promote discussion. All over the world, government agencies have produced posters with a wide variety of aims and objectives. In most countries, however, there has been a marked contrast between national, state-funded AIDS education aimed at the public, and educational material produced by charities and community based organisations which tend to focus on specific groups in society. Most government campaigns have tended to be vague, relying on scare tactics and appealing to the public in a manner which suggests to everyone, from married couples to gays, that they share equal risk of contracting the disease. The main problem of course is sex. Governments have tended to tread very carefully when dealing with this subject. Initially governments tended to recommend either monogamy or celibacy as the 'correct' moral answer to the problem. In recent attempts there has been a growth in the use of sexual images; however, these tend to focus solely on heterosexuals and still contrast greatly with voluntary agencies' imagery in relation to effectiveness. Government agency responses quite basically ignore the lesbian and gay communities. The Eastern Health Board (Dublin) was unable to provide me with any material which targeted either of these





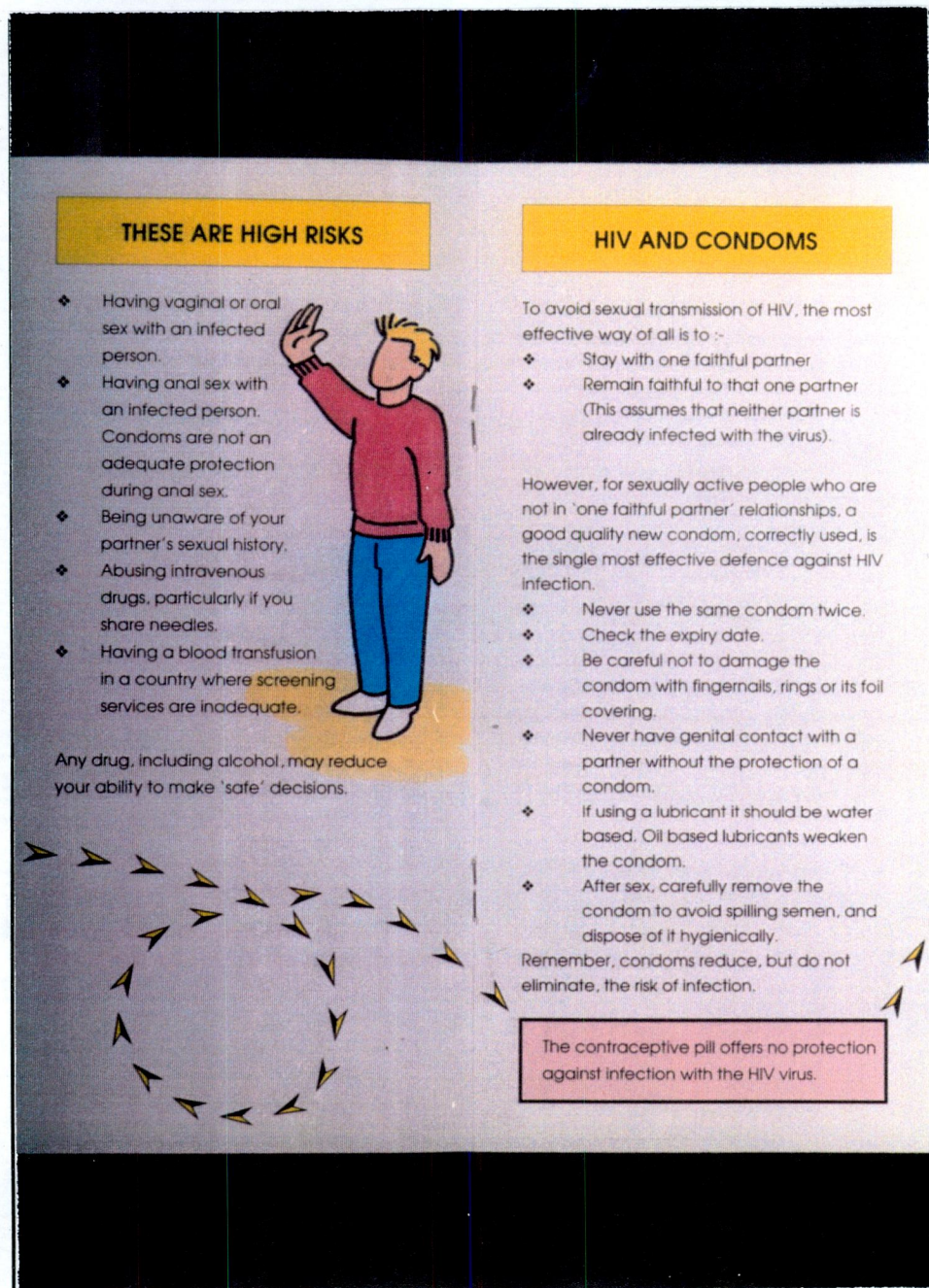


FIGURE 20



1260

Fig 20



We've all heard someone say: "I HATE safer sex!" "What's the point of having sex if you can't do anything FUN!" "I only do it over the phone these days." "Sex just isn't what it used to be."

Well, guys, sex can still be hot, sweet, steamy, tender, raunchy or however you like it, AND totally satisfying. We just need to make it safer. Safer means: No exchange of body fluids. Blood, cum and vaginal secretions are the fluids we're most concerned with. That's where HIV can be found. Tears and saliva cannot carry enough HIV to be dangerous.

We're going to do some real talking, in plain language, about how you can do everything safer. And talking is the best way to start: Talk to your partners. Make sure they know that safer sex is the rule. Once that's clear, you can use your energy creatively and come up with your own variations on safer sex. Here are some basics to start with...



#### SAFER THAN SAFE

- \* Your biggest sex organ is between your ears, not your legs. Use your imagination. Sex does not have to be genital to be hot.
- \* Masturbation, hugging, phone sex, cuddling, massage, "dry humping" (no insertion), visual fantasies (drag or costumes) are all safe since no body fluids are exchanged.

FIGURE 21



Fig 21



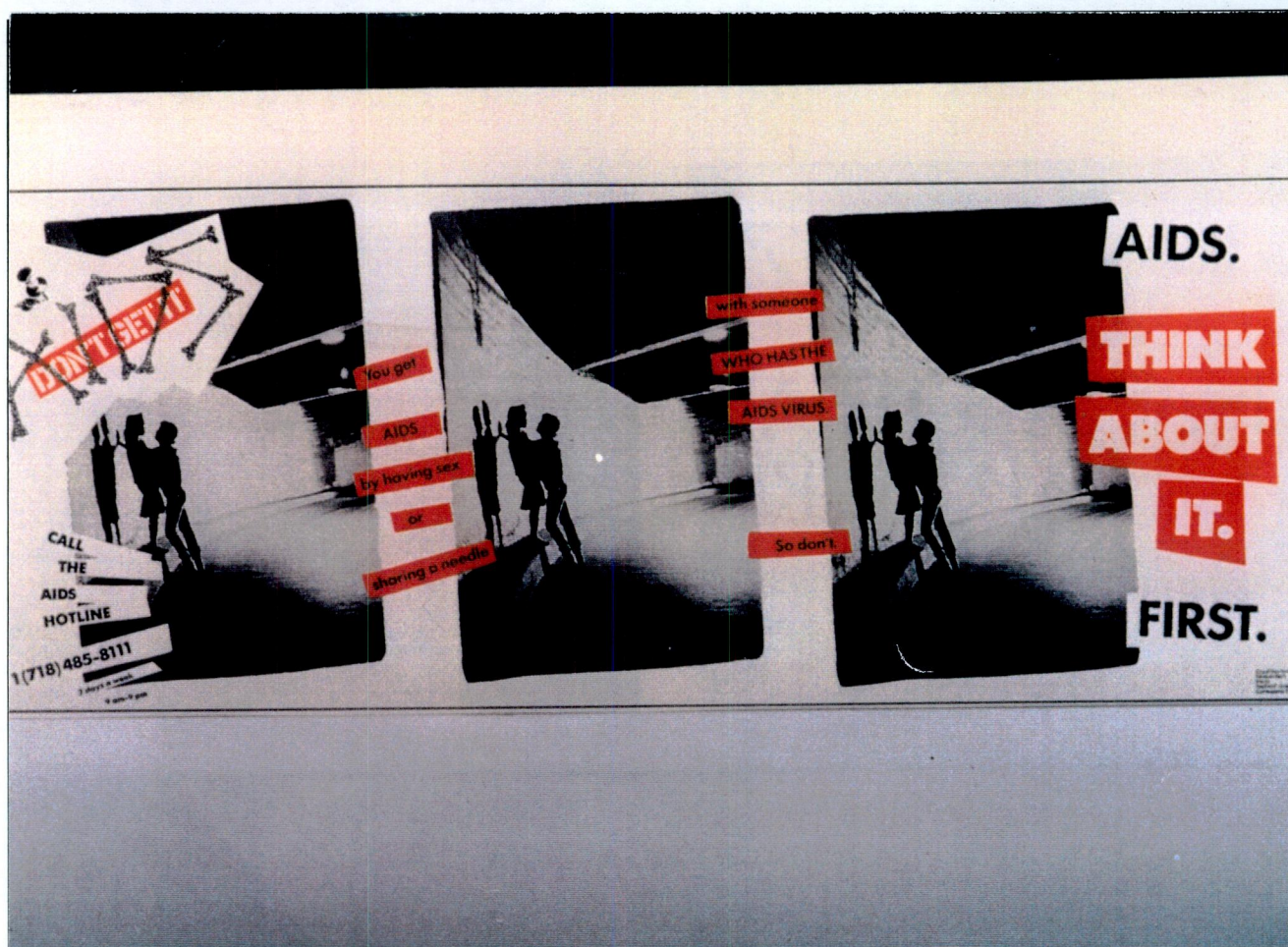


FIGURE 22



Fig. 22

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS



high risk groups. It is very often the case that the voluntary sector is left with the responsibility of addressing these social groups. The result of this sharing of responsibility, between government and voluntary bodies, has been that different population groups have received very different kinds of AIDS education posters. Advice to heterosexuals, commonly produced by government agencies is very often unclear and indirect, see figure 20, whereas materials produced by and for gay men such as that produced by the Gay Men's Health Crisis Centre New York, tend to be far more explicit and informative, (see figure 21). The 1990's seem destined to inherit these communication problems of the '80s as government agencies still seem unable to react to the problem of AIDS in an informative manner. Governments worldwide seek justification in not wishing to unduly shock the public. However, once the shock of these images of safer sex are weighed up against the shock experienced by someone who is diagnosed H.I.V. positive, there really is little case for argument. Nonetheless my search for blunt, informative posters on safer sex produced by government agencies proved quite fruitless. In New York City AIDS is the major cause of death in women between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four and one baby in sixty is born with H.I.V. antibodies. Despite the obvious urgency of this problem, government responsibility in producing informative posters has quite basically been ignored.

The poster called 'AIDS Don't get it', (figure 22) was one of the posters produced by the New York City Department of Health. The poster first appeared in '89 and is directed towards adolescents. This public service announcement depicts the sexual activity of adolescents in quite a degrading manner. They are pictured outdoors at night in hostile surround-





**A I D S**  
**THINK POSITIVE**



**STAY NEGATIVE**

**Practice Safer Sex**

**Never Share Needles**

HEALTH PROMOTION UNIT  
Department of Health

FIGURE 23



Fig 2

1973/11/20



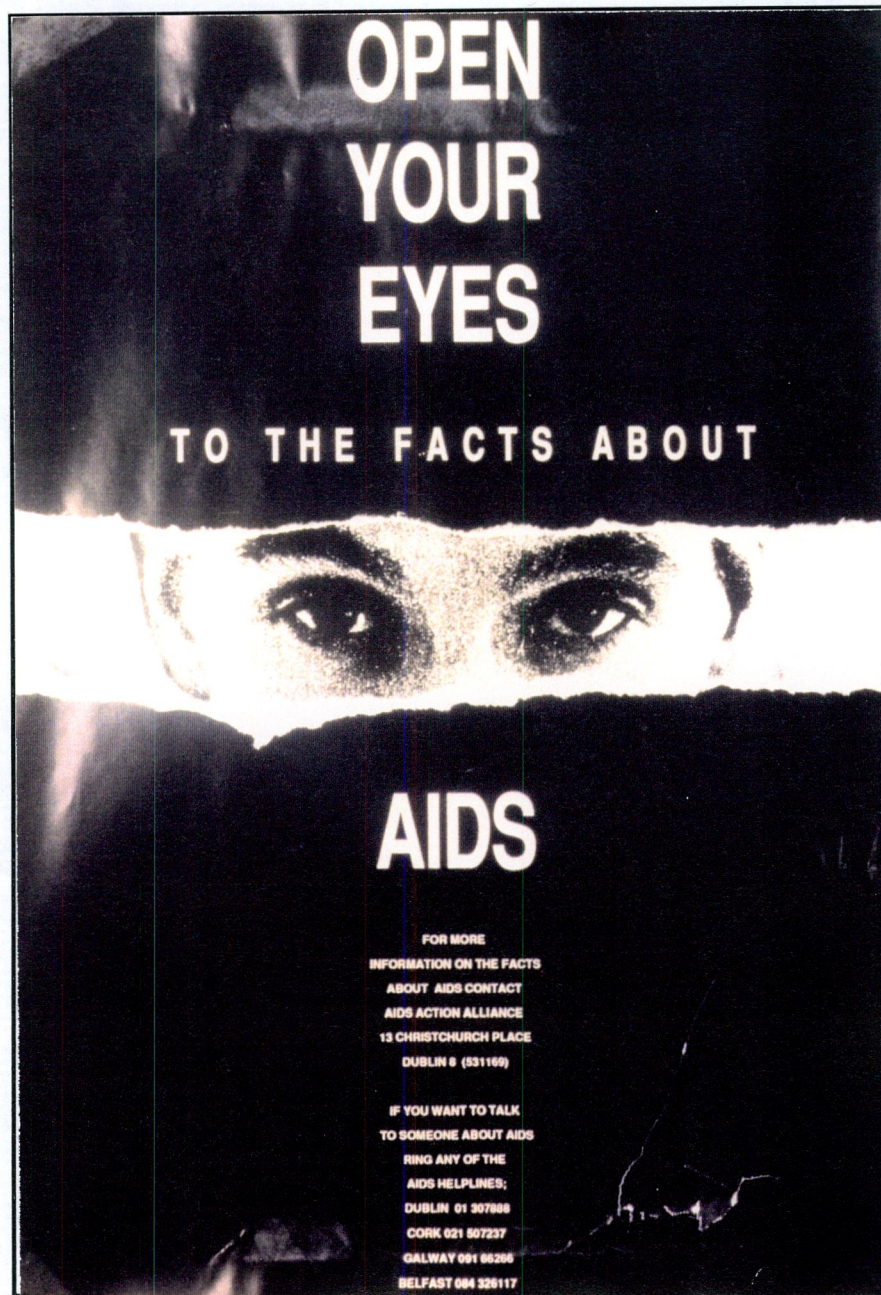
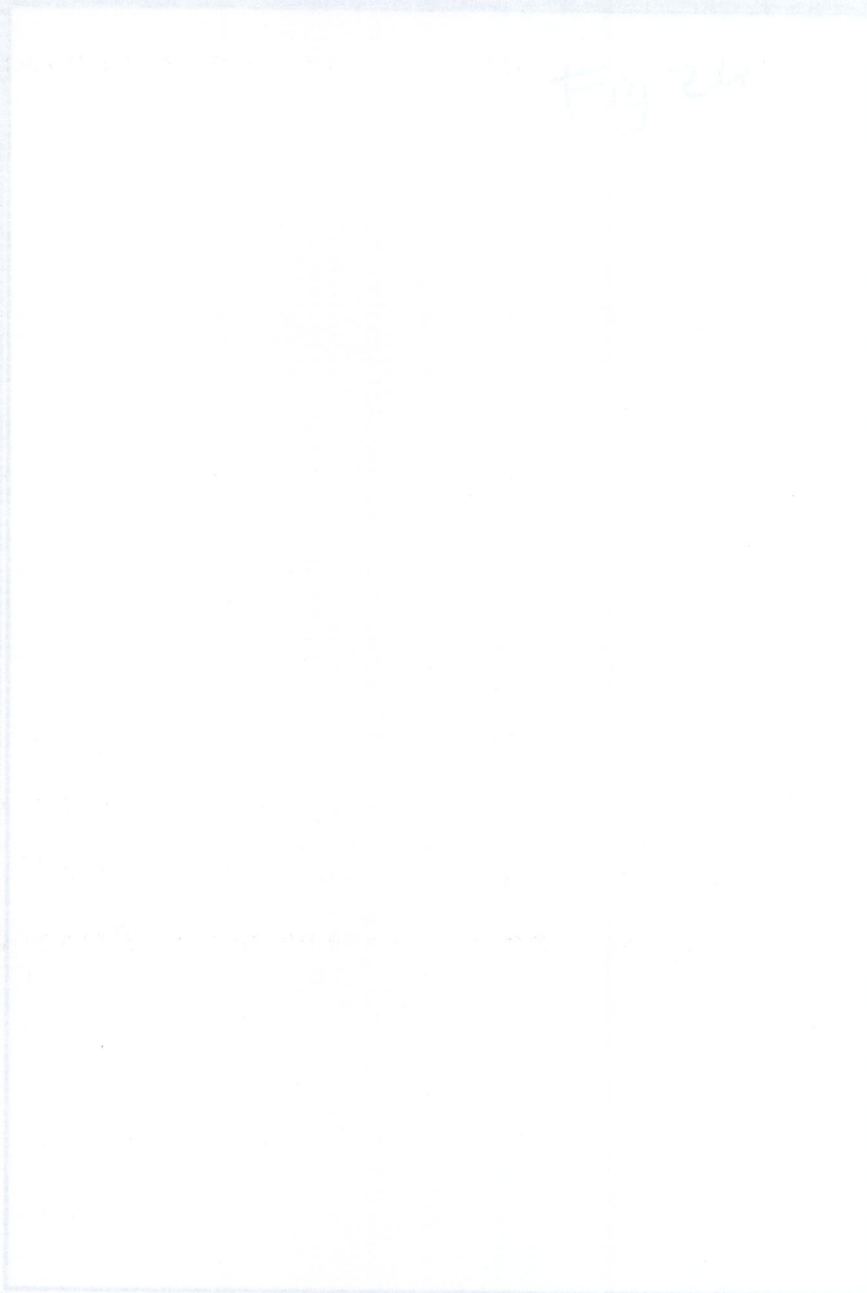


FIGURE 24







ings, a dimly lit tunnel which emanates a feeling of danger. This image in conjunction with the absence of any real safe-sex information other than a phone number, renders this effort quite ineffective. The poster makes no mention about the use of condoms. Instead, it suggests abstinence as a means of self-protection. However, the manner in which normal sexual desire is condemned and celibacy is promoted as the only other alternative actually alienates the audience.

'AIDS Think Positive' (figure 23), a poster done by the Health Promotion Unit (Department of Health Dublin), shows these similar problems which occurred in figure 22. In this case, however, the poster does not even follow up its information with any hotline number. The emphasis of this poster is put on 'AIDS - think Positive - stay Negative'. This is quite an obscure approach, how can the power of the mind correctly help to protect you from AIDS. By placing the emphasis on this phrase, the viewer is left confused. This confusion is only marginally lessened when we read the small type 'practice safer sex', and 'never share needles'. In all this poster heightens peoples confusion rather than informing them.

'Open your eyes to the facts about AIDS' is another poster done by the Health Promotion Unit (Dublin), see figure 24. Here a phone number was deemed necessary. This is hardly surprising as there is no mention of safe-sex, the use of condoms or the dangers associated with the sharing of needles. The actual informative value of any of these posters discussed so far is quite minimal. They do not directly address the important issues of how to achieve safer sex or the serious implications associated with sharing infected needles. Quite basically they prove to be quite ineffective.

In Britain, the Health Education Authority, after two years of research,





# HOW FAR WILL YOU GO BEFORE YOU MENTION CONDOMS?



THIS FAR?



THIS FAR?



THIS FAR?



THIS FAR?

Today, no one can ignore the need to mention condoms. They sex with someone without using one and not only could you risk an unwanted pregnancy, but you also risk contracting one of the most sexually transmitted diseases.

Like Herpes, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, and of course HIV, the virus which leads to AIDS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO GET A FREE COPY OF THE FREE REPORT...

So the question isn't if, but when you mention condoms. You could mention them at any moment leading up to sex intercourse. In reality, it's not quite so easy.

Mention them too early and you might feel you're in a bad position or available. Leave it too late and you risk getting a STD or worse, you might not mention them at all.

When is the easiest moment to say you want to use one? How about while you're still wearing your knicker? In this instance it would be picture three.

By now you've gone far enough to make it obvious that you both want to have sex. But not so far that you're in danger of getting emotionally and sexually carried away.

It's a perfect opportunity. So take it. Say you want to use a condom.

Say he hasn't got one? Well, here one of your own at the ready just in case. It really doesn't matter whose you use.

And then you can go just as far as you like.



FIGURE 25







came up with figure 25, a double page spread on 'How far will you go before mentioning condoms?', two million pounds was spent on producing this campaign on behalf of the Department of Health in Britain. The campaign which was launched in January '94 was quickly withdrawn by the British Junior Health Minister. The material was regarded as inappropriate for a campaign aimed at the general public. According to Sunday Times author Andrew Taff,


*Ministers seem to be in a moral panic. They accept that unwanted teenage pregnancies and the spread of AIDS means more emphasis should be put on the use of condoms and safer-sex, but are in a tangle about how to get the message across to young, single people while upholding family values.*(Taff, '94, p.12)

This example, of a governments inability to accept the necessary approach desperately needed in the combat of AIDS quite clearly reinforces my argument. In this case the British campaign would have been an effective approach. The campaign was tested on targeted audiences. Young people and their parents were happy with this campaign for the sixteen plus age range and believed it would be effective.(Taff, '94' p.12). It seems evident, therefore, that due to governments incompetence in dealing with the issue of AIDS and their failure in providing proper public education, that the responsibility must be taken on board by more liberally minded groups.

Groups which have taken up the challenge in this country are Dublin AIDS Alliance, U.S.I. and Lesbian and Gay Health. These groups have joined forces to produce an awareness campaign which contrasts greatly with government efforts in this country. Figure 26 through to 28 are examples of campaigns by voluntary agencies. On a basic level the approach to sexual imagery is one which contrasts greatly with the government agencies







**HIV / AIDS is a problem for everyone**

Sex  
feels  
better  
when  
you  
know  
it's  
safe. Use a  
condom, or explore  
other safer ways of  
having sex. **Never share  
used needles.**

**t a k e   c a r e   b e   s a f e**

AIDS Helplines:  
Dublin: 224 2771   Cork: 276 676  
Limerick: 310 101   Galway: 66 296  
Belfast: 326 117

Program funded by Health, Social & Family Affairs, Dublin City Council, and the Department of Health, Dublin City Council.

FIGURE 26



Fig 26

WOMAN'S NAME





take care  
be safe

**Sex is wonderful**  
and safer sex can be even  
**better**, it's great to just enjoy it without  
having to worry. Choose safer  
sex every time and  
never share  
used needles.

London: 310 101    Dublin: 124 277  
Glasgow: 66 286    AIDS Helpline  
London: 276 616  
Belfast: 376 117

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FIGURE 27



Figure 7





## Condoms can prevent ;

AIDS,  
Cervical Cancer,  
Chlamydia,  
Syphilis,  
Gonorrhea,  
Genital Warts,  
other S.T.D.s  
and Pregnancy



t a k e   c a r e   b e   s a f e



**AIDS Helpline:**  
Dublin: 724 277   Cork: 778 838  
Limerick: 310 181   Galway: 66 266  
Belfast: 325 117

Posters kindly produced by  
UNAIDS, with the assistance of the Irish and UK Health Departments.

FIGURE 28



Fig. 2.1



where it was non-existent. The approach to safer sex, particularly in figures 26 and 27, has taken on a more adventurous and modern approach. These images do not revert to moralising, scare tactics or an attempt to impose restrictive behaviour. They are seductive, lustful yet very informative at the same time. They are a tempting invitation to safer sex, aimed at a modern and sexually active audience. Figure 27 is particularly important as it directly approaches a gay audience, an audience which is commonly ignored in this country, yet one which is particularly vulnerable to the disease. The campaign appeals to an audience which is sexually active, one which is at risk of infection, and gives clear advice to use a condom and never share needles. However, the strength of this approach is their choice of imagery and the modern form which the design of the poster has taken. The entire feel of the campaign is young, interesting and, most importantly, informative. Each poster includes AIDS Helpline numbers for Cork, Belfast, Dublin, Galway and Limerick.

Another innovative approach in the fight against AIDS can be seen in figures 30 and 31. This strategy, which is prevalent in the U.S., is one which I find very interesting. These images show us a type of power struggle which is occurring over the communicative powers of advertising. It seems that the power of commercial advertising, to programme lifestyles and to mould social attitudes, has been acknowledged and is in turn being used by these awareness groups to communicate their own messages.

In figure 30 and 31 the manner which common advertising images have been manipulated by public awareness groups in order to communicate their opinions is evident. The Marlborough man and Coca Cola, perhaps two of the most common images in advertising, were cleverly used in





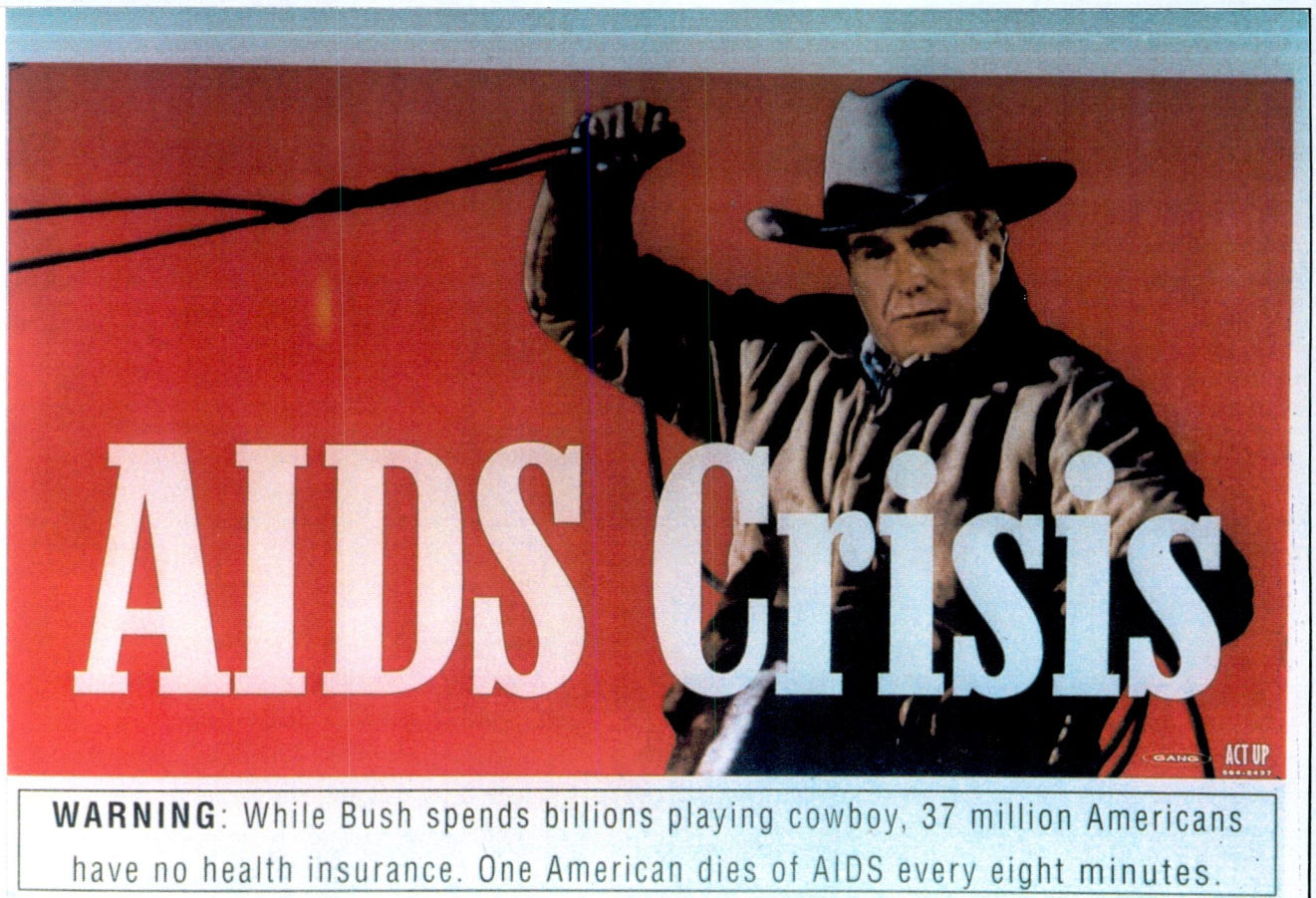


FIGURE 30



Fig 35



Enjoy

AZT

The U.S. government has spent one billion dollars over the past 10 years to research new AIDS drugs. The result, 1 drug—AZT. It makes half the people who try it sick and for the other half it stops working after a year. Is AZT the last, best hope for people with AIDS, or is it a short-cut to the killing Burroughs Wellcome is making in the AIDS marketplace? Scores of drugs languish in government pipelines, while fortunes are made on this monopoly.

**IS THIS HEALTH CARE OR WEALTH CARE?**

FIGURE 31









There's only one pullover  
this photograph  
should be used to sell.



**SILENCE=DEATH. ACT UP.**

Information and donations: ACT UP London, BM Box 2995, London WC1N3X.

FIGURE 32.



F13 32



1990 to expose serious problems relating to health care in the U.S. Both of these posters by Act-Up and Vincent Gagliostro respectively are excellent examples of ways which AIDS awareness groups use the communicative powers of advertising to their advantage. The choice of Marlboro and Coke ads can in no way be considered coincidental. They are companies about which there has been much public debate relating to issues such as worker exploitation, and in the case of Marlboro the glorification of a cancer causing product. Therefore it is not a simple matter of hijacking an advertisement to communicate a new more controversial message, the specific choice of company is also very important.

Figure 32 is one which relates this struggle for control of advertising imagery the best. It shows the aforementioned controversial Benetton advertisement of a dying AIDS sufferer with a condom placed beneath it. The caption reads 'There's only one pullover this photograph should be used to sell.' This AIDS activist group Act-Up make their obvious difference in opinion with Benetton on the moral right to use such an image in advertising, quite clear.

This range of examples of recent advertising campaigns show that the question of how to deal with the AIDS issue is one which is creating many problems. The manner in which Benetton has chosen to deal with the issue of AIDS is proving unacceptable to at least one AIDS activist group as is clear from figure 32. Also, I'm sure the way advertising has been used by awareness groups to communicate their beliefs is just as unacceptable to the companies involved. With regard to awareness campaigns, it is quite clear that the group upon which direct responsibility to inform the public falls, namely the government, is not effectively dealing with the problem. The





main problem seems to be their inability to deal with sexual imagery in their campaigns. From the examples of the U.S.I. campaign (see figures 26 and 27) it is clear how effective the use of such imagery can be, and indeed how necessary it is to target specific audiences. It is clear that due to governments' ineffectiveness in dealing with AIDS awareness that the problem of an uninformed public is destined to exist for the foreseeable future.





## CHAPTER FOUR

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### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION





Sexual imagery in advertising has been increasingly updated in relation to people's own growth in acceptance of imagery in magazine and T.V. format. Sex has acted as a marketing tool for a diverse range of products. Calvin Klein's approach to advertising in the past proved to be quite revolutionary in relation to the success with which they used sex to sell. From the use of topless images of pubescent Brooke Shields through to images of 'Obsession', his approach proved to be a marketing man's dream. However, it is my belief, that the mid '80s have revealed a tension in the use of sexual imagery which developed into images of monogamy and sexual denial. I have discussed the manner which society has been forced to reconsider the effects of overtly promiscuous sexual behaviour and it seems, through this new direction in Calvin Klein's imagery, that this need for reflection has also been observed in the company's advertising. While admittedly this analysis of Calvin Klein's sexual imagery in his ads in relation to AIDS is inconclusive, it is still possible to suggest that it may be the initial response to such a global issue of AIDS by an advertising company.

On the other hand, the section on Benetton and Esprit quite clearly shows the manner in which companies have chosen to openly embrace the issue and incorporate it into their advertising. It is quite an interesting and innovative concept, the effect of which I have already discussed in chapter three as being highly controversial.

Another area where considerable controversy has arisen is in the manner in which AIDS education should deal with the subject of safe sex. My research has shown how high levels of sexually explicit imagery is now being used by voluntary AIDS awareness groups. These images appeal to specific groups in our society, those most at risk; gays, lesbians and the





sexually active. They work on a more direct level to the campaign used by the government where reference to sexual imagery is non-existent and indeed information on the dangers of AIDS is unclear. It is quite interesting that images used by the voluntary organisations in their advertising actually link quite closely with the imagery used by Calvin Klein in the early '80s, a period when it was inconceivable that sex could have fatal consequences. It is through this imagery that the sexually active are appealed to and advised on ways to protect themselves and their partners.

I hope to have illustrated the manner in which advertising is being affected by the issue of how to deal with AIDS. In the case of Calvin Klein it could be described as a latent response, but may also be a sign of what to expect from future advertising. It also seems clear that until government agencies either resolve their problems of how to deal with the issue of safe sex or indeed until they decide to join forces with voluntary agencies to educate the public, such companies as Benetton and Esprit will consider it their responsibility to heighten the public's awareness on the issue of AIDS through their advertising.





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