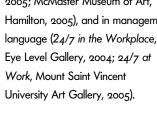
About the Artist

Cathy Busby makes art that responds to the mediation and representation of emotion in consumer culture. She has looked for their patterns and extracted recurring instances of textual and visual emotional representation in: self-help books (How..., Gallery 101, Ottawa, 2001), SUV advertising (Testdrive, Eye Level Gallery, Halifax, 2002; Totalled, Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa, 2004), public apologies (Sorry, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, Halifax,

2005; McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton, 2005), and in management

Busby has a BFA from NSCAD from Concordia University (1992) and a PhD in Communication from Vincent University.

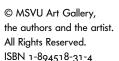


(1984), an MA in Media Studies Concordia University (1999). She currently teaches at Mount Saint



This publication documents the exhibition 24/7 at Work, which was presented by MSVU Art Gallery in the University Library over the period 15 October through 11 December 2005 Exhibitions situated in the vitrines are part of a continuing experimental series entitled Window Box. Window Box exposes a range of practices within visual culture, often with the participation of members of the Mount Saint Vincent campus community, in a heavily frequented public site. We gratefully acknowledge the Canada Council for the Arts for its financial support of MSVU Art Gallery programs.

Ingrid Jenkner Director MSVU Art Gallery



msvu art gallery

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Design: docaitta/05 Photography: Diana Campanaro, MSVU Art Gallery Printing: Bro Moc Print & Litho Ltd.

GROW AN IDEA, A BUSINESS HIT THE GROUND RUNNING INCENTIVIZED ISSUES (MEANING PROBLEMS) KISSING UP AND KICKING DOWN LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD MAXED OUT MOVING FORWARD NO-BRAINER NUMBERS SERVED OPTICS OUT OF THE LOOP OUTSOURCING OWNING THE PLAN PUSHING THE ENVELOPE RAISING THE BAR RAMPING UP **RATIOS OF SUCCESS RE-PURPOSING RESULTS-DRIVEN RIGHT-SIZING** RISK-AVERSE ROADMAP **ROLL-OUT STAKEHOLDERS STEWARDSHIP** STRATEGIC FIT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS SWAP-OUT TALK THE TALK THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX SUNSETTING

24/7 ACTIONABLE ALIGNMENT TO PLAN ALL ON THE SAME PAGE

BAD OPTICS BENCHMARKING BLAME GAME

BLOWBACK BRAIN DRAIN

BRAIN DUMP

CLEAR THE AIR

CLIENT FOCUS

CONNECT-THE-DOTS

CORE COMPETENCIES

DOWN THE ROAD

DOWN-SIZING

EMPOWERMENT

FAST-TRACKING

FUTURE-BASED

GOOD TO GO

TRANSITIONING TURN THE PAGE

VERSIONING WALK THE WALK WE HAVE A SITUATION

WIGGLE-ROOM

WIN-WIN SITUATION WORK-AROUND WOW FACTOR\

UP-SELL **VALUE ADDED**

GAME PLAN GOOD OPTICS

FLEXIBILITY

BRANDING

BUY-IN

BUY-OUT

CLOSURE

DE-HIRING

DE-RISKING DISCONNECT

AT THE END OF THE DAY

BREAKTHROUGH VALUE

CAREER-LIMITING MOVE

CONSTRUCTIVE DISMISSAL

CORPORATE SCOREBOARD

Cathy Busby 24/7





24/7 at Work

IN THE SHOWCASES you see arrangements of library books and self-maintenance products such as deodorants, toothpastes, and "energy" drinks labelled, "High Endurance," "36 Hour Power!" and "Powerful Thirst Relief." If products are a measure of consumer preoccupations, then the pressure to be increasingly "on" and available is dear.

The word "empowerment," widely used in feminist and other social justice contexts to speak of ways out of oppression, is modified on a toothpaste box to "empowermint," describing a mint-flavoured toothpaste. But before landing on the toothpaste tube, "empowerment" was appropriated from its political contexts by managers who declared the new workers "empowered"—to maximize their performance in the workplace.

feature of the Colgate "Navigator" (also the name of a hefty SUV) toothbrush. The flexible toothbrush can get around the corners of our teeth more easily and serves our dental hygiene as a better "navigator." "Flexibility" to hire more people on contract is what CBC management repeatedly claimed it wanted during a seven-week lock-out that ended in October 2005. Management spokespersons used the word "flexible," meaning the option to hire workers on a contract basis, to explain what they needed in "an everchanging, fast-paced and highly competitive media environment". The message to CBC workers is that they must conform to the mean and lean media world by providing the Corporation with greater flexibility, but in the process drastically reduce job security.

"Flexible" is noted as the primary

Recently I was picking up a rental car, and after the woman behind the counter asked how I was, she began explaining that she had broken out in a rash, which she showed me on her hands. She said she could feel it spreading to her face and that she felt horrible and in need of medical attention. But she was the assistant manager, one of two people working on the floor, and she felt she just couldn't leave. By volunteering to sacrifice her health for her job, she was putting into practice the inordinate flexibility that has come to be associated with retail workers.

If the self-maintenance products on display in 24/7 at Work are selling, then as consumers we must be eager to buy back a little time, strength and endurance with their promises of security, invincibility, and protection. Whereas the products are

the immediate result of this discourse of high performance, the books included in this installation point to some of the ideas that have enabled the products to be imagined and produced. The book titles point to management and marketing strategies and ways that ideas about product identities are developed: Brand Power (Paul Stobart, ed) and Reputation: Realizing the Value of Corporate Image (Charles J. Fombrun) are two examples. While many of the titles selected here indicate an uncritical embrace of management and marketing strategies, titles such as No Logo (Naomi Klein) or Downsizing Democracy: How America Sidelined

its Citizens and Privatized its Public (Matthew A. Crenson & Benjamin Ginsberg) indicate a resistance to this discourse.

24/7 at Work is the result of my observations of language used in consumer and workplace contexts. This work could only have taken this shape in the university library, where books are so abundant, and in the university, where social re-thinking and criticism find their home. I am grateful to the Gallery for providing me with the opportunity to develop this visual and textual analysis.

Cathy Busby October 2005



marketing and current trends in corporate "manager-speak" as reflected in the MSVU Library collection. Flexibility, stamina, and being a "team player" characterize today's corporate athlete, and this trend is reflected in the language of consumer culture. With this shift, as evidenced by books titled Competing Against Time (George Stalk), The Balanced Scorecard

Competitive Edge (Janelle Barlow) a form of extreme selfhood seems to be emerging as the managerial ideal.

When both personal hygiene standards and productivity at work are expressed through a vocabulary formerly reserved for professional sports—itself a fusion of recreation and paid performance—we see a blurring of the boundaries between work and non-work that serves the interests of businesses seeking cheap labour. A list of phrases such as "hit the ground running," "level the playing field," and "raising the bar," imply a jock mentality. Employees internalize such attitudes towards productivity and incorporate the phrases into their own vocabulary. By

assuming a subservient place in the workplace pecking order—always a team player, never an ownerworkers unwittingly submit to their status as members of the employee herd. Considered in this context, the term, "branding," becomes unfortunately appropriate.

By positioning the consumer in a market similar to that of a professional athlete, branding language blurs the distinction between private and public spheres. The message: what we shave with, brush with, shampoo with, in private, directly affects our public image and reception. Like an athlete's, our performance is rated like a consumer item. The body-the physical manifestation of self that acts in the world-becomes an object expected to perform, to

respond to consumer demand. So when jock talk infiltrates the workplace without question or an ironic smile, is it an indicator of a discourse insidiously infiltrating our lives? When did the office, or the burger joint, or the call centre, become an arena? When we buy into a team mentality, do we become players who can be traded, downsized, commodified, at the owner's whim? If language is our barometer, work is now a playing field, where we are expected to perform, 24/7, at home and on the job. Stress is the new leisure. Don't forget your helmet.

Peggy MacKinnon Exhibition Curator

The Balanced Scorecard

WALK INTO ANY drugstore and you become marketing's target. "Empowermint" toothpaste, "High Endurance" body wash, "24/7" deodorant—the packaging language "shops" a set of ideals that the act of buying confirms: I am energized, powerful, effective in the world. The powerful, energetic athleticism advocated by this marketing psychology is but a purchase away.

The message implied in such branding language is that social self-regulation requires control of the body, with all its appearances smells and secretions. Words such as "power," "ultimate" and "extreme" link consumer selfmaintenance standards with those of elite athletes who subjugate the wants and needs of the body to a competitive discipline.

Using language to manipulate the consumer is as old as advertising itself and advertising has long been considered an index of a society's mindset. With 24/7 at Work, Cathy

the language used in contemporary (Robert S. Kaplan), and Branded Customer Service: the New

Busby draws parallels between



