

Art, Sex, Commodity

*"I'm not interested in intentions,"
says imagemaker Barbara Kruger*

By Claudia Lasky

Former Santa Monica Barbara Kruger has achieved international attention and recognition in the art world in New York (where she now lives and works) and beyond. But right now, her homegirls are getting a look at her work again. Kruger images are prominently included in the current MOCA Semiotics show, "A Forest of Signs," and a selection of her most

to objectify and visualize the experience of how we live our lives.

Do you worry about people thinking of, and valuing your work as simply another valuable commodity like a sports car or a new suit? Is this a "wrong reason" to value art

We live in a culture where no one exists outside of the market place. My parents



"Ruining certain representations" - Barbara Kruger

recent work is now on view at the Fred Hoffman Gallery here in Santa Monica. We spoke to her briefly at the opening: In a longer phone conversation the next day, she discussed her priorities, her interests, and her plans.

You attracted a lot of attention with the poster which you designed for the Women's March in Washington. (See Cover) Can you tell us something about how that came about?

I picked an image that I thought would make a strong poster. On the poster that was seen in New York City, it had additional words on it like "SUPPORT BIRTH CONTROL, MARCH APRIL 19th" Basically, I volunteered my work, but they [the organizers of the march] never called me back. I worked with my students in the Whitney Independent studies program to put posters up all over the city. I felt it was important to support the Roe v.s. Wade decision, and this was my attempt at getting people to go down to Washington.

In your work, categories and pictorial dialectics force one to confront - contradictions...Does simply exposing the conflict satisfy your creative intent?

I'm not interested in intentions. My work is less interested in the object than the process. In the process is a reflection of social relationships. I would never use the words "merely or simply exposing."

People realize that one of arts definitions is

traded labor for wages. We are driven by capital. I don't want to be outside of that... It's inevitable and it would be disingenuous for me to think that my work would be otherwise. Historically, art exists as a vessel for capital and speculation. Art is still a commodity—if it's not happening, it wants to be.

What are you trying to do when you create an image ?"

I grew up looking at pictures and words - they have the power to tell us who we are, who we aren't, who we can be, and can never be. In tv and films, there's been no place for women and minorities. I want to displace the power of those pictures and words. I'm interested in ruining certain representations, and welcoming the female into an audience of men.

Do you think that the complicated message you offer can work in the context of mass media propaganda?

The work functions differently in a gallery setting than it does on a billboard. But the fact is that it's not that complicated. There is no one way to read it.

How do you relate to the work of Jenny Holzer?

I look at art that has pictures and words that connects directly with the experience of what it means to be alive today. What interests me is art that forthrightly address issues, that has something that makes me think. Few works do that, as Jenny's does. Jenny has been a colleague of mine for many years, we have shown together...it would be a lonelier place without her.