

# Stony Brook Seduced Subliminally

By Audrey Arbus

Wilson Bryan Key, professor, lecturer and writer of *The Clam Plate Orgy* and *Subliminal Seduction* appeared before a packed house in the lecture hall Wednesday night to lecture on his theories concerning subliminal advertising techniques.

The first part of his lecture consisted mainly of a slide show depicting various examples of what he considered subliminal messages to the viewer. What Keys had found was that an amazing amount of current apparently photographic advertising was in actuality photo-realistic airbrush paintings - paintings that cost appreciably more than their simpler photographic counterpart. It occurred to Keys that perhaps there was a reason for the seemingly unnecessary expense. What he found, or what he'd like us to believe that he found, was a myriad of sexually explicit images, very few of which had more clarity than the same found in high contrast cloud patterns. In addition he claimed that such things as ice cubes in alcohol advertising contained ghouls, a disguised death wish, painted into their interiors.

Key also described an even more insidious subliminal technique that was, frankly, more believable with much clearer documentation. He sighted as an example of this technique - an ad by Canadian swimwear company Jantzen. The ad was for matching (or almost) mens' and womens' bathing suits with a patriotic patterned material depicting an abstraction of the Canadian maple leaf and the Union Jack. Unless one looks closely there is nothing out of the ordinary to discern.



However, upon inspection one notices that the patterns of the mens' bathing suit are slightly different from that of the womens'. As you discover this, you may note as well that the man is wearing the woman's suit and the woman is wearing the man's zippered trunks. Herein lies the premise behind the technique: Within an actual image the advertiser will place some slightly divergent image. Key has noted these off-color perceptions to be usually of a libidinous nature. Whether the technique is employed to stimulate on a subconscious level the sexual implications or to leave stirring in the brain the unconscious knowledge that something was not quite as it should be (possibly insuring that the name of the company might stir in the brain as well) cannot be proven. However, it would seem that whether the device is morally deteriorative, as Keys implies, or simply stimulating memory recall, it does play around with uncharted territory in the brain. Such casual manipulation of the brain's function is ethically irresponsible and possibly a violation of free will.

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One might say that the Jantzen ad is not one of the more extreme examples of advertising manipulation except that, on even closer inspection of that ad, Keys found airbrushed minute changes in the ad's visual message. There is a hand on the woman's leg, apparently her own, that is airbrush and placed far too low to be anatomically her own. Not impressed? It turns out that this photograph is actually a montage, the man being placed in separately. Nothing diabolic about that except that the man's hand seemingly clasping the woman's waist has airbrushed shadows delineating a violent grab of flesh. The water that swirls around the woman's body and between her legs is a muddy brown airbrush painting that features a fairly discernable man's face with open mouth between those same legs.

This ad was by far the most blatantly subtle of Keys examples, some of which seemed to "come" embarrassingly out of his own subconscious: Most conspicuous of these was the ad that inspired the title to his newest book, *The Clamplate Orgy*. He showed a slide of a Howard Johnson's placemat showing their fried clams special. Key noted the lascivious phrasing -- "tender succulent clams," "they always come out right," etc. He asked the rhetorical question -- What reason could



Statesman/Eric Ambrosio

Wilson Bryan Key

the advertisers have to keep the porthole, through which one views the succulent clams, so tightly barred? He then proceeds to the enjoyment of the audience, to discover people and animals having sex in the platter on the placemat. He offered as scientific proof of his hypothesis a highly technical method of gathering evidence. He and his students spent half the night looking at actual clam platters and didn't find one copulating clam.

One of the more disturbing aspects of Key's presentation was his own mannerisms. Obviously an intelligent man, he assumed a we're-all-boys-in-the-locker-room posture that, by logical extension of his own theoretical stance, detracted from the audience's ability to judge his evidence on their own. It is difficult to decide upon the validity of a statement made with lewd comradery.

Also disturbing was Key's undertones of moralistic perspective. He seemed less concerned with the thought that advertisers were doing this than the possibility that it was inducing mothers to lift up their little daughters' dresses and play with what was underneath. (An ad for Miss Clairol showed a little girl and mother, the child laughing, her dress above her waist and the mother smiling intently. As Key notes,

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## NYPIRG Speaks Out On Group's Unity

By Brian Henschel

The Stony Brook chapter of the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) held its first meeting Wednesday night with Donald Ross, NYPIRG's executive director, as guest speaker.

Ross, who spoke at Stony Brook last year, worked for the Peace Corps, and said he is a former association of Consumer Advocate Ralph Nader. Ross has also written on consumer affairs and helped to create an Australian Public Interest Research Group.

Ross spoke of the importance of NYPIRG in demonstrating the slow build-up of community strength through educating people on the issues and fighting in the local and state governments. Ross was optimistic about the future of NYPIRG, and he assured his audience that victories will continue

to build the strength of the group. NYPIRG has fought successfully on the Suffolk County bottle bill, which bans no-deposit, no-return beverage containers, student voting rights and the decriminalization of marijuana.

NYPIRG, which has been operating since 1973, is a non-profit, non-partisan research and advocacy organization established, directed and supported by New York college and university students. NYPIRG's staff of lawyers, researchers, scientists and organizers work with students and other citizens in developing citizenship skills and shaping public policy. consumer protection, nuclear energy, fiscal responsibility, political reform and social justice are the principal concerns of NYPIRG.

Jim Leotta, a NYPIRG staff member, is project coordinator for the Stony Brook chapter.



Donald Ross

Statesman/Ed Banner