

What is Going on in the World Today?

By Julie VEINOT

The Bodyspace exhibit that took place here not at UPEI started me thinking (along with the fact I've been taking a course about historical costumes) about body image.

While one thinks that today, we might be suffering through the worst period for body image – after all, look at *Cosmopolitan* – I would argue we are better off than ever before. I'm not saying we are in good shape (no pun intended) but I think we are better than we were in the past. Yes, I think fashion magazines need to be a little more flexible in choosing models of all sizes. I think people need to stop complimenting thin women when they lose weight, as well as disparaging thin women for not having enough meat on their bones (I'm even guilty of that one). And I seriously think clothes should come in sizes past the equivalent of eights and tens. And why is that anyone over a size fourteen is considered a "plus" size? Why can't there just be sizes?

Aside from these problems, I think while today we may be fighting off a

constant barrage of body image ideals, but at least we have choice about what to believe and what to believe in. While there are three articles in a magazine about dieting, at least today there is *one* article about being proud to be beyond the Hollywood size. At least there is that.

For centuries, most of the ideals have been restricted to one look. Maybe we were supposed to have googly eyes, or skin so transparent that we had to have our delicate little blue veins showing. Or perhaps that powder-white look so no one would know we worked in the sun, or had more pock marks on our face than the moon's craters. And this was centuries ago. Who could forget the lovely hour-glass corsets of the late Victorian period? Nothing says sexy like having your internal organs up where your lungs should be.

Then there was the flapper period. The ideal look – boyish and no bust.

Period. Sound like today? Of course not. But today, at least there's some variety.

I argue, then, today, despite the things we have been told by our culture and the media, we still have a choice about

what ideals we can look like, leaving a lot of room for people to choose what their ideal look is. If I see Kate Moss wearing a slip dress, I don't think to myself that I have to go out and get that look at all costs. Of course not. Because that is not congruent with my body shape or my lifestyle. However, if I see a woman with my colour hair, and a body like mine, wearing a pair of pants that speaks to me, I can choose to go out and purchase them.

I think this leaves me more empowered than ever before – and certainly more than what my ancestors had to face. Though there are still "ideals" like the Jennifer Lopez derriere, or the Pam Anderson bust (or have they changed?) there is also a variety of body images out there not unlike those of everyday women.

One only needs to look at the Oscars to see the variety (though I do agree most of the actresses are tiny) of body shapes out there. There was Calista Flockhart (Ally McBeal) with her little-girl liteness. Queen Latifah that had more curves on which to show her gorgeous dress on than any store mannequin. And for the pregnant women of the world,

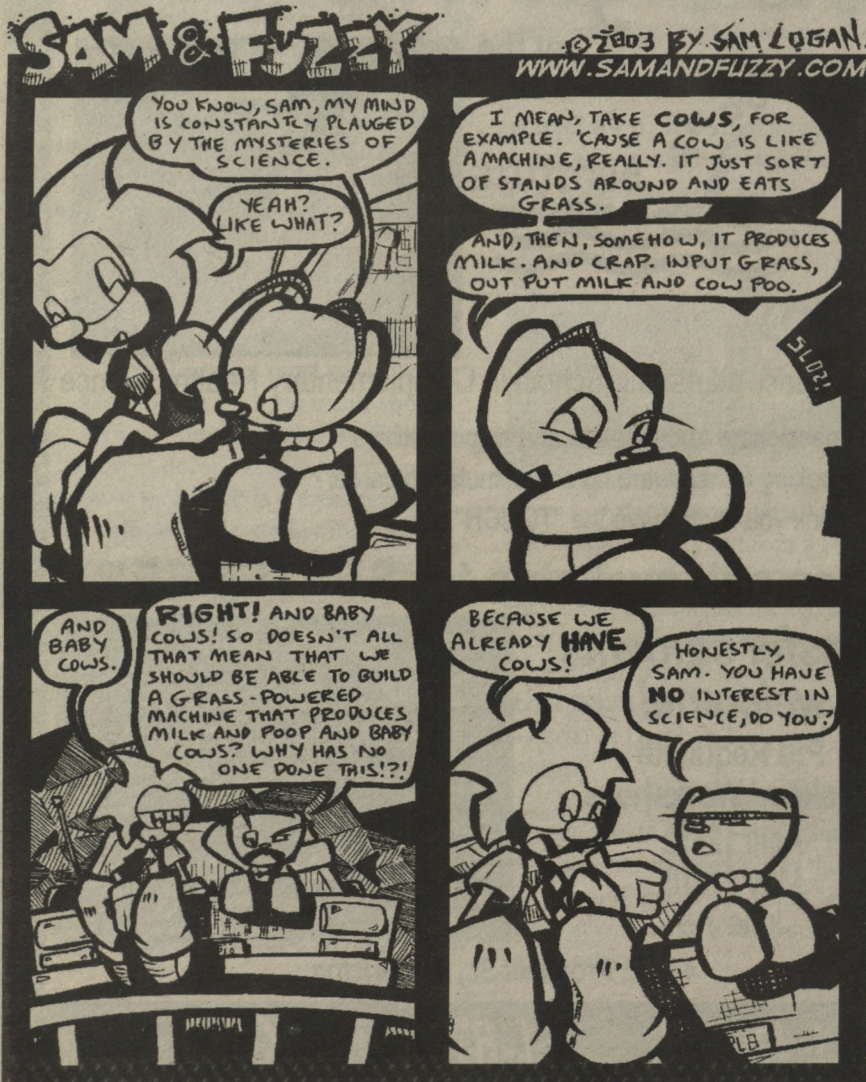
Catherine Zeta-Jones, showing why the empire waist never goes out of style.

While there are so many body images and ideals thrown at us – by television, by magazines, by friends – there is a good thing in all of this. There are many images. It's important to remember that when we look at ourselves in the mirror. It's important to remember that not everyone fits an ideal, or, if they do, it will only be an ideal for a short time.

For me, I'm happy to look at the Baroque period (the 1600s) when big wasn't just beautiful – it was necessary to fit in. Or perhaps, when I'm looking at the tanned Hollywood stars, I will think about the Elizabethan period, when patting white on your face was necessary because tanning was bad. There is no reason why I have to limit my image to one look. As history, and even today's images show, thin isn't beautiful.

Variety is.

Now if only the clothing manufacturers would understand this.



Letter to The Editor

Reality Check: Who are the Real Terrorists?

With the invasion of Iraq, it is time for a reality check. Bush's war plans are driven by political aims to terrorize and demoralize the Iraqi people and the Arab masses and send a message of intimidation to the world. The Bush Administration is preparing to commit war crimes of immense proportions, and has also stated they are prepared to use nuclear weapons.

Lawyers Against the War (LAW) is an international organization based in Canada. In a letter from lawyers and law professors they have warned Bush, Blair, and Chretien that senior officials could face prosecutions for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide if the Iraq War proceeds. Despite the US refusal to ratify the treaty establishing the new International Criminal Court, the letter stated, "US officials involved in committing certain international crimes may nonetheless be held responsible under principles of Universal Jurisdiction and the War Crimes Act."

It is becoming clear to more and more people that the US government is a Terrorist State. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines terrorism as "the systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion." It goes on to define terror as "violence (as bombing) committed by

groups in order to intimidate a population or government into granting their demands." Is it not terrorism when committed by the US government and military?

The USA has the world's largest stockpiles of Weapons of Mass Destruction and is the ONLY government that has used nuclear weapons to target civilians in not one, but TWO, large cities.

The US government and CIA have armed, supported, and trained Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban, Saddam and Iraq, and many other murderous dictators and death squads. This continues today. They have supported the overthrow of democratically elected governments when it is in their interest. Bush was unelected and his granddaddy helped finance and supply the rise of the Nazi Germany. Shortly after taking office in January of 2001, the Bush Administration ordered the FBI to back off their investigations into the Bin Laden family. Who are the real terrorists here?

-Aaron Koleszar

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