

Pro and Con Essays
Written in Response to CK's Lolita Defense

Condoning Calvin

There is an ongoing controversy about the provocative Calvin Klein advertisements that were featured in the media during the month of September. The controversy arose as to whether or not these "steamy" ads are a form of child pornography, since teenage models were used in seemingly seductive poses. To label these ads, "kiddie porn," is an exercise in overreacting. True, young boys in the ads were posing without shirts. In displaying them in this way, Klein seems to be making several points.

On a very basic level the fact that the teens are wearing only jeans speaks for itself: Klein is selling jeans. In this particular case, minimalism is the key concept. "What you see is what you get!" Those that think otherwise are overdramatizing the issue. A commercial is just that a commercial. No more, no less.

However, if the ads are suggestive in any way, then they convey messages about teenage rite of passage. On the one hand, the bare-chested youth in the ads are models of self-expression. They dare to make a statement, claim an identity. At the same time, their "bareness" might just suggest their vulnerable nature, as well as their awkwardness that is intrinsic to the transformation from youth to adulthood. There is nothing pornographic about this metamorphosis.

It is ridiculous that the uproar over this campaign caused Calvin Klein to discontinue it. People should stop worrying about the ads and start worrying about where real porn thrives--in the streets.

Approx. 250 words.

NB: For the educational use of students attending class with Judge Michael J. Gregorek

CK: Stealing the Innocence of Youth

For more than a decade, Calvin Klein has always attracted the eye of the media and the public. This fashion mogul, born in the Bronx, has had a relentless hold on his audience since the early eighties. Ck fashions, as they are abbreviated, have always stood for class, intelligence, and sensibility. These themes have dominated his advertisements. However, in the past five years, Ck cologne and jeans ads have sparked controversy world-wide. The popular advertisements with supermodel Kate Moss have spread suggestions of anorexia and bulimia, as well as inspired the "waif look."

Klein's latest ads involving provocatively photographed teens, as well as, his television ads which engage young adults in sexually suggestive conversations with an anonymous voiceover, have been justifiably labeled, "kiddy porn." This new approach in advertising has been criticized by many who have seen the posters sported on public transportation, television, and New York streets. They have been found offensive in that these new, young and upcoming models are being exploited and portrayed in a manner which is demeaning to them. This newfound freedom of the advertising agencies is not a right which has been exercised responsibly, but rather, a license taken for the sake of profit.

Unfortunately, many people are responding in defense of these ads. However, as consumers, we should be aware of the harm that this type of advertising can cause. One ad has already been pulled because of its explicit nature and sexual implications. Klein has defended that his ads were "art misunderstood." It is our belief that Klein purposely used these ads to shock the public, and create more publicity for himself. His actions were merely a calculated attempt to gain publicity, and to increase sales. Klein has definitely succeeded in both of these aspects, but at what price to the dignity of our youth?

Approx. 300 words.

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