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MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert Marino, Acting Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, Hunter College.
FROM: Personnel and Budget Committee, Film and Media Studies Department.
RE: Professor Stuart Ewen's Distinguished Professorship.
DATE: August 29th, 2001.

Dear Dean Marino:

The Personnel and Budget Committee of the Department of Film and Media Studies would like to recommend Professor Stuart Ewen for a Distinguished Professorship at Hunter College.

Professor Ewen is an internationally respected cultural historian and scholar, a gifted teacher and a persuasive advocate for the college. Ewen's work speaks across boundaries of academic scholarship. It has sought to educate a broader public about the central role media plays in society. Ewen's profile as a public intellectual is particularly suited for recognition at Hunter College, an institution deeply involved in nurturing an active and informed public. His continued commitment to public education and academic excellence, his leadership in the field of media studies and his concerns that our students must receive a quality education make him a deserving candidate for this academic honor.

INTRODUCTION

Stuart Ewen began his academic career at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, receiving a BA with high honors in American history in 1968. He completed his MA in History in University of Rochester and earned a Ph.D. in American history with distinction at SUNY Albany.

Ewen began teaching at Hunter College, as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communications, in 1977. Today, he is Professor and Chairman of the Department of Film and Media Studies at Hunter College. At rank since 1984, he has served as Chair, off and on, since 1987. Ewen is also a Professor in the Ph.D. Programs in both History and Sociology at The CUNY Graduate Center. At The Graduate Center he is also Professor in the certificate program in American Studies.

In the fall of 1999, he was Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Graduate Program in Media Ecology (Department of Culture and Communication) at New York University.

SCHOLARSHIP

Ewen was trained as an American historian, but he early became interested in interdisciplinary modes of thought, particularly the ways that phenomena such as advertising, public relations, and the image industries more broadly, have influenced the social and psychological environment of modern American society. This aspect of historical examination was innovational in the field when Ewen began, and he helped to open up critical approaches to American cultural life that have reshaped the terrain of academic endeavor ever since.

Ewen's intellectual work has examined the ways that the mass media and the rise of a modern consumer culture helped to shape the contours of power, perception and everyday life in the United States over the past two centuries.

Beginning in 1969, with the publication of a pivotal essay, subsequently anthologized, "Advertising as Social Production," Ewen emerged as a central figure in the nascent field of American media studies. For nearly thirty years he has been one of the leading historians and analysts of American consumer society, and has helped to give definition to the related fields of media studies, cultural history, visual culture, and the history of design. Because of the broad relevance of these topics, Ewen's work has not only influenced academic discourse, but has had a significant impact on public discussion. His ideas have found a platform in major museums, in national and local organizations of media practitioners, also within community-based art centers and civic organizations.

Ewen's first book was *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* [1976], widely recognized as the first major scholarly history of American advertising. More than any other book, *Captains of Consciousness* gave rise to the now sizeable literature of advertising history, and it continues to serve as a point of departure, or a touchstone, for those writing histories of this quintessentially American institution. The book won major awards from *Choice* magazine (a 'Best Academic Book') and *Library Journal* (a 'Best Book About Business') and has continued to garner praise and spark controversy over an in-print life that now exceeds a quarter century. It appears in French and Italian translations, with a Korean translation presently underway. Basic Books published a 25th anniversary edition of *Captains of Consciousness*, including illustrations and a new introduction, in June 2001. In an academic environment that is often marked by the disposability of scholarly effort, the persistence of *Captains of Consciousness*, and of Ewen's other books, is remarkable.

In 1982, Ewen published *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness*, co-authored with Elizabeth Ewen (McGraw-Hill). *Channels of Desire* is a series of historical essays examining pivotal aspects of visual culture, including silent movies and their audiences, the relation between fashion and democracy, and the complex, often ambivalent relations between people and machines. It was adopted in classrooms around the country and quickly became a must read for college students interested in the new field of media studies. The University of Minnesota Press (1992) published a revised edition of *Channels of Desire*—including a new chapter, "Shadows on the Wall."

Ewen is also the author of *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (Basic Books, 1988), a book which provided the foundation for Bill Moyers' 4-part, Peabody,

Emmy, and National Education Association Awards winning PBS series, "The Public Mind." Beyond participating in the development of this series, Ewen appeared at length on Part I, "Consuming Images." The book has appeared in Italian, Japanese, Korean and Spanish translations. In connection with the first edition of *All Consuming Images* Ewen was the keynote speaker to the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) national convention in San Antonio. Organized by Milton Glaser and Tibor Kalman, and entitled "Dangerous Ideas," the San Antonio AIGA convention and Ewen's "Design Notes for a New Millenium," helped to inspire critical discussion in the design field ever since. Basic Books published a new, revised edition of *All Consuming Images* in 1999.

Ewen's most recent book, *PR! A Social History of Spin*, published by Basic Books, is the first comprehensive historical examination of the development of public relations as a force in American life. Because of its scope and depth the book has been compared to pivotal works on the consumer society and media as Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion*, Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society*, and Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*. The book was a finalist for the 1996 Financial Times/Booz-Allen Global Business Book Award, the highest international honor for a book about business. The book also serves as the foundation for a four-part documentary being produced for BBC Television, to appear in 2002. In response to this book, Ewen was invited to serve as keynote speaker for both the Publicity Club of New England Annual Awards Ceremony at the Kennedy Library in Boston in 1997 and at the Canadian Public Relations Society national convention, held in Ottawa in June 2000. He has also been invited to address the Whalen Symposium in Media Ethics, in Minnesota in September 2001, and will speak to an audience of media professionals on the social responsibilities of public relations and advertising practitioners.

At present Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen are working on a new book project, tentatively entitled *Typecasting: On the Arts & Sciences of Human Inequality*. The book will explore the evolution of stereotyping practices in Europe and the United States since the latter part of the 18th century.

All of Stuart Ewen's books remain in print either in original or new editions. His list of shorter writings and published interviews is extraordinarily extensive and they appear in a wide range of scholarly, professional, and popular venues. A number of these pieces have appeared in French, Italian, Spanish, Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish, Korean and Japanese translations.

In recognition of Ewen's exceptional intellectual contribution over three decades, *Mass Communication & Society*, a major refereed journal in the fields of media and communications studies, commissioned him to write a "Scholarly Milestone" essay. His essay, "Memoirs of a Commodity Fetishist," appeared in the Fall issue, 2000.

PUBLIC VENUES

Ewen's continuing record as a public speaker, invited to present in a remarkably diverse range of contexts, also testifies to the unusual reach of his scholarship, as well as to the respect that intellectual, artistic and civic communities—across disciplinary boundaries—have for his thinking. A few deserve mention.

In 1978 he was invited to serve as keynote speaker at the second Critical Communications Conference held at Stanford University. In that same year, highlighting the interdisciplinary impact of his writings, he was asked to speak at the Colloquium on Social Theory in the Department of Psychiatry, at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Yeshiva University. The topic was "Mass Culture and Mental Life."

In 1982 he was Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the University of California, San Diego. In 1983 the National Institute for Research Advancement, in Tokyo, brought him to Japan to deliver several lectures at universities and art centers, discussing topics in American popular culture. Also in 1983 he, along with Robert Coles and Christopher Lasch, keynoted a Duke University Symposium on "Narcissism" in American culture and society. In 1988 he was a featured speaker at the MIT Media Lab and in 1989 was the Ford Foundation Collegiate Visiting Lecturer in the Social Sciences at The University of Chicago. In 1993 he was also Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Havens Center of the University of Wisconsin.

Given his work on visual culture, Stuart Ewen has been a featured lecturer at major American museums, at local art and regional centers, and at major university art programs. In 1992 he was Distinguished Lecturer in the Arts at the University of Arizona in Tucson. In 1996 he delivered the Inaugural Lecture for the Yaffe Speaker Series on Persuasive Media, at the University of Michigan, School of Art & Design. In recent years, Ewen has also lectured at the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Walker Art Center, the International Center for Photography, the Parrish Museum, among other distinguished art venues, speaking on issues of aesthetics, mass media and society. In 1999 he delivered a major presentation at the Davis Museum and Cultural Center, at Wellesley College, was Inaugural Lecturer at the Center for Media Studies at Rutgers University and, in 2000, was a Convocation Speaker, addressing issues of visual culture, at Grinnel College.

In recognition of his contribution to a better understanding of American consumer culture and its consequences, Stuart Ewen was invited to deliver a keynote address at the 1991 Consumer Assembly in Washington, DC. In response the publication of *PR! A Social History of Spin*, and to his prior work, Ewen was asked, in 1997, to address the national leadership of the Consumers Union regarding the social effects of public relations practices and pertinent strategies for consumer education.

Because of Ewen's pivotal writing in the area of visual and commercial culture, and his central role in defining the scope of media education, he also presents to a diverse range of relevant professional and public gatherings. In June, 1997 he presented one of two keynote addresses (along with Oprah Winfrey) at the annual Awards Ceremony of the combined PROMAX (television station management) and Broadcast Design Association (television graphic designers) Conference in Chicago. He keynoted at the Taos Talking Picture Festival in 1999, and also ran a workshop for the New Mexico Media Literacy Project, conferring with high school students and teachers from around the state. He was a featured speaker at New York Law School's 1999 symposium "Law/Media/Culture: Legal Meaning in the Age of Images."

In March 2001, he was "Faculty Development Keynote Speaker" at Nassau Community College, speaking with faculty about ways that media issues and concerns might be integrated into teaching across a range of subject areas. In October 2001, he will be keynote speaker at an

annual Global Awareness conference at Delta College in Michigan, where he will introduce and reflect on the conference theme: "Selling American Culture: Planet Earth - the Market Place." Next April 2002, he will return to the Taos Talking Picture Festival, where he and Elizabeth Ewen will make a presentation based on their current "Typecasting" research.

Stuart Ewen has lectured in a wide range of international settings as well, having been invited to deliver major addresses in Canada, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands and Switzerland.

OFFSHOOTS

Ewen's writings on visual culture and design have appeared in Art in America, ARTFORUM, PRINT, I.D., ENTROPIE, The AIGA Journal and other visual arts and graphic design periodicals. He also served as historical advisor for "Packaging the New," a widely heralded exhibit on design, advertising and consumer culture that was mounted at the Cooper Hewitt Museum in 1994. He was also advisor for "Face Value: American Portraits," an exhibit on portraiture at the Parrish Museum, and consulted for "The American Century" at the Whitney Museum in 1999-2000. He (1993-1998) was National Chairman of the "Humanities Circle," an NEH-funded national humanities education project of the YMCAs of the USA. Ewen was a featured speaker at "Popular Culture: America and the World," a conference that served as the inaugural celebration for the opening of the new Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars' headquarters in Washington, DC in October, 1998. Also in 1998 he served as Guest Editor for the AIGA Journal of Graphic Design, a special issue on public relations. In 1999 he was invited to join the editorial board of Advertising & Society Review. Published by Johns Hopkins University Press online division, Project Muse, A&SR is the first American academic journal devoted to publishing articles about the role of advertising in society, culture, history and the economy.

Additionally Ewen has been consulted and interviewed by numerous newspapers and other media agencies here and abroad. Beyond the Moyers series, Ewen has been featured in a number of other television and video documentaries including the widely circulated "The Ad and the Ego," which has been broadcast globally, and two forthcoming documentaries, one, on the history of public relations, for BBC television, the other, "American Classics" for the History Channel. He has been cited in several newspaper articles in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal and other national papers, and also appears regularly on radio and television. He was commissioned by Time magazine to write the biography of adman, Leo Burnett, for the "TIME 100" series, chronicling the hundred "most influential people" of the twentieth century.

Though primarily known for his scholarly work, under the nom de guerre Archie Bishop, Stuart Ewen has also worked as a photographer, pamphleteer, graphic artist, multimedia prankster, and political situationist for nearly thirty years. These forms of intervention in public discourse have been extended to student practice in Ewen's Advanced Graphic Communication Workshop at Hunter College, and the quality of students' work and interest is evident in installations such as "Gravestones for Democracy," "Billboards for Democracy," and "Warning Signs! For Democracy."

TEACHING AND COLLEGE SERVICE

While Stuart Ewen has an exemplary career as an innovative and creative scholar he also has a solid commitment to teaching, teacher training and college service. Ewen has made it a principle and a practice to extend his scholarly vision into the classroom, to develop courses that engage pertinent issues of our day. He consistently meets with graduate students and interested adjunct faculty to discuss pedagogical, as well as course content issues. He initiates and is often keen to participate in intellectual debates in fields adjacent to his expertise. It is in part his commitment to all levels of teaching from introductory courses to graduate seminars that has helped build a department combining serious scholarly inquiry with innovative creative work in print, video, film and the new digital media.

Ewen is an excellent teacher, eloquent, broad-scoped and accessible. His student evaluations are extraordinarily high. Anyone who speaks with him is aware of his love for Hunter and its students. His ongoing discourse and debate with Hunter's students, over a 24-year period, has provided him with countless insights that would be harder to find in stuffier confines. For example, in the writing of both editions of *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture*, Ewen asked his Media 180 students to write autobiographical essays entitled, "What style means to me." From these essays, he gleaned a diverse, global and poignant representation of the different meaning of style, and his students' voices emerged as an eloquent element within the book. Most importantly, it is hard to find a student at Hunter, who, after having taken Ewen's classes, is not converted to serious critical thinking about the impact of media in our society.

Ewen is also an institution builder. He has worked tirelessly for the development of his department, Film & Media Studies and for Hunter College more generally. After many years spent in the development of an undergraduate curriculum that merged academic and practical know-how in media related subjects, the department, under Ewen's leadership, is now in the process of replacing an outmoded MA program in Communications with a new MFA Program in Integrated Media Arts, offering advanced studies in nonfiction media making. The proposed program, which has received extraordinarily positive response from those who have evaluated it, inside and outside of CUNY, will launch in fall 2002.

In conclusion, Stuart Ewen is an ideal candidate for the rank of Distinguished Professor. His scholarship is excellent, critical, nationally and internationally recognized. The fact that so many diverse institutions in the academy, in the media world, in the art world, and in community venues seek him out as speaker, consultant, interviewee and participant speaks to the vigor and range of his work. Over thirty years Ewen has emerged as one of the world's leading media scholars and critics. He has also displayed a powerful commitment to Hunter College's students, faculty, department and educational development. We are lucky to have him in our midst and believe that the honor of a Distinguished Professorship is long overdue.