

IDEAL MATE

A Vancouver artist has a new mannequin in her life. *Avenue, B6*

SPORTS

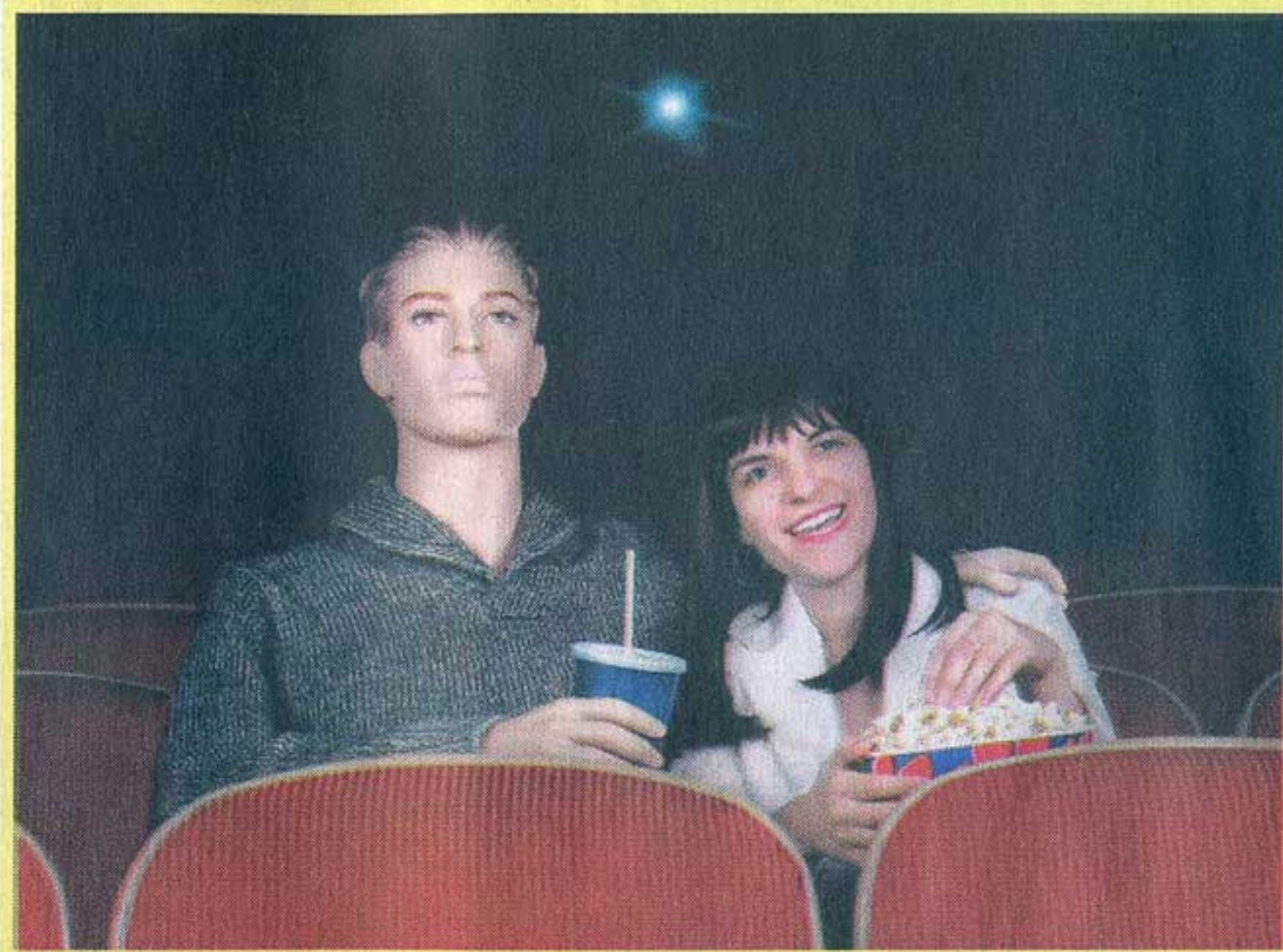
CFL's new commissioner fought passionately for the job. *B8*

B6

NATIONAL POST, THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2007

AVENUE RELATIONSHIPS WITH DUMMIES

Questions & Artists



Despite love's recent technological revolution (see Match.com, Lavalife, etc.), some things haven't changed — namely, the impossibly perfect romantic ideals modern daters pursue. It's these ideals that Vancouver artist Susan Bozic examines in *The Dating Portfolio*, a series of large-scale photographs currently showing at Lethbridge's Southern Alberta Art Gallery. In it, Bozic poses as the besotted girlfriend of a certain Prince Charming called Carl — who just happens to be a mannequin. The resulting images of joyous (and on Carl's part, slightly wooden) contemporary romance question the construction of our ideas of love. Here, Leah Sandals sets up a personal chatline with Bozic at her home in Vancouver.

Q Art addresses a range of heavy topics: war, death, birth and history, to name a few. Why did you choose dating?

A I think it's a relevant topic and subject for today's times. I was reading there are 45 million single people who are online looking for a partner today. That's a lot of people looking for companionship.

I'm also interested in the influence of pop culture, in this case the kind that's found in reality-TV dating programs. It's a fantasy. But as spectators we root and hope that [happily ever after] comes true at the end for the people on TV because we want that for ourselves.

Q What do you see as the biggest influence on what we expect from romance?

A Well, I'm talking from a female perspective, because that's what I understand. For women I think it starts at a very young age. One way it happens is being read fairy tale stories like *Cinderella* and *Snow White* before going to sleep; young girls are basically taught they should look forward to meeting Prince Charming. You don't hear little boys talking about their wedding that's going to happen 20 years down the road.

Those ideas carry through advertising as you get older. Advertising promises that you will be happy when you meet that special person, that he will be successful, attentive, romantic and everything else you desire. I don't know if that's necessarily true.

Also, it's a lot of pressure on men to perform as that type of person — a Prince Charming as opposed to a real human being. It's not fair for any of us. We're human and we make mistakes; we're not perfect.

Q Carl seems perfect.

A Well, Carl is the perfect boyfriend: perfectly affectionate, appreciative and attentive. In *He let me pick the movie*, Carl and his girlfriend are in the movie theatre and he has his arm around her, he's making sure she has a good time. It's the same things we all do with partners, except it's more idealized.

Q Some of your photos are in public settings. How did passersby react?

A Oftentimes there's a crowd. I try to be as quick as possible, but it's two to three hours minimum for a shoot. People come by, ask questions, laugh. For the image on the boat, *We had a beautiful time*, one woman was like, "He's hot!" *We both really love the ocean* was shot at [Vancouver's] Kitsilano Beach and a little girl kept trying to figure it out. Overall, I think it makes for interesting dinner party conversations.

Q Do men and women respond differently to *The Dating Portfolio*?

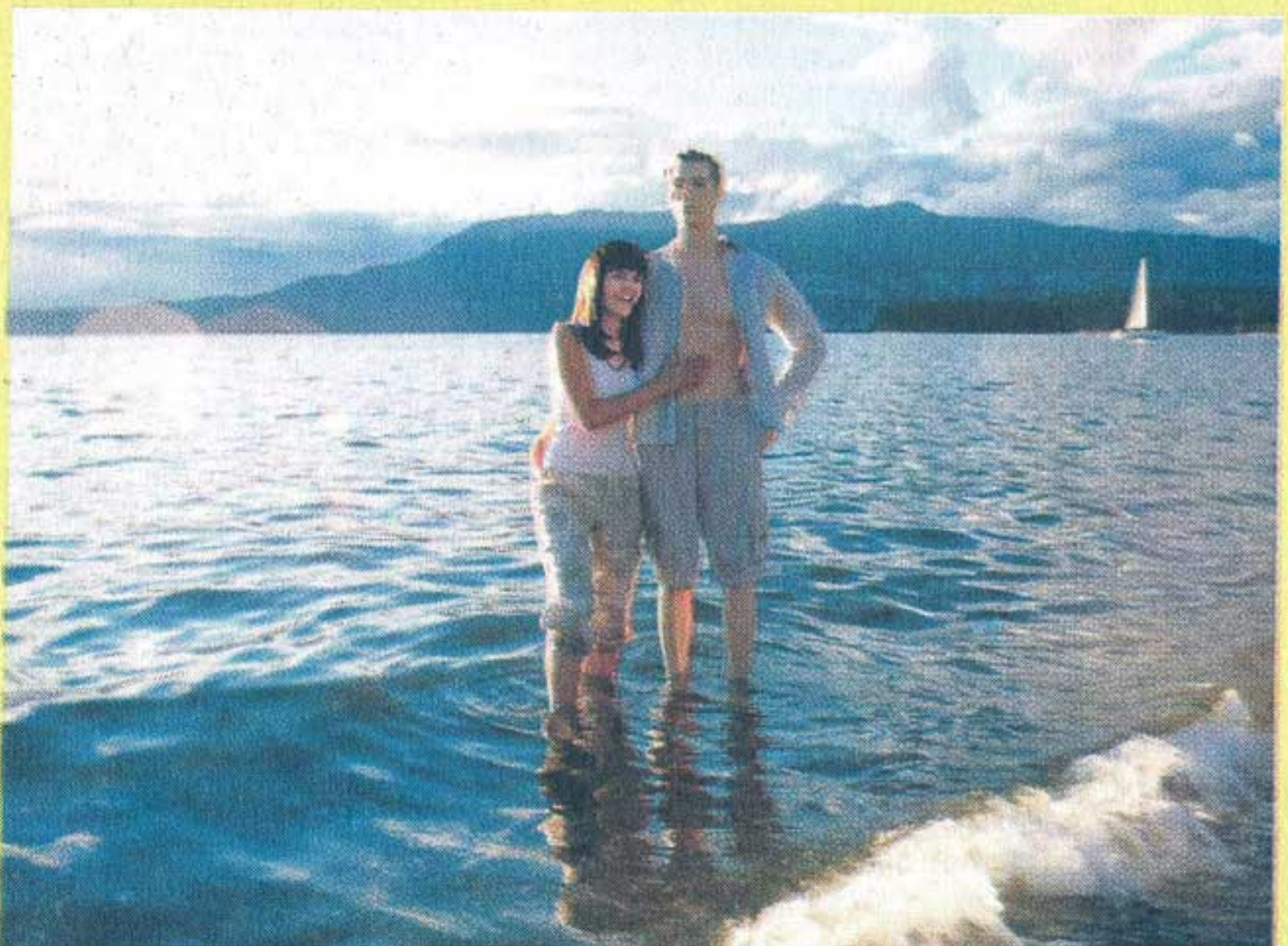
A Well, I think it allows both men's and women's experiences to be reflected. But one woman viewer seemed a bit bitter; she said, "Carl was my date on Tuesday." So I'm guessing her date didn't go so well.

Q Have any dates come out of this for you?

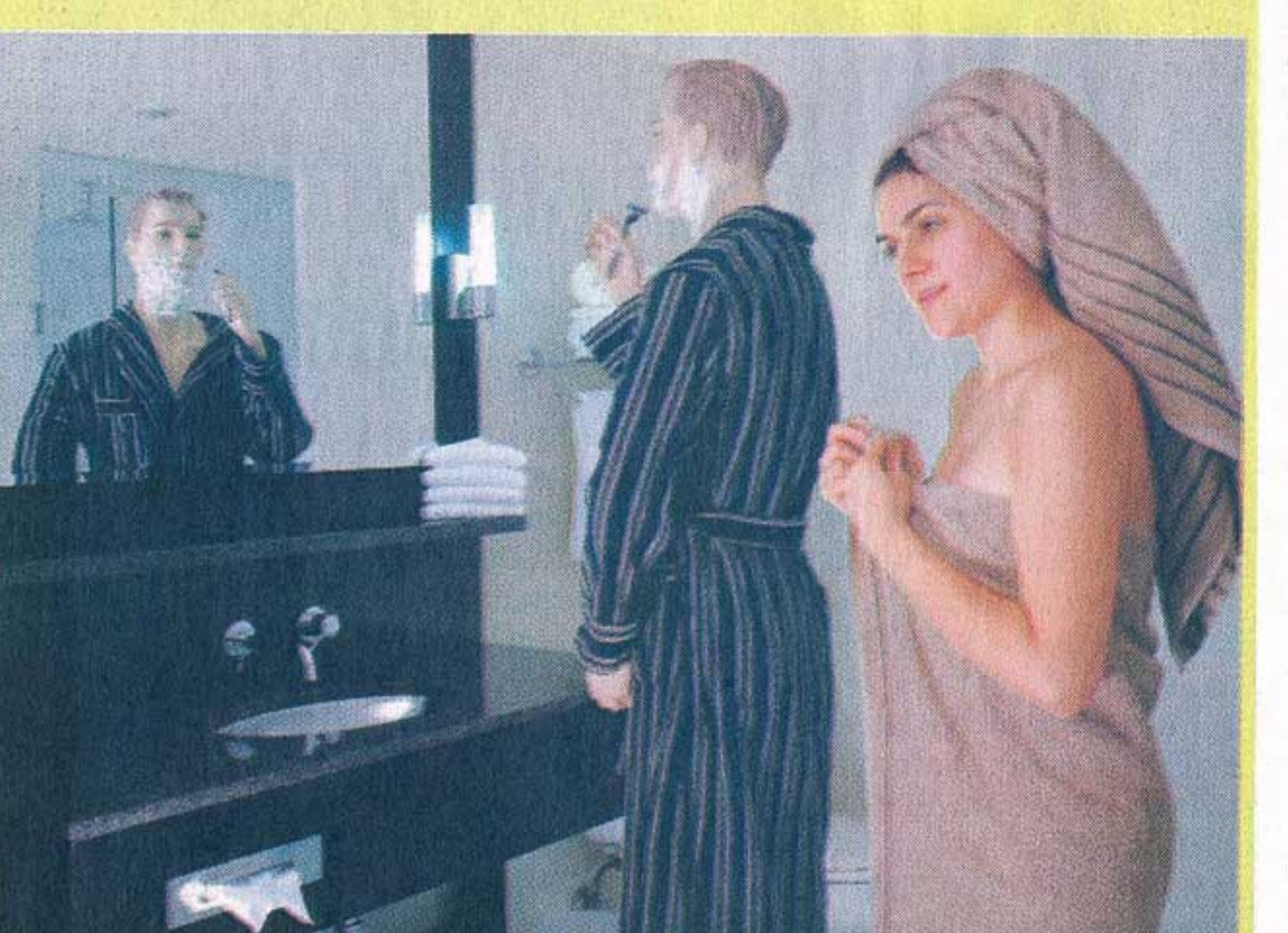
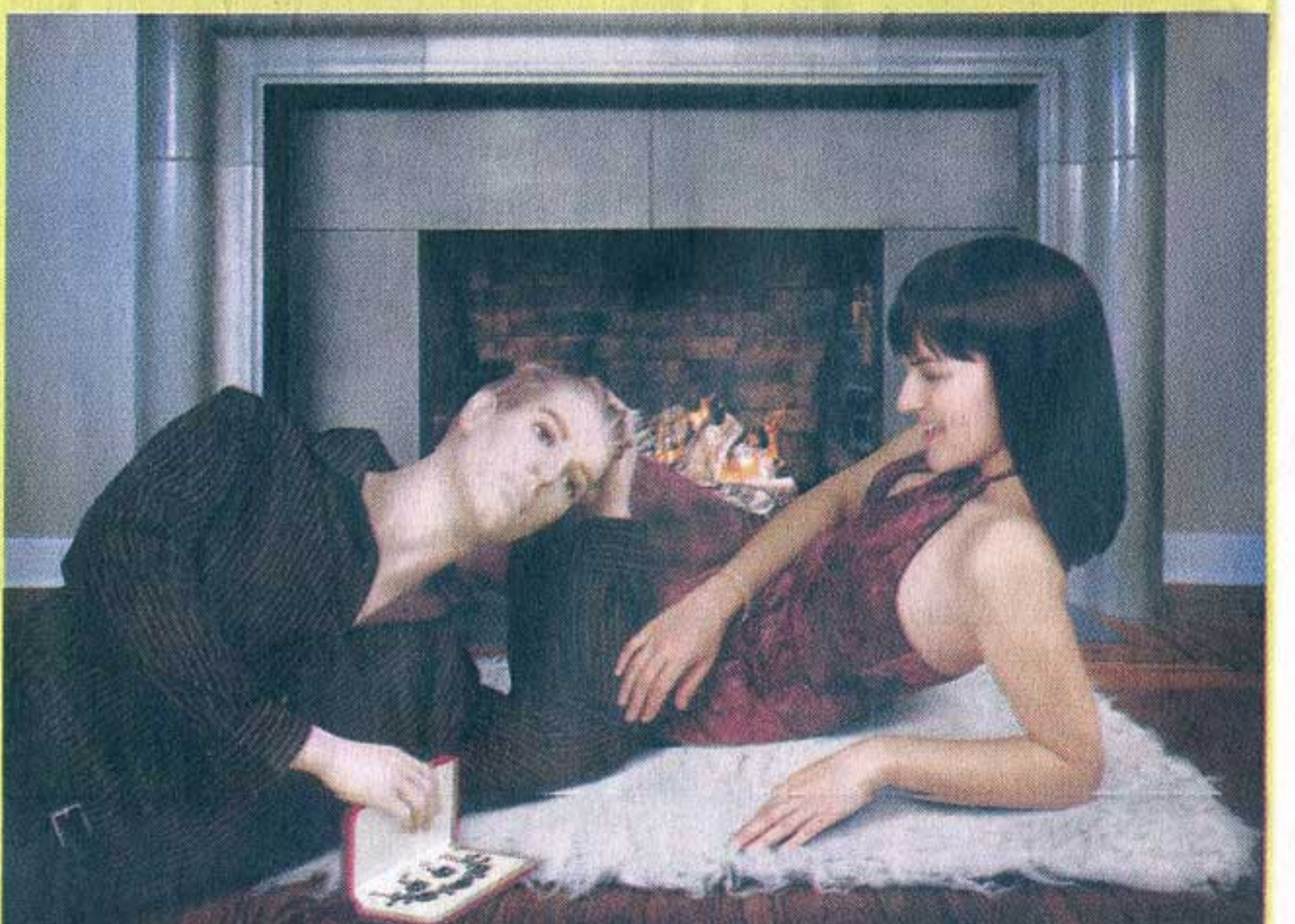
A I've met a lot of people who are interested in the work, but not on that level. This portfolio took two years to make and I was dating someone at the time. Sometimes I felt he was a bit jealous about Carl. I didn't ask him about it, but I found it bizarre because Carl is made out of fibreglass, and I'm not. I honestly don't understand it, but I would hear it in his voice. Maybe it's a competitive thing.

■ *The Dating Portfolio* is at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery in Lethbridge, Alta., until April 20. Visit www.saag.ca for details.

National Post



From the series *The Dating Portfolio* by Susan Bozic, now showing at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (from top): He let me pick the movie; I can't believe I found my match; We both really love the ocean; We had a beautiful time; He's so thoughtful, it wasn't even my birthday; Carl takes me to the nicest places; We start the day



SOUTHERN ALBERTA ART GALLERY

From top: All I said was my feet were a little sore; He's so thoughtful, it wasn't even my birthday; Carl takes me to the nicest places; We start the day