

# NUDITY, NUNS AND EQUINOX GYMS: JUST EDGY ENOUGH

Equinox fitness clubs rolled into 2008 with a new marketing campaign, displaying ads in its gyms and in publications like *Boston Magazine* and *New York Magazine*. The “Happily ever” campaign features an ad with attractive young women, all dressed as nuns in habit, sketching a naked man; each of the nuns are fixated on his genitals.

The ad agency, Fallon Worldwide, believed that running these edgy ads were an important marketing tool. It was speculated that Fallon used the ads in order to make a splash financially, due to its past financial difficulty.

Twenty years ago Fallon lost \$22 million when major U.S. corporations stopped doing business with the company: an ugly series of racist and sexist incidents involving senior Fallon employees set off the firestorm. Given their recent struggles and tainted past, it is a wonder that Equinox chose such an unreliable agency.

While this ad was not the most offensive ad the Catholic League had ever seen, we recognized that it was completely unnecessary and juvenile. The need to rip off Catholic imagery in a sophomoric soft-porn ad was, and always will be, inexcusable.

We wondered what Equinox would have done had Fallon replaced the nuns with Islamic women covered with veils. They would have probably agreed that it was too edgy.

Following our news release on the ad, Fallon’s global communications director, Rosemary Abendroth, defended the ad by saying, “We’re not saying they’re nuns. They are all models who are dressed in a certain way. It isn’t meant to be a religious commentary.” Abendroth concluded, “For those who

jumped to the conclusion they were nuns, they should be corrected.”

Did Ms. Abendroth expect us to buy Fallon’s claim that there was no intent of religious commentary? This statement was a clear jab at the intelligence of Catholics. It also showed that Fallon Worldwide believed it could pull the wool over the eyes of Catholics who were offended. Unfortunately for them, the Catholic League saw right through it.