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Spring 2012

# Contested images: the politics and poetics of appropriation

Michael Alan Glassco  
*University of Iowa*

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CONTESTED IMAGES:  
THE POLITICS AND POETICS OF APPROPRIATION

by

Michael Glassco

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Doctor of Philosophy degree  
in Mass Communications in the Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

May 2012

Thesis Supervisors: Associate Professor Venise Berry  
Associate Professor Kembrew McLeod

As a tactic of dissent and political protest, appropriation artists use commercial and government images to critique power, by subverting the intended message and displaying their critique in public spaces. Appropriation activists are revolutionary subjects, graphic agitators, and rebellious bricoleurs who engage in the tactics of guerrilla semiotics, 'subvertising,' fauxvertising and culture jamming, to expose advertising imagery as a system of ideology that manufactures identity, sublimates desire, and naturalizes the construction of race, class, and gender. Their tactics also indicate the attempt to reclaim public space to address the privatization of culture and the unequal access to cultural resources. The use of images and tactics of appropriation creates a more diverse array of voices in the public sphere and opens spaces for active participatory engagement with the public to address systematic asymmetries of power.

The appropriation tactics and images used by Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, and the Guerrilla Girls in the late seventies and eighties, for example, addressed the normalizing representations of gender, sexuality and identity in advertising and the idealized promises of consumption. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the Billboard Liberation Front, *Adbusters*, Robbie Conal, and Shepard Fairey engaged in ideological warfare over the right to own, access, produce and display appropriated images. From billboards intended for commercial advertising to the display of 'subvertisements' in magazines, and the un-commercials to promote Buy Nothing Day and TV Turn off Week, these activists confront the prevailing cultural apparatuses of meaning and the political economic structures that enable their power.

To capture the cynical trendsetting demographic more resistant to traditional advertising, advertisers have co-opted the imagery, style and tactics of these artists. Their tactical strikes and visual style now convey hip, new, edgy and cool brand identities. Their images have also been commodified as commercial products and institutionalized art and have become fashion. As appropriation artists and advertising agencies engage in

the same tactics and use the same visual style, the lines between art, appropriation and advertising have blurred and the public sphere overcome with a pastiche of visual codes.

The dissertation traces the tactics of appropriation of Barbara Kruger, The Billboard Liberation Front and Shepard Fairey as exemplars of transgression and commodification within the changing commercial conditions of neo-liberalism. Their works, tactics and strategies are emphasized as points of insight into the practices and conditions of subversion as well as the limits of hegemonic containment that reproduces the political and economic structure within which they operated. The dissertation furthers and contributes to the theoretical and methodology of critical cultural studies as it emphasizes the role of the economy and ideology in reproducing the prevailing hegemonic order. Critical cultural studies hinges on the concepts of hegemony as lived discursive and ideological struggles over meaning and communication resources within historically specific and socially structured contexts. This framework emphasizes the poetics of appropriation - the use, meaning and spaces of articulation of visual representations with the politics - the socio-economic and discursive conditions that reproduce the dominant social order.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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**To You!**

The constitution of the resistant subject depends upon the ability to formulate cultural meanings from the materials that are available and can be appropriated from the dominant culture...cultural appropriation operates not only as a means for the development of an alternative subjectivity on an individual level, it also opens up cultural space for the formation of collective identities...The interplay of culture and identity - how culture forms the self and how culture may be subversively utilized for the definition of one's self-becomes a thoroughly political matter with no predetermined outcome. Instead, the process is an ongoing struggle for identity, which itself is a product of culture or, more accurately, the outcome of a contestation over the meaning of cultural artifacts.

Rosemary Coombe, *The Cultural Life of Intellectual Property*



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## INTRODUCTION

If you walked through Time Square on the evening of October 29, 2009 you might have stumbled across a bizarre convergence of advertising, appropriation art and fashion. In front of the Levis Store a group gathered in anticipation around a series of images posted to the store front. Iconic civil rights leaders and music artists were collaged against an ominous image of two staring eyes. The store front seemed to have been “bombed” by the likes of Shepard Fairey, Banksy or Mr. Brainwash in yet another attempt to address the privatization of public space. Looking down a bit and across the front entrance a group gathered. While some looked puzzled others, perhaps in the know, were patiently waiting to get a glimpse of Fairey himself working diligently to construct and weave in the next image.

But there was something peculiar about this event. While it seemed to convey a street tactics of guerrilla appropriation art and the aesthetic designs of revolution, it looked almost contrived to attract attention. Unlike the midnight raids and fly-by-night guerrilla tactics of appropriation the “take-over” seemed sponsored by Levis. If you were on the street that night, perhaps you noticed someone next to you wearing what appeared to be a Barbara Kruger tee shirt and shoes that announced, “protect me from what I want.” But, what was going on here? It is almost as if the tactics and styles of appropriation had become mainstream advertisements and fashion.

Was this all some sort of marketing ploy? Had it finally happened? Had resistance and the counter cultures that emerged in the last thirty years finally been quashed by the very commercial industries these artists railed and rallied against? Sure, United Colors of Benetton and Calvin Klein had been creating controversial ads to shock the puritan ethos of sex and sexuality that pervades U.S. culture for some time, but this seemed, somehow, all-together different. It was almost as if the styles and tactics of appropriation had become brands themselves, as big as the flagged Tommy Hilfiger

apparel so popular in the mid-1990s. But how did this happen? What compelled marketing and advertising agencies to move in on the territory appropriation artists sought to commandeer?

Appropriation activists are revolutionary subjects, graphic agitators, and rebellious bricoleurs who engage in the tactics of guerrilla semiotics, 'subvertising,' fauxvertising and culture jamming, to address the colonization of the public sphere by advertising and the privatization of cultural imagery and public spaces. As a tactic of dissent and political protest, these artist/activists appropriate commercial and government images, highlight the ideological codes hidden there, subvert the intended message, and display their critique in public spaces. Through their street tactics of under the radar fly-by-night interventions to their style of bricolage, montage and parody, appropriationists expose advertising imagery as a system of ideology that manufactures identity, sublimates desire, and naturalizes the construction of race, class, and gender.

Utilizing the same aesthetics of Madison Avenue with the tactics of street protest, these activists create spaces that confront the colonization of advertising in the public sphere, the unequal access to cultural resources and call forth a plurality of voices in their active creation and reconstitution of hegemonic meaning. Their tactics insert a diverse array of voices in the public sphere and opens spaces for active participatory engagement with the public to galvanize around and create strategic alliances to address systematic asymmetries of power and incite collective change.

Over the last three decades these artist activists used the streets across of the U.S. to agitate and incite dialogue over the use and abuse of advertising images by commercial media. In the late 1970s and 80s, political activists and artists such as Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger and the Guerrilla Girls hit the urban landscape with images and texts that exposed the idealized promises of consumption as a farce, overturned the hegemonic constructions of gender, sexuality and identity in advertising and created places to question the use of public spaces of consumer culture. With the pithy slogans of Holzer,

such as “Abuse of Power Comes as No Surprise” occupying Marquis and the Electra Color Signboard of Time Square, the public was invited to stop, think and question not only the relevance of this statement, or its placement on a commercial billboard, but also other taken-for-granted “truths” that are often thought but rarely spoken.

But, what was first utilized as a site of critique and dialogue soon turned into a guerrilla street war over the use and meaning of cultural representations and who had the right to own, distribute, use and display the images that were shaping history and defining the public as, first and foremost, consumers. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, other guerrilla activist groups emerged who re-appropriated the spaces and images of the culture industries to “unearth the hidden persuaders,” reclaim public spaces and incite questions over the asymmetrical access, use, and ownership of culture. Appropriating billboards intended for commercial advertising to the display of ‘subvertisements’ in magazines, and un-commercials that promoted Black Friday as Buy Nothing Day, the Billboard Liberation Front, Robbie Conal, Shepard Fairey, *Adbusters* and Banksy engaged the public through a multi-media assault to further a diverse array of voices in the public sphere. From the liberation of billboards to guerilla tactics that subverted the aesthetics and iconography of power, the tactics and visual style of appropriation artists/activists reflect a climate of unrest in the streets across the U.S.

In recent years however, the tactics of appropriation have been converted into an array of under the radar, stealth and guerrilla marketing campaigns and their styles rearticulated as signifiers of a hip and trendy brand identity. The more recent tactic of guerilla marketing is illustrative in this regard. It appears that those who aimed to unearth the ‘hidden persuaders’ and create dissociative moments have been co-opted and commodified. Is it possible that the changing political and economic shifts in the 1970s, in which these artists emerged to confront the excesses of advertising also facilitated their co-optation and commodification? This question is critical to understanding these developments.

The 1970's marks a turning point in political economic activity in the United States. Often identified as the beginnings of neo-liberalism, the seventies ushered in an era of media conglomeration, hyper-commercialism and the privatization of culture. As David Harvey explains, in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, neoliberalism is a theory of “political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.”<sup>1</sup> Neoliberalism embodies freedoms, but the freedoms advanced are not democratic or social inasmuch as freedoms that advance elite interests, those of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations and financial capital.

Neoliberal ideology is advanced by media owners through systematic public relations campaigns and lobbyists who extoll the myth that free markets fulfill the public interest while concealing the role of government as the grantor and guarantee of a free and diverse market place of ideas. The free market, it is claimed, fosters competition and innovation, yet it facilitates increased consolidation and monopoly power. The ideologues of neoliberalism have used threats of co-optation and bribery backed by the persuasive power of the state to incorporate freedom, whether political or otherwise, within the neoliberal fold and create “the climate of consent necessary to perpetuate its power.”<sup>2</sup>

Neoliberalism unified the public as freedom was articulated through the freedom to choose among products and reflected a diversification of lifestyles, modes of address and a range of cultural practices. As neoliberalism depends on consent it cast its net wide enough to create a “neoliberal market-based populist culture of differentiated consumerism and individual libertarianism.”<sup>3</sup> But, the freedom of the market, “as the high point of human inspiration turns out to be nothing more than the convenient means to spread corporate monopoly power and Coca Cola everywhere without constraints.”<sup>4</sup>

In *No Logo*, Naomi Klein captures the neo-liberal trend of the 1980-1990s and its association of brand based marketing. While the tenets of neoliberalism facilitate

deregulation and increased concentration of the media, the diversification of consumer choice, and the proliferation of cable channels it also spawned seismic shifts in the entertainment industries, journalism and the role, function and tactics of advertising. Faced with increasingly fragmented markets and a shift to an information and service based economy, advertising agencies altered their focus from selling products to manufacturing meaning and articulating their brands as signifiers of a lifestyle. As Klein notes, “‘Brands, not products!’ became the rallying cry for a marketing renaissance led by a new breed of companies that saw themselves as ‘meaning brokers’ instead of product producers.”<sup>5</sup>

To implement the ethos of branding, marketing agencies adopted new techniques to infiltrate the fringes of mainstream culture and find and develop new brand identities with authentic appeal. Using, peer-to-peer research, cool hunting and teen consultants, marketers and advertisers employed anthropological insights and metaphors of biological warfare to discover and capture the signs and lifestyles of a new generation of hip and edgy trend-setters. As if they were using the works outlined by Stewart Ewen and Thomas Frank and even those by Vance Packard, this new breed of agencies developed an array of under the radar, stealth and buzz marketing campaigns.<sup>6</sup> The tactics of under the radar, stealth, and buzz marketing are significant in this respect as the current trend indicates a method of “marketing without marketing” due to a rising mistrust over traditional advertising. Recent guerilla marketing attempts are illustrative as the images and tactics of appropriation appear to have been incorporated, seemingly to create intrigue and articulate an edgy, street and hip “authentic” brand identity.

Over the last decade the once notorious Banksy was named guerrilla marketer of the year by *Brandweek* and Shepard Fairey, having partnered with guerrilla marketing firms, was identified as a “modern-day Zorro,”<sup>7</sup> but also a “design-guru” and “marketing whiz.”<sup>8</sup> By 2008, the images produced by Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer and Shepard Fairey could be spotted on Gap t-shirts, Keds Shoes, and Levis Strauss apparel,



respectively. And while their once legally fraught interventions were plastered on the sides of buildings, they now hang on gallery walls at MOMA, the Andy Warhol Museum, and the National Portrait Gallery. While the emergence of these developments within the ever burgeoning neoliberal consumer climate speak volumes to the change in marketing tactics at this time, it leaves a number of questions in its wake. If the styles of appropriation have been commodified and turned into hip fashion trends, what are the possibilities of resistance and dissent? Why have their styles and tactics been commodified and co-opted? And, just what are the poetics and politics of appropriation?

It would seem, that by the second decade of the new millennium, the collective practices of and toward action against the tenets of capitalism and entrenched representations of power, have been contained and incorporated to reproduce the dictates of power. Articulated to serve the establishment they rallied against, the once democratic potential of appropriation refashioned as “authentic” counter cultural brands, invites the elusive, consumer savvy Generation Y to identify with, organize around and buy into consumer ideology. But the result of co-optation and commodification point to the blurred lines of art, fashion and activism and perhaps, the creation of an environment of unperceivable manipulation, as their tactics and visual styles once used to voice grievances and perform democracy on the streets blend in with ads and become fashion and are used to reproduce consumer ideology and subjects of capital.

If the tactics and images of appropriation have been co-opted to sell products, the study of these tactics and the procedures of co-optation advance a more thorough explication of the dynamic relations of communication, capitalism, resistance and democracy. The dissertation identifies appropriation as the most revealing site to explicate these coordinates, as political activists who appropriated commercial and government images emerged from the changing political and economic shifts in the 1970s, to confront the neo-liberal conditions may have facilitated their re-appropriation in the forms of co-optation and commodification. The study of the poetics of appropriation

and contemporary marketing practices point to the dynamic and variable political forces that limit a vibrant democratic culture within a neoliberal order.

The infiltration of advertising in the public sphere, the co-optation of dissent to market products, and the commodification of their visual styles have irreparable consequences to the proper functioning of free and vibrant democratic culture. For, if the visual style and tactics of appropriation are redirected toward consumption, the tactics and visual styles of democratic participation are articulated to hyper active consumption. The consequence of which positions the rights of property over expression as it reproduces consumer ideology, consumer subjects and asymmetrical relations of power in the name of democracy and democratic participation.

Research in consumption and consumerism indicates that the images of advertising and politics not only reflect an ideology at work and interpellate subjects within it but inscribe the body as a productive apparatus of power. From reproducing and congealing the construction of race, class or gender,<sup>9</sup> to naturalizing binary gender distinctions<sup>10</sup> that discipline a heteronormative gaze,<sup>11</sup> the images of the culture industry manufacture identity,<sup>12</sup> and colonize physical and discursive space.<sup>13</sup> Agencies use market research to segregate and target the public and use of images manufacture subjects fraught with feelings of inadequacy.<sup>14</sup> In doing so, advertising sublimates desire to the interests of consumer capitalism,<sup>15</sup> and naturalizes the dominant ideology.<sup>16</sup> The unequal access and use of image and the power of the media to blanket the public diminishes democratic participation in the public sphere<sup>17</sup> and creates the impression and entrenches its presence as a natural, immovable and an inevitable part of culture.

While opposition to the prevailing ethos of consumer capitalism does emerge, it is converted into next week's fashion. As Gary Hall and Catherine Harold suggest, the problem with alternative media, tactical re-appropriations, and culture jamming is that oppositional forms are too easily co-opted by the culture industries.<sup>18</sup> As Hall argues, "Nowadays being overtly 'oppositional,' 'alternative,' even 'revolutionary' often

amounts to little more than a fashion choice.”<sup>19</sup> Opposition itself provides the ground for the culture industries to stay hip and co-optation the mechanism used manufactures consumers who reproduce this order rather than citizens that question and change it.

Harold’s arguments are concerning given recent branding manuals such as *Brand Hi-jack* and *Lovemarks* whose authors proclaim insights garnered from consumer resistance manifestos such as Naomi Klein’s *No Logo* and Kalle Lasn’s *Culture Jam*. Indeed, the use of such manuals for marketing purposes points to the co-optation of the images and tactics of appropriation for marketing purposes. While such insights point to the ability of the culture industries to absorb appropriation and redirect it to reproduce consumer capitalism, little is known about why this occurs and has resulted in wide speculation regarding this process. Does resistance itself merely serve to reproduce the system it seeks to overturn? If so, then why?

In *Unmarketable*, Anne Elizabeth Moore states part of the difficulty of understanding co-optation derives from the underlying assumptions of co-optation and integrity as a set of binary oppositions where the unified approach of corporate entities is an unwelcome intrusion in culture.<sup>20</sup> Such notions gloss over the often conflictual practices within such groups and corporations themselves. Accounts of co-optation rarely consider the multiple and conflictual practices of marketing and guerrilla activism, often treating the former as a monolithic entity and the latter as existing outside of a market economy. If the visual practices of and street tactics of appropriation artists are rendered ineffectual, it is necessary to question how and why this occurred and explicate the possibilities of dissent in a burgeoning neoliberal climate by examining appropriation and the practices of new marketing tactics.

As Thomas Frank contends in *Why Jonny Can’t Dissent*, the distinction between advertising and opposition creates the perception of the media as a monolithic entity and subversion as something in opposition to the mainstream. But, “American capitalism’s endless drive for difference is the cultural ethos of the time. It is an ethos that promotes

the countercultural rebel to sell products, opposition is the ideology of capitalism.”<sup>21</sup> “Dissent” is incapable of subverting, challenging and questioning the belief of western business. The business of advertising has not co-opted subversion nor have they appropriated dissent. Rather, what such trends indicate is a confluence of interests.

While it is worth questioning the degree and type of shared interests taking place on the streets, it is important to note that Frank does not account for asymmetrical relations of power nor larger hegemonic structures of ownership and power that facilitate co-optation and reproduce unequal access and use of cultural resources. Others that have, barely explicate the significance of hegemony, if such a term is used at all. Harold and Andrew Heath and Joseph Potter limited their analyses to the rhetoric in published manifestos and the representation of resistance in popular culture, rather than the actual practices or images used.<sup>22</sup>

While Heath and Potter argue that co-optation implies that authenticity is undermined, it is worth questioning the very notion of authenticity, and if it remains a viable and productive concept to explicate co-optation.<sup>23</sup> For, authenticity is a manufactured construction deployed to facilitate an illusion of hip and edgy and create the distinction necessary to build brand identity in distinction to the mainstream. Although some research has explored the commodification of subcultural dissent, much of it has not explicated nor thoroughly linked the practices, tactics, methods or visual tropes of appropriation within the social, political and economic conditions in which they emerged and were apparently co-opted.<sup>24</sup>

Few scholars have examined the intricate connection of these visual strategies in detail and often only allude to the strategies of the avant-garde or past movements in which the commercial industries are supposedly utilizing. Most fall prey to an analysis that privileges *Adbusters* in particular without tracing an overarching circuit of production and contemporary marketing and advertising practices and the dynamic interplay of visual images, archetypes of graphic agitation/agit prop.<sup>25</sup> While Steven

Duncombe's analysis of advertising and progressive politics indicates shared practices between advertising and dissent, fascist propaganda and advertising, and dissent and fascism, his focus was secured to ethical considerations rather than explicating their similarities within a hegemonic field.

More research is needed to explore the dynamic and variable conditions that facilitate such similarity.<sup>26</sup> This dissertation accounts for this gap in understanding the possibilities of appropriation and the reasons and outcome of incorporation. It contends with the socio-economic and commercial conditions by accounting for the current practices of marketing that absorb their style and tactics as part of and constituting an overarching dynamic and variable structure that reproduces asymmetrical relations of power. The study of these practices and conditions therefore point, not to a confluence, but a battle of and over cultural resources and the underlying assumptions of creativity and authenticity; of who has access and the means necessary to intervene and secure meaning, and contain and/or enable expression counter to the prevailing hegemonic articulations and underlying logics of capital and property.

This dissertation traces the tactics of appropriation and visual styles of Barbara Kruger, The Billboard Liberation Front and Shepard Fairey, in particular, as exemplars of appropriation artists/activists and the recent trends of guerrilla marketing as both have emerged within the changing conditions of neo-liberalism. Their style, tactics and strategies are emphasized as points of insight into the moments of conflict, tension, negotiation, and articulation of subversion, as well as the political and socio-economic conditions within which they operated and were incorporated. For, recent trends tend to indicate the co-optation of their tactics by guerrilla marketing firms and the commodification of their styles by the art and fashion industries. The significance of these cases lies in the rearticulation of democratic politics toward consumption and the reproduction of asymmetrical relations of power.

The study of these practices reveal vital points of interest regarding the democratic potential of the politics and poetics of appropriation and the multiple lines of force that rearticulate their intervention to reproduce consumer interests. Bringing these artists together examining their similarities and differences within the conditions in which that emerged and which are constituted by them, furthers the study of contemporary hegemonic systems of power. It is the aim of this project to advance the study of appropriation and co-optation by accounting for variable practices of resistance and cultural reproduction. It traces the relatively stable and multiple relations of force to explicate the articulatory principles by which the tactics of appropriation emerge, are co-opted and become part of the dominant culture. In doing so, it provides a more thorough explanation of co-optation and commodification and expands the emerging controversial debates concerning counter-culture and oppositional practice.<sup>27</sup>

Tracing and situating the works and artists of graphic appropriation from the late 1970s to the present to explicate the politics and poetics of graphic appropriation requires inquiring into their tactics in relation to more recent marketing practice. As such, it is necessary to first ask, what are the tactics of graphic appropriation? How do appropriation artists-activists mobilize a diverse array of voices and meaning? And how is the public invited to participate around their tactics? If the tactics of appropriation hail participatory citizens rather than consumers but are co-opted by contemporary marketing practices, it is necessary to ask how and why the culture industries incorporated the tactics and images of appropriation? If appropriation is contained within the interests of capital, the subversive limits of appropriation reveals contemporary practices of power and the possibilities of democratic participation in the era of neoliberalism.

To derive information pertaining to the visual strategies and tactics of appropriation the published manifestos and visual anthologies of Barbara Kruger, *Barbara Kruger* and website [barbarakruger.com](http://barbarakruger.com), of Shepard Fairey's *Supply and Demand* retrospective and website [Obeygiant.com](http://Obeygiant.com), and the Billboard Liberation Front

archives at [Billboardliberation.com](http://Billboardliberation.com) were collected. These sources were utilized as archives of images, interviews, news articles and texts. They also contribute to the source information for the display, reproduction and commodification of their works.<sup>28</sup>

These artists are utilized because in explicating their works and tracing the weighted circuit of production, they provide insight to graphic appropriation and the conditions of reproduction and commodification in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s – a time of increased deregulation in the media industries, the rise of brand based and guerrilla marketing, and the privatization of culture. As each addresses different aspects of representation and the reproduction of ideology they provide a more thorough view of activist whose work confronts issues of power and representation and the cultural apparatuses that block their expression; for these artists have confronted unprecedented levels of hegemonic containment, as their tactics have been co-opted and their visual styles commodified.

Given the nature of this project, including all instances of graphic dissent is beyond the purview of this dissertation and points to areas of further research. The focus on these particular artists relates to the need to speak to the specific form and tactic of appropriation as outlined below. Moreover, given the methodology of this dissertation, the artists are selected based on the availability of second hand information. As such, the works analyzed are limited to the works available, which limits the analysis to the more “canonized,” but also more commodified works. In studying how such subversive artists are contained and their poetics co-opted and become dominant, this research is limited to the artists who have undergone incorporation and become house-hold names and part of the dominant commercial and institutional culture, used to market products, are part of national museum exhibits, and have become state sponsored propaganda artists.

Although the Billboard Liberation Front does not fit neatly into this categorization, their uniqueness from Kruger and Fairey is utilized as a point of insight to derive similarities and differences of appropriation, co-optation and commodification.

By bringing these artists together through their similarities and differences to establish a process of graphic appropriation and tracing the multiple articulatory principles that intervene to reproduce a dynamic and variable structure, one can identify the limits of hegemonic containment and structuring principles that secure ideology. As such, this dissertation highlights the contradictory moments and social conflicts over and within the use and meaning of popular culture, the identities it accords and the structure it promotes.

While each artist emerged utilizing an assortment of tactics, together, their poetics constitute a political attack against commercial representations to critique ideology reproduced in advertising and representations confined in the corridors of male dominated art institutions. Utilizing an assortment of tactics reminiscent of Dada and Futurism, their work provides a point of insight into the counter revolutionary potential of appropriation, for their work confronts the dominant uni-vocal hail with a multi-accentual voice and a multi-focal perspective, to voice and provide a view necessary for a diverse and vibrant democratic culture. From the guerrilla tactics on the street to the press coverage of their successes and failures, each intervened in the urban landscape by creating spaces in which a diversity of voices address, question, and critique power.

As these artists use the dominant representations, aesthetic elements, images and graphic designs of mass communication and culture, from both the media as well as state sponsored propaganda, the dissertation remains focused on the study of appropriation of dominant mass mediated forms of culture to critique and expose ideology and re-articulate meaning. Artists who take alternative avenues, such as those who engage in performance art to critique the reification of social relations or critique the constitution of the consumer subject and the colonization of public space by advertising - and reclaim the streets, must remain as part of the general context in which Fairey, Kruger and the Billboard Liberation Front are understood, but not the specific focal point.

As such, more contemporary artists that worked alongside Kruger, Fairey and the BLF, such as Jenny Holzer, Guerrilla Girls, Robbie Conal, *Adbusters*, and Banksy who



utilized similar tactics and aesthetic styles to announce grievances are included to contextualize the conditions in which these artists were working and the histories in which they are a part, but are not its focus. Thus, the works of Jenny Holzer located in the visual anthology *Jenny Holzer*, Mark Dery's culture jamming manifesto and website, markdery.com, *Adbusters* website Adbusters.org and publications, the Guerrilla Girls anthologies *The Guerrilla Girls' Illustrated Guide to Female Stereotypes* and *The Guerrilla Girls Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art* and website guerilla girls.com, Robbie Conals' autobiography, *Art Attack* and website, robbieconal.com, and Banksy's *Wall and Piece* and website banksy.co.uk, are used to ground, differentiate, and trace the evolution of appropriation.

Newspaper articles retrieved via Lexis Nexus Academic were used as a source of secondary 'data.' The articles used were comprised of both news and opinion of mainstream and local press, in major U.S. and World Publications. The following was retrieved under the search term "Barbara Kruger" (958), "Guerilla Girls" (350), "Jenny Holzer" (997); "Billboard Liberation Front" (28), "Mark Dery" (70), "Adbusters" (826), "Robbie Conal" (195); "Shepard Fairey" (625), and Banksy (311), within newspapers, magazines and journals, industry trade press, news wires and press releases, aggregate news sources and newsletters. The articles were limited by utilizing the search term in the title or lead paragraph. Search terms that gathered irrelevant information based on identical names of non-graphic artists were eliminated.

The tactics of appropriation, point to a politics of visual dissent, as the appropriation of the signs of commodity and consumer culture create a site of resistance to denounce social inequality. It is a struggle that is fought through the appropriation of government and commercial propaganda that creates a space to question, incite dialogue, and organize around to critique the colonization of the public sphere and the privatization of visual culture by corporate interests. For, such practices de-reify the static conception of the world and the ahistorical intervention of power, as it subverts the prevailing

representations and authoritative status of the culture industry. As such artists attempt to reclaim public space and insert a diverse array of voices necessary for a healthy democratic culture, this dissertation becomes a forum, another medium in which their voices are expressed and heard.

It is necessary to account for not only the ways in which Barbara Kruger, the *Billboard Liberation* and Shepard Fairey have engaged in counter-hegemonic articulations through the appropriation of consumer images in public space but also recent marketing practices, myths and commodification as the multiple forces of containment that reproduce asymmetrical relations of power. If these practices are incorporated and turn the critique of the ownership of media, the use of images to manufacture identities, and the colonization of the public sphere into a means to reproduce this order, it is necessary to explicate how and why their tactics were co-opted by advertising and commodified as art and fashion objects. These concepts are discussed in detail in the theoretical section.

Explicating hegemonic containment in terms of the co-optation of their tactics along with commodification requires collecting data on the products of graphic agitators sold and distributed through their and other commercial websites as well as searching business publications for the most recent trends of marketing for specific instances and trends of co-optation. While the role of the mainstream press is a forceful apparatus of ideological incorporation, it was vital to explicate the role of business and trade publications; for it is in those publications that managerial decisions, press releases and insider reports convey marketing practices in which appropriation is articulated as hip, new and edgy. In short, such publications indicate moments of articulation in which appropriation is discursively constructed and articulated as commercially viable.

Business publications were used to explicate the over determined and complexly articulated structure that constitutes the limits of hegemonic containment and reinforces asymmetrical relations of power. Lexis Nexus Academic was utilized to collect

newspaper, magazine and industry trade press articles to trace the cooptation and the commodification of appropriation. The search term “guerilla marketing” which pulled (560) articles was the most productive search term, compared to “guerilla advertising” (46), “branding” (991), “street marketing” (801), and “street advertising” (762), whose focus was too broad and search term combination semantically untenable. The results from guerrilla marketing were used to gather the most up to date trends of marketing practices and explicate how appropriation is commodified and co-opted. These reports were used to trace the political economic conditions by which and within which these artists were working, railing against and incorporated.

### **Organization of Chapters**

Chapter I: The Politics and Poetics of Appropriation, advances a Critical Cultural Studies theoretical framework to further the study of the politics and poetics of appropriation. The first section, the poetics of appropriation, provides the historical context of graphic appropriation and agitation in which contemporary artists are positioned as part of and diverging from. This section presents a history of appropriation as the basis for re-occurring figures in contemporary work and highlights particular tactics and visual styles of collage, photo-montage and détournement to ground contemporary practices. It continues with an explanation of culture resistance, appropriation and subversive art as a means to create revolutionary subjects and promote a dialogue on the street through the tactics and designs of dissent.

The second section, the politics of appropriation emphasizes the concepts of ideological power, articulation and hegemony to explicate the structure of power in which appropriation artists-activists confront and are contained within. It introduces the concepts of incorporation, commodification and containment as the mechanisms in which power intervenes and secures articulations and subjects of capital. Accounting for gaps in literature, this chapter furthers critical cultural theories of appropriation and provides the concept sets necessary to explicate the politics and poetics of appropriation.

Chapter II: Identity in the Field of Vision, primarily focuses on the poetics of Barbara Kruger during the late 1970s and 1980s. Although Kruger's interventions are emphasized they are also positioned within the context of other of other artist/activists such as Jenny Holzer and The Guerilla Girls. Since the 1970s and 1980s these artist-activists have created sites to incite questions regarding the dominant hetero-normative representations of the culture industry. Through the critique and re-articulation of the ideal images of the singer, writer, actress, model, mom, and teenager that are relentlessly projected through the lens of television, movies, magazines, and advertising to the practices of co-opting public spaces, these artists point to an ideological struggle over the politics of representation and identity formation.

While the poetics of these appropriation artists intervene in public spaces and question the authoritative pronouncements of the culture industries and the unequal access to cultural resources they introduce a diverse array of tactics that undermine the reified, passive, and unitary subject position. Their particular tactics and visual tropes are identified within their socio-cultural context and feminists writings during such times and the question how such artifacts act rhetorically on subjects, pursuing how subject positions are unraveled and repositioned through the appropriation and re-articulation of commercial and governmental propaganda. These works are contextualized as carrying on the tactic of collage and photomontage that problematizes the image-text relation common to Dada.

This chapter also explicates how Barbara Kruger negotiates her position within the institutions of art and the commercial sector as her works faced copyright infringement and were commodified by the collaboration of art institutions and the fashion industry. It is argued that the direct yet ambiguous address of Kruger's works and rebellious aesthetic was co-opted by the fashion industries to articulate a hip and edgy brand identity by remaining elusive. While the role of the press positioned her interventions in opposition to the dominant culture and helped create the conditions for

the culture industries to capitalize on appropriation's edgy tactics, her scuffle with the law helped create the conditions for the commodification of appropriation.

Rather than simply illustrating the institutional structures that facilitate this aim, this chapter utilizes the accounts of guerrilla artists and activists in the press to explicate both the discourse of subversion as well as commodification. As such, the published interviews in business and trade press of Barbara Kruger are utilized as points of insight into the multiple and contradictory conditions of appropriation. This chapter navigates the often hostile discussion of co-optation, selling out, authenticity and integrity as Kruger negotiates her role as artist, activist and commodity.

Chapter III: MIJI, moves the discussion of the poetics appropriation into the guerilla tactics of dissent following the prevalence of Kruger, Holzer and the Guerilla Girls. While the tactics of the more recent works of The Billboard Liberation Front is the primary focus of this chapter, their interventions are positioned in relation to other artist/activist groups such as *Ad Busters*, as this organization was also operative at this time and reveal the consumer climate they were engaging with. The liberation of billboards and the production of subvertisements incite questions that problematize the prevailing politics of representation, the ownership of culture and the right of access and expression over that of property.

Operating within the cracks and fissures of dominant hegemonic constructions, these artists appropriate the dominant systems of representation and their channels of address to reclaim public space and create a dialogue in an otherwise one way flow of communication. In rearticulating advertisements with meanings other than the prevailing/dominant representation to a set of practices and subjects, they create the conditions by which strategic alliances can be formed for political and social change. An analysis of their tactics, provides a more thorough explication of appropriation and the conditions by which co-optation can be understood.

This chapter also addresses the evolving tactics of appropriation as The Billboard Liberation Front engaged in the tactics of political jujitsu through their official communiques, press releases and mock kidnapping of journalists. While turning the power of the mainstream news against itself to finance its own critique reveal a significant intervention in discourse it also foreshadows the an integral component of marketing practices in the years to come. While the Billboard Liberation Front was largely immune from commodification, this chapter focusses on the cooptation of the tactics of appropriation through guerrilla marketing. A recent marketing tactic used to cut through the clutter and associate a hip, edgy and rebellious ethos to brands.

Chapter IV: Undermining the Iconography of Power: analyzes the practice of visual appropriations and political praxis in the late 1990s and early 2000s – a time of increased consolidation in the media industry and proliferation of neoliberal ideology. While the focal point of this chapter is the works of Shepard Fairey, it also positions his works within the context of other appropriation artists such as Banksy and Robbie Conal. This set of case studies examines the shared and/or conflictual tropes and/or practices of appropriated and re-articulated images that confront, critique and/or problematize the dominant representations of the culture industries. As such, chapter five furthers the discussion of appropriation and articulation.

The significance of Shepard Fairey’s work is three fold as his intervention in the public sphere through an ambiguous image invites the public to invest their own meaning in the image and galvanize around shared meaning and distribute the posters throughout the streets. Identifying the tactics as an attempt to engage the public through corporeal engagement with their surroundings and the distribution of the images points to the central characteristics of guerrilla marketing that would pervade culture in the late 1990s and 2000s. Fairey’s work in particular is revealing in this regard as he moved from a political provocateur on the fringes to a guerrilla marketing “guru” and fashion designer. His position and iconic works of revolution and disobedience for social critique and

branding provide the necessary insight to illustrate how the culture industries use the aesthetic feel of revolutionary design and ambiguity to unify a diverse array of interests, channel dissent to consumption, and articulate hip and edgy brands.

Ch. V: The Subversive Limits of Appropriation, traces the trajectory of guerrilla marketing as it incorporates and co-opts the poetics of guerrilla appropriation artists. An analysis of the conditions in which graphic dissent emerged and was co-opted is furthered by a discussion of the evolving methods of marketing and advertising that led to the co-optation of appropriation. As such, it provides a detailed account of the multiple under-the-radar, stealth and guerrilla campaigns used in the mid-1990s and 2000s, to explicate how, what and why these tactics were utilized and articulated to consumption.

This chapter explicates the role of the press as a discursive mechanism that is intricately connected to the commodification of dissent. But rather than simply illustrating the institutional structures that facilitate this aim, this chapter utilizes the accounts of guerrilla marketing and activists to explicate both the discourse of co-optation as well as commodification. This chapter traces the commodification and depoliticization of graphic dissent that occurs at the socio-economic, discursive, and institutional levels. In doing so it explicates how the poetics of appropriation is contained within the interests of capital as democratic participation is articulated to consumption, how guerrilla marketing capitalizes on polysemy and unites a diverse array of meaning under the tactics of appropriation, how the press is manipulated to garner free publicity and how theses coordinates reproduces the necessary conditions of capitalist modes of exploitation. It ends with a discussion of QR Codes as the logical outgrowth and convergence of appropriation, art, and marketing as the ultimately vague emblem invites active participation and becomes art, fashion, and advertisement all wrapped up into one.

The conclusion addresses the findings of appropriation and creativity in the age of hypercommercialism. It is argued that such tactics are utilized to articulate hip, edgy, and urban identity to brands in their attempt to attract a more cynical demographic. It

accounts for the mechanisms by which the ambiguity advanced by appropriation artists to create a number of voices and subject positions in the public sphere and invite the public to take action, is co-opted by advertisers to create intrigue as these tactics invite a diverse array of publics to invest meaning and create buzz. While the tactics of appropriation were used as a means of dissent and protest they were also usurped by the culture industries.

The conclusion draws attention to future research as appropriation artists continue in new forms and the culture industries continue to contain their poetics. Accounting for the recent activities of: Trusto-Corp who attempt to maintain an authentic culture of appropriation, *Adbusters* role in Occupy Wall Street, and Shepard Fairey's designs for the 99% and *Time*'s "The Protestor" person of the year cover, provides many directions to expand this research and further areas of study. The conclusion also introduces the role of intellectual property law as a mechanism that forecloses meaning and reproduces asymmetrical relations of power. While appropriation remains a legally fraught practice its use by guerrilla marketing agencies points to its incorporation as the ground upon which intellectual property owners may have greater control over their wares.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE POLITICS AND POETICS OF APPROPRIATION

Critical cultural studies hinges on the concepts of hegemony as a complexly articulated structure in dominance that sets limits in which oppositional and alternative forms emerge and accounts for the relations of force that absorb and rearticulate them to reproduce a structure in dominance.<sup>1</sup> It is a framework that conceptualizes culture as a contestation over meaning and experience and ideological power as that which secures articulations and constitutes subjects to its rule.<sup>2</sup> Rather than a static conception of cultural reproduction it recognizes the multiple and variable lines of force that reproduce asymmetrical relations of domination.<sup>3</sup> This approach accounts for commodity containment and co-optation as coordinates of hegemonic containment absorbing and articulating opposition to consumerism.<sup>4</sup>

Informed by critical cultural studies, this dissertation utilizes articulation as a theory to explicate culture as a contested terrain of ideological struggle rearticulated through discursive practice. In *The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies* Jennifer Daryl Slack describes articulation as both a theory of contexts as well as a way of “contextualizing” the object under investigation. While in the theoretical sense, articulation grounds engagement with the object of analysis, as a method it is the “creative process of articulating, of thinking relations and connections as how we come to know and as creating what we know. Articulation is, then, not just a thing (not just a connection) but a process of creating connections.”<sup>5</sup> The open-ended-ness of this approach moves from the application of theory to derive and apply an epistemology to a methodological practice as it constitutes and is reconstituted by the objects and contexts of analysis.

If appropriation opens the possibility of a new and radical democratic subject by undermining the reproduction of relations of power<sup>6</sup> the poetics of appropriation defines

the tactics of appropriation as a lived ideological struggle over cultural resources and meaning connected to real practices.<sup>7</sup> The concept of poetics illustrates visual aesthetic and rhetorical techniques of poetic composition and production used to articulate alternative meanings of commodity signs, expose ideology, address the colonization of public space by advertising and form radical subjects and collective identities. As such, the first section, focuses on historical precursors of appropriation along with the concepts of tactical poetics, radical subjects and counter publics as the poetics of appropriation.

While the poetics of appropriation is influenced by visual rhetoric, active audience theories and oppositional reading practice it specifically focuses on theories of cultural resistance as an ideological struggle.<sup>8</sup> This scholarship addresses the use of commodity signs and cultural representations as a poetic tactic of appropriation that undermines power, exposes ideology and calls forth revolutionary subjects.<sup>9</sup> In doing so it provides a set of theoretical concepts to explicate how Barbara Kruger, The Billboard Liberation Front and Shepard Fairey resisted the dominant ideology and representations of consumer capitalism through oppositional tactics of appropriation. The poetics of appropriation is concerned with the social use and articulation of visual culture as it overturns, de-naturalizes and/or rearticulates dominant representations.<sup>10</sup>

If the tactics of Barbara Kruger, The Billboard Liberation Front and Shepard Fairey are co-opted and commodified by the culture industries, it is necessary to move beyond the poetics of appropriation and explicate the conditions and dynamic forces that intervene over and contain their work. The politics of appropriation addresses multiple forms of containment and identifies co-optation and commodification as mechanisms in which commercial meanings are attached and temporarily secured to the service of power.<sup>11</sup> As such, the politics of appropriation privileges the discursive practices of visual representation within and around images<sup>12</sup> and explicates the hegemonic conditions by which articulations are overturned and/or sustained.<sup>13</sup> If the tactics and styles of appropriation are co-opted by advertising and marketing firms, turned in

commodities and hung on gallery walls, section two introduces a series of concepts to explicate the intervention of power.<sup>14</sup>

The politics of appropriation introduces theories of co-optation, commodification and incorporation as multiple forms of hegemonic containment. Section two places an emphasis on the concepts of hegemony and hegemonic containment to theorize the social, political and economic lines of force that reproduce a structure in dominance and limit the terrain of ideological struggle. Co-optation and commodification are theorized as dominant lines of force that rearticulates appropriation to commodity signs and marketing practice to reproduce capitalists relations of production. These coordinates indicate the limits of oppositional tactics within a consumer capitalist structure as they reconstitute appropriation to reproduce the ideology and subjects of consumerism. The second section provides the theoretical framework necessary to explicate the limits of hegemonic containment and explain how and why appropriation is co-opted, commodified and secured to the service of power. Thus, the poetics and politics of appropriation draws and continually creates connections between appropriation artists and marketing practice to trace the conditions in which they emerged and explicate power reproduced and secured.

### **Poetics of Appropriation**

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michele DeCerteau argues that the use of consumer images should be conceptualized as a production, a poiesis – a poetics of composition and production. The importance is not placed on the use of one’s “own products” but in the tactical use of the “products imposed by a dominant economic order.”<sup>15</sup> These tactics, Certeau argues, “boldly juxtaposes diverse elements in order suddenly to produce a flash, shedding a different light on the language.”<sup>16</sup> As this light shines through and refracts the taken-for-granted aspects of products and commodity signs, meaning and conventionalized use, the alternative use of commodities give way to alternative perspective refracted on the surface of commodities.

A tactic does not occupy a specific spatial or institutional space for the place in which the tactic is used is the place of another. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety. As such it is "a way of using imposed systems that constitutes the resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimizations. A practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneuvers of unequal forces and for utopian points of reference."<sup>17</sup>

The appropriation of material within culture and intervention in the space of economic and property relations point to the acts that momentarily expose the naturalized interest that is hidden there and reorganizes these spaces for an alternative network of relations to form. "These 'ways of operating' constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of socio cultural production...deflecting their functioning by means of a multitude of 'tactics' articulated in the details of everyday life."<sup>18</sup> So, what are the tactics of Shepard Fairey, Barbara Kruger and the Billboard Liberation Front?

While, Barbara Kruger, the Billboard Liberation Front and Shepard Fairey appropriated the images and slogans of marketing and propaganda, their tactics and visual aestheticism often reference the visual styles and tactics of Futurism, Dadaism, and Situationism. As these groups critiqued the means by which authority and consumer ideology constitute subjects and sublimate desire to the interests of capital, it is necessary to return to their works and explicate the tactical poetics and the theatre of dissent. The following provides an overview of the tactics of agitation, collage, détournement and bricolage common to Dada, Futurism, Situationism and Punk to explicate contemporary works and position them within a historical context informed by their tactical precursors.

### **Futurism**

As a precursor to the avant-garde practices of Dada, Futurism emerged in the early 1900's in response to cubism, the elite distinctions of art institutions and the regime

of linear one point perspective that emerged in the Enlightenment. While Cubism developed, in part, as a response to one point perspective and tried to convey multiple perspectives at once, Futurism sought to undermine the depiction of fixed images in art and the spectator position of the audience in theatre. The radical portrayal of movement and the progression of time on canvas and the agitation of the audience in their theatre, created the terrain to undermine entrenched authority of “Art” and the dominant meanings and assumptions reproduced through perspective and artistic tradition.

The birth of Futurism and its “formal” break with art proper has been traced to the publication of the Futurist manifesto in the Paris newspaper, *Le Figaro* on February 9, 1909. In the publication, the founding member Filippo Tommaso Marinetti outlined a project that embraced the dynamism, speed and power of the machine age.<sup>19</sup> Futurism, set its aim on static and traditional artistic forms and sought modes of unbridled expression. Through a series of interventions in art, theatre, poetry and verse, the Futurists embraced the speed, restlessness, vitality and change of the modern machine age and even glamorized war. Exalting violence and conflict rather than stability and order undermined the tradition and stability of unexamined values reproduced through cultural and social institutions.

As Marinetti contends, futurist art and performance was born of two vital currents, “(1) our frenzied passion for real, swift, elegant, complicated, cynical, muscular, fugitive, Futurist life; (2) our very modern cerebral definition of art according to which no logic, no tradition, no aesthetic, no technique, no opportunity can be imposed on the artist’s natural talent.”<sup>20</sup> For Futurism, it was necessary to destroy the logic and pretensions of the enlightenment and unleash perception to achieve knowledge based in the felt experiences of the world. By reinventing performance, art and poetry the Futurists called for a mode of being that challenged orthodox and privileged hierarchies and sought to rid the world of the constraints imposed upon them. The manifestoes published over the next few years outlined the procedures necessary to revolutionize

poetry, theatre and art, and called for the glorification of new technologies and the speed, power and movement of the industrial age.

In the *Variety Theatre Manifesto*, published on September 29, 1913, Marinetti identifies the theater as a place that “destroys the Solemn, the Sacred, the Serious, and the Sublime in Art with a capital A”<sup>21</sup> and outlines a number of procedures of Futurist theatrical performance to undermine the distinction between theatre and everyday life.<sup>22</sup> From spreading glue on the seats in the audience, selling the same ticket to ten people to create a traffic jam, bickering and wrangling, and offering “free tickets to gentlemen or ladies who are notoriously unbalanced, irritable, or eccentric and likely to provoke uproars with obscene gestures...or other freakishness,”<sup>23</sup> the Futurist undermined the convention of a detached viewing experience. When paying costumers found themselves in competition for the same seat or glued to their chairs, they became active participants in the theatrical performance, and their interaction and outrage became theatre.

In the destruction of the conceptions of perspective, proportion, time and space the Futurists sought to destroy logic and make strange the traditional and habitual. As Marinetti contends, “the Futurist theatre will be able to excite its audience, that is make it forget the monotony of daily life, by sweeping it through a labyrinth of sensations imprinted on the most exacerbated originality and combined in unpredictable ways.”<sup>24</sup> But as the performance spilled onto and over the audience the distinction between the two unraveled, and the audience, filled with joy or terror, would “perhaps become an actor itself as well.”<sup>25</sup> Unable to decipher the performance from the situation, the audience turned to themselves and wondered if they too, were part of the performance.

Beyond the forced agitation of the audience Marinetti recommends “prostituting” all types of classic work on the stage, where all Greek, French or Italian tragedies are condensed, mixed together and performed in a single evening. The attempt to ridicule, parody and perform an entire play in minutes was one method used to destroy attachment to traditional values by invoking the audience into a fit of comic laughter and “body-

madness.” The tactic, claims Marinetti cooperates in “Futurist destruction of immortal masterworks, plagiarizing them, parodying them, making them look commonplace by stripping them of their solemn apparatus as if they were mere attraction.”<sup>26</sup> In the end, the Variety Theatre incited being rather than knowing, and experiencing and feeling through a direct apprehension of the world and exposing, if not obliterating the authority and status of tradition. Ultimately, it was an attempt to destroy “all our conceptions of perspective, of proportion, of time and of space.”<sup>27</sup>

The Futurists abolished perspective and traditional notions of space reproduced through the text and theatrical stage to “arouse new sensations and emotional values in the spectator.”<sup>28</sup> As Enrico Prampolini contends in the Futurist Scenic Atmosphere: Technical Manifesto of 1924, the flat and horizontal surface of the stage facilitated an equally flat involvement with the audience as it limited the developments of theatrical action, “making it a slave to the scenic frame and the fixed-perspective visual angle.”<sup>29</sup> To abolish the stage however, trespasses on the three dimensional limits in which traditional stage performance relies. By “breaking the horizontal surfaces by the intervention of new vertical, oblique, and polydimensional elements, by forcing the cubic resistance of the scenic arc by means of the spherical expansion of rhythmic plastic planes in space, we arrive at the creation of Futurist polydimensional sceno-space.”<sup>30</sup>

Perspective is conceptualized as the mathematization of vision that directly implicates a subject or viewer’s relation to the outside world, so the futurist problematized their perception of space, the cultural history in which they are embedded, and the ontological and epistemological foundations that give rise to vision and disrupted spatial coherence. By re-organizing the public’s relation to rational forms and invoking a multi and polymorphous experience, they assaulted conventional and habitual ways of seeing, knowing and feeling and undermined the illusion of a unitary perspective to assume. This technique was performed on the stage as well as through their typographical manipulation on the printed page.

The desire to move from language to experience and “destroy all logic in the spectacles” was elaborated further in Marinetti’s article, *Destruction of Syntax*. Here Marinetti outlines the return to the unbridled expression of emotion and the experience of life that is repressed through syntax and the convention of language. Real expression of life in its movement and vitality is not expressed in sentences, the use of punctuation or correct adjectives, rather actual expression assaults all the senses at once. Expression overcomes the visual, auditory and olfactory sensations of both the speaker and listener. Thus, art, verse and poetry that replicates these experiences destroys the repressive canals of syntax and invites unrestricted corporeal engagement.

In destroying syntax and linear expression, emotion is freed and overflows the repressive function of linearity like the rush of steam, as emotion bursts “the sentence’s steam pipe, the valves of punctuation, and the adjectival clamp.”<sup>31</sup> Dismantling the ‘canals’ of syntax frees words from the connecting strings of syntax and overflows the barriers in which meaning and experience is confined.<sup>32</sup> Analogy, Marinetti contends, is one way to achieve unconventional connections in meaning and overcome the limits and chains of equivalence in which syntax secures.<sup>33</sup> By juxtaposing contradictory experiences radically different images induce vast and divergent connections and opens up an uninterrupted free flow of consecutive images and new experiences.

As Marinetti outlines, “Always with the aim of giving the greatest number of vibrations and a deeper synthesis of life, we abolish all stylistic bonds, all the bright buckles with which the traditional poets link images together in their prosody.”<sup>34</sup> Words in freedom therefore crumbles the walls of syntax that sublimate the experiences of the corporeal, and spreads beyond them, illuminating new experiences of material life. This approach embraces the swift, brutal and immediate lyricism of all experiences, sounds and sensations of modern life.

Surpassing the syntactical order of words to break free of the lyric intoxication of logic, Marinetti proposed a new orthography called free expressive. Free expressive was



a practice used to “freely deform, refresh the words, cutting them short, stretching them out, reinforcing the center or the extremities, augmenting or diminishing the number of vowels and consonants.”<sup>35</sup> While the expressive use opens up interpretation and overflows convention with multiple and contradictory meanings resulting in ambiguity, it matters little for the word will be married to “the onomatopoeic harmonies, or the noise-summaries, and will permit us soon to reach the *onomatopoeic psychic* harmony, the sonorous but abstract expression of an emotion or a pure thought.”<sup>36</sup>

The revolution in typography was another tactic that railed against the ‘harmony’ of the page that produced uniformity and reproduced linearity of the static ideal. Both were conceived as contrary to the dynamism of life in the modern age. While the direct linear exposition of the written word forecloses alternative ways of experience, a revolution in the printed word facilitated leaps and bursts of emotion. As Marinetti explains, “On the same page, therefore, we will use three or four colors of ink, or even twenty different typefaces if necessary...With this typographical revolution and this multicolored variety in the letters I mean to redouble the expressive force of words.”<sup>37</sup>

The Futurist rejection of authoritative meaning of Art, guides this discussion as their refusal to submit to the dominant and prevailing orthodoxy points to the potential revolutionary power of re-appropriated artistic works that juxtapose radically divergent elements, tear free the repressive function of the text, and expose dominant constructions to unearth entrenched traditions and call forth for a new subject who speaks diversity often in incomprehensible tongues.<sup>38</sup>

Antonio Gramsci’s encounter with Futurism is illustrative in this regard. Gramsci contends, the revolutionary potential of Futurism lies in the formation of a new set of standards, new psychology, and “new ways of feeling, thinking and living.”<sup>39</sup> The destruction and overturning of bourgeois culture does not deprive humanity but liberates it from spiritual hierarchies, prejudices, idols and ossified traditions. Revolutionary culture demands innovation and audacity without fear that the world will collapse. As

Gramsci explains, “The Futurists have carried out this task in the field of bourgeois culture. They have destroyed, destroyed, destroyed, without worrying if the new creation produced by their activity were on the whole superior to those destroyed.”<sup>40</sup>

The Futurists intervened in a socio-cultural field dominated by industry and bourgeois culture and revolutionized culture by creating new forms of art, philosophy, behavior and language without fear. But as the revolution in culture was inextricably wed to the speed, dynamism and power of the industrialized age, the tactics deployed toward progress, emancipation of tradition and archaic forms converged in the reproduction of a new order that advanced destruction in the name of the sacred.<sup>41</sup> For as Futurism aestheticized war, the spectacle of war valorized by Marionette was co-opted by Fascism and channeled unbridled enthusiasm to obedience.

As Futurism turned toward Fascism as the embodiment of this new ethos, the ethos of industrial progress and the exploitation of sensuous and material life became the new myths deployed to entrench and legitimize this order. Walter Benjamin’s essay on *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility*, is illuminating in this regard as he argues that Futurism’s embrace of destruction, speed and war led to war and an allegiance with Mussolini. Unlike the contemplative detachment and critical view of Bertolt Brecht in Epic Theater, the Futurist impulse purged the public’s discontent and its emotional remnants were channeled to the unbridled obedience to authority. Benjamin adds, unlike Futurism’s cathartic turn, Dada’s poetic intervention of collage struck at both bourgeois culture and Fascism.

## **Dada**

As one of the most subversive movements of the avant-garde in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dada emerged in Zurich from the rubble of World War I in the heart of a war torn Europe. As a safe haven for those escaping the First World War, Switzerland’s policy of political neutrality helped facilitate the conditions for unbridled political and social activity. “In many ways, the conflict set the stage for the great quandaries and

imperatives of the twentieth century, unleashing the demonic triad of mechanized warfare, mass death, and totalitarian politics that shaped the century to come.”<sup>42</sup> Dada emerged from this crisis and triad.<sup>43</sup>

As Hans Richter, one of the groups' founding members argues in *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, “at that moment of history it was just this that gave the movement its explosive power to unfold in all directions, free of aesthetic or social constraints.”<sup>44</sup> If the past led to the momentous destruction of war, Dada rejected the political, economic, artistic and dominant modes of rationality that led to such destruction. Although taking different paths “all reached positions of committed opposition to the war and entrenched skepticism about the social and cultural institutions that had given rise to it.”<sup>45</sup>

Zurich was a sanctuary for Dadaists Hans Arp, Hugo Ball, Emmy Henning's, Richard Huelsenbeck, Francis Picabia, Hans Richter and Tristan Tzara, to name a few. But it was also a place where draft dodgers, profiteers and pacifists, as well as Vladimir Lenin and Mikhail Bakunin took refuge.<sup>46</sup> Operating from roughly 1916 to 1924 the movement is comprised of a diverse and loosely knit community of practitioners present in Zurich, Berlin, Cologne, New York and Paris. Dadaists challenged traditional values and authority through a politically charged skepticism and undermined the distinction of art from everyday life.

Ranging from the burlesque and carnivalesque with futurist reverberations emanating from the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich to Berlin Dada's radical dissection and manifestos of new media Dada sought to destroy that which was worn out and no longer of use and eliminate the banality of everyday life. In Zurich, Dada embraced Kandinsky's vision of the emancipatory potential of abstraction, a conception that privileged “the possibility of synaesthetic effects – the crossing and reverberation of sensory responses in a way that would allow for a fully corporeal, rather than an intellectual response.”<sup>47</sup> The idea, was to exclude “subject matter that could be named, it

would evade intellectual processing and resonate instead with the ‘inner soul’ – the unconscious, pre-linguistic mind that lies beyond everyday modern consciousness.”<sup>48</sup>

In Munich, Dada provoked chaos and public hell raising by inserting false reports in newspapers and staging fake public duels. In New York and Paris, Duchamp’s use of everyday objects overturned the prevailing meaning and engaged in an aesthetic, authorial and authoritative indifference to the mechanisms of elite class and taste.<sup>49</sup> As Duchamp, among others, developed strategies to express the barbaric war they were also in direct “opposition to the sacrosanct terms and traditions of oil painting, which they viewed as abhorrent and absurd.”<sup>50</sup> In Cologne Dada reflects a bio-technological world of ordered cyborgs from the mechanical appendages placed on the wounded in World War I.<sup>51</sup> But in Berlin, German culture and idealism was attacked through satire, bluff, irony and even violence.

In 1920 Richard Huelsenbeck spoke of a new direction and collective vision for Dada by calling for direct action against the bourgeoisie.<sup>52</sup> And in this call to praxis, German Dada made demands upon the public.<sup>53</sup> For Hausmann and Huelsenbeck, Dada was in opposition to direct representation and sought to advance a different perspective through collage and photo-montage that overturned linearity and realism reproduced in art, photography and the cinema. The Dada collage and photomontage takes found objects, or “readymades” such as newspapers and photographs and cuts them up, juxtaposing their elements “to confront a crazy world with its own image.”<sup>54</sup> Removed from context, the images and texts of propaganda and ideology were physically cut up, transformed, and forced to be transgressive and critical.<sup>55</sup>

As the collage transforms the “original” object it also provokes a multi-lateral movement as the juxtaposition of foreign elements on canvas forced the viewer to move horizontally, vertically, and diagonally, across different type settings and pictures as a singular unitary perspective and subject position to assume was absent.<sup>56</sup> “Large and small letters joined in new combinations and danced up and down; vertical and horizontal

words arranged themselves to carry the meaning, and gave new life to the printed pages.”<sup>57</sup> And in doing so, the manipulation of typography “not only described the new freedom to the reader, but allowed him to see and feel it for himself.”<sup>58</sup> Freed from the tyranny of the prevailing rationality and authority collages consist of large and small type and cut up images used to articulate meaning anew.

The use of collage was common in Hannover as Hans Arp and Kurt Schwitters deployed this method to critique an increasingly commodified culture. In these works machine-made elements were juxtaposed with news print, train ticket stubs and other mass produced objects. As Schwitters explains, “I pasted words and sentences into poems in such a way as to produce a rhythmic design. Reversing the process, I pasted up pictures and drawings so that sentences could be read in them. I drove nails into pictures...I did this in order to efface the boundaries between the arts.”<sup>59</sup> In doing so, the poem as a collage of sentences of found material undermines linear perspective and ruptures the unitary perspective derived from the syntax and narrative of the original.

In Merz, materials undergo a layering of text and other images inviting a reading and seeing that oscillates due to a lack of any clear story or narrative. The shifting relation between the text and the image creates a multilayered composition, where multiple voices are combined and a sense of order undermined. It is difficult to decipher one voice or perspective in which a singular meaning can be derived, as multiple and fragmented meanings compete within the work itself. Identified in earlier works such as “Kots,” this technique takes on a confrontational tone in which the codes of photojournalism are appropriated and deconstructed.<sup>60</sup>

The collage and photomontage are techniques used to intervene in consumer, institutional and political reality and disrupt the prevailing representations and expose the underlying contradictions in which they are based.<sup>61</sup> The use of photomontage and collage freed the repressive function of the text and political and economic power unleashed a direct corporeal experience of the world.<sup>62</sup> As a project of de-reification, the

works dismantle linear perspective and tyranny of Gutenberg technology and reveal the multi-positionality and the complex, contradictory and turbulent relations of material life.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, the appropriation and poetic use of material encountered in the mass media through collage, photomontage, and montage, subverts the authorial intent of the media and announces a political grievance against the established order.<sup>64</sup>

For Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Man Ray the use of mixed-media assemblages, found objects, photography, performance art and readymades was a political anti-art tactic. As more and more objects from the culture industries were utilized in their works and new techniques of making art emerged, the concept of the masterwork of art and the notions of artistic genius were questioned, ridiculed and subverted. Duchamp's readymade, and the fountain in particular reveal the troubling notions of art, creativity, and of original authorship, as "he did nothing to the object except to present it for contemplation."<sup>65</sup>

Duchamp's contribution to Dada cannot be underestimated, as the submission of a porcelain urinal to the Society of Independent Artists in 1917 signals not only a tactic used to undermine tradition common to Dada in Europe, but also, reveals the problematization of authorship. Designed as a joke, the appropriation of the urinal and re-articulation as the "Fountain" was "designed to flush out the hypocrisy of the society's professed liberal idealism."<sup>66</sup> But, the readymades were also identified by Duchamp as an attempt to de-stabilize elite taste and hypocrisy and to tear down the notion that aesthetic objects are indeed different from the objects of everyday life. As Richter explains, "these works, as he stresses again and again, are not works of art but of non-art, the results of discursive rather than sensory insights."<sup>67</sup>

The Dadaists embraced anti-art strategies to resist against and reveal the passive spectatorship of art and the authoritarian establishment of the art and media industries.<sup>68</sup> Against tradition and social hierarchy, Dada was not the anti-theses of art in so much as the anti of all that had come before it. As Hans Richter recounts, everything was to be

pulled apart, undone, bent and twisted toward a means different than its intended purpose. “Not a screw left in its customary place, the screw-holes wrenched out of shape, the screw, like man himself, set on its way towards new function which could only be known after the total negation of everything that had existed before... a principle of dissolution and anarchy. In art, anti-art.”<sup>69</sup>

Richter argues that this stance, “drove us to the fragmentation or destruction of all artistic forms, and to rebellion for rebellion’s sake; to an anarchistic negation of all values, a self-exploding bubble, a raging anti, anti, anti, linked with a passionate pro, pro, pro.”<sup>70</sup> In the active and creative constructions coupled with the total negation of everything that had existed Dada promoted riot, destruction, defiance and confusion. But, as Richter contends, “Dada took hold of something that can neither be grasped nor explained within the conventional framework of ‘either/or’ binary logic. It was just this conventional ‘yes/no thinking that Dada was trying to blow sky high. This radical attack on dualistic thought was in the very nature of the movement.”<sup>71</sup> Thus, Dada shined a light on the dialectics suppressed in law, for in law was the negation of law, and in exposing its negation it revealed the duality of law as always already a part of it.

As Richter states, “The realization that reason and anti-reason, sense and nonsense, design and chance, consciousness and unconsciousness, belong together as necessary parts of a whole – this was the central message of Dada.”<sup>72</sup> Dada can be conceptualized as a critique of the dominant systems of power and it represents “a mode of artistic practice in which art, eschewing contemplative detachment, serves as a form of diagnosis and critique of modernity itself and elicits audience response, whether it be shock or conspiratorial amusement.”<sup>73</sup>

The tactical poetics of Dada worked to violate the tradition of art from within the field of legitimate artistic expression. But this artistic expression was one that would trouble notions of realism as well, moving beyond its representation on a picture plane, the tactics of Dada as intervention, appropriation and agitation used the everyday world

of mass consumer objects that were shaping the world after its own image. As the mechanisms of advertising and propaganda became the ideal reflections of a world that could be, the appropriation of media images become the necessary material to overturn the univocal posturing of the prevailing systems of representation and authority. Thus, if propaganda depended on the sublimation of desires and the discipline and control of the body, the photomontage was a poetic and theatric de-sublimation and dis-articulation of the images of power to free the corporeal subject.

Although the word Dada is, ironically, non-sense, a word chosen at random in the dictionary which means a toy hobby horse according to Hugo Ball and Richard Huelsenbeck and means nothing according to Tristan Tzara, it is perhaps what the word could mean on its connotative axis, and how it could be redeployed to mean something else, a new form or tactic in art, a rupture within the concept of art itself, a sound that reverberates beyond what d-a-d-a signifies, a rallying cry against instrumental reason, that describes the poetics of Dada as encompassing both an intervention in meaning as well as meaning production.

Benjamin's insights are significant in this regard, as the Dadaists took on the everyday world they destroyed the distinction of "Art" that reproduced hierarchies of taste when locked up in museums for the privileged elite to see and comprehend. But severed from tradition and ritual and torn free from an aura of authenticity, "the whole social function of art is revolutionized. Instead of being founded on ritual, it is based on a different practice: politics."<sup>74</sup> The poetics of dada reveals the political dimension of appropriation, as the use of seemingly banal and taken-for-granted objects are repurposed through a series of tactics and deployed for new meaning and unbridled experiences to ends foreign to their original design.<sup>75</sup>

Futurism and Dada are central to an understanding of appropriation as both movements intervened in the production of power. As the tactics of appropriation engage in exploded mimicry, through the adoption and appropriation of modernity in hyperbolic



and transformative ways, they reinvest the social through a proliferation of voices and meaning.<sup>76</sup> As a poetics of appropriation, agitation, and intervention, these tactics point to the direct experience of concrete material reality and an engagement with the corporeal using found objects, photographs and commodities for the expression of new meaning, feeling, seeing and being. Despite the collective framework of Dada, the group began to fracture in 1921.<sup>77</sup> As Andre Breton moved to distinguish his aims as divergent from Tzara, he turned to surrealism, chance and psychoanalysis.

While the Surrealists deployed a defiant stance toward the status-quo, their aim was more specific to the overthrow of capitalism through a liberation of false-consciousness. Although the differences between Dada and Surrealism are vast, they share an aim to intervene and deconstruct the habitual perceptions by dissociation and radical juxtapositions of found objects and images. Surrealist tactics of non-conformism broke free from the tyranny of rationality and the suppression and sublimation of libidinal desires. Moving into the obscurity of human drives and libidinal impulses, the surrealist attempted to create a way of being in the world that could not be easily translated.

The surrealist manifestoes, “authored” by Max Ernst and Andre Breton, are revealing in this respect. As Ernst writes, the mechanism of collage couples two irreconcilable realities to bring forth a sudden intensification where, “contradictory images, double, triple, and multiple images” produce that which neither image was capable of expressing.<sup>78</sup> They worked to create flash of insight into consciousness unbridled from reason, logic and language. While their tactics carried on in a variety of ways, they were picked up again in the 1950s by the Situationists in Paris, France through a series of tactics called *détournement*.

### **Situationist International**

The Situationist International (S.I.) emerged in the 1950’s as an “anarchist” group concerned with overturning commodity fetishism and technological apparatuses of capitalism in advanced industrialized sectors of the modern world. First organized in

1952 the Lettrist International was the foundation of what would become the Situationist International. On July 27, 1957 eight men and women gathered at the Cosio d'Arrosia conference of European avant-garde artists to create the Situationist International and pledged to intervene in the very structure of consumer capitalism.<sup>79</sup>

The intervention was necessary as the current conditions replaced individual autonomy with an abundance of commercial material and gave way to a purely economic mode of being. Extending beyond the production of necessities and surpassing physical needs, capitalism commodified inner desires and replaced them with arbitrary freedom and false needs. It changed them into the “objective, replicable commodities, placed them on the market, set their prices, and sold them back to those who had, once, brought emotions and experiences out of themselves-to people who, as prisoners of the spectacle, could now find such things only on the market.”<sup>80</sup>

Guy Debord, one of the leading members of the group and author of *The Society of the Spectacle* describes the spectacle as the colonization of the commodity in social life. As Debord states, “In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has receded into representation...The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society and as a means of unification...it is in reality the domain of delusion and false consciousness.”<sup>81</sup>

The Situationists identified their depression and boredom with modernity. The limited work and relative abundance, the urban planning and the welfare state all resulted in misery and contempt. Boredom “was a haze, a confusion, and finally the ultimate mode of control, self-control, alienation perfected: a bad conscience.”<sup>82</sup> The society of the spectacle produced democracies of false desire “as a mechanism of social control the spectacle dramatized an inner spectacle of participation, of choice. In the home, one chooses between television programs; in the city, one chooses between the countless

variations of each product on the market. Like a piece of avant-garde performance art, the spectacle dramatized an ideology of freedom.”<sup>83</sup>

Marcus explains in *Lipstick Traces* that the Situationists conceived leisure time as pure consumption and repression and sought liberation from the prevailing order. They were revolutionaries of daily life as everyday life had turned into a fetish of alienation – where humans were transformed into things and things were given human qualities. The never ending accumulation of spectacles was pure ideology. The immutable relations of the modern world derived from the one directional flow of communication, from the powerful to the power less. “In the spectacle, passivity was simultaneously the means and the end of a great hidden project, a project of social control.”<sup>84</sup>

The spectacle is the prevailing mode of social life as ads, propaganda, and consumption were all directed to reproduce the conditions of the spectacle. The form and the content of the spectacle was total justification of its conditions as it ensured the permanent justification of its presence. “The victory of the spectacle was that nothing seemed real until it had appeared in the spectacle, even if in the moment of its appearance it would lose whatever reality it held.”<sup>85</sup> The spectacle contained revolution and collapsed reality into images, products and activities that legitimized businesses and bureaucracy and reproduced the necessary conditions of its reproduction.<sup>86</sup> Thus, the spectacle was not merely advertising or television, it was a world converted into an image of capital as social relations and reality was mediated by capitalist relations of control.

With the intent to reveal and overturn Marx’s notion of commodity fetishism, and armed with the Dadaist and surrealist aesthetics, the Situationists produced films, literature, poems and performances to redirect the spectacle, reclaim public space and create a massive reversal of perspective to feel and experience life within and against the spectacular imagery of an increasingly atomized society. The tactics ranged from creating situations in the streets by appropriating the spectacle to the psychographic derive in which members drifted through the streets to facilitate an experience free of the

reified mediations of the spectacle. Ultimately, the S.I. aimed to overthrow the spectacle by revolutionizing the experiences of everyday life and sought to maximize freedom.

The Situationist, like the Dadaists, embraced the material and corporeal experiences of life and used tactics to subvert the commodity spectacle of consumer capitalism and the hierarchies of elite taste and distinction reproduced by entrenched bureaucratic apparatuses of the media and art institutions. The Situationists took a stance against the control and alienation of capital and the one way flow of goods of a capitalist consumer society that merely projected false needs. They overturned the spectacle as they converted avant-garde interests into everyday practices and revolutionized mass culture by promoting spontaneity, play and creativity. Through the implementation of a tactic called *détournement*, in which official representations were appropriated and the aimless drifts throughout the city.

*Détournement* can be translated as diversion, rerouting, hijacking, embezzlement, misappropriation and corruption. But, *détournement* is short for a detour of the preexisting aesthetic elements where different elements of artistic production are juxtaposed and integrated into a critique of existing society. Debord describes *Détournement* as a political strategy that utilizes elements of or within a culture and places them in a new context, so as to re-signify the elements within the often taken for granted cultural object.<sup>87</sup> If the spectacle produces the negation of style, then *détournement* is the negation of negation, or what Debord describes in the *Society of the Spectacle* as the style of negation.

In *Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life*, Debord argues that *détourned* objects make use of objects and forms “that are considered ‘normal’ and not even noticed, and which ultimately condition us.”<sup>88</sup> *Détournement* is a poetics of subversive quotation where the spectacle is taken, remade, turned on itself and forced to speak. As Marcus explains, “the *détournement* of the right sign, in the right place at the right time, could spark a mass reversal of perspective. The one-way communication of

the spectacle reduced all other speech to babble, but now the spectacle would fall back on itself; it would sound like babble, and everyone would see through it...every yes would become a no, every truth would dissolve in doubt.”<sup>89</sup>

Détournement does not induce a rational reply or a simple rebuttal, but a questioning elicited through the reversal of subject and predicate as they are turned in on themselves to reveal the real conditions that inverted. It is a tactic used to create a moment in which reality and social relations are felt and experienced. This momentary glimpse and agitation in corporeal experience could potentially lead to creating new demands of social order and foster the conditions necessary for collective change.<sup>90</sup> Experiments in the détournement ranged from the inclusion of speech bubbles on photo-romance and pornographic photos to advertising billboards, where prepared placards were pasted onto them. But the ultimate détournement is the creation of situations.

Situations aimed to create a moment of revolutionary consciousness through a guerrilla mentality in which the spectacle was attacked through fly by night raiding parties. “A situation was created in which society was forced to finance, publicize and broadcast a revolutionary critique of itself, and furthermore to confirm this critique by its reactions to it.”<sup>91</sup> Situations create a glimpse into the very constructed nature of the spectacle itself. Turning the words of enemies back on themselves and forcing the spectacle to finance a critique of itself, situations used the power of the spectacle against spectacular power. It “was the aesthetic cooptation of enemy territory, a raid launched to seize the familiar and turn it into the other, a war waged on a field of action without boundaries and without rules.”<sup>92</sup>

The use of culture in the spaces of organized property relations comprises a series of tactics that insert new and alternative meanings in the otherwise unidirectional flow of communication and power. The appropriation of commodities towards liberation from tradition and commodification and the use of the media to finance its own critique has been traced in the post-war music and fashion styles of punk as well. But, do the tactical

strikes and visual bricolage constitute guerilla semiotic warfare, where the repurposing of advertising imagery de-naturalizes and de-reifies consumer ideology? The analysis of punk moves from the tactics of appropriation that incite corporeal engagement to the discursive and ideological dimension of bricolage that undermined the reproduction of power and ideology. For their poetics created a semantic glitch in power and undermined the reproduction of naturalized meaning.

## **Punk**

In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* Dick Hebdige argues, the use, repurposing and display of commodities by Punk was a response to colonized space in a consumer culture, as resistance to it, and as a response to alienation. Their acts reflect an oppositional politics reflected in the refashioned styles of subculture. By re-purposing the commodities of the culture industry with an oppositional code, subcultures, and punk in particular, expressed a refusal to the dominant prevailing ideology of their time. The oppositional use of these commodities illustrate their subversive character.

As Hebdige argues, the tactics deployed by such groups are a type of ‘semiotic guerilla warfare’, as the bricolaged ensemble created through their use juxtaposes two incompatible realities to undermine the perceived and accepted meaning and invite new and oppositional decodings beyond their reified use as commodities for exchange. “By repositioning and recontextualizing commodities, by subverting their conventional uses and inventing new ones” appropriation blocks the system of representation and exposes the codes and undermines the authority of the prevailing ideology.<sup>93</sup> The struggle of the bricoleur is a struggle of ideology, as bricolage problematizes the whole system of representation and authority, of the power to sign-ify.

As the Sex Pistols released *Anarchy* in the UK in 1976, the cover art and sound collage signaled a break from the prevailing representations in a postwar-era of hyper consumption. The Pistols disrupted what one expected to hear, the hegemony of music itself. Such insights can be seen in the visual collage aesthetic of Jamie Reid, Malcolm

McLaren and Winston Smith. While Smith's work directly addressed the privileged position of art and authorship, Reid utilized the collage aesthetic common to Dada, in which images of authority were appropriated and collaged with texts. Their collage aesthetic called all music, life, and meaning into question. "Damning God and the state, work and leisure, home and family, sex and play, the audience and itself, the music briefly made it possible to experience all those things as if they were not natural facts but ideological constructs."<sup>94</sup>

While these bricoleurs engage in signification they move beyond it to significance as alternative meanings are created that "works against" and "exceeds" meaning and causes "the reading to slip."<sup>95</sup> Using Barthes concept of significance as a process where the subject struggles with meaning and is deconstructed, Hebdige points to the disruptive potential of Punk. Repurposing commodities is not an attempt to rule over and master meaning inasmuch as unhinge meaning from power, the proper perspective in which dominant meanings are understood and order reproduced. In this sense, appropriation is a rupture that prevents "the text from reaching its destination: a full and final closure...it outplays meaning – subverts not the content but the whole practice of meaning."<sup>96</sup> Thus, the poetics of punk lie not in an end product or any potential effect, but in the practices themselves as it undermines "the process of meaning construction."<sup>97</sup>

These tactical precursors are central to an understanding of the poetics of appropriation, as Futurism, Dada, Situationism and Punk engaged and repurposed mass produced representation and undermined the role of the audience and power. From collage, montage, assemblage, ready-mades and pranks to the use of the mail, film, photography and mechanical reproduction, their tactics reveal appropriation as a tactic in which commercial works are invested with new ideas which simultaneously questions authoritative codes of power and their use as commodity objects. Appropriation de-reifies commodity fetishism and announces multiple and contradictory expression within and through commodities displayed in advertisements and represented in official

propaganda. As the poetics of appropriation expose meaning construction and denaturalize the ideology, the mechanisms in which ideology reified is unearthed.

In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Valentin Nikolaevich Volosinov theorizes ideological struggle as a struggle to maintain and drive inward the historical and contingent character of the interests and value judgments in cultural formations. As Volosinov argues, “The ruling class strives to impart a supra-class, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it, to make the sign uni-accentual [which is to say, one voice] so accentuating yesterday’s truth as to make it appear today’s.”<sup>98</sup> The uni-accentual sign reifies meanings, structures, and representations so as to appear fixed and immutable and as the way things are naturally and inevitably. As struggle is suppressed signs, cultural objects and representations achieve a supra-class character and speak with one voice – a uni-accent. In short, they function as ideology.

In this sense, ideology becomes a social force that has real material effects, while also a site of struggle over the meaning, perceptions and representations of the world. If, as Volosinov states “Every utterance is above all an evaluative orientation [the] sign becomes an arena of the class struggle by an intersecting of differently oriented social interests within one and the same sign community.”<sup>99</sup> Then, appropriation is an ideological struggle where the play of social power within the naturalized signs of commodities and representations, of making meaning stick, wiping clean evaluative accents and giving them the appearance of a supra-class character, overflows in multi-accentuality. In this view, appropriation is material ideological activity, an ideological struggle to expose the operations of ideology through the inflection of alternative evaluative accents.

If tactical strikes create a space for new, alternative and/or oppositional points of reference, the reorganization of the social field, and new ways of seeing, feeling, and being advances a revolution in consumer culture. The meanings temporarily attached and



secured through commodities exchange are severed and a multiplicity of associations, meanings and values call forth a radical subject constituted through a multiplicity of competing accents, values and truths. In this process the public is invited to be active participants in the creation and investment of meaning rather than subjects of consumption. In short, the tactics of appropriation reflect the practices and cultural field that make up the terrain of ideological struggle over cultural representation, especially within spaces of consumer capitalism where the constitution of the subject and identity are directly implicated.

### **Radical Subjects**

But how does appropriation problematize the unitary subject position in which ideology is secured and reproduced? The constitution of the subject points to the discursive operations in which both advertising and appropriation alike reflects back, produces, constructs, and positions subjects who in turn undermine or reproduce and naturalize the dominant ideologies of power. Utilizing insights from Karl Marx's *Capital*, Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Jacques Lacan's three co-ordinates of the psyche, Althusser conceptualizes ideology as central to constitution of the subject and the reproduction of capitalist modes of exploitation. For Althusser, ideology is "a representation of the imaginary relations of individuals to their real conditions of existence."<sup>100</sup> This is to say that in ideology the real conditions of existence are represented in imaginary form. The word "represented" is key, as ideology constitutes subjects it proclaims to represent through the discursive operations of the hail.

In *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Althusser argues that ideology is material, as ideas exist in action as well as constitutive, as it exists by, for and through its use. Althusser claims, "There is no practice except by and in an ideology; there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects."<sup>101</sup> Which is to say, material practices are ideological and constitute subjects by and through ideological practice. According to Althusser, there is no ideology without subjects and no subjects without ideology, both of

which are reproduced through an identification as a subject of a interpellation. A subject that says, “yes, I see it,” or sees him/herself reflected in the image before them, or identifies with a hail, is constituted as a subject of ideology and subjected to reproducing the necessary conditions of capitalist modes of production.

Althusser contends that “The duplicate mirror-structure of ideology ensures simultaneously: the interpellation of ‘individuals’ as subjects; their subjection to the Subject.”<sup>102</sup> As a subject identifies with the hail, individuals misrecognize themselves as subjects, and are subjected to reproducing ideology. “All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject.”<sup>103</sup> This occurs “precisely because the individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection.”<sup>104</sup>

Ideology is completed through interpellation, through the multiple ways in which social order and ideological state apparatuses call upon and constitute subjects. The category of the subject, “the existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing.”<sup>105</sup> By identifying with the hail, the subject is constituted and caught up in a web of subjection, through the misrecognition of representations of existence in imaginary form. Thus, as advertising images call upon the public to identify with their representations and invite the public to assume such identities, the commercial apparatuses of the culture industries constitute subjects through the imaginary misrecognition of their real conditions of existence.

The preceding points to the dialectical relationship between ideology and consciousness, where an individual’s inner world accommodates itself to its surroundings and where one’s surroundings reflects back the reified and naturalized ideology, that in turn organizes experience. The dialectical constitution of experience, consciousness and signification and the mirror structure of ideology, reify the univocal hails of the culture industries as they represent, reflect back, and constitute subjects through myths that

appear natural and not the result of competing forces. But if Althusser's conception of ideology leaves little room for resistance it is important to ask how appropriation undermines the univocal hail or can re-direct it?

In *Gender is Burning: Questions of Subversion and Appropriation*, Judith Butler contends the interpellative hail can be refused and ruptured and forced into a rearticulation. "The call is formative, if not *performative*, precisely because it initiates the individual into the subjected status of the subject."<sup>106</sup> Although such a system appears as a closed hermeneutic circle, the possibility of subversion exists insofar as one is able to engage in tactics of re-articulation through the appropriation of the materials that constitute individuals as subject to power. This refusal may take the form of parody that questions the uniformity of the subject and the authority of the command.<sup>107</sup> As Butler contends, "Interpellation thus loses its status as a simple performative, an act of discourse with the power to create that to which it refers, and creates more than it ever meant to, signifying in excess of any intended referent."<sup>108</sup> As the monotheistic force and unilateral operation is called into question, struggle and conflict overflows in the hail and reflects multi-accentual voices.

The crux of Butler's claim resides in a tactic that exposes interpellation as formative and performative, where the failure of the performativity of the hail, due to the semiotic excess of multiple and conflicting accents, undermines the unilateral operation in which the subject is constituted. In the *Psychic life of power*, Butler claims that, "Indeed, I would add, a subject only remains a subject through a reiteration or rearticulation of itself as a subject, and this dependency of the subject on repetition for coherence may constitute that subject's incoherence, its incomplete character. This repetition or, better, iterability thus becomes the non-place of subversion, the possibility of a re-embodying of the subjectivating norm that can redirect its normativity."<sup>109</sup>

If the interpellative hail cannot constitute subjects once and for all through a univocal hail, but must continually unify subjects through repetitive performative utterances,

the re-appropriation of such utterances with a different inflection and evaluative accent creates the conditions to hail “incoherent” subjects and undermines the unity in which they are constituted. Through the articulation of the hail with multiple, contradictory and conflicting accents, the uniform ideological articulations constituted by and through the hail are overcome by a proliferation of meaning and anxiety, an overflowing of polysemy that undermines the constitution of the unitary subject.<sup>110</sup> Thus, it is the constitutive failure of the performativity of the hail, due to its semiotic excess, that undermines the command and prevents the appropriate reconstitutive effect.

As the use of advertising images work to de-naturalize the denoted image as simply a reflection, appropriation poses a question and confronts the viewer as artificial by shedding a different light on representation. In doing so, the tyranny of the unifying voice of the culture industries, of the uni-accentual hail wiped clean of its evaluative and repressive accent overflows in multi-accentuality and gives way to a multiplicity of voices and subjects. Rather than driving the struggle of meaning inward the tactics and images of appropriation insert a radical ambiguity overflowing in polyvalence where alternative multi-accentual and polyvalent subjects are called upon to disrupt the reification of social order sustained through the naturalization of the prevailing ideology.

In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse argues, the appropriation of materials toward radical democratic social means demystifies social reality and opens the horizon for liberation. This change in the subject occurs through a dialectical relationship in perception, where new aesthetic dimensions of experience de-activate the subject of capital and redirect the subject towards emancipation. Marcuse explains, “on the basis of aesthetic sublimation, a desublimation takes place in the perception of individuals—in their feelings, judgments, thoughts; and invalidation of dominant norms, needs, and values. With all its affirmative-ideological features, art remains a dissenting force.”<sup>111</sup>

Revolutionary art is a representation that is also an accusation and does not perpetuate an ahistorical ideology or false consciousness, but a “counter consciousness:

negation of the realistic-conformist mind.”<sup>112</sup> As a vehicle of both recognition and indictment, it is contradiction and truth as it inserts a different reality that breaks the monopoly power of representation and presents a battle over the “real.” “Art reflects this dynamic in its insistence on its own truth, which has its ground in social reality and is yet its other. Art breaks open a dimension inaccessible to other experience, a dimension in which human beings, nature, and things no longer stand under the law of the established reality principle.”<sup>113</sup>

The radical potential of art lies in constituting a revolutionary subject by disrupting and exposing the construction of “reality.” Revolutionary art “shatters the reified objectivity of established social relations and opens a new dimension of experience: rebirth of the rebellious subjectivity.”<sup>114</sup> Art is revolutionary if it demystifies social reality, opens the horizon for liberation and constitutes alliances toward change. “The possibility of an alliance between ‘the people’ and art presupposes that the men and woman administered by monopoly capitalism unlearn the language, concepts, and images of this administration, that they experience the dimension of qualitative change, that they reclaim their subjectivity, their inwardness.”<sup>115</sup> Thus, injecting the social field with a proliferation of voices and advancing new ways of being, denaturalizes the univocal hail of the culture industries, facilitates active engagement with one’s surroundings, desublimates desire and opens the horizon for new organizing principles deployed toward change.

Antonio Negri argues in the *Politics of Subversion*, that revolutionary culture begins with the appropriation of communication apparatuses and secures a space to articulate interests against the inequalities advanced by systems of capital. The re-appropriation of the means by which capitalism is reproduced alters the deeply entrenched mechanisms of the subject and replaces them with multiple, polyvalent and polychromatic identities. Through appropriation, the regime of the unitary subject can be

dismantled and gives rise to a proliferation of ideas, concepts and desires of the self alternatively defined and continually recreated.

The radicality of appropriating communication depends on tactics that subvert the channels, forms, and aesthetics of consumer capitalism and exposing the construction of reality, disrupting its reproduction and redirecting desires toward the rebirth of a rebellious subject. As an implacable countervailing power, subversion is a creative violence that does not destroy but multiplies truth, that once unleashed from reification expands, multiplies and proliferates. The subject constituted in this process is not unitary but multiple as the command is not uni-vocal but multi-vocal and polyvalent. The appropriation of communication intervenes in the hegemonic constitution of obedient subjects and advances spaces for the formation of subjects constituted through the production of a collective identity.

The poetics of appropriating communication therefore resides in its potential to not only revolutionize culture and struggle against power, but create revolutionary subjects and alliances as well. The tactics of appropriation point to the procedures in which the univocal hail and perceived eternal, immutable and ahistorical ideology of commodities and advertisements are refashioned. Creating a revolutionary subject position through the de-reification and de-sublimation of desire directs our attention to the very acts of appropriation and the re-articulation of consumer images as a poetic production and recomposition of commodities to resist and critique the dominant order of commodification and create sites in which alternative identities are hailed and reconstituted for collective action and social change.

### **Counter Public(s)**

If the poetics of appropriating communication invites an active public who participates in meaning rather than subjection, it is necessary to ask how the tactics of appropriation call on revolutionary subjects and constitute new identities in which communities can form and galvanize around. In *Publics and Counter Publics*, Michael

Warner argues, that publics are groups of strangers who are mediated by cultural forms and are constituted through the discourses that address them. The formation of publics derives from both the imaginary public to whom it is addressed but is not yet realized and through their active participation as a self-organizing group. “A public sets its boundaries and its organization by its own discourse rather than by external frameworks only if it openly addresses people who are identified *primarily* through their participation in the discourse and who therefore cannot be known in advance.”<sup>116</sup>

A public is constituted through mere attention and by virtue of their participation and dialectical constitution they are united as a public. But as Warner argues, “A counter-public maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status. The cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public, but a dominant one. The conflict extends not just to ideas or policy questions, but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public and to the hierarchy among media.”<sup>117</sup> The formation and constitution of counter-publics is both formed against and is contained within material limits, “the means of production and distribution, the physical textual objects themselves, the social conditions of access to them.”<sup>118</sup>

The poetics of appropriation therefore is not only about the struggle over material resources in culture, but also, over the constitution of subjects and its rule. It points to the possibility of contesting power by and through the very mechanisms by which power operates and proliferates. As their tactics intervene in the streets, on billboards and on walls, the spaces shared by social actors become the concrete cultural field of struggle in which the clash of ideology, the constitution of the subject and the formation of publics are struggled over. If, appropriation shatters the interpellative hail and the ideological labor in consumer and commodity signs and creates a space in which new identities and relationships are called upon and constituted. But how do the poetics of appropriation constitute democratic practice in which counter publics form and recreate history without access to the dominant apparatuses of culture?

### **Gaining Access**

In *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, appropriation “means having free access to and control over knowledge, information, communication, and affects...the multitude’s right to self-control and autonomous self-production.”<sup>119</sup> However, political autonomy and productive autonomy depends on the formation of the multitude. Unlike ‘the people’ that synthesizes social difference to one identity, the multitude is plural and multiple and comprised of a set of singularities that cannot be reduced or synthesized but consists of an active social subject in common, whose challenge is the production of democracy itself. This challenge puts demands on the system for equal access and active expression and conceives communication as social.

The common refers to a common set of practices, languages, styles, tactic, conduct and desire for a better future organized by a posse. “Posse refers to the power of the multitude and its telos, an embodied power of knowledge and being, always open to the possible.”<sup>120</sup> The formation of a posse requires a constant struggle over the communicative apparatuses, for making history is a constitutive power as it configures its own constitution through creative imagination. If production is a social, cultural and political force, then redirecting production constitutes a radical and progressive transformation of subjects and objects of history and constitutes its mode of production and being. It follows therefore, that appropriating the lines of production through creative energy not only performs democracy on the streets but reorganizes meaning and the social through its active democratic reconstitution and through the social production of radical plurality. “This constituent power makes possible the continuous opening to a process of radical and progressive transformation.”<sup>121</sup>

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe contend consumer society has created “the multiplicity of social relations from which antagonisms and struggles may originate...all constitute terrains for the struggle against inequalities and the claiming of new rights.”<sup>122</sup> New antagonisms are the expression of



forms of resistance to commodification, bureaucratization and the homogenization of social life. Laclau and Mouffe add, communities of social struggle derive from “the de-centering and autonomy of the different discourse and struggles, the multiplication of antagonism and the construction of a plurality of spaces within which they can affirm themselves and develop.”<sup>123</sup> Thus, a non-unitary subject is only possible by renouncing the universal and organizing around a radical plurality of different interests and spaces in which they are constituted. This new order however depends on “democratic character of the forces which pursue that strategy, but also upon a set of structural limits established by other logics – at the level of state apparatuses, the economy, and so on.”<sup>124</sup>

In the *Making of a Counter Culture*, Theodore Roszak defines cultural resistance and counter culture as “a culture so radically disaffiliated from the mainstream assumptions of our society that it scarcely looks to many as a culture at all, but takes on the alarming appearance of barbaric intrusion.”<sup>125</sup> The counter culture is one that develops in opposition to the orthodox culture and develops an identity around a nebulous symbol that stands as a mark of both identity and difference. The counter culture seeks to overturn or supplant the authoritative regimes, whether they are political or based in instrumental rationality with those of the experience of human communion.

As Roszak argues, they embrace a “style of human relations that characterizes village and tribe, insisting that real politics can only take place in the deeply personal confrontations these now obsolete social forms allow.”<sup>126</sup> But it is a strike that is both against the prevailing ideology and consciousness and attempts to transform the entrenched sense of the self, the other and the environment. Resistance requires tactics deployed against power announcing the misdeeds of society but also, it must “transform the very sense men [sic] have of reality.”<sup>127</sup> The difficulty, as Roszak contests, is the need for counter cultures to “stand still in the light” to form and mirror back their shared interests while remaining elusive to power that positions them as deviant and celebrity.

In *Hiding in the Light*, Dick Hebdige argues an ideological struggle demands a movement from the active dismantling and combining of ideological material to the formation of unities, “which in turn act to interpellate and bond together new imaginary communities, to forge fresh alliance between disparate social groups.”<sup>128</sup> This means social movements will have to re-organize and redeploy these ideological elements with different inflections and different accents that reflect back their interests so that they can organize and constitute their identities around them. They will have to constitute their own identities and will only gain this force when it has real effects, i.e., when the perception of reality confirms and mirrors back these re-articulated elements as new points of identification for collective engagement.

Appropriating the images and modes of address of commercial and government propaganda to expose techniques of manipulation, the abuse of government and the role of the economy positions these artists on contested ground over who has the rights and access to the dominant meanings and communication apparatuses that reproduce culture. In this sense the tactics of appropriation comprise a series of poetics operating on the outskirts of institutions and from within the dominant lines of communication to insert a message that is heard on par with advertising to alter the ways in which subjects are constituted and history remembered, while remaining elusive to power.

If appropriation exposes and undermines meaning construction and uncouples and undermines ideology reified in commodity form, their poetics move from shedding a different light on language and advancing an alternative perspective to the active construction and deconstruction of meaning to unhinge the stability of power. The importance of these movements resides in the appropriation of materials for free and public expression and intervening in ideological reproduction as alternative perspectives unravel from power and the streets and dominant lines of cultural production are reclaimed for alternative social relations as they call forth and constitute new democratic citizen subjects through its production and being.

### **Politics of Appropriation**

Barbara Kruger, Shepard Fairey and the Billboard Liberation Front appropriate, irritate, and re-articulate the dominant representations through a poetics directed to make power speak dissent by redirecting the hail. Their tactics point to an ideological struggle over meaning and the reconstitution of identity, history, and a counter public of collective organization. However, if their tactics are co-opted by advertising agencies and their visual styles commodified as fashion and institutionalized as “Art” objects, it is important to move the discussion from the poetics of ideological struggle to the multiple and complex lines of force that contain their practices within the interests of capital. For, ideological struggles do not exist independent from larger political, social and economic structures that reproduce and sustain power.

While the poetics of appropriation analyzes appropriation as an ideological struggle, to uncouple meaning from power and create a dialogue in the public sphere, the politics of appropriation accounts for the hegemonic lines of force in which power intervenes in securing ideology by rearticulating the tactics and visual style of appropriation to the interests of consumer capital. The politics of appropriation is informed by a discursive approach and expands the analysis of co-optation as it accounts for discursive formations, clusters of ideas, images, and practices, including the role of the commercial sector as the conditions that overdetermine capitalist relations of production. Thus, the politics of appropriation introduces a set of concepts to advance the theoretical discussion of how ideology is secured and clarifies the necessary conditions for the reproduction of consumer capitalism.

### **Ideological Power**

Stuart Hall’s contribution to the study of ideology and cultural practice is noteworthy, as his analyses position cultural production within social and political power, social structure and the economic relations that both under ride, bare down upon and define the field in which cultural forms are reproduced. In the *Rediscovery of Ideology*,

*the Return of the Repressed in Media Studies*, Hall argues that class formations, the complex relations and practice of economic interests and sets of institutional relations constitute the power relations that entrench particular forms, set limits and reconstitute the practices, conditions and relations of ideological power. Ideological power is the power to secure, maintain, and reproduce certain closures by “establishing certain systems of equivalence between what could be assumed about the world and what could be said to be true.”<sup>129</sup>

Ideological power defines and reproduces “consent to a particular kind of social order; a consensus around a particular form of society: integration within and conformity to the rules of a very definite set of social, economic and political structures.”<sup>130</sup> As Hall accounts for the structures that reproduce ideology but also points to these conditions as opening for the very possibility of struggle, he emphasizes the importance of explicating how and under what conditions ideological power is secured and sustained. Identifying the circumstance, conditions, and social structures in which ideology is actively secured is critical to understanding the limits in which appropriation is contained and points to the barriers when engaging in an ideological struggle toward the reconstitution of democratic subjects.

### **Articulation**

The concept of articulation expands the analysis of ideological power as it accounts for how and under what conditions resistance emerges and how the culture industries intervene and secure representations to reproduce asymmetrical relations of power. Articulation provides a theoretical and methodological approach that underscores the conditions in which ideology is secured and maintained, forged to particular interests and reproduced through cultural production. It is the non-necessary connections and the historical and variable conditions in which the conjuncture of multiple lines of force, conflicts, tension and contradictions cohere to. Through power and ideology articulations are temporally securing equivalence in meaning connected to social practices.

Articulation points to the particular historical circumstances in which a unity is forged between discourses and social forces and provides an account of social order, ideology and power. Articulation explicates how “ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects.”<sup>131</sup> It accounts for how subjects are hailed and identifies their interests reflected in unity. As Hall states, “The theory of articulation asks how an ideology discovers its subject rather than how the subject thinks the necessary and inevitable thoughts which belong to it.”<sup>132</sup>

Hall maintains in *Encoding/Decoding*, articulations are partially secured through the deep seated and taken-for-granted systems of classification, hierarchized codes and naturalized meaning in the service of power. Particular ideas, beliefs and conventions do not exist freely, but are deeply entrenched in culture and reflect how particular cultures identify with and see the world. These codes, refer to “the ‘maps of meaning’ into which any culture is classified; and those ‘maps of social reality’ have the whole range of social meanings, practices, and usages, power and interest ‘written in’ to them.”<sup>133</sup>

Advertising is a system that reproduces articulations, where meaning is attached to and conveyed through brands and the bearers who see their identities reflected in them and are expressed through them. As they convey to others their membership, advertising images and marketing practice become the site of the forged links of articulation and ideological power constituting a subject. The struggle for power or opposition against it will be located in those forged and disarticulated links, both in terms of the meanings assigned to brands and the practices that reflect them and reconstituting subjects.

### **Hegemony**

However, as advertising and marketing agencies have a vested interest in securing articulations, it is necessary to ask how the ideology of advertising is re-secured. How are meanings and practices used to reconstitute and reproduce ideology and rediscover subjects? In order to explicate how appropriation is rearticulated by the culture industries

and is at once diffused by power, it is necessary to advance a conception of hegemony as constituting a structure in dominance that contains ideological struggles within overdetermined lines of force. The conjuncture in which these forces cohere point to the complexly articulated structure by which a proliferation of discursive power intervenes in forging these links, securing ideology and manufacturing consent to the prevailing order. In a word, through hegemonic articulations.

Antonio Gramsci's conception of hegemony outlined in the *Prison Notebooks* provides an account of the more complex and subtle articulations in which the dominant order is reproduced. The significance of hegemony resides in a concept of social order that accounts for capitalist relations of production deriving from the formation of a particular ruling alliance and historic bloc, comprised of complex, contradictory and discordant ensembles and interests that are wielded together to reproduce and sustain a structure in dominance. Rather than a static conception of power, Gramsci advances hegemony as a process in which power is continually wielded, absorbing oppositional elements and reflecting back the interests of power with the interests of the culture as a whole. Hegemony smooths out contradictions as it speaks to divergent interests and identities and articulates and represents the unification of those interests to reproduce relations of domination and subordination.

This reasoning, as Gramsci contends, derives from the reciprocity between cultural production and cultural formations, "a reciprocity which is nothing other than the real dialectical process."<sup>134</sup> Hegemony accounts for an entire range of practices, underlying assumptions, common sense understandings, meanings and values that are dominant and reciprocally confirming. As Gramsci argues, "the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures" that form a historic bloc unified through the articulation of diverse wills "is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production."<sup>135</sup> The deeply entrenched dynamic relations of force in which social order and the conditions of production are unified and reproduced, calls attention to the

conflicts that emerge within this structure, the resolutions that emerge and the actual changes that develop, that in turn serve as an organizing principle that reflect back a culture's active reconstitution of this order.

As Gramsci maintains, consent is imposed by the dominant group and is backed by relations of force connected to historical and economic conditions articulated to dominant interests. "Ideology is a terrain of struggle, and the question of how in particular historical situations, ideas 'organize human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.," becomes of vital importance.<sup>136</sup> Maintaining hegemony involves unifying a culture through ideology and utilizing the prevailing and diverse political and economic structures to defuse ideology as representing the interests of diverse groups as part of the interests of society at large. Thus, consent to the prevailing order is a manufactured ideological construction and naturalizes power as it reflects the interests of the general public held in common.

Gramsci suggests that hegemonic lines of force fix the "limits of freedom of discussion and propaganda" and imposes limits on the self as well as in the development of cultural policy and the rights to and of knowledge.<sup>137</sup> "These systems influence the popular masses as an external political force, an element of cohesive force exercised by the ruling class and therefore an element of subordination to an external hegemony."<sup>138</sup> Hegemony reflects something so total that it reaches to the depths of the common sense and the taken-for-granted conceptions of the world that are unified, reproduced and legitimized through their perceived neutrality. Common sense takes on countless forms and "is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is."<sup>139</sup>

In enabling the public to identify with such interests, they not only see themselves reflected and represented, as they actively consent to their subordinated status but also come to take-for-granted such common sense constructions. By articulating the diverse interests of the public to a unified representation of consent, the public is invited to

identify with these discursive constructions and participate in the constitution of their subordinated status and subsequently contained within prescribed limits, i.e., to that which reproduces the prevailing hegemonic order.

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe argue that all of society, institutions, identity and the economy are held together through discursive practices that unite them. This is not to say that the sign is not a site of struggle, or that signs are never fixed, that is precisely the case. But, the diverse and complex character is both the conditions for hegemony and articulations. The underlying antagonism and contradictions point to the unstable relations that are continually renewed and closed off through articulatory practices. Thus, the articulation of ideology, of a collective will by leadership that unites a historic bloc through articulatory practices is not the result of a necessary class belongingness, rather “the collective will is a result of the politico-ideological articulation of dispersed and fragmented historical forces.”<sup>140</sup>

Hegemony is the very attempt to fix the unfixable, “to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre...that fix the meaning of a signifying chain.”<sup>141</sup> A hegemonic articulation depends on antagonistic force and the instability and the changing frontiers that separate the two, for “only the presence of a vast area of floating elements and the possibility of their articulation to opposite camps – which implies a constant redefinition of the latter – is what constitutes the terrain permitting us to define a practice as hegemonic.”<sup>142</sup> Articulations are any practices that establish relations that modify their identity as a result of a proclaimed universal articulation incommensurable with it that unites them. This is “a ‘cultural-social’ unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world.”<sup>143</sup> Thus, articulation consists of practices that partially fix the meanings of unstable, ambiguous and polysemic signifiers and damming the proliferation of meaning.



Such practices not only unite diverse interests under a universal crucible but “constitutes the interests which it represents.”<sup>144</sup>

In *History, Politics and Postmodernism*, Laurence Grossberg conceptions of ideology, articulation and hegemony provide the framework necessary to explicate both appropriation as resistance and the articulatory practices that constitute and contain the hegemonic field. For Grossberg, culture largely consists of the practices over and within meaning and representation represents a struggle over how life is defined, lived and experienced using the discursive forms available. One’s identity emerges and is constituted through these practices, but is a part and embedded within a complex web of multiple and contradictory struggles over power, history, and politics. Subjects are not whole or total, but are constituted and able to act against power.<sup>145</sup>

Ideological power is marked by contradiction and struggle in which the subject is hegemonically positioned. To maintain legitimacy, “Ideologies must attempt to win subjects already spoken for into their representations by articulating various social identities into chains of equivalence which constitute and are articulated into structures of domination and resistance.”<sup>146</sup> Articulation refers to the practices in which identities are produced and complex, contradictory and differential meanings and experiences are united to reproduce structural unity. “That is, ideological practices entail a double articulation of the signifier, first to a web of connotation (signification) and second, to real social practices and subject-positions (representation).”<sup>147</sup> Hegemony emerges from within the configuration of these struggles and the structural field of advanced capitalism, mass communication and culture, however it “need not depend upon consensus nor consent to particular ideological constructions. It is a matter of containment [for it] defines the limits within which we can struggle, the field of ‘common sense’ or ‘popular consciousness’.”<sup>148</sup>

In this conceptualization, hegemonic power where resistance emerges and is contained within an overdetermined structure, and an essential mechanism of its

reproduction. Cultural forms emanate from within political, social, cultural organization and economic factors that exert limits and create the terrain of ideological struggle. In this sense, the cultural production is not the foundation or ground but constituted through activities that express and contest meaning. The radical contingency of the social accounts for the complex dialectical relationship between cultural practice and the reproduction of cultural forms. Both practice and production do not simply derive from social order somehow constituted in advance, but are major determinants in its constitution. These dynamic relations of production, between producers and institutions are not only the context in which such tension and resolutions emerge, but constitute the very context and conditions for such emergence.

The concepts of consent, containment and incorporation as constitutive of hegemony is elaborated by Raymond Williams in *Culture and Materialism*. Williams advances a notion of hegemony and determination as a “field of mutually if also unevenly determining forces.”<sup>149</sup> This field is neither uniform nor static, as it is populated with deep contradictions, residual traces and emerging forms and the complex interplay between relations of production and actual practice. Hegemonic cultural reproduction and the uneven determining forces consists in multiple and dynamic forms of reproduction, for “hegemony is not singular; indeed that its own internal structures are highly complex, and have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended; and by the same token, that they can be continually challenged and in certain respects modified.”<sup>150</sup>

In the *Sociology of Culture*, Williams elaborates further and conceptualizes hegemony as active participation and constitution through multiple and contradictory forms of production. As Williams notes, “we have still to insist that social orders and cultural orders must be seen as being actively made: actively and continuously, or they may quite quickly break down.”<sup>151</sup> Production and innovation are not only compatible with the reproduction of power, but are necessary to avoid stagnation and the risk of its overturning and collapse. “Thus significant innovations may not only be compatible with

a received social and cultural order; they may, in the very process of modifying it, be the necessary conditions of its reproduction.”<sup>152</sup>

However, there are “significant asymmetries between the social relations of the dominant productive mode and other relations within the general social and cultural order.”<sup>153</sup> While relative asymmetries exist and largely determine social and cultural order, they are relatively stable, and therefore point to how particular configurations and forms emerge, are absorbed and become the necessary elements of reproduction. Some parts and versions of these forms will have “to be incorporated if the effective dominant culture is to make sense in those areas. It is also because at certain points a dominant culture cannot allow too much of this kind of practice and experience outside itself, at least without risk.”<sup>154</sup>

In this sense, appropriation constitutes the conditions for hegemonic articulations. As the moving equilibrium of hegemony is maintained through innovations, appropriation becomes the necessary conditions for the innovative and continued rearticulation of dominance. As artists/activists not only attempt to disarticulate and rearticulate meaning through their street tactics and create a place in which alternative subjects are called upon, hegemonic articulations point to the conditions in which such forces are sustained and reproduced. The concept of hegemony demands that one account for the dynamic and variable relations between the dominant and subaltern cultural forms as they act upon and reconstitute each other.

### **Incorporation**

But what are the forces that sustain and secure hegemonic articulations? The concept of incorporation points to the social, political and economic structures that exert pressure, set limits, contain contradictions and reproduce the dynamic conditions of the prevailing order. Hegemonic incorporation accounts for ideological struggle and the emergence of alternative and oppositional forms within pre-established limits, and illustrates how multiple lines of force cohere to secure ideology and the subjects

necessary to reproduce the dominant order. If appropriation artists work to disarticulate meaning from power and open up a field of multiple and contradictory subject positions, hegemonic incorporation points to the deployment of variable lines of political, economic and social forces that engulfs opposition and secures meaning, arresting the flow of difference through overdetermined lines of force.

As Williams states, “we can only understand an effective and dominant culture if we understand the real social process on which it depends: I mean the process of incorporation.”<sup>155</sup> Incorporation reveals the multiple, complex and variable lines of force and the mechanisms of its reconstitution. The effective and dominant culture is reconstituted through incorporation as the constantly changing and adapting level of the dominant engulfs emergent forms and becomes the conditions of its reproduction. It is therefore a primary function of the dominant to incorporate opposition and alternative and emergent forms. If the tactics and aesthetic styles of appropriation are incorporated, how does it reproduce and secure consumer ideology and consumer subjects?

The variable, historically specific and complex processes of incorporation have been traced by Dick Hebdige, Theodore Roszak and Todd Gitlin. In the *Whole World is Watching*, Todd Gitlin contends the culture industries, “including the news organizations, produce self-contradictory artifacts, balancing here, absorbing there, framing and excluding and disparaging, working in complicated ways to manage and contain cultural resistance, to turn it to use as a commodity and to tame and isolate it into spectacle movements and ideas.”<sup>156</sup> Containment in the form of control or amplification occurs through deprecating opposition in moments of tension or marginalizing opposition as inconsequential. As youthful deviance it trivializes their stance as senseless, incoherent and absurd and by polarizing opposition it undermines and amplifies dissension from within. These techniques re-establish the limits of hegemony as a sense of order is reproduced by containing disorder.

## Containment

Containment derives from commercial sector that splits movements as either legitimate “main acts” or illegitimate “sideshows,” that in turn perpetuate such distinctions as natural, taken-for-granted, and not even noticed - as a matter of common sense and beyond question. The prevailing function of the culture industries in this regard is to “process” social opposition, “to control its image and to diffuse it at the same time, to absorb what can be absorbed into the dominant structure of definitions and images and to push the rest to the margins of social life.”<sup>157</sup> In short, containment engulfs opposition and converts it into a spectacle.

In the *Making of a Counter Culture*, Theodore Roszak offers a similar perspective. For Roszak, while the prevailing structure enables dissent, controversy and resistance, it also has the capacity to absorb and anabolize its potentially subversive effects. Absorption and anabolization is achieved by providing a degree of satisfaction to the prevailing order, as it sublimates discontent to consumer choice and lifestyle statements within prescribed limits and in turn generates submission and anesthetizes controversy. Absorption occurs through the institutionalization of resistance and is facilitated by capitalist containment. Both comprise large-scale social integration and control as resistance becomes part of the spectacle of consumption.

As Roszak contests, opposition will be subject to commercialization or treated as trivialized objects. This is achieved by appropriating opposition and turning their interventions into the common place tactics of the commercial sector. In short, it converts opposition into a fad that is at once displayed, controlled and articulated as consumer ideology. Thus, the reproduction of the hegemonic order is not achieved through repression, in so much as through commodification where discontent and protest is put on display, reflected in the styles of the culture industry and channeled toward consumption and the reproduction of consent. In short, it is used to reproduce the prevailing order that it rallied against.

In *One Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse argues that forms that do not immediately cohere to a unitary logic, technological rationality or the immediate confluence of interests are not suppressed but are liquidated through exploitation. Integrated under the fold of consumption, multi-dimensional thoughts and feelings are promoted and positioned to reproduce false needs and desires and the diversity of interests and values necessary to reproduce a one-dimensional society. As Marcuse argues, liquidation “takes place not through the denial and rejection of the ‘cultural values,’ but through their wholesale incorporation into the established order, through their reproduction and display on a massive scale.”<sup>158</sup>

Dick Hebdige derived a conclusion in his analysis of the codes and meaning of the post war youth styles, from hipsters, to mods, glam rock and punk, and provides an account of the commercialization and popularization of resistance as an articulatory principle of hegemonic containment. As subcultures interfere with order and violate authorized codes, they will be “incorporated, brought back into line, located on the preferred ‘map of problematic social reality.’”<sup>159</sup> To regain the power that is slipping from its grasp, the media, legal systems and fashion industries undermine, co-opt and legally prevent subcultural styles and rearticulate meaning to the service of power.

In the press headlines fluctuate between dread and fascination and outrage and amusement. The press is a site of double articulation as resistance is celebrated by commerce and ridiculed, abjected and defined as social problems. Both function to amplify the attention to these practices in order to defuse and diffuse their problematic style. It is through the “continual process of recuperation that the fractured order is repaired and the subculture incorporated as diverting spectacle within the dominant mythology from which it part emanates: as ‘folk devil, as Other, as Enemy.’”<sup>160</sup>

### **Commodification**

While the media are a momentous social force in reproducing the prevailing established order, they do not alone constitute the production of commodification. For

hegemony is comprised of a complex web of activities and institutional practices where the news media, commercial advertising and the economic sector of commodification cohere and reproduce the prevailing order. This overdetermined structure of the culture industries represent the hegemonic lines of force that absorb pressures and unite contradictions, co-opt, repackage and reproduce appropriation as a commercial advertisement, marketing tactic, news report, fashion design and commodity.

As commodities, the codes of resistance are refashioned by publicity and packaged as high and mainstream fashion. As commodities “they become codified, made comprehensible, rendered at once public property and profitable merchandize.”<sup>161</sup> The symbols that convey new meaning or incomprehensible ‘noise’ are removed from their contexts and fixed as objects of exchange. Commodification indicates not only how groups are controlled but “contained within an ideological space which does not seem at all ‘ideological’: which appears instead to be permanent and ‘natural’. To lie outside history, to be beyond particular interests.”<sup>162</sup> Commodification points to the forged link in which commercial interests articulate oppositional symbols to commerce. “In this way, the two forms of incorporation (the semantic/ideological and the ‘real’/ commercial) can be said to converge on the commodity form.”<sup>163</sup>

In *Ideology and Modern Culture*, John B. Thompson indicates that the objects of culture are subject to both valuation and conflict. The economic valorization of symbols takes place through commodification, or rather, when such forms are articulated as objects of exchange. The central features of economic valorization include the “fixation, reproduction and commodification of symbolic goods.”<sup>164</sup> Commercialization plays a central role as it fixes cultural symbols as commercially viable resources by securing meaning and naturalizing ideology. As meanings and representations are articulated through these practices, commodities mirror back an ahistorical “supra class” character. The concept of imparting a supra class character and anesthetizing ideological labor has been conceptualized by Roland Barthes as a myth.

In *Mythologies*, Barthes illustrates how consumer artifacts become mythological sign systems. Objects become myths through the suppression of the ideological labor that produced it and facilitates the perceived naturalness of the sign as transparent reflection of reality. “What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality...things lose the memory that they once were made.”<sup>165</sup> As commodities are turned to myths, they are emptied of history and naturalized, for as a myth it no longer appears to be alterable, but a given, not something to struggle over but to take in. Myth de-politicizes and purifies objects, it innocents them and gives them the aura of a natural and eternal justification where they “appear to mean something by themselves.”<sup>166</sup> Myths suppress and congeal the labor, history and the interests that went into creating meaning and replaces the dynamism of cultural artifacts with a fixed, immutable and ahistorical reality. Thus, the secret of myth is taken-for-granted, the ideological abuse is hidden in commodities.<sup>167</sup>

As coordinates of incorporation, co-optation and commodification point to the multiple lines of force at play in reproducing the prevailing structures, the mechanism that intervene in securing ideology, and the reciprocally confirming character of the base and superstructure that reflects the interests of the people through ideology and material practices that “represents” and mirrors back their interests. Articulations are secured through commercial activities and institutional procedures that wield together a diverse array of interests to maximize consent and secure power. Power lies in the forged links that are articulated by and produced through these moments of articulation, in the form of myths and commodification. Thus, co-optation and commodification point to the limits of hegemonic containment as they cohere, unify and contain appropriation within commercial and social institutions and secure mythical articulations to consumption.

### **Subversive Limits**

If the poetics of appropriation are oppositional ideological struggles and contest the rights of access to dominant forms of culture, the politics of appropriation indicates



the complex web of unequal and variable forces that may bear down upon and absorb through co-optation, myths and commodity and ideological containment. The degree to which the tactics of appropriation create new subject and create a democratic dialogue in public spaces or are incorporated and contained to reproduce asymmetrical relations of power reveals the conditions and possibilities of the poetics of appropriation and a democratic radical plurality in the era of neoliberalism. As such, it is necessary to ask, What are the hegemonic limits imposed by the media, press and fashion? And how does co-optation and commodification contain appropriation and unify multiple, diverse and contradictory forms?

As appropriation artists struggle to expose power and undermine ideology through a re-articulation with a different inflection, the commercial industries may co-opt their tactics to interpellate 'subversive' subjects as consumer subjects. Here appropriation confronts not only the ideology of advertising or the myths of commodification but also deeply entrenched structures of consumer capital that reinforce and articulate the logics of capital and interpellate subjects to reproduce the necessary conditions of production. Commercial articulations forge and entrench meaning of cultural and symbolic resources as they are connected to and reflected in practice and overdetermined through unequal relations of production.

If appropriation is both turned into a marketing opportunity and commodity object, the diverse interests represented by their tactics and styles potentially foster a multiplicity of points of identification that can be unified and directed toward consumption. In short, the self-organizing constitution of counter-publics is re-articulated through an external organizing principle which directs their allegiance and identification with the practices and visual styles of appropriation through marketing practices and commodification. As such it is important to ask: what are the subversive limits of appropriation as a tactic of resistance and dissent in a democratic society?

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **IDENTITY IN THE FIELD OF VISION**

Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger and the Guerrilla Girls emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s within and against a cultural environment in which the battle over the right to use culture and space was raging both on the streets, over the air and within the corridors of power. On the streets, the wars over culture were ablaze as street and graffiti artists spoke out against cuts in social welfare programs, dilapidated housing districts, and the alienation reproduced through the society of the spectacle. As continued consolidation of the media in the U.S. and U.S. diplomatic relations abroad were shaping cultural representations through prevailing political and economic interests, the streets and galleries of New York City became beacons of cultural critique to address the commodity logic of the spectacle and the abuse of governmental and commercial power.<sup>1</sup>

Their appropriations détourned the spectacle and the semiotic excess of the hail to de-sublimate desire and de-reify hegemonic representations. Their interventions spoke to the postmodern crisis of legitimation, poststructuralist concerns over the reproduction of power, and Feminist insights, as all three converge and proliferate in the spaces of their work. This chapter is concerned with the tactics used for poetic appropriations directly addressing the changing media industries and institutionalized systems of representation that constitute history and problematize the reification of ideology and the representation of gender and sexuality for social, political and existential awareness.

#### **Jenny Holzer**

Jenny Holzer took to the streets in the late 1970s using texts as images that doubled as both social criticism and artistic intervention addressing the public head on. Born in Gallipolis, Ohio Holzer studied at Rhode Island School of Design and moved to New York in 1976. Although Holzer started as an abstract painter, it wasn't long before she took on the written word as her primary mode of expression. The success of Holzer

is astounding as the Guggenheim held a retrospective of her work in 1989 and in 1990 the Venice Biennale showcased her work. Since then, Holzer's works have appeared at the Spanish Steps in Rome, the Olympic ski jump in Lillehammer, Norway, on the beach in Rio de Janeiro, on 10 buildings in New York City, and across the Potomac river in Washington D.C. The critical acclaim of Holzer led early news reports to cover her quite favorably. As one report suggests, "Holzer embodies an American ideal of democracy. It is the combination of experiment form and traditional American content, and the way they are fused together" that speaks to Holzer's democratic character.<sup>2</sup>

In 1977 Holzer produced and distributed "Truisms" across the streets of New York. "Truisms," as the word indicates, was an intervention in the public sphere with truths so "taken-for-granted" that they are rarely uttered. The intervention consisted of posters filled with truisms and placed in the public's right of way. Some more notable truisms include, "Abuse of Power Comes As No Surprise," "A Strong Sense of Duty Imprisons You," "Action Causes More Trouble Than Thought," "Alienation Produces Eccentrics Or Revolutionaries," "All Things Are Delicately Interconnected," "Ambition Is Just As Dangerous As Complacency," "Ambivalence Can Ruin Your Life," "An Elite Is Inevitable," "Anger Or Hate Can Be A Useful Motivating Force."<sup>3</sup>

And there were hundreds of these rarely uttered but often thought "truths." When Holzer first put up her poster-forum truisms on street corners in New York, she watched people write on them, underlining some words while leaving others blank. As they were noticed, defaced and scrawled over, she created new truisms and put them on T-shirts, stickers and baseball caps. Although the Truisms are ideological they are neither left of center or conversely right wing. And perhaps, therein lays the power of her work. As Holzer explains, the statements were written to invoke a feeling that they were strongly held opinions of individuals. "You could imagine your friend or your enemy making these pronouncements. I think the statements would be true to whomever is

saying them. They are conflicting truths, however, because there are over two hundred fifty different viewpoints in the collection.”<sup>4</sup>

As Holzer used words not images, she troubles the very distinction between the two when placed in public spaces, normally relegated to advertising images that command through the hail of both image and text. Placing such a diverse array of multiple and conflicting truths in public space addresses the ideological power head on as the placement of such a diverse array of voices de-sutures their banality and the unitary perspective common to each. Often aphoristic, the tactical poetics of “Truisms,” lies in their placement in unsuspecting places and the proliferation of interpretations in which they foster. Representing a spectrum from commonsense to the fringes of political discourse, Truisms presented contrasting viewpoints in public spaces. They are not didactic or dogmatic of one position however, as the combination of their diversity facilitates a battle over meaning within the posters themselves. As Holzer explains, truisms were not stories but real pieces of ideology and expressed in a very direct manner. “I could say exactly what I wanted on any subject, and I could address specific topics...That’s how I came to use language. I had the desire to be explicit and I felt the need to study dearly held beliefs.”<sup>5</sup>

The visual impact of Truisms lies in the familiarity of each, but also the problematic subject position when read together and out of context. As a series of utterances, truisms such as, “A strong sense of duty imprisons you” confronts the public in unsuspecting places with a direct accusation. The “you” is addressed to ostensibly everyone while the author is absent, for Holzer never left any identifying authorial mark. The placement in public spaces commonly reserved for advertising and the absence of authorial intention and voice, and thus the absence of authority over the meaning of the texts, facilitates multiple and contradictory readings. As a mechanism of appropriation, truisms potentially disrupt the complacency and habitualized routines of everyday life as

the messages re-articulate the space of the city as a thought provoking encounter with a dynamic and lively space in which a plurality of voices are expressed and seen.

As each presents contrasting viewpoints, the public is invited to question their stance in relation to such truths. The political intervention of “Truisms” lies in the multiple array of utterances that undermine the uni-vocal hail and ‘truth’ of such isms. After the initial intervention of Truisms, Holzer created Inflammatory Essays. Intended to be recognized as part of a series, the essays were posted on the sides of walls, storm drain covers and public telephones. Each essay was exactly twenty lines and one hundred words and placed on posters, uniform in size. The only style change that occurred in the posters was the color of the paper used, so that people would be encouraged to “think about the Essays in relation to each other.”<sup>6</sup>

The essays outlined a number of points of view in hopes of freeing the emotion from the suppressive function of text and its oppression in public space. As Holzer recounts, “So often we have to be polite and pretend that everything’s fine when a situation is tragic. We have to be quiet and non-combative. I thought for once I should write like I think.”<sup>7</sup> As the texts embody more than one voice and a number of concerns, a point of view becomes impossible to discern. Without any attribution to an author, the number of voices appear to project the anxieties, of multiple points of view competing within the series itself and give the impression that they are “a radical basement workshop production.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Electronic Revolution**

Holzer soon moved away from the ideological extremes and began to focus on the connection of everyday life with larger social and political issues. After the inflammatory essays Holzer created The Living Series in which bronze plaques and painted signs were used.<sup>9</sup> But, in 1982 Holzer were commissioned by the Public Art Fund to take over the spectra-color billboard in Time Square. Although her work was not the first to appear on the sign, as Barbara Kruger, Keith Haring and a graffiti artist named

Crash presented their work there before her, the electronic display of the truisms was an alternative intervention in the public sphere as the appropriation of the channels of communication used to reproduce consumer culture were reinvested with statements that incited questions rather than commercial obedience. The irony, however, is that such questions derive from totalitarian like pronouncements projected over the city.

As Holzer recounts, “I put alternative content in authoritative or ‘big brother’ media. This process began with The Livings Series. Then came Survival that used the same strategy. It was written for electronic signs.”<sup>10</sup> Flashing across the screen was an admixture that did not sell a product, but rather incited questions regarding the use of public space to sell products, the techniques of advertising, and the abuse of power. Questions that unearth common-sense, the veil of ideology and the intervention of power in discourse. The use of the Spectacolor sign in Times Square was the beginning of Holzer’s electronic revolution to critique and undermine the channels in which power and consumer ideology is reproduced.

“The signboard is a futuristic, eye-catching thing and I thought it was a wonderful way to present art clearly,” explained Holzer. “I want to use means of communication that worked. But I couldn’t afford Spectacolor unsubsidized, and so after I used the big board, I bought a small LED, programmed the one-liner ‘Truisms’ in, and went on from there. I used them as art proper in art spaces, and continued whenever possible to do them in public spaces.”<sup>11</sup> The L.E.D. (Light-emitting diode) signboards have contained a number of expressions ranging from utterances of anxiety to inflammatory statements. As the statements publicly testify to private responses, ranging from sex to the anxiety of nuclear war, the text elicits a private response in public that is both solitary and potentially shared as the public bear witness together.

Throughout the 1980s, the texts appeared on sign boards for Caesars Palace and within baseball stadiums.<sup>12</sup> As electronic billboards and marquis designed to sell and promote products in the streets are occupied with expressions of war, sex and death, the

constitutive command of the culture industries whose commands channel emotion toward consumption is undermined. From writing on the obsessions of justice, love, war, money and sex Holzer's work incites questions regarding the public's beliefs and perspectives about such all-consuming obsessions and the expression of emotion in public. As such thoughts are otherwise relegated to the private thoughts of the public, locked up in the corridors of institutions, or are carefully crafted to sell products, the voices of pain and joy proliferate on the sides of walls, on marquis and billboards.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1989 and 1990, Holzer utilized the medium of television to project her truisms throughout the electromagnetic spectrum. The truisms were seen on MTV as well as for KCOP-TV Channel 13, in what was called an on-air exhibition of "Video Poetics." Although the original version of video poetics was scheduled during regular commercial and programs breaks on two local stations, KTLA-TV Channel 5 pulled the plug and their involvement with the spots. The broadcast standards administrator of KTLA, Roger Field, was concerned that the program was attempting to manipulate the audience. "In a few spots they had utilized what we would consider subliminal perception," Field said.<sup>14</sup>

While it's unclear if truisms operate at the level of subliminal perception, it seems more accurate to say the attempt is super-liminal as it operates above the normalized levels of TV programming that depends, to a certain degree, on a passive and receptive audience who absorb naturalized representations. Without punctuation, the text emerged from and disappeared into the background of a blank TV screen. Printed in uppercase white letters, they read more like a random assortment of thoughts than any subliminal persuasion tactic. Aphorisms were used for the broadcasts, some included, "Protect me from what I want," "Raise boys and girls the same way," "Abuse of power comes as no surprise," "Private property created crime." What might a viewer make of such truisms?

By the mid-1990s and to the present, Holzer created a number of large scale mechanical/digital projections that flashed text across the sides of buildings, U.S.

monuments and over rivers and onto islands. Often playing against the surrounding buildings or in opposition to the advertising it was juxtaposed against, the texts remain elusive. And by first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jenny Holzer's work engaged the systematic information and disinformation campaigns of the U.S. Government's War on Terror. From the appearance of her work at the Republican National Convention to the projection of declassified documents on buildings throughout major metropolitan areas, her poetics were taking on a political environment increasingly under censure.

These later works directly engage the discourse of power and the language used to justify and conceal the violent nature of torture. Pulled from requests using the Freedom of Information Act, the posters address the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, prison abuse, court-martials, covert operations and discussions of oil supplies concealed through overdetermined structures bureaucracy. As elements of the redaction pieces were combined with emails messages from the Department of Defense and the FBI to the "Phoenix Memo" and projected on the Bobst Library, the voices of death, dying, martyrdom, murder, slaughter, and rape occupied the surfaces of U.S. buildings.<sup>15</sup>

These techniques hold the government accountable through a display of light and transparency. Here, the transparency of the projected text invites the viewer to see through the rhetoric as it projects a light on censorship. The projections invite the public to question the presence of U.S. Government actions abroad, as the buildings move from 'innocent' signifiers to expressions of the underside of global capital. And in this dual operation a dialogue is created between text and image, sign and signifier, concept and referent. The relations between the two are exposed as motivated by interests of power, money and politics. The projection of voices speak to larger issues of power, as thoughts and feelings generally excluded or systematically denied after being painfully revealed, are both voiced and seen with the actions of the U.S. government intervention abroad, conducted in the name of the public, are shown through.



Holzer's projections embody a transparent government through the tactics of transparency while revealing the public's involvement as producers of meaning and meaning making. When such words are projected on rivers and glass buildings, which is to say upon reflective surfaces, the words stripped from context and recontextualized intervenes in the mirror structure of ideology. The words double, triple and reflect back not one voice, nor one author but a plurality of voices. Holzer's explanation is interesting in this regard. "I was interested in the use of signs in Russia and China to announce great things. And the use of language in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when things were going to be great; the tragic optimism that said everything was going to be good."<sup>16</sup> But, these works are not propaganda, a form of persuasion that speaks through a univocal hail intended to incite people to act. Rather, the texts invite contemplation through the number of perspectives, rather than a unifying voice. As Holzer states, "I can offer hundreds of different positions, in the hope that people can sift through and find something for themselves."<sup>17</sup>

Holzer's tactics are a direct confrontation with the U.S. Government's actions, in terms of both violence as well as censorship. With the discourses that suppress emotional pain and the corporeal subject through discursively constructed persons, her tactics express the violence and contradictions concealed through redacted statements of classified documents and reveal the underbelly of U.S. global hegemony. Violence concealed by powerful interests in her poetics reveal the underside of American postmodern culture as that of, "blood, torture, death and terror."<sup>18</sup> Thus, a unitary hail is not offered where the subject is constituted but rather a proliferation of constantly refracted evaluative voices are uttered. These projections introduce a dialogue where the taken for granted history absorbed by the banality of the everyday and the rush of time is revealed as a complexly articulated history. The words have an ideological function shown through the translucent projections that shine a different light on language through transparency and concealment.

The later works that directly engage the discourse of power and the language used to justify and conceal torture, positions Holzer's tactics as a direct confrontation with the U.S. Government's actions of violence as well as censorship. In 2009, Holzer continued with works that sourced military documents and autopsy reports. In the ACCA survey of her work in Australia, Holzer created canvases that detailed email exchanges between US Army personnel. The emails provided accounts of alternative interrogation techniques for unlawful combatants, that included electric shocks and muscle fatigue inducements.<sup>19</sup>

When confronted with the blackness of the censored part of the documents, it is hard not to wonder just what was written there? What 'techniques' were used? The rhetorical effect of the document lies in the incomplete picture that Holzer provides. And, in this continued use of juxtaposition Holzer asks her audience why and how such atrocities have happened. Such incompleteness asks the audience to imagine and think about not only the issue of censorship, but what might have been done to constitute censorship? How has the U.S. Government acted in behalf of the public? What was done? The rhetorical "effect" rests in inciting questions and not providing any clear or immediate answer.<sup>20</sup>

The political import of this tactic resides in projecting an unidentifiable subject position to assume or make sense of the preferred reading of the work. The plurality of possible meanings and positions expand and overflow meaning and the plurality of voices and accents, as shown in the movement of the text itself. It troubles the hegemonic fixivity and semantic violence that suppresses the movement and dynamic character of meaning and the multiple, contradictory and concrete experiences and desires of the corporeal subject.<sup>21</sup> Thus the poetics of these latter works are derived from revealing subjects, events and tragedies closed off by administrative doors to displaying the works in a focused space for solitary and shared contemplation.<sup>22</sup>

## Image-Text

The statements in the Truisms series are not didactic or dogmatic of one position but rather speak to multiple ideological positions.<sup>23</sup> As Holzer asserts, “That’s how they’re effective. As soon as people know that an opinion comes from an individual, then they can say: ‘Oh, that’s a right-wing person,’ or ‘a left-wing person’ or ‘Oh, that’s a woman,’ then it’s out of the window depending on their own personal position. So the stuff has to hang in the air.”<sup>24</sup> But, if Truisms fail to make sense and meaning is just left ‘hanging there,’ the works incite the viewer not through signification but through an unraveling of meaning and perception, of significance.<sup>25</sup> Juxtaposing one stance in relation to another, a unitary standpoint in which meaning unravels and difference expands and proliferates within the text.

Thus, when the texts facilitate the proliferation of meaning through the articulation of multiple, contradictory and conflicting accents, the repressive value of the text and its uniform ideological articulations are overcome by an overflowing of polysemy. Truisms points to a semiotic polyvalence and the ideological deconstruction of truths articulated in the spaces of consumer capitalism. As Barthes states, “Polysemy poses a question of meaning and this question always comes through as a dysfunction...bound up with an uncertainty (an anxiety) concerning the meaning of objects or attitudes”<sup>26</sup> As Truisms incite questions and invites the public to see through these truths, the absence of any anchor dismantles the repressive function of the symbolic over the corporeal and opens up the conditions for the experiences of corporeality.

The poetics of Holzer’s intervention derives from the appropriation of ideological texts and their re-articulation in the spaces in which ideology is reproduced and secured. As the multiple, contradictory and conflictual expression of truisms invite contemplation through the number of perspectives, the tyranny of the unifying voice – of the uni-accentual hail wiped clean of its evaluative accent that represses emotion, desire, and pain, overflows in multi-accentuality and gives way to a multiplicity of voices and

subject positions in the public sphere. As Truisms reflect and refract a multiplicity of subject positions the spaces of advertising are rearticulated with a plurality of voices both expressed and seen disrupting the constitutive command of interpellation.

Ultimately, Holzer helped create and reshape an environment that seems utterly beyond one's control. And, in peering up to the electric light display and projections as they move across buildings and rivers and seem to evaporate into air, techniques in which advertisers exclaim the value of their products, one sees something else. A proclamation, an utterance under one's breathe, a projection of thoughts, or maybe an Orwellian nightmare come true? Or the voices from underground that will not be silenced. Such works bring to light questions over who has the right to use such spaces. Whose voices are heard? Whose voices are legitimate? And why?<sup>27</sup>

But her works introduce other questions making critics skeptical. As one claimed, "the trouble with her project is that it is ultimately condescending to its audience. Whether you tell people that...you position yourself on a plane of privileged insight and of moral superiority."<sup>28</sup> As this reporter suggests, putting such truisms on t-shirts is subjective, scolding and smug. "Holzer," this reporter continues, "is either naïve or extraordinarily arrogant if she imagines that her work is going to bring various well-documented examples of unacceptable behavior by the US military in Iraq to a broader audience."<sup>29</sup> Others however suggest the spaces "ask us to consider our thoughts and actions in the world." As Engberg states, "This essentially humanist and philosophical project encourages us to seek self-enlightenment through examining our prejudices, false beliefs, fallback positions and habits to reach a new level of tolerance, understanding and self-awareness."<sup>30</sup>

Was Holzer's work on display for its commercial viability in the art establishments, rather than for its ability to incite emotion or inspire thought? Are the art institutions desperate to fill their corridors with content even if it attacks their foundations and fictions? Or, does its display reproduce distinctions of taste? These types of

accusations were not uncommon and are perhaps best exemplified in the works and commercial success of Barbara Kruger.

### **Barbara Kruger**

Barbara Kruger emerged along-side Jenny Holzer as an appropriation artist in the 1970s, and similarly, her work and intervention into the public sphere and institutions of art has spanned more than three decades. Using the strategies of advertising in both visual technique and the direct hail and the guerrilla tactics in which spaces such as the billboard and the placard are appropriated for means other than commercial advertising, Kruger has been a critic of the power of advertising and the representations that have come to define gender, sexuality and power.

Born in New Jersey and trained by Condé Nast, Kruger's method is one that has been undoubtedly influenced by her experiences working within the advertising trade. After spending a year at Syracuse University she took up residence at Parsons School of Design in 1967. While at Parsons, Kruger connected with Diane Arbus and Marvin Israel, a photographer and graphic designer respectively. Israel who was the art director of Harper's Bazaar in the 1960, encouraged Kruger to pursue work in the fashion industry. And, at the age of 22 Kruger left Parsons to pursue a career in magazine publishing. Having put together a portfolio under the tutelage of Arbus and Israel, she was hired by Condé Nast Publications in New York as an assistant to the art director of *Mademoiselle*. Within a year, Kruger was the chief designer and stayed for 10 years.<sup>31</sup>

Her experiences at *Mademoiselle*, much like those growing up, served as points of insight into the construction of femininity and sexuality in commercial media. As Kruger remembers, "I loved spending my days looking through photos of opulent houses with shots of people eating pate. My experience at Condé Nast greatly influenced my work. I used to use big type for layouts. It was like a substitutional activity."<sup>32</sup> But, growing up in middle class America also provided the lessons to reach out and address issues of power and inequality in her work. As Kruger recalls, "I grew up in a neighborhood

where issues of race and money, or lack of it, was on people's minds. It gave me an insight into the way race and power work in this country."<sup>33</sup>

Kruger describes *Mademoiselle* as an elite world of college-educated girls who found the only place that would take them seriously. "Nobody would hire women like them to do anything other than secretarial work then, but at Conde Nast they actually became editors and writers...needless to say, I felt like a Martian there – I didn't have their privilege, their affluence or a college degree."<sup>34</sup> For some, Kruger's work at Condé Nast is the key to her subversive style. "Trained in the ultra-stylish, mass-market environment of one of the world's most successful publishing groups, Kruger played the design game from both sides of the fence. She learned the art of graphic seduction while privately deconstructing more insidious messages."<sup>35</sup>

And perhaps rightly so, as Kruger states, "it was a major influence. It enabled me to take the formal acuity that I learned there and put some meaning behind it."<sup>36</sup> The job at *Mademoiselle*, was one that depended heavily on making articulations and associations between pictures and texts to create emotional impacts on its reading public. After visiting a number of artists throughout various colleges in the U.S., by 1973 Kruger, was writing poetry and giving readings at Artists Space in SoHo New York. Her work at this time however, is very different than the work she would become famous and infamous for in the 1980s and 90s.<sup>37</sup>

During that time, Kruger used thick patterns of paint on canvas that resembled doilies. Speaking about her work and first show at this time Kruger states, "Jane Kaufman, the painter, recommended me, and I showed painted decorative works. One of them was also included in the Whitney Biennial. Then I stopped. I felt making this work was so labor-intensive it was putting my brain to sleep."<sup>38</sup> And by 1979 she started to write film and television criticism for *Artforum* magazine and *TV Guide*. At this time, Kruger was "interested in making art that displaces the powers that tell us who we can be and who we can't"<sup>39</sup>

In 1981 in a show called “Pictures & Promises”, the *New York Times* ridiculed her work. “The trouble” as Grace Glueck states, “is not with Miss Kruger’s relatively simple – though pretentiously proclaimed point, that artists ‘have chosen to engage the codes of advertising esthetics,’ but with her uneven selections and confusing presentation. Maybe, like the artists whose work she shows, she could learn from advertising itself how to make a point effectively.”<sup>40</sup> Although this scathing critique legitimizes of the codes of advertising and the privileging of art that utilizes a clear and univocal narrative voice, it would not be the last time that attempts to disrupt the entrenched codes of advertising would receive critical reportage.

From this point her work takes on a more political tone. Kruger’s place in this history is unique as few were directly addressing the absence of voice to express dissent by appropriating representations that constitute gendered identities through a method that complicates the image-text relation of visual representations. Using a poetics of collage and photomontage, advertising instructional manual images were reprinted and overlain with a new text. Similar to those of Dada and John Heartfield in particular, Kruger’s style addresses the public to see contemporary power dynamics in the U.S. The untitled works, often referred to by the messages they convey, have been defined by Kruger as a direct address to a complacent public.<sup>41</sup>

“Your comfort is my silence,” “Your gaze hits the side of my face,” and “Memory is your image of perfection” produced between 1981 and 1982, for example, can be identified as part of the signature style of the direct address and confrontational tone of her work. But as Kruger states, her work is “about the power and the use and abuse of language. How images and words determine the way we act toward each other. Direct address is consistent in all of my work. It’s all about language and how it can veer from tenderness to brutality.”<sup>42</sup>

Kruger’s methods of appropriation represent a tactic in which earlier forms and images of culture that were once dominant and/or so taken-for-granted that they were

rarely even noticed, are recombined in a struggle for new ways of seeing and feeling.<sup>43</sup> For Kruger, the use and articulation of commercial images therefore address the mediated systems of representation through what might be identified as a series of tactics. It is a tactic that appropriates and rearticulates the representations that constitute historical memory and intervenes in their constitution as commodity objects.

Utilizing similar tropes of the x-ray image that was common in John Heartfield's early photomontages Kruger addressed the loss of life and the abuse of power, and the facades that conceal the violence conducted in the name of tradition and emancipation. Kruger's method is one that utilizes photographs found from magazines and service and instructional manuals that still reflect, maintain, and perpetuate patriarchal representations of women, women's work and sexuality. "My work," Kruger explains "is about how people are with each other. It's about social relations. I'm using aggressiveness and direct address to foreground that. It's what we do to each other. There is no 'you' or 'I'. It's not hierarchical or a battle of the sexes or us versus them."<sup>44</sup>

Her work can also be identified as a tactic of appropriation of images redefined to induce laughter and humor in places otherwise vacant of such acts. As, Kruger states, "humor is an important part of the work. I'm trying to create a collision between the hilarious and the tragic."<sup>45</sup> Kruger adds, "perhaps this would make for fewer zealous designations of the 'the sacred' which expel or destroy those that differ, fewer ideologies of univocal 'correctness', fewer ethical arrangements which perpetuate the oppressions of the law of the Father."<sup>46</sup>

Kruger's use of black, white, and red bold font juxtaposed over these found images, images of a mass produced consciousness perpetuated by the "fashion" industry, are often ironic and contradictory to the images they overlay. But such irony points to a meaning other than the literal interpretation of the text and complicates the text's function in describing the image. The collage aesthetic facilitates a dismantling of an ideal-self obtained through identification with the image, as the expressed construction of her work



dismantles the realistic feel of the image and creates puzzlement rather than a myth. The works not only speak of their arbitrary character but also to the character and relationship of the text and image as well.

Moving beyond the works in 1981 and 1982 to works that directly confront the ideal image perpetuated in fashion magazines and higher institutions of art, include “we won’t play nature to your culture,” “you are not yourself,” “who’s the fairest of them all,” “we will no longer be seen and not heard,” and “I shop therefore I am.” Beyond the confrontation with the art industry as is evident in “your gaze hits the side of my face” is a confrontation with the silencing of the female voice, the power of the male gaze, the representation of women and sexuality in advertising, the binary construction of gender, and the mechanism of a linear perspective in which division and categorization is used as a means of control and distinction. Thus, Kruger’s work confronts binary oppositions as the organizing principles used to justify abjection and difference.

It demands mention that unlike film both cinematic and photographic, collage and montage does not attempt to conceal its constructed character, but rather, exposes the fantasy of realism and the principle of identification of realist techniques. It shows itself as technique, reveals its construction as a re appropriation, as a reference, forgery, or copy. It is not a suppression of its basis but an affirmation through negating the instruments of realism. As Kruger juxtaposes the image and the text to problematize the representation of women and sexuality and power and violence, we are also confronted with the construction of photography and language as ideological. These works therefore, present battles with the perceived and taken-for-grantedness of common-sense language and photo-realism.

It is the very taken-for-grantedness of ideology and ideological elements derived from consent to common sense and naturalization that renders invisible the logic and semiotic labor in the production of meaning. Just as statement and meaning are articulated to images, representations mirror back and affirm discursive constructions of

identity, sexuality, gender and success as natural, fixed and immutable. While, the ideological force of the photographs in advertising is derived from this perceived and manufactured realism, it is also reproduced through the text or caption that frames ‘proper’ reading of the ad. Often through direct commands the text comprises a promise and interpellative hail that constitutes subjects and invites them to be the object in the ad by purchasing it.

As Diane Hope’s analysis reveals, cultural mythologies used in advertising naturalize gender distinctions in terms of binary oppositions. For Hope, advertising is a site of power where cultural mythologies, gender, power relations, and ideologies are obscured through strategies of historical, cultural and “natural” appropriated iconography. This is to say, by pulling on historical memory ideology can make itself ahistorical and invisible. As ads, like film, render invisible the production process thereby giving the associated links in the ad the appearance of a natural and inevitable connection, appropriation makes the invisible signatures of advertising visible. As re-appropriated icons lose their “natural” status and illusion of permanence and stability so too does advertising’s promise of an achievable unified-self.

Roland Barthes’ *Image-Music-Text*, reminds us that texts supplants the image as natural and as a representation of the real. As texts ‘quicken’ the reception of the photo to second-order signifieds, i.e. to connotation, the image does not illustrate the words but rather, the words impose perceptual categories over the image. As the text loads the image, it sublimates and rationalizes the image with a culture and a history and provides the image with an appearance as natural. However, the dialectical relation of meaning demands that this process is dual. Which is to say, that as the text loads the image with an ideology and covertly the image into a myth seemingly without history and apparently neutral, the denotative elements in the image and the perceived realism of the photograph naturalizes the cultural. For Barthes, this is achieved, in part, because the referential

quality, or rather the analogm of the image, is conferred onto the text, making it appear innocent, i.e. referential itself.

This dialectical relation between the text and the image is produced through the process by which the text supplants the ideology as natural and the perceived natural supplants the text as innocent. The text then, regulates meaning and attempts to frame, constrain, and fix the meaning of the image – and the image makes the text appear innocent. The same procedure works upon the viewing subject when viewing an advertisement, where concepts used to understand the world, thought of as neutral, reflect back and confirm that neutrality of the concept by providing “evidence” of its existence in the world.

In returning to Kruger’s work, the black and white bold font juxtaposed over these found images, images of a mass produced consciousness perpetuated by the “fashion” industry, often ironic and contradictory to the images they overlay, facilitate a dismantling of an ideal self-obtained through identification. The texts de-naturalize the realistic feel of the image and expose the codes of power. As Kruger states, “In most design work, received images and words are arranged and aligned to produce assigned meanings. I am engaged in rearranging and realigning these dominant assignments.”<sup>47</sup>

But, what are we to make of these images and the use of “Your” and “My”? Just who is the “you” Kruger is addressing? These works address the spectator in a direct confrontation with the hail, and the juxtaposition of the image that does not seem to naturalize the text, or the image, that ‘your’ and ‘my’ become problematic terms of the direct address. “This ‘hailing’” as Kruger explains, “this curious ambiguity of the subject as the ‘centre of initiative’, is one of the most frequent tactics of most public design work, whether it be advertising, corporate signage, or editorial design.”<sup>48</sup>

The juxtaposition of the images and texts in “You are not Yourself,” “Your gaze hits the side of my face,” and “Memory is your image of perfection,” calls attention to the formation of the subject in the mirror stage, the male gaze, the constitutive hail, and the

techniques used to elicit identification in advertisements. Kruger's poetics expose how a unified consumer subject is re-inscribed into a structural and symbolic order of capitalist modes of production and reproduction, and question it by undermining the interpellative command by using it and parodying it and to expand and overflow the unilateral operation in which meaning is secured. In doing so, the works disrupt and shock conventionalized ways of looking.

The direct address in Kruger's works, such as "your gaze," "you are not yourself," "memory is your image of perfection," problematizes the command as it unclear who the you is meant for and from where and from whom it derives. Upon looking at such images, questions regarding the self and what constitutes the "you" are brought into the open and complicated. Just what constitutes the self? And, is the "you" addressed to me? Is it possible to be and not be myself? Such questions facilitate a shift in perspective where the spectator is invited into multiple and conflictual subject positions as both and neither the addressor and addressee, Kruger's work points to both schizophrenia and interpellation.

When the works of Kruger hit the streets, the interpellative hail does not work to constitute subjects but to disrupt such a function by problematizing the addressor and addressee, which means representation and how power intervenes in discourse is ruptured. Kruger problematizes the direct address of the univocal hail so that the stability of the command and centered subject is undermined and facilitates a dispersal of meaning expanding the space between the production and subjection of the subject. But not only is the hail of the prevailing hegemonic ideology undermined, but so too is the unitary Cartesian self as it is exposed as an illusion of coherence and stability.

The text is not in isolation from the images they overlay so the spectator is invited to find a connection between the two. The bold black lettering against a black and white negative with a slash of red, reveals not only simplicity, but in its simplicity refracts the underlying structural framework in which subjects are constituted. When such texts do

not load the environment with a unitary meaning but facilitates the proliferation of meaning, the repressive value of the text is overcome by an overflowing of polysemy. As such, the text works to corrupt the appearance of neutrality, and the de-naturalized appearance demythologizes ideological concepts.

By 1984 Kruger's work was recognized in a group show at the Annina Nosei Gallery in New York. The works included appropriated images from magazines and instruction manuals from the 1940s and 1950s. They were set in black and white, with red bold italic futura font. Images from the 'heyday' of the post-war America, including ill-conceived civil liberties, the atrocities committed unto the black American public, McCarthy hit squads and the commercial push to place women in the household were no accident. As Kruger states, "There is no doubt that, to some degree, the experience I have of the world is reflected in the work I make. But it's not biography! I use these words for the readings they might suggest to people and all the meanings they might be conjuring up. I don't even agree with some of the texts I use."<sup>49</sup>

Reports at this event often framed Kruger through the lens of predecessors of soviet agit-propaganda. From the color schemes of El Lissitzky's Russian Constructionism to John Heartfield's x-ray images and photomontage, Kruger was sharing company with some of the earliest tacticians of appropriation. Where "these pictures not only have the look of power, they are about power [and] we can't help but feel the incongruity between what advertising promises and what reality delivers. Here Ms. Kruger functions as a kind of guerrilla Federal Trade Commission."<sup>50</sup> And, perhaps it is here, in these early reports that Kruger's works takes on an identity that positions her in opposition to the culture industries at large as an activist exposing societal ills who stands for social justice.

In the early 1980s, appropriation techniques hit the art scene in New York as the next big art movement paralleling pop. Unlike photography, which was only beginning to make its way into the institutions of art as a legitimate form of artistic expression,

appropriation art was a highly fought term and approach. Andy Grundberg of the *New York Times*, argued that appropriation “artists” were “editors or curators, selecting images from the cultural filing cabinet and reconstituting them rather than going out into the world to find ostensibly ‘new’ ones.”<sup>51</sup> The unhealthy side of appropriation resides in “creating meanings that bear no relation to, or is widely at odds with, the materials it makes use of.”<sup>52</sup> While others in the *New York Times* framed appropriation within a political history of agitation propaganda, it simultaneously claimed that it lacked the “complexity and mastery to be able to stand on its own merit.”<sup>53</sup> Both sides rearticulate appropriation as suspicious and even unhealthy.<sup>54</sup>

But the reports didn’t end there either, as Kruger was labeled one of the most prominent feminist artists, if not the “most forceful feminist artist working with the techniques of commercial art.”<sup>55</sup> But, Kruger’s work should not be isolated to gender or sexuality either, for it is also class that she attempts to address. Even with such concerns looming, Kruger is adamant about explaining that her work moves beyond cultural attitudes and perceptions and the conditions in which art is bought and sold. As Kruger reveals in an interview in the *New York Times*, “I am not concerned with issues if they are not going to be anchored by some kind of analysis or consideration of class.”<sup>56</sup>

As the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) hung her work, “you invest in the divinity of the masterpiece” in three sections, news reports not only questioned whether Kruger had been co-opted, but rather, as Michael Brenson wrote, “Kruger’s didactic work quickly becomes predictable. At best, it could become a political fact, a kind of moral deterrent. As of now, however, her work remains uneven, and so limited in its intellectual and emotional range that a little bit of it goes a long way.”<sup>57</sup> But, what were these reports referring to? How does Kruger’s work address the construction of gender, sexuality and class and confront the codes of advertising? These questions will require an explication of some of the texts of her work and of feminist authors in the late 1970s and 1980s who critiqued the male gaze, spoke to and through the silenced female voice

along with the gender and sex relations reproduced in the images of advertising used to sell products reproduced through identification and interpellation.

### **You are not yourself**

In *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, Jacqueline Rose argues the security derived from looking at an image, from a clear and distinct division in sexual identities as male or female, or even in language at the level of truth or falsity, is a fantasy deriving from a foundational split in the ego. The narcissistic perfection of form is an illusion projected in images that constructs the women as always other and inferior. As Rose argues, “More simply, we know that women are meant to look perfect, presenting a seamless image to the world so that the man, in that confrontation with difference, can avoid any apprehension of lack.”<sup>58</sup>

This absolute category, derives from and having its basis in division both within the subject and between the subject. The category of woman is the negativity that brings forth the fantasy of a unitary or transcendent consciousness, or Cartesian cogito, and it is always already a fantasy, a fiction that serves to guarantee the unity of man. As Rose maintains, “The *object a*, cause of desire and support of male fantasy, gets transposed onto the image of the woman as Other who then acts as its guarantee. The absolute ‘otherness’ of the woman, therefore, serves to secure for the man his own self-knowledge and truth.”<sup>59</sup>

It is perhaps here, that the central feature of Kruger’s intervention emerges in greater focus. In, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Jacques Lacan explains, “the gaze is presented to us only in the form of a strange contingency, symbolic of what we find on the horizon, as the thrust of our experience, namely, the lack... The eye and the gaze—this is for us the split in which the drive is manifested at the level of the scopic field.”<sup>60</sup> The implication of the gaze as a central organizing principle of the self, implicates a phallic register, or rather, the Name of the Father of the symbolic order, one that reproduces an overarching structure that positions subjects through the

presence/absence of the gaze, of the unified ego as the distance point that remains forever out of reach, but never the less constitutes the alienation of the subject.<sup>61</sup>

For Lacan the gaze becomes the continued organizing fiction that constitutes subjects. As the child enters the mirror stage it leaves forever disconnected and alienated from him/herself, specifically as it sees the ideal self-reflected in the mirror, and internalizes the look from outside. While Lacan indicates that this structure can be felt and continues to insist through the internalized look of the other, it is important to note how this operation takes place through advertising as well.<sup>62</sup> The economy of vision and alienation reproduced through advertising exploits and sublimates the desire for wholeness and a return to the unified self, by inviting the subject to identify with the image as a complete representation of the ego.

As Jon Berger contends in *Ways of Seeing*, advertising in the 1970s reproduces the signs of the “free world” and naturalizes ideas of freedom into ideas of free consumption and free markets. It teaches the public how to transform themselves through buying. Advertising is an ideological site of interpellation that conceals class position by perpetuating the belief that one can rise in social status by obtaining possessions. Advertising facilitates this aim by inviting women in particular to adopt the perspective of the ad.

Berger explains, the woman is “meant to imagine herself transformed by the product into an object of envy for others, an envy which will then justify her loving herself...the publicity image steals her love of herself as she is, and offers it back to her for the price of the product.<sup>63</sup> The command of advertisements demand that women internalize the gaze and treat themselves as objects to be seen. Berger adds, “A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself...From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually.”<sup>64</sup>



In *Decoding Advertising*, Judith Williamson argues, advertising recreates the alienation of the subject by selling a unified-self obtained through the purchase of commodities. Advertisements that project models as an ego ideal promise a reunion with the ideal ego and the unified subject through identification with the hail and fulfilled by commodity exchange, as identity is replaced by the purchased commodity.<sup>65</sup> Williamson and Berger illustrate not only a subject position reproduced in advertisements, but how subjects are both positioned and interpellated through identification with the male gaze, as the image reflects the promise of advancement through an identification with the image that treats women as objects. In short, ads ask women to identify with the objectification of the self.<sup>66</sup>

In appropriating the visual codes of advertising and cutting them up, Kruger's work address the objectification and the hegemony of subject identification in advertising. Woman is both the figure of guarantee but always also a threat; the "place onto which lack is projected, and through which it is simultaneously disavowed."<sup>67</sup> Kruger's work illustrates the political dimension of appropriation and the potential to reposition subjects by exposing and redirecting the constitutive hail. As the subject is implicated and interpellated through sight and the direct address, Kruger's work exposes and redirects the gaze so that it hits the side of your face, rather than internalized.

Kruger's poetics confront a history of objectification and the hegemony of linear one point perspective, where woman becomes the basis for the man's fantasy of a unified ego, and the woman becomes the object for man. Thus, in reading "You are not yourself" the public is invited to look at the shattered mirror that resists reflecting back the woman as a unitary self and exposes the fiction of a unitary subject. It is an intervention in the commercial exploitation and sublimation of desire, as it utilizes the codes of advertising and the constitutive hail without promises.

Kruger's poetics point to the authoritative gaze of masculinity in advertising and the fractured subject it creates. It is a space that de-sutures identity by revealing an un-

reparable fissure and unhinges a rigid subject position in which an ideal unitary self is reflected. Moreover, it calls on the subject to identify the mechanisms used for points of identity. But then, who or what is this self that you are not? While the answer is unclear, the work invites the public to question if a real or authentic you derives from the systems of meaning, cultural artifacts, commodities, or the roles one assumes.

These works also reveal an impossible unitary spectator position for the fragmented image proliferates. These perspectives assume and dismantle the unitary vantage point of a master signifier in which to align one's self. In creating a play and plurality in the order of the master signifier by disrupting this scopical regime, Kruger's work reveals a multi-positionality of the spectator where the spectator is not the subject, complete or ideal, but multiple, split, and contorted. This is to suggest, that the shattered mirror signifying the central organizing principle of ego formation and entrance into the symbolic order, i.e., the Law of the Father, is shattered to free the subject from a gaze that inscribes power onto the body and the symbolic order.

Through the interruption of interpellation spectators are invited to recognize the promise of the ideal ego and through consumption as an illusion, a fiction and fantasy. In this sense, her works expose the technique of advertising and fashion photography, as the image of perfection advanced by advertising and promised with the purchase of a product, is exposed as an illusion, a misrecognition of one's real conditions of existence, and the inadequacy and unity deriving from this split and solved by commodity exchange as imaginary. Advertising is the invitation to look at the image and see the product for the ideal. The figure for the ideal ego and the photographic techniques that veil manipulation through photographic realism present an ideal image to aspire to. Rose argues it is a coercive standardized ideal that erases or exploits differences as a means of control. Kruger's image reflects the shattered ideal that necessarily fails to offer a unifying standard. Thus, Kruger's images disrupt the univocal hail, stating instead that the self is split, multiple and fractured.

### **Your body is a battleground**

In 1987 Kruger was the first woman artist to have a solo show at the Mary Boone Gallery. Sherrie Levine was also on display that same year. As major newspapers covered this ground breaking event, accusations of co-optation again filled the press. As *New York Times* reporter Grundberg states, “Isn’t their work supposed to be critical of art’s status as a commodity, yet doesn’t Mary Boone’s gallery represent an apogee of commercialism? Isn’t their work staunchly feminist, yet hasn’t Mary Boone been pilloried for not representing a single woman artist? How can they represent themselves as artists interested in changing the status quo when they are part of the art Establishment?”<sup>68</sup> But as Kruger notes, “I think my work can be effective (in questioning spectral positions and sexual representations) within the symbolic site of Mary’s gallery, given its position in the discourse of contemporary picture-making and aesthetic practices.”<sup>69</sup>

Although the questions Grundberg states are indeed important as “the works of these two artists, which were once consigned to the outskirts of the marketplace, now occupies the symbolic center of popular and commercial success,” change is presented as an either/or proposition. Such accusations, although they acknowledge that these artists were never completely ‘outside’, does seem to suggest a purity developed by a distance from such institutions. But, subversion may be produced and reproduced through a number of sites thereby reaching the public through a number of avenues. It’s not subversion in so much as access and entry that is noteworthy.

In response to such questions and accusations Kruger stated, “Basically, I try to make work that is accessible, that people can understand and determine their own meanings.” “Nothing,” she retorts, “could be more commercialized than the art galleries. If anything, billboards are less commercial.”<sup>70</sup> As Kruger contests, “I don’t think there’s a within or without the system. Either we work to question and change the systems that contain us or we don’t.” This is not about an either/or opposition, but rather points to the

absence of an outside in which to speak. But as Kruger states, “it has to do with a breakdown of binary oppositions. It’s about a dispersal.”<sup>71</sup>

The dispersal of images throughout culture can be identified in Kruger’s earlier works, but also, in 1988 when her work appeared on Adelaide billboards and taxi-cabs that typically reserve their space for advertising. As Kruger explained at this time, “I want the work where it will have the most effectiveness. I want as many people as possible to see it.”<sup>72</sup> Yet, while such spaces normally reserved for advertising may indicate the commercialization of her work, it is worth questioning whether such placement has a greater capacity to alter one’s predilections, as the appropriation of the modes of address in advertising question the codes and methods of advertising. The critique of the media therefore would seem to demand a tactic that not only uses the codes of advertising to critique representation, but also the spaces in which advertisers use, for it is in such places that the media, Kruger claims “have the power to tell us who we were, who we are going to be, and who we can never be.”<sup>73</sup>

By the summer of 1988 Kruger’s works had been commissioned in Australia, where it was not uncommon to see her black and white photographs overlaid with statements such as, “You make history when you do business” or “We don’t need another hero” on billboards at the Wynyard station nestled neatly against other advertisements. By this time, Kruger’s signature style of the direct address and use of appropriated images was being questioned by art critics and newspaper reports alike and the questions the images themselves invoked still seemed to unsettle expectations. The direct address, reported by Carole Hampshire became so unsettling that concerns over who the “you” in the work was referring to elicited a response of agony. “Is this a dig at capitalism and the owners of capital and, therefore, power in our society? Kruger is addressing me, the viewer, stranding on the platform...I am part of the ‘you’ – or am I?”<sup>74</sup>

But, this frustration also led to an attempt to position Kruger in terms of success or failure, of conveying a clear and univocal message. As Carole Hampshire ends her

piece, “Perhaps with her authorized ‘graffiti’ Kruger is doing what every graffiti artist dreams of, and being sponsored. The work obviously has its value, but by its very simplification the text lies open to miss-readings.”<sup>75</sup> Perhaps that has also been the point of Kruger’s work and a tactic that shares common tenets of appropriation art, from Dada to punk as these poetics provoke a misreading to expose and amplify the process of meaning making and undermine ideological power. It is no surprise then the instability of readings may incite pacification this anguish by securing ideological closure.

And yet, media coverage of Kruger’s work by 1989 still remained suspect. In a report by Paul Richard of the *Washington Post* claimed of appropriation art of the 1980s, specifically those of Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer and Sherrie Levine, “instead of taking on the masters, they preferred to do battle with – and very often lost to – the media pros whose Nike spots sold shoes on TV. High ambition faded, skepticism vanished. Cynicism reigned.”<sup>76</sup> By, 1990 the public remained skeptical over the power of her images. As a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, fumed, “What alternatives to categorization does she propose? While one may argue with the contents of any given category, to attack, as Ms. Kruger does, the very existence of categories is nonsense. Language is nothing other than a system of categories...Ms. Kruger asserts that ‘our’ bodies have given way to representations and that we are experiencing a crisis of truth. Who is this ‘we’ for whom Mrs. Kruger speaks?”<sup>77</sup>

Yet, such statements may overlook the activism behind the works as well. On Sunday, April 9, 1989 the work “your body is a battleground” was used in protest by a prochoice movement in Washington D.C. With the text “Support Legal Abortion, Birth Control and Women’s Rights” now superimposed over the image, “your body is a battleground” was used for a rallying cry for women’s rights. The caption read, “On April 26 the Supreme Court will hear a case which the Bush Administration hopes will overturn the Roe vs. Wade decision, which established basic abortion rights. Join thousands of women and men in Washington D.C. on April 9. We will show that the

majority of Americans support a woman's right to choose. In Washington: Assemble at the Ellipse between the Washington Monument and the White House at 10am; Rally at the Capital at 1:30 pm.”

The political investment of the body is bound up in the political and economic relations of production that serve to (re)make individuals, through which their bodies are reproduced as productive mechanisms that will represent both capital and social order. There is a semiotic and geometric inscription of power, in which bodies are engraved by and within material practices. They bear the mark of and are converted into productive forces, subjected from within these forces, reproducing the mark of power and reproducing bodies as productive and subjective.<sup>78</sup>

But power is not possessed it is a strategy in which dispositions, maneuvers, tactics and techniques reveal the complex and dynamic battle between a network of relations constantly in tension. Moreover, these relations reach the depth of society in which individuals, bodies, gestures and behavior recreate the mechanisms and modalities where power is reproduced. These micro-powers are sites that maintain the ‘proper’ ordering of the social whole. As a battleground and site of contestation, the body is marked by the construction of ‘nature’ through laws that dictate what a woman may legally do with her own body.

In “your body is a battleground” Kruger’s work directly engages in the potential effects of advertising and politics over and above bodies. In this image spectators are directly confronted with a critique of bio-politics where Kruger’s work invites the spectator into direct dialogue with the inscription of power over and in bodies. It illustrates not the possession of power as is usually understood, but the exercise of power in terms of a continual battle over bodies – where, as Foucault argues power “invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them.”<sup>79</sup>

As a battleground and site of contestation, the body is marked by the construction of ‘nature’ through laws that dictate what a woman may legally do with her own body.

But, it is not only Foucault's words that echo throughout this work as the haunting and sinister laugh of a medusa reverberates through this image as well. Some years earlier, Helen Cixous wrote the *Laugh of the Medusa*. Reflected again in the split image above, Cixous states, woman must un-think "the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield."<sup>80</sup> As Kruger's image suggests, the body is the site of this battle as the body is continually fought over by media, fashion and cosmetic industries, in domestic settings, as well as the government who dictates what is legal.

In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz describes the body as a, "site of contestation, in a series of economic, political, sexual, and intellectual struggles."<sup>81</sup> She points out a complexly articulated structure of power that produces knowledge and power of and over bodies as the body becomes a site that reproduces power. "The body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or construction. The body is not opposed to culture, a resistant throwback to a natural past; it is itself a cultural, *the* cultural, product."<sup>82</sup> Power inscribed over and above individuals comes to structure how bodies act, indeed it makes bodies as subjects of power by normalizing power and abjecting difference.

As Susan Bordo argues in *Unbearable Weight*, advertising should not be overlooked as a cultural force for it positions the body as the site of "organization and regulation of the time, space, and movements of our daily lives, our bodies are trained, shaped, and impressed with the stamp of the prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity, femininity."<sup>83</sup> The organization and regulations of the body reproduces the "body politics" of subjugation and nominalization. The body is the site in which articulations of power are secured and inscribed that reproduce the ideology of the culture industries through a proliferation of sites.

The body is inscribed by power, of habits and patterns of movement, of culturally inscribed commitments in everyday life. Both on itself and within, the body is

involuntarily and voluntarily marked by life-style choices and distinctions of taste advanced through advertising. Taste, Kruger argues is

a discourse that instructs not only what we put in our mouths, but how we put ourselves together, how we furnish our bodies, our homes, our governments, our museums, and our minds. Taste literally dictates the techniques of our bodies... which lead to one's particular image of perfection.<sup>84</sup>

When habitual and cultural routines that shape and inscribe the body are interrupted by images that address the public through the direct address it says, "Your body is a battleground." A division is revealed within the subject creating the fissures in which the signifying network of power is traced back to the constitution of the subject, the internalized look and the docile body. The split image points beneath the surface of the image and to surveillance, bio-politics, micro-power and media representations that depict the body as docile and a marker of gender, race and class distinction.

The corporeal subject is addressed in "we are not what we seem" as well. In this image the spectator is confronted with what appears to be an opening into the very materiality of the body itself. In exposing the eye as an artificial implement, a foreign object is revealed as that which lies beyond and beneath the body. This object, alluding to a mechanical optics, a gaze that is manufactured from without but must be placed within, so as to see oneself and the world through the lens of an "other" reveals the body as a site of power enforced by the self-surveillance of the internalized the male gaze.

In this work the dividing lines between the body and the world, inside and outside, self and other are transgressed. In this rupture, becoming, change, and renewal seep through the body, the revealed through the window and the eye, the body is projected as undergoing a splitting and mechanical transformation. In this way, "Your body is a battleground" and "we are not what we seem" calls upon the spectator to question the material surfaces of clothing, skin, makeup, and external mechanisms of power. Therefore such depictions make a distinction between the self and the appearance of the body, the works point to the body as a site of power and the self as a site of



resistance. Here a unitary conception of the self and the symbolic network of binary oppositions that reinforce the distinctions of self/other and nature/culture is transgressed.

So the representation of the body as split, with the dual image - one the inverse negative reflecting inside and the other the outside, of a produced and subjected subject - points to an alien internalized gaze used to look at the body as distinct from and a part of the self. Where the public is constantly embattled with a culture that inscribes itself on the body as “natural,” Kruger illustrates not only power written onto the body, but also, the self/body as a potential site of resistance. As Kruger states, “In my production pictures and words visually record the collision between our bodies and the days and nights which construct and contain them. I am trying to interrupt the stunned silences of the image with the uncouth appearances and uncool embarrassments of language.”<sup>85</sup> It is an attempt to provoke a question about the pose in the pictures with an insistent text.

Kruger’s poetics point to the absence of space to voice dissent within and against the decadence and over indulgence of neo-liberal ideology and a phallogocentric unitary logic promoted and perpetuated by the culture industry. Through the critique and re-articulation of the ideal images of the singer, writer, actress, model, mom, and teenager that are relentlessly projected through the lens of television, movies, magazine, and advertising, spectators are repositioned as a problematical site, rather than a docile body of micro-power. This is to suggest that Kruger disrupts the construction of “homogenizing and normalizing [representations that are], erasing racial, class, and other differences and insisting that all women aspire to a coercive, standardized idea.”<sup>86</sup>

Kruger’s poetics confront and battle against the hegemonic construction and patriarchal representation of women, femininity and truth. Vision is the means by which a subject’s subjectivity is formed – through opposition and differentiation of the objects seen, as a dialectically constituted subject. Subjectivity is at once and immediately controlled by the habitualized tendencies of perception, through the constitution of the

subject as subject to and subjected by the central organizing principles reinforced by the media. In this way Kruger's tactics problematize the very constitution of the subject.

In the manipulation of the visual codes that dominate the streets of downtown metropolitan areas, a new semiotic structure is overlain on the surfaces used by advertising to interpellate the public. In such rearticulations, a multiplicity of subject positions are created and do not necessarily provide a coherent or simple explanation of the image and the subject's relation to it. As the meanings that are derived in such spaces are not easily deciphered or signify one voice they do not promise an ideal to strive to through the purchase of products. Rather, the multi-acculturality of the image enables a proliferation of meanings and subject positions and invites the public to see through the codes and dominant connotative associations used in advertising.

In honoring multiplicity, Kruger also problematizes a unitary and stable subject and invites a public to galvanize around difference and to question the hegemonic authoritative gaze of the culture industry. In an attempt to obtain "control over the devices of their own representation," Kruger attempts to take back that access, make meaning and "construct another kind of spectator who has not yet been seen or heard."<sup>87</sup> In asking the audience to replace meanings of a closed hierarchically based hegemonic system, Kruger challenges the reification of gender and sexual representations and invites the audience to identify through movement, openness, metamorphosis and unsettlement.

This tactic provokes a constant questioning of habits, the familiar, and our acceptance and complicity in the reproduction of conditions of exploitation. This is to suggest that in revealing the subordinated aspects of culture through the contortion of the hegemonic images of the body, the carnivalesque elements of Kruger's work subverts the central organizing principle of the univocal hail and breaks apart the hegemonic gaze of heteronormativity. Kruger's work is a call to examine the concrete material conditions of existence and the body as a site of power, as her work confronts the subject and problematizes a unitary truth in which a spectator is able to derive meaning.

Kruger's images suggest the body is the site of this battle. In a very literal sense then, the forced discipline of bodies to be productive and reproductive positions the body as a site of contestation, a battleground. But as Kruger maintains, "One site of struggle against this imperialism that colonizes bodies and minds centers on the text. Texts empower; they grant authority, and their deconstruction from race-gender perspectives had become a kind of anti-imperialist strategy that has reverberations for political action."<sup>88</sup>

### **Inciting Questions**

After producing "your body is a battle ground" and the "Decades Project: Frameworks of Identity" in 1990, Kruger's work "Questions" was creating controversy with the local community members of Little Tokyo. With the proposal to paint the Pledge of Allegiance bordered by questions over the right to voice opinions, community members took action. Although the work was scheduled to cover the side of the warehouse in which the Museum of Contemporary Art was housed, the Little Tokyo community objected to the "heartless" attacks on their legitimacy as citizens.<sup>89</sup>

After a year of community meetings, Kruger negotiated with the Little Tokyo community to drop the pledge but keep the questions: Who is bought and sold? Who is beyond the law? Who is free to choose? Who follows orders? Who salutes longest? Who prays loudest? Who dies first? Who laughs last?" From 1990 to 1992, the public driving by the warehouse were able to encounter such questions, and perhaps even give a response. The mural, invites the public to analyze vital questions of democracy and patriotism appropriated by politicians. As Kruger explains, "It was intended to fill in that idea of democracy – not to have it just appropriated (by politicians), but to really have it mean something. It was done soon after the past election, when the politicians were wrapping themselves in the flag."<sup>90</sup>

Unlike the advertising ads that command a public through the interpellative hail that invites the public to buy a product, go shopping, and fantasize about what a product

could do, the mural disrupts the uni-vocal posturing of political rhetoric with questions. Questions that illicit a more active involvement in the reproduction of a democratic order, as the public is invited to provide a number of competing answers. “Her mural,” one report indicated, “addresses you as a peer, as a citizen or fellow member of the public world. It means to start a conversation. The huge and startling painting speaks loudly in order to be heard above the urban din; still, you’re pointedly addressed as an active participant in disputatious public life.”<sup>91</sup>

Such questions therefore do not construct an identity to aspire to or a promise to some ideal ego long lost but fulfilled by the purchase of a product. Nor do they command unquestioned obedience to the U.S. flag and authority. Rather, the mural invites the public to participate as active members of a community. The dialogic potential of the mural should not be taken lightly for the import of these questions lies in their public display. As Kruger states, “these questions should not be whispered” and when the issue was brought up, it addressed the need to “intervene in a public space.”<sup>92</sup>

Ultimately, the mural creates a dialogue in the public sphere and fulfills some neglected democratic practices. As Kruger notes, “Basically, I think that our great democracy is, like all democracies, a fragile one. I think it’s important for us to be vigilant and to preserve the generosities we have within the democratic system. I think we really have to work to protect our freedom.”<sup>93</sup> The questions Kruger pose are illuminate the need to address the role of power and the role of the public in sustaining democratic processes. Kruger’s insights are illuminating in this regard, as the work is also about, “How power can dissemble and invert lived experience, how it appropriates slogans, struggles, and bodies, how it mouths the false humilities of common sense, and how...its fear of change can detonate torrents of vindictiveness and victim blaming.”<sup>94</sup>

Using the images of the dominant modes of representation in the media, images found in magazines, projected on billboards and utilized for marketing campaigns eventually moved Kruger from the outskirts to a plurality of sites where she intervened in

the press and the media financed her critique on the cover of magazines. In the early 1990s for example, Barbara Kruger expanded her reach, from billboard and poster projects, to museum exhibitions, magazine publications and even using *The New York Times* editorial section to deliver her message.<sup>95</sup>

During the U.S. election campaign season of 1991, Kruger created a piece for *The Times* that attacked George Bush's anti-abortion stance. Kruger recalls this environment and the motivation behind it using the *Times* as a forum to intervene in the politics over bodies. "I had already done a number of works before that which were called 'If men could get pregnant'. I found this picture of a young George Bush, so I did this image called 'Help', in which Bush is saying: 'I have just decided to go into politics, my career is going really well, but I have just found out I am pregnant – what should I do?'"<sup>96</sup> "The most piquant part of that whole thing" Kruger states, "was that I knew he saw it – I mean, this is The New York Times, right? Who gets up in the morning and doesn't read The Times?"<sup>97</sup> Between 1991 and 1997, Kruger used the New York Times to display five politically charged works. The George Bush attack, was the first piece followed by, "Are we having fun yet" on October 11, 1991; "Who will write the history of tears" on December 1, 1995; "Remember Me" on January 7, 1997; and "The future belongs to those who can see it" on October 11, 1997.<sup>98</sup>

In, 1992 Kruger continued her intervention in the media and designed covers for *Ms.*, *Esquire*, and *Newsweek*, with reports of *The New Republic* 'copying' her design. By June 7, 1992 *Newsweek* was reported to be the most widely read magazine to feature her work on its cover. But, the use of her work to illustrate a story written by Joe Klein, was a moment in which her work was repositioned to mean something else altogether. Kruger's comments on this situation are revealing for they point to a struggle to remain elusive and provocative while working for a magazine that sought to articulate her work to the service of their needs.<sup>99</sup>

The appropriation of a number of billboards in the late 1980s and early 1990s also speak to such concerns. Although the billboards and posters were funded through the public art fund, Liz Claiborne and a number of New York museums, the fundamental issues of power, lived experience and the struggle over bodies remains a steady current in such works.<sup>100</sup> As Kruger notes, “I want to question the notions of heroism and skew the conventions which litter around depiction. I try to pull this off in a number of sites, sort of grazing from the mobility of roadways to the intimacy of postcards and matchbooks, to the pages of magazines, to the institutionalized site of the art gallery.”<sup>101</sup>

The proliferation of her work within a number of sites on the streets and in political rallies continued when Kruger joined up with WAC (Women’s Action Coalition), and sent delegates to Houston to plaster posters as large as 60x40ft at the Republican National Convention. WAC was created in early 1992, with their first meeting on January 23, to support the immediate enactment of the Equal Rights Amendment initiative to end homophobia, racism, religious prejudice and violence against women. The tactics of WAC and the artists such as Kruger and Levine who have taken part in WAC activities, have included filling the White House garden with green tennis balls covered with facts and figures of women’s oppression.<sup>102</sup>

Within two months of WAC actions at the Republican Convention, other artists were speaking to the ills of colonization as well. Performance artists Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Coco Fusco locked themselves in cages at UCI’s Fine Arts Gallery to protest Columbus Day. This was not the first or the last of such caged tactics by either artist. But these actions must be contextualized, for it is not by accident that such works address the body and sexuality and find their way into art museums, political conventions and on the cover of magazines. In 1992, presidential elections began to heat up, the courts were ruling on abortion laws, and a strong push to censor art was heralded by Newt Gingrich.

From holding teach-ins for self-exams and ‘safe’ at-home abortion, a number of groups began packing courtrooms at rape trials to support rape victims. WHAM

(Women's Health Action and Mobilization) gagged the Statue of Liberty as a form of protest against the banning of abortion counseling at federally funded health clinics. WAC (Women's Action Coalition) marched a drum corps through New York's Central Terminal on Mother's day in protest of deadbeat dads who didn't pay child support. POW (Pissed Off Women) blocked urinals in museums and demanded health care reforms. Some of these movements mobilized in response to the Anita Hill sexual harassment situation and the William Kennedy Smith and Mike Tyson rape trials. Some groups such as WAC, also sought improved health care and economic equality, due in part, to the erosion of *Roe v. Wade*.<sup>103</sup>

On April 5, 1992 a small band of girls in guerilla masks joined a march on Washington to support the pro-choice movement. For this rally the girls produced an ironic work that reads: "Guerrilla Girls demand a return to traditional values on abortion. Before the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, abortion in the first few months of pregnancy was legal. Even the Catholic church did not forbid it until 1869." The Guerrilla Girls were finding allies against the male hegemony in the art world, in government legislation, and in the courts. In what was described as part of a larger feminist movement in the 1990's the guerrilla girls joined forces with WAC, WHAM, RAW, and POW.

### **Guerrilla Girls**

By the mid to late 1980s, the art market vamped up a commodity logic which privileged the acquisition and display of works by male artists.<sup>104</sup> In a frenzy of activity male artists became Hollywood type celebrities and women artists were systematically ignored. It is from within this environment that the Guerrilla Girls emerged as a new force of feminism that aimed to reveal the underside of art. The impulse to conduct such activity started when the girls moved to New York and found the representation of women artists absent.<sup>105</sup>

In response to the International Survey of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition that only included 10% women, of the 169 arts

represented, the Guerrilla Girls took action. Standing outside of Moma, wearing gorilla masks to protect their identities, the girls protested. But, as they were quickly ushered away, they took on a different tactic. So, under the cover of darkness, the Guerrilla Girls took to the streets to spread a message that exposed discrimination through posters. The Guerrilla Girls plastered the streets, kiosks and construction site fences of down-town New York with posters condemning the art institutions for their lack of female art works.

Utilizing the statistics published by *Art in America*, they created lists of galleries and museums that show few, if any women artists. The Girls confronted the public with not-so-rhetorical questions, “What do these artists have in common?” and then listed a number of male artists that included, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Francesco Clemente, Roy Lichtenstein, Keith Haring and Richard Serra. “They allow their work to be shown in galleries that show no more than 10% women artists or none at all. Another listed some of the more prestigious gallery’s in New York, such as Mary Boone, DIA Art Foundation and Edward Thorp. The posters also addressed the lack of representation in solo exhibits, as one poster states, “How many women had one-person exhibitions at NYC museums last year?” All of the posters were signed, “A public service message from Guerrilla Girls. Conscience of the art world.”<sup>106</sup>

The girls continued, but as the years progressed the representation in museums that included the Whitney did not. So, in the spring of 1986 the Girls displayed huge posters on the walls of Clock Tower Gallery. The alternative space proved to be an ideal site, as the posters named all the corporations that sponsored the shows. Curators were named as well as their connections to larger corporate backing. One poster stated, “Would you trust these trustees for your interpretation of American Art?” As such information is rarely seen or known, the Guerrilla Girls were making public just who was funding the publicly funded Whitney.<sup>107</sup>

In 1987 the Girls obtained statistics of the representation of women from the Whitney Museum in New York, and represented a detailed analysis of the museums 15



year record of gender and racial discrimination. As one Girl intoned, “As most naïve people think, the Whitney Biennial is supposed to be the chosen artists from the entire country and, really, the world: the new comers, the emerging artists, the important young artists. Most people go into the museum thinking that someone has chosen them for that reason. And that’s the way it should be.” But, that is hardly the case.<sup>108</sup>

In the years to follow, posters would confront the lack of art critic attention to women artists and the lack of one-person exhibitions. Others would present the inequality of pay, as “women in America earn only 2/3 of what men do. Women artists earn only 1/3 of what men artists do.” And, other’s proclaiming, “Only four commercial galleries in N.Y. show black women. Only one shows more than one.” But, as the years progressed the girls also utilized billboards, bus advertisements, post cards, and bumper stickers. And, such stickers just might be placed in museum visitor books, as the guerrilla girls went into museums as spies, under the cover of their own identities. In the museums, the girls conducted research and physically counted the women in current contemporary art shows.<sup>109</sup>

Another billboard was produced with the aid of the Public Art Fund in 1989. It states, “Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? Less than 3% of the artist in the modern art sections are women, but 83% of the nudes are female,” the guerrilla girls were attempting to live up to their name. The realization that most museum goers were under the impression that the art system and institutions were meritocracies needed to be exposed as a myth. The appropriation of the billboard would become a trend in the years to come, as images of Halle Berry and Pamela Anderson were used to critique Hollywood’s representation of women and the absence of women producers and directors winning Oscars.

### **Rewriting Herstory**

The use of public space a forum to voice dissent remains a critical component to the tactics of the Guerrilla Girls. As they appropriate the spaces that render the

constructions of power neutral, the street becomes both the arena and the dismantled terrain of their poetics. One Girl explained, “The ‘80s were a time when everything was slicker, pre-packaged. We wanted to reflect that. We decided to take to the streets, that would be our forum, and used posters and other media.”<sup>110</sup> Remaining anonymous and appropriating spaces provides a connecting thread to Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger.<sup>111</sup>

The late 1980s and early 1990s was rife with battles over art. With Senator Jesse Helms at the helm, works displayed by Robert Mapplethorpe were considered obscene. The backlash over this issue created a number of stories regarding the government’s role over artistic expression. But, the issue was not obscenity in as much as homo-phobic discrimination. As one Guerrilla Girl intoned, “For 5,000 years my [naked body was] spread all over the walls of museums. Then a couple of photographs of [male organs] and the walls come falling down.”<sup>112</sup> The guerrilla girls publicly announced that men should take action and prevent this from happening again by sending their organs to Jesse Helms. And another Girl added, “this would not only ensure they would never appear in a work of art...but would be a gesture of solidarity with women, since the government would then have control over men’s as well as women’s ‘reproductive organs.’”<sup>113</sup>

At this time, the Guerrilla Girls appropriated a full-scale billboard.<sup>114</sup> During the controversy over censorship and the National Endowment for the Arts, a billboard of Mona Lisa with a fig leaf over her mouth, was put up. This is not the first appropriation of this work, nor will it be the last. And, although the appropriation of this work speaks to their issue of the representation of female, but not female artists, it also positions the Guerrilla Girls in a long line of appropriation artists that include Jamie Reid and Marcel Duchamp whose re-articulation of the Mona Lisa addressed the specter of the male genius myth that haunts modern day interpretations of value, authenticity and creativity.

But the Guerrilla Girls politics of subversion did not end with right-wing’s war on American culture, as they created posters that confronted the Gulf War, homelessness,

and the L.A. riots. During the Gulf War the group distributed a poster of a women soldier with the headline, “Did she risk her life for governments that enslave women?” Others were used during political election. As noted below, the Guerrilla Girls were confronting a republican agenda that undermined the importance of education, national healthcare, poverty, AIDS research, reproductive rights, safe environments and alternative energy. Another, posted for the republican national convention read, “The Republicans DO believe in a woman’s right to control her own body.” The illustration showed women with nose jobs, breast implants and less elective bodily alterations.<sup>115</sup>

Their intervention was a refueling of feminism in a desperate time of inequality over representation. But the timing was also crucial as the national media in the 1970s “all but declared feminism extinct, feminists [were] an outdated fragment of the radical fringe, frumpy and out of sync with the rest of the county.”<sup>116</sup> It was also a tactic to re-articulate the meaning of feminism as the girls use of the word and gorilla masks and turned them to their own ends. When, the 1980s feminism was condemned as a mere complaint rather than a rallying cry, the use of inflammatory posters on the street evokes a political action to re-invest feminism with a meaning of hard and fast statistics and humor to create a collective awareness of the inequalities of female representation. These guerrilla tactics would embody a hip and fierce feminism that would take no prisoners and call out anyone in positions of power. And, their anonymity facilitated this approach.

Their tactics were also an invitation to use the statistics and posters for political and social change. Anyone can be a Guerrilla Girl, and the group promotes this message. “We finger the guilty and exploit the media. All parties interested in progressive social change are invited to steal our ideas.”<sup>117</sup> But, and perhaps to a less significant degree the Girls are also re-articulating the meaning of the gorilla prevalent in World War I propaganda posters.<sup>118</sup> Calling upon this site of cultural memory undermines the depiction of the helpless female figure in need of protection. Beyond propaganda posters the prevalence of these gendered constructions in popular media have perpetuated a

stereotype of masculinity and femininity alike. Thus, when the guerilla girls embody the gorilla to critique the stereotypes of women and feminism, and the use of the gorilla to dehumanize cultural groups, they are waging a war over the representation of femininity and the institutionalized under-representation of women artists. As Wigman states, “We’re exploding a stereotype, we’ve appropriated it for another purpose.”<sup>119</sup>

As some of these works question the very mechanisms of this construction, issues concerning what constitutes knowledge and gender, art and creation, and the intervention of power, be it socio-economic or institutional, are troubled and can potentially facilitate real change.<sup>120</sup> Chadwick argues, “One of the biggest issues confronting the feminist movement in the arts is how to affect change at the institutional level rather than just write a few more women into the art history books. One wants the terms of art itself changed and that’s what’s difficult.”<sup>121</sup> As Chadwick explains, that issue now is the construction of gender, sexuality and race that reproduces inequality. In a word, the issue now is culture. It was, and continues to be a cultural war over representation and the right to use, access, distribute and produce what becomes cultural memory. It is about history, explains one member. “The art market, and all that that entails, has taken charge of making history. We want a more accurate story told.”<sup>122</sup>

This propelled the Guerrilla Girls to publish *The Guerrilla Girls’ Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art* in 1998. The book project, which followed the *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls* published in 1995, was to rewrite art history to include the stories and art of women who have been ignored in the history of modern art. The bedside companion promotes their mission as it shows the works of women, who have, contrary to art history text books, been producing quality art for hundreds of years. But the book is also an extension of their tactics, as the final page ends with a rallying cry, “Let’s make sure that the work of women and artists of color is valued, exhibited, and preserved by our institutions. Guerrilla Girls plan to keep up the pressure on the art world. We’ll continue to identify and ridicule the powers that be and to drag the

misogynists and racists kicking and screaming into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We invite you to join us. Tell your local galleries and museums how to behave. Write letters, make posters, make trouble.”<sup>123</sup>

Ultimately, the poetics of the Guerrilla Girls of appropriation and street intervention agitate the public and move into a political intervention as they challenge institutions to rewrite history.<sup>124</sup> But when women’s work enters the museum, does it reproduce inequality and commercial exploitation? To answer this question it is necessary to return to Barbara’s Kruger’s work. But as Kruger intervened in the dominant institutions her images were rewritten to coincide with commercial interests.

### **As Recognizable as Coca-Cola**

Throughout the 1990s, Kruger’s work progressed into feature installations at the Mary Boone Gallery, three-dimensional multi-media displays in SoHo, and bus projects. “I find my work to be cultural commentary in a world that has contained and enveloped me. I want to reach people in ways that are forthright and compelling”, said Kruger in a *New York Times* interview before the opening at the Mary Boone Gallery.<sup>125</sup> The installation in SoHo, in a 3,000 square-foot space – transformed the walls and floors into a place ‘full of voices’, and spoke to the multi-accentuality of Kruger’s work. The work, as one report intoned, was an approach that hurtled “into the ‘90s with a vengeance, reclaiming her territory by stretching it – toward crass materialization in one direction and immateriality in the other. Her work matches exactly the deranged and odious mood of America today – rage, righteousness, and all.”<sup>126</sup>

Defined as art that disturbs, entertains and provokes thought, “like a politically conscious advertisement,” by some reports, Kruger’s multidimensional approach became the gallery walls and moved outside of it. The bus project, which ran \$25,000 was sponsored by Beck’s beer and the New Yorks Art Program and organized by the Public Art Fund, who first commissioned Kruger to light up the Spectacolor billboard in Manhattan.<sup>127</sup> With quotations from personalities and political figures displayed on the

surface of the bus, and the words “Don’t look down on anyone” written across the top, those looking down from upon high were invited to look away. “The bus is the perfect venue for Barbara’s sound bites,” said Susan K. Freedman, president of the Public Art Fund. “The messages are pro-freedom of speech and anti-violence, which is very pertinent in today’s culture.”<sup>128</sup>

Kruger’s works have been both cherished as a site of anti-consumer activism and ridiculed as pretentious snobbery. Recognized by both the art establishment and the media, and in the promotion of works and the products of the culture industries, the press serves as an ideological apparatus that aids in this recognition. By the late 1990s, Kruger was recognized in more than twenty two solo exhibitions. With the prevalence of her work as an institutionalized and commodified object, it is worth questioning if the market orientation and institutionalization of her work facilitates the containment of her social critique of gender, sexuality and class, or if it also facilitates in spreading her message. Since her work can be identified on the street, on T-shirts, magazine covers and in museum exhibitions.<sup>129</sup>

Such recognition facilitated a barrage of attacks in the media and discerning events regarding sponsorship, while some reports moved from a confrontation over the techniques to a condemnation of Kruger herself. As one report indicated, “there is something incorrigibly patronizing about her work – especially when seen in the context of a fine arts museum. Her works address us as though we were a bunch of idiots, made passive and stupid by exposure to mass media. ‘I shop therefore I Am’ is a sneer at those who are prepared to sport this slogan on a shopping bag or a T-shirt, laughing at their own compulsive consumerism.”<sup>130</sup>

This report offers a unidimensional approach to the notion of subversion, as subversion indicates some undefined quality that must be completely distinct from institutions and somehow maintaining a position outside of apparatuses of culture at large. The question remains, has such institutions denied an artist autonomy? Do gallery

exhibitions go against an initial intent to expose the codes of representation? Or, gain access to culture? Or, does it afford a better opportunity to expose the codes of advertising and power and change representations from within dominant institutions?

By 1999 Kruger's works had become part of the cultural repertoire of images on the street, on T-shirts, and magazine covers and in museum exhibitions. By this time Kruger had been recognized in more than twenty two solo exhibitions. With the prevalence of her work as an institutionalized and commodified object, it is worth questioning if the market orientation of her work facilitates containment of her social critique of gender, sexuality and class, or if it also facilitates in spreading her message. Although the works of Kruger are viewed in museums that dictate a proper viewing perspective, the image-text relation does not foreground power.

The display and reception of her work does not remove her practice from the concerns of feminist discourse, rather, they speak to such concerns with ever greater magnitude. For Kruger, foregrounding power, gender and reception does not remove her practice from the concerns of feminist discourse. For, feminism does not exist outside the discourses of capital, "as a kind of primordial meandering which escapes all economies except those of birth and rhythm."<sup>131</sup> As Kruger asserts, "I consider sexuality and capital to be inextricably wedded and this coupling has the power to dictate the feel of the moments of our lives. As my position within the market structure became more palpable, I thought it increasingly important to comment on the financial proclivities which involved me: to be in and about consumption at the same time."<sup>132</sup>

What such reports indicate is not only a battle over the meaning and potential effect of the appropriation artists such as Kruger, but also, larger macro-level structures of power and representation more generally. Kruger identifies this as having entered "culture, and I'm pleased to have done that."<sup>133</sup> "When you are an artist," she continued "you choose to somehow convey what it means to live a life. You can do that in a forthright manner. To solve design problems about selling a car or a scarf is a different

practice. You have to be your client's idea of perfection. I am my own client."<sup>134</sup> And perhaps, these particular notions should not be taken lightly, as it indicates a degree of autonomy, although within prescribed limits.

Kruger's insights to her own placement within the market structure reveal that she does not romanticize dissent, opposition or detraction. Speaking of the re-appropriation of critical works, Kruger states, "I certainly think it is possible to appropriate certain 'strategies; and in doing so, siphon off their criticality, leaving a shell, a clump of seductive artifact which signifies criticality but has little relationship to its possible displacements."<sup>135</sup> At issue is the degree to which entering the market facilitates the co-optation points to larger hegemonic structures of power, as criticality is siphoned off and all that remains is evidence of a failed struggle.

As some reports claimed, "Barbara Kruger, the artist who targets commodity culture, has herself become one of the great commodities of the contemporary art world. Her style is as recognizable as the Coca-Cola logo. She works only in the traditional Fascist colours of red, black and white (playing both sides by stealing the visual language of the ideas she attacks); her images have become best-selling postcards, posters, T-shirts and, in one famous instance, canvas shopping bags: you could see them swinging up and down Fifth Avenue in the late-80s, bearing the legend, "I shop therefore I am."<sup>136</sup> Even as this report acknowledged the intervention into the public sphere it still questioned her approach. This report continued, "a political activist on the inside; a radical who (sometimes) makes her bed with the conservatives."<sup>137</sup> And perhaps this is nowhere more apparent than in recent developments of Kruger's work.<sup>138</sup>

As Kruger explained in an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald*, "There have been all these accusations of my being co-opted: 'You're political – how dare you make money from this?' But I didn't enter the market – I was born into a market economy: my parents traded their labor for wages."<sup>139</sup> Kruger maintains, "I don't consider myself a political artist any more than I consider Courtney Love a political



artists, or [REM's] Michael Stipe or Spike Lee political artists. There are those of us who want to do work about sexism or money or power or race...it's about challenging a certain subjectivity of the human condition."<sup>140</sup>

In remaining elusive even to the concept of the political, Kruger, despite the appropriation of her work and the definitions of it in news reports, attempts to create a multidimensional approach to challenge such dynamics in culture. For Kruger, the either or binary ignores the market economy in which all works are always already a part. "You can't let the debate be defined that way because then you are letting them define the terms of how you react. I'm not interested in being the 'other' side of the coin – I want to change the coin."<sup>141</sup> She does admit, however, before Boone, she was more pure.<sup>142</sup>

### **It's a Small World**

However, in 2002 the debate was largely defined to court rooms. Barbara Kruger, the critic of consumer culture whose appropriation tactics of collage facilitated questions regarding the phallogocentric perspective of a unitary subject, of meaning, originality, authorship and the conditions of interpellation, was sued for the unauthorized use of a photograph taken in 1960 by Thomas Hoepker, of Charlotte Dabney.<sup>143</sup> The image entitled "Charlotte as seen by Thomas" pictures Dabney holding a magnifying glass over her right eye, giving her eye the effect of enlargement. The image was first published in the German photography magazine FOTO PRISMA in 1960.

Kruger, having created a number of works through the juxtaposition of found images in commercial magazines and training manuals to critique the representation of women and sexuality in post-war America, used the image for an exhibit of her work. In line with her extensive body of work, Kruger appropriated Hoepker's image, cropped and enlarged it, transferred it to a silkscreen and in bold italic futura font overlaid the phrase, "It's a small world but not if you have to clean it."

The work was displayed from October 17, 1999 to February 13, 2000 in Los Angeles and at the Whitney Museum of American Art from July 13 to October 22, 2000.

It was one of over sixty works used for postcards, note cubes, magnets and t-shirts sold at the museum gift shop. The Whitney also used newsletters and brochures with the image to advertise the Kruger exhibit. At this time, a five-story high billboard appeared in Manhattan, followed by others throughout the city. The display of the image was enough however, for Hoepker to claim that the use of the image was a commercial advertisement and therefore infringed on his rights. Together, Hoepker and Dabney filed a suit claiming the use and display of the image amounted to copyright infringement, unfair competition and a violation of Dabney's right to privacy.<sup>144</sup>

The issue before the court was whether the use of Dabney's picture was displayed for "advertising purposes or for the purposes of trade."<sup>145</sup> However, the court reasoned, according to the California Supreme Court, if an artistic expression uses a literal depiction or imitates a celebrity for commercial gain, without the addition of any new elements the use directly trespasses on the right to publicity. The State, it was argued, has an interest in protecting "the fruits of artistic labor" rather than the interest of the imitative artist. However, if a "work contains significantly transformative elements, it is not only especially worthy of First Amendment protection, but is also less likely to interfere with the economic interest protected by the right of publicity." Ultimately, the court ruled that Kruger's work is pure First Amendment speech, as it is sufficiently transformative, and such work "outweighs whatever interest the State may have in enforcing the right of publicity."<sup>146</sup>

While Kruger's work was used for advertising purposes, both in terms of brochures and newsletters, such advertisements are reproductions of Kruger's work and therefore protected by the First Amendment and not conceptualized as ads. In short, the advertisements illustrate the content of the shows rather than a use of the image to market unrelated products. As the court ruled, since the work carries the protected artwork outside of the boundaries of the museum, they are merely the vehicle upon which a more varied public is exposed to the work. The court reasoned that whether in the form of a t-

shirt or a magnet, the museums were selling art, and it was therefore protected expression. As the court claimed, merchandise sold at museum gift shops merely replicates art and furthers its display and distribution on common items of ordinary everyday life. “That the art is produced in formats and in quantities sold for modest sums makes the art popular, but does not change the essential nature of the artistic expression that is entitled to First Amendment protection.”<sup>147</sup>

The danger of such a definition lies in a definition of art and advertising as distinct for the former is protected expression and the latter must directly promote a product. As the court reasoned that art products are distinct from commercial works for an image used to promote a product other than itself is advertising even the billboard falls outside of prohibited activity, as the image is a copy of protected speech. Thus, *Hoepker v. Kruger* points to a liminal space in the law, where images produced by artists and associated with museum exhibits and commodified do not infringe on the right to privacy because the display of the work is not classified as a direct advertisement that sells commercial products, but rather is the display and merchandizing of art itself.<sup>148</sup> If only commercial messages can dilute trademarks or trespass on one’s right to privacy and publicity, the possibility for the culture industries to engage in marketing that appropriates the images of cultural struggle to create brand identities by selling meaning rather than products is legally enabled.

While such decisions protect art from the legal classification as commodities which is significant in itself, the potential implications of this case to new strategies of appropriation are overwhelming, as marketing trends indicate the use of images of artist for branding purposes rather than the promotion of a product. Often without a direct tie to a product, branding is the articulation of an idea to a company or product line. And, in the absence of a direct command, such images are not legally constituted as advertisements but the public display of art, giving marketers free rein, if not an

incentive, to use the images of the past to create brand identities and ‘co-sponsored merchandise’ for artists without legal repercussion.

While the right of publicity and vandalism statutes may push street artists into museums, thereby controlling the public’s access in this process, works are given the privileged status as art and thus protected by the First Amendment. Once accorded this status the work, whether on a matchbook, coaster or coffee mug is ‘art’ and therefore protected. Once protected, the conditions of co-optation are set in place, enabling corporations to place such work on clothing or shoes, under the guise of art. Eluding the commercial advantage facilitated in this process or the association made as part of brand engineering, the commodified and commercialized art work is protected from violating rights of publicity. The constitution of art creates the conditions for co-optation.

The result may further the spread of ‘Art’ in places outside of the museum after, during or immediately preceding its initial display, which opens access to the public. However, as the message of the work is cleansed of its criticality, as it is no longer juxtaposed against commercial ads, but becomes the signifier of brand identity alongside commercial products vying for distinction and cultural cachet in public spaces, street art is replaced by advertisements with institutional backing. This case points to the process of commodification and co-optation enabled through law as it creates an opening in law where advertisers are free to use images to establish brand identity and meaning rather than selling products, which is then protected by the First Amendment and trademark alike. In short, the conditions of collaboration are created that limit access of critical works to museums, while their criticality is subsumed to the conditions of commerce.

In 2008, the Gap, in collaboration with the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Art Production Fund, created artist-inspired T-shirts, with Barbara Kruger designs occupying some of that space. The campaign was featured in the June issues of *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *The New Yorker* and *W.* as well as newspapers and select Gap stores throughout the U.S.<sup>149</sup> The limited edition collection featured the works of Kruger as

well as Chuck Close, Jeff Koons, Marilyn Minter, Kiki Smith, Cai Guo-Qiang, Ashley Bickerton, Kenny Scharf, Glenn Ligon, Rikrit Tiravanija, Kerry James Marshall, Hanna Liden and Sarah Sze.<sup>150</sup> The commodification and joint collaboration of art museums with the fashion industry points to the blurred lines between art as protected expression and advertising, as the two merge into a branding strategy of selling meaning and conveying a lifestyle articulated to a product rather than selling the product itself.

The collaboration places the Gap as a firm supporter of the arts while capitalizing on the poetics associated with these artists. The \$38 t-shirts were available exclusively at GAP stores, but could also be purchased at the Whitney, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and at Collette. Beyond the direct tie-in and co-sponsorship displayed within these venues, the shirts were on display in the street and served as both advertisements and “street art.” And of course, the collaboration was also promoted on billboards.<sup>151</sup> While it is important to note that the Gap was not alone in this endeavor, Kruger’s collaboration with *W.* in 2010, reveals the qualitative change in meaning through commodification.

In 2010, Kruger’s work was commissioned again for the cover of *W.* It is with the cover of *W.* however, that the question of commodification, as it relates to hegemonic containment is pronounced. For, although the text is still presented in the troubled juxtaposition with the image, it is the image itself that is troubling. For, in one of few attempts to use an appropriated image from the past to expose the stereotypes of gender and sexuality, the image of Kim Kardashian is neither appropriated nor confrontational. To what extent however, can one identify this image as dismantling the violence onto the body and the illusorily ideal of women and femininity in advertising?

It is with this most recent issue of *W.*, that the politics of visual dissent is overridden by the commercial imperative to sell sex. While the accusations of Kruger’s celebrity in the past remain suspect, this cover – unlike the cover of Howard Stern in

1992, seems to perpetuate stereotypes and objection rather than expose them. While there is little doubt that Kardashian is exposed, and perhaps speaks to the recent fascination with reality TV and the unashamed desire for the Warholian 15 minutes of fame, it is unclear how this work in particular can signify anything but the commodification of her work leaving the criticality of her work a mere shell while articulating *W.*, as hip and edgy.<sup>152</sup>

In becoming part of the mainstream she once railed against, as an established artist recognized by the art industry, the co-optation and commodification of Kruger's work creates the semiotic fodder to be deployed through larger networks within a discursive field. It is utilized to unify diverse wills and interests and have new points of identification in which unstable and contradictory subject positions are united. Rewriting the images that get historicized and changing the historical memory by changing and inserting counter-hegemonic representations, the images that are 'co-opted' afford greater opportunities for a diverse range of people to have their interests and identities reflected back to them.

In the co-optation of such work by the MOMA and Mary Boone and the commodification by the GAP, the images used to reflect a culture's memory of itself is changed thereby altering the cultural repertoire of images in which the public can unify around. They reproduce the dominant institutional positions and sustain their positions through multiple lines of commercial, institutional and social force.<sup>153</sup> But in order to develop a more thorough understanding of this development, it is important to explicate the conditions in which Kruger's work emerged and become a commodity object.

### **Concluding Comments**

Kruger, the Guerrilla Girls and Holzer ask the public to question the assumptions and stances of feminism, sexuality, gender, class, consumerism, and taste they create sites of resistance and incite "a reaction against the cold rationalism, against official, formalistic, and logical authoritarianism;...a rejection of that which is finished and

completed, of the didactic and utilitarian spirit of the Enlighteners with their narrow and artificial optimism.”<sup>154</sup> This interruption is one that positions the viewer as momentarily freed from the boundaries and foundations of a western unitary gaze of institutionalized patriarchy. Appropriating the visual style and mode of expression of the dominant images of commercial and government propaganda they critiqued the institutionalization of patriarchy, the authority of art establishment and presuppositions of the male spectator and artist. They expose the manipulation of consumer capitalism and question the obedience to authority by disrupting the representations and techniques that legitimize power. These artists provide points of insight into politics and poetics of graphic appropriation in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the counter revolutionary potential of appropriation. Their trajectories indicate, the discourse of empowerment turns out to be a great marketing opportunity.

As appropriation tactics move from the spaces of urban environments to the commercialized sites of galleries and are employed as new strategies for advertising and myth creation, the subversive potential of such works is questionable. Do the tactics of the indirect address, ambiguous image, invitation to invest meaning, and call to multiple and contradictory subject positions facilitate co-optation, commodification and the hegemonic reconstitution of consumer capitalism? While their works facilitate commodification and provide a lucrative avenue for the culture industries, the degree to which and the reasons why marketing co-ops appropriation is in need of explication.

It is important to note that other groups of activists were also appropriating billboards to critique the uni-directional flow of culture and the continually consolidating media industry. So have their tactics facilitated co-optation as well? It is the works of artist-activist appropriation groups such as the Billboard Liberation Front and a publication known as *Adbusters* that we now turn to. Tracing the tactics, subsequent co-optation and legal threats provide a more thorough explication of the hegemonic structures of power.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **MEACONING, INTRUSION, JAMMING, INTERFERENCE**

By the late 1990s, the works of Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger were recognized by prestigious art museums and galleries throughout the U.S. While the Guerilla Girls took to the streets to address the absence of women in museums, except for the “token” exceptions, Holzer projected her texts across the sides of buildings, and both her work as well as Kruger’s were used for joint collaborations between museums and fashion. During this time, the political economic activity in the U.S. introduced a new set of concerns over representation.

With the implementation of the Cable Act of 1984 and the elimination of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987, the concern over the right to access the dominant means of communication and the excess of commercial advertising facilitated the conditions in which, activists such as the Billboard Liberation Front and *Adbusters* emerged and appropriated dominant channels of mass communication to insert a diverse array of voices in the public sphere. These voices would assert the public’s right to be treated as citizens first and consumers second, plus declare their right to access the media and confront the corporate malfeasance of Big Tobacco, alcohol advertisements and environmental degradation.

#### **Billboard Liberation Front**

The creation of the Billboard Liberation Front (BLF) dates back to September of 1977, when 19 year old Jack Napier (pseudonym) and a 43 year old Irving Glikk (also a pseudonym) attended a San Francisco’s Suicide Club (SFSC) event. “Enter the Unknown” was the name of this night’s festivities, initiated by Gary Warne and Adrienne Burk. As part of an initiation ritual, Warren and Burk led the blindfolded Napier and Glikk, in addition to 24 others, to a freeway exchange and were persuaded to climb a rope ladder up to a warehouse rooftop to alter a double sided billboard for Max Factor.<sup>1</sup>



The San Francisco Suicide Club (SFSC) was an exploratory group involved in underground infiltration. Through a number of activities, the group would wonder the city scape in hopes of inciting interest in the unknown, even, and at times especially, if the unknown incited fear. From participating in naked cable car events to climbing around on buildings, the group pursued their fears and took great strides to bear witness to their own predilections. They participated in street theatre and held costume theme events in cemeteries. Other members of the group infiltrated religious and political organizations they found interesting just to find out what the meetings were like, what was talked about, and others conducted themselves. Under cover, they joined these organizations just to find out what they stood for and what they really thought.<sup>2</sup>

In September of 1977, the SFSC held a billboard altering event. At the time, there had been a strong outcry in San Francisco about sexist media and sexist attitudes, so Gary Warren organized the event around altering billboards that addressed these concerns. But, as pastor of the group, Gary not only thought it would be fun to alter the board, but funny, if he could convince a group of people to come to the event without knowing what they were going to do or precisely what activities they would get into. He invented this type of event and called it “enter the unknown.”<sup>3</sup>

While Warren and Burk were the main organizers of events, the SFSC was considered a democratic “organization.” Anyone in the club could organize an event and everyone was free to decide their level of involvement. The democratic character of the club advanced a free-wheeling spirit, as members in disagreement with the operation, organization or activities of the event could conduct their own or even return the place of the original event and do it themselves the way they wanted to. While the group advanced freedom and was largely democratic, there were rules to follow once the event was underway. The rules were necessary as some of the events were dangerous and nearly all of them were quasi legal.<sup>4</sup>

To insure the secrecy of the nights activities and eliminate the potential of arrest, members were kept in the dark until the night of the event. The only information participants were given was a list of items to bring with them. They showed up to an event with the clothes on their backs, a backpack and flashlight and were blind folded and taken to the location. As Napier recounts the night of the Max Factor alteration, “We’re all blindfolded, and tunneled into a van or vehicle and then taken someplace. Climbed up on a warehouse, and still didn’t know what we were going to do, and yeah, so it was like 26 people. Kind of an insane cluster fuck, which a lot of the suicide club events were very, you know, they were not firmly organized – we didn’t have like set protocol for doing anything, we were doing something that had never been done before – certainly by us. So there was no real routine.”<sup>5</sup>

Without any real routine, despite the organizer’s best attempts to establish rules, the events would break into chaos. For the Max Factor event, the SFSC got twenty six people on a roof using a rickety rope later. Once on top of the warehouse, Gary and Adrian told the group of twenty-six that they were going to alter both billboards. The billboard contained the same message on both sides, “Warning: A pretty face isn’t safe in the city: fight back with Self Defense, the NEW moisturizers by MAX FACTOR.” The instructions given by Warren were to alter the Max Factor billboard in such a way that it would undermine the original message. However, Warne was adamant that the alterations should be easily removed by clean-up crews. After speaking to the overriding mission of the take-over, the group was instructed to use rubber cement, so as to not to permanently vandalize the board. Rubber cement provides the adhesive necessary to add to the design of the ad as elements can be pasted up, layered and collaged but also easily removed without damaging the image beneath.<sup>6</sup>

Warren and Burk were “really interested in and amused by decision making processes and interested in agreements, people making agreements and then thinking about people making decisions and then sticking to them.” Gary suggested that the group

vote on what the billboard should say and then commit to the design. As Napier explains, “we were up there for several hours figuring out what the billboard would say. It was pretty comic. Actually very comic. And, at the end of that process we came up with two captions.” The first, “A pretty face isn’t safe in this city. Fight Crap with Self Respect, the NEW moisturizer by MAX FACTOR” while the second was altered to say, “Fight Back with Self Abuse, the New Mutilator: AX FACTOR.”<sup>7</sup>

However, the night’s escapades soon turned sour. As the night industrial supervisor, who traveled around working on several different industrial properties came across a bunch of people climbing down a rope ladder attempting to get something out of one of their vehicles. The supervisor, thought that the few members were burglars and called the police. And a short while later, the police showed up thinking a burglary was in progress, but they had no way to the roof. Adamant to catch the “burglars,” the officers called the SF Fire Department who arrived shortly with a fire truck ladder and an onslaught of police cars.<sup>8</sup>

While the organizational structure was loose, the SFSC did have a protocol for such circumstances. It was short, simple and to the point. All members were to cooperate with the police completely but not voluntarily offer information to them, but also, not to lie. As Napier tells it, “So when the cops actually came to the top of the roof from this big heavy duty fire department ladder truck, they came on the roof and found 26 people. You know, they were expecting to find two or three burglars, right, and the cops when they are in a situation like that, they are really nervous because they get shot at, you know they are were very nervous, they had their guns drawn we’re sitting in a big clot, all twenty six of us, our hands clearly in the open.”<sup>9</sup>

Trying to avoid any unnecessary skirmish or misunderstanding, Gary and Adrian got the officers attention and said, “Hi officers, can we explain what we are doing here?” After explaining the situation, and why Jack was in a guerrilla suit, the Sergeant in charge was willing to take their information and let them go. However, by that time the police

had already contacted the property owner of the billboard who was adamant about pressing charges. “So instead of letting us go, which is what they wanted to do, they lined us up, and had us get on this ladder truck to get to the ground. By this time a lot of cops had arrived.” But, many of them did not have a clue as to what was really going on. “All they knew was a bunch of people kept falling down this ladder, the ladder truck ladder. It was shocking to them.”<sup>10</sup>

As Napier explains, “they followed us down and everyone on the latter, you know we climbed up on this building using a really rickety rope latter, very precarious... The great thing about the suicide club is that these were normal people, I mean we were not like ninja climbers or anything. I mean, me and a couple of other guys were young and really good climbers, just naturally gifted climbers, but most of the people were not. So for them to do something like climb up 16-20 feet on to a roof with a rickety latter was a challenge. But they did it. You know, we had a lot of support, you know, a very supportive atmosphere for doing that sort of thing.”<sup>11</sup>

While the police took all twenty six members in that night, they were later released and the charges were dropped. As Napier explains, they were not really doing anything and the police had a lot of larger concerns to worry about. Criminals and violent crimes were a lot more important than dealing with “idiots.” As Jack explains, “We were goof balls doing these silly stunts.” But, the whole thing “sort of blew my mind. That you could just go up on a billboard and say whatever you wanted to on it.”<sup>12</sup>

Despite Napier’s arrest that evening, he was fascinated by the tactics to confront the power of corporate America by appropriating billboards, creating an alternative message and inserting his own voice in the spaces reserved for advertising. But, the Suicide Club lacked the kind of organizational leadership to advance a political agenda regarding the politics of public space and the privatization and unequal access to culture. In response to the evenings events, Napier created a tightly organized unit of activists to publicize his grievances and organization around a central activity, the liberation of

billboards by and for the public. Glikk agreed with Jack and with one bad leg and a cane, helped to co-found the Billboard Liberation Front.<sup>13</sup>

By December of 1977, after two months of searching and planning for the next billboard to commandeer, Napier and Glikk found an ad for Fact Cigarettes. The board was placed in nine different locations throughout San Francisco. The ads read, “I’m realistic. I only smoke Facts.” It didn’t take much to make the necessary corrections to the board. And, with keeping to the tenets of the Suicide Club, the corrections were made to be easily removed without damaging the property of the board.<sup>14</sup>

After checking for access, lighting and escape routes the letters of the board as well as the color of the paint and comparing type styles - so as to integrate the alteration in such a way as to give it the appearance of a commercial advertisement and perhaps prolong the life span of the alteration, in short, to give it the look as if the board had not been altered at all, Napier and Glikk went to action. The take-over occurred on Christmas day, when the two dressed in overalls with the words “Acme Sign” on their backs moved in on the board. By the time they were finished six boards throughout the city were altered to read, “I’m real sick. I only smoke Facts.” And, with a large arrow pointing from the word fact to the surgeon’s general warning, the BLF’s work exposed decades worth of tobacco advertising that had systematically denied the harmful effects of smoking, with the real consequences of smoking.<sup>15</sup> In short, unearthing the dangers of smoking and confronting the industry head on with the facts they aimed to suppress, the BLF were engaging in a tactic that de-mythologized the culture industries.

The poetics of this intervention derives from both the ground tactics as well as the subsequent news coverage of their intervention, as news reports were abound. The *San Francisco Examiner* reported on the liberated billboard, but when the Billboard Liberation Front confessed to the work, they refused to give their names and suggested that the group had over 350 members.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Jack Napier is the name of the alter ego of the Joker in Batman, and not the real name of the co-founder of the BLF. The attempt

to stay anonymous would prove imperative throughout the next thirty years of the Liberation Front's activities.

And, in a similar fashion to the Guerrilla Girls, members would only conduct interviews using pseudonyms and with masks on. Also like the Guerrilla Girls, Simon Wagstaff, who was a journalist by day, used the press to draw attention to the billboard improvements. The first press releases were delivered by hand to local media outlets and would soon help them create an entire mythology as they reversed the flow of signification.<sup>17</sup> They also directed the press to report on their activities the way they saw fit. Press releases sent to newspapers for each 'hit' would become common place and a central component of the tactics of the BLF.

By October 7, 1978, the BLF took over three Camel Cigarette billboards of the RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company. The advertisement on the billboard was of a shirtless man, a woman directly behind him, the words "One of a Kind" and a pack of Camel Filters. But, after the hit, the man in the ad was no longer the shirtless signifier of masculinity connected to Camel Filters, but rather, the emasculated sign of smoking, as he was now wearing a white brassiere. And, after a press release and interview with Wagstaff, the message behind the alteration moved from the busy intersections around the city to the *San Francisco Examiner*. "Free Again. The Billboard Liberation Front has struck again" read the headline and lead paragraph. After recapping the hit from December, the *Examiner* provided the exact locations and precise alterations of each billboard.<sup>18</sup>

In an interview with the *Examiner*, Wagstaff stated the aim of the BLF, as well as what distinguished their activities from other tactics of appropriating space. "We use paper and rubber cement. We don't damage billboards. The unprofessional groups use spray-paint, but that's below our standards."<sup>19</sup> Unlike graffiti artists, the BLF were adamant about making only temporary alterations that did not destroy or damage the original advertisement. As Wagstaff continued, "Billboards are the only form of advertising the consumer can improve. You can't do it with radio or television ads or

magazines. Here you can improve the messages. At times it's more imaginative than the original."<sup>20</sup> Conceptualized as upgrades and improvements to both the image and the written message, Wagstaff claims, that what was once a dull ad of lies now speaks with a number of voices and calls out and exposes the dominant images used to attract consumers and create branded meanings.

However, unlike the Facts billboard which exposed the lie of cigarette advertising, the Camel alteration spoke to the representations of men and women in advertising. As Wagstaff stated, "you can't show a naked woman's chest. So why show a naked man's? It's unfair. It's a double standard. And the sight of it could have an adverse effect. Especially on young people. Young boys could be attracted to men, like the Briggs Amendment. These advertisers should have a sense of public responsibility ...The Turk is a very macho image. This is stereotyping of men, macho, virile, bald on chest. It's unfair. Some of us are kinda wimpy. We don't have hair on our chest and when we smoke, we cough. Man should be portrayed more realistically. We don't want our bodies used as sex objects to sell cars or cigarettes or anything else."<sup>21</sup>

In another press release sent to *Filth Magazine* the Billboard Liberation Front described why they attacked the Turk. The Turk, they claimed, has been a part of advertising imagery of R.J. Reynolds long before Joe Camel. Joe, the rival in influence to Mickey Mouse, Barney, and the Muppets came much later. But the Turk was the 1970s macho, bare-chested, man with a steely gaze.<sup>22</sup> The subversive element of placing the 'macho' Turk in a bra operates on a number of levels, where exposing what is unfair and sexist moves into the performativity of gender as the Turk is now dressed in drag. Whether the newly fashioned Turk problematizes the construction of gender or is emasculated and feminized, re-positions the board and the stereotyped imagery as a site of contestation in which the problematization of gender codes disrupts the stereotypes of masculinity used to sell cigarettes. The billboard transgresses its own limits and opens up a site in which the univocal hail of advertising now speaks in ambiguous terms.

By 1980, the Billboard Liberation Front took on a Marlboro sign, changing the “o” to an “e” and placing a cartoon balloon next to the cowboy’s mouth. The balloon indicated that the Marlboro Man was a construction of masculinity continually repeated through a tried and tired marketing campaign that used machismo to sell cigarettes while denying their debilitating consequences. The balloon only had one word, “yawn.” After a number of press releases, the BLF stated that it in fact has nothing against cigarettes; rather, what they despised was boring and dull advertising.<sup>23</sup>

In one press release, *A communiqué from the Billboard Liberation Front, improving urban advertising since 1977*, Wagstaff describes the reasons for altering the Marlboro ad. As Wagstaff states, “We felt that the whole Marlboro campaign using that macho cowboy is hackneyed and painfully dull. It’s about time they got rid of it. We thought we’d help them along.” “The company,” Wagstaff continued “should think up a new campaign maybe switch to an agency with a bit more flair.”<sup>24</sup> The tactics call attention to concerns and motivations common to Situationists critique of the society of the spectacle and the mythologizing system of advertising. The strategic use of the press through official communiques however, constitutes a tactic that moves beyond the limited exposure on the streets and invites the media to publish its own critique.

### **Jujitsu**

From 1980 to 1985 some of the original members of the BLF retired and or split off into splinter cells. And, until 1989 the BLF front was virtually silent. Their absence from 1984 – 1989 should not be taken lightly, as monumental political economic and social changes in media and advertising were taking place at this time. For, in the years between 1984 and 1987, massive structural shifts and technological changes were altering the power of the media, advertising and the news. Since the deregulatory push starting in 1984 with the Cable Act as well as the beginnings of the Fairness Report, media giants privatized the broadcast sector of the public sphere. The government regulations initially



instilled to foster democratic participation were being dissolved into a deregulated environment supporting free market competition.<sup>25</sup>

After a five year hiatus that spanned 1985 to 1989, the BLF took to the streets to address the Exxon Corporations environmental negligence in Alaska. In what can be identified as a tactic of meaconing, the BFL intercepted a corporate billboard and “rebroadcast,” a message for Exxon. In a press release dated May 8, 1989 the Front issued a revamped call to action. The Billboard Liberation Front, it stated, “in a show of solidarity with our beleaguered and unjustly maligned corporate comrades at Exxon Corporation, have decided to dust off our coveralls and re-enter the vital field of outdoor advertising improvement.”<sup>26</sup>

With their new “client” of Exxon, and a storm of official communiques, they confronted environmental degradation, the depletion of natural resources, and the politics of oil dependence on six different billboards. The original billboards that advertised “Hits Happen – New X -100” were altered to read “Shit Happens – New Exon.”<sup>27</sup> The poetics of this billboard, also indicates a slight change in appropriation, as the message is not only at odds with the original advert for a new radio station, but also, as it moves beyond a critique of the board to a critique of other pressing societal issues. In this tactical move, the alteration of the board does not utilize the message of NEW X-100 to critique the radio, but to appropriate the method of communication to condemn an entirely different industry. In this move, the appropriation of billboards become a tactic to voice grievance, lighten-up ads, and otherwise insert a diverse array of voices around advertising, yet still existing within such spaces.

The tactical strike of six billboard “improvements” speaks not only to the prevalence of the marketing campaign for radio, but also, to the gusto of the Front, in commandeering six different locations in which the public could re-question the dependence on oil and the corporate and environmental consequences of oil dependence. However, while the billboards were limited to the six locations, the press releases were

not. In them, Napier applauded Exxon for their use of petrochemicals to produce asphalt. And, in tongue and cheek address, the satirical remarks spoke to the unethical abuses of Exxon. As Napier wrote,

One of the primary goals of the BLF has always been to encourage and accelerate the ongoing paving of the world...the Alaskan spill should be applauded by all Americans as another step in our ongoing evolutionary destiny. We should capitalize on our good fortune as presented by Exxon Corporation. PAVE ALASKA.<sup>28</sup>

Although the discursive reach of the communiqué is difficult to determine, *San Francisco Magazine*, published nearly the entire release. But the condemnations didn't end with Exxon either, for within two months of their May 8<sup>th</sup> Exxon takeover, the BLF, headed by Igor Pflicht the organizer of IRANT (Institute for the Rational Analysis of National Trends) – the BLF philosophical arm, led the improvement of a Kent cigarette advertisement. In this operation, the board that was designed to say “Kent. The choice is taste,” was converted to “Kant. The Choice is heteronomy.”<sup>29</sup>

Pflicht explains, “The spirit of autonomy will never succeed in unfurling its stunted idealistic wings to take flight and direct the traffic of human affairs. Who cares to be free anymore. The value of freedom has been rendered obsolete. There is no longer any need for individual choice in this age when all decisions can be left to a skilled professional who specializes in knowing our every desire and need; The Advertiser. Today only a sad hold-over of effete intellectual fossils cling to the tired ideal of freedom. The people know better. Let the sweet soporific of our pleonectic compulsion to consume transport US to the elysia of dogmatic slumber. Kant’s pathetic adulation of waking life, individual awareness and independent thought belong to an age long past and putrefying on the death bed of its own naïve ambition. Today the wise choice is not freedom but heteronomy. We at I.R.A.N.T applaud the noble contribution billboards make to the unfolding of humanity’s destiny....Let heteronomy reign.”<sup>30</sup>

By New Year's Eve of 1989, the BLF were planning one last attack before the New Year. With Pflicht's philosophical arm guiding the actions and philosophy of the newly revamped BLF, they took to yet another billboard to address the hypocrisy and the corporate and governmental malfeasance of the Reagan-Bush years. The client of the billboard was Harrahs Entertainment, Inc. The choice to alter the billboard on New Year's Eve, therefore reveals a concerted effort on behalf of the BLF to manoeuvre under the cover of night, while the San Francisco P.D., were occupied with new year celebrations. But, working on that night also afforded greater exposure of the public to the advertisements, as over the course of the next few days, most workers would have the day off. And, the owners of the billboards, Harrahs Entertainment, Inc., would be hard pressed to clean up the site before a number of people would encounter the alteration.<sup>31</sup>

In the center of the billboard was the word "America." To the left, was a message that stated, "Everywhere: AIDS, crack, the homeless." And, to the right the message stated, "The White House: Don't worry, be happy." The take-over of the original casino advertisements lasted only a couple of days, as a sign crew from Patrick Media dismantled the new panels leaving the original ad. The short lived alteration of only 48 hours indicates the extent to which the BLF will go to convey and expose social inequality and the fight for access to the dominant means of communication. Ephemera, hardly captures the two months of labor, hundreds of dollars of supplies, the strategizing and risk that nearly a dozen people took to speak to the public and to power.<sup>32</sup>

"We call for a return to the good old days" wrote Harry Tuttle in a press release to the new board. "When uncontrolled disease, ugly poverty, and rampant substance abuse were safely restricted to the third world. We cannot abide the thought of fatal epidemics, starving families in the streets and armed gangs of drug-crazed youths deterring the American people from continuing the lifestyles promoted by the Reagan and Bush administrations...DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY. If drugs, disease and poverty engulf

our cities, you can always move to the suburbs. After all, it's a free country...See you at the shopping malls.”<sup>33</sup>

By 1990, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* ran an entire full length feature on the Billboard Liberation Front. But as an opportunity to voice their tactics, goals and strategies and also practice them, the BLF created a grand scheme for reporter Tim Redmond. If the *Guardian* and Redmond wanted an article, Redmond would have to prove that he could jump through the necessary hoops.<sup>34</sup> The “exposé” is revealing as the BLF manipulated the press through an elaborate ploy and used their financial prowess to create a mythology. This incident points to their level of sophistication regarding publicity and their determination in keeping their anonymity intact as they kidnapped Redman after a series of strategies common to CIA when infiltrating terrorist cells. All of which led to the climatic conclusion similar to counter terrorist interrogation as Redmond was dragged into a room in a basement where the BLF was waiting.<sup>35</sup> But this stunt also reflects a vital procedure of resistance outlined by Saul Alinsky.

In *Rules for Radicals* Saul Alinsky argues that “Radicals must be resilient, adaptable to shifting political circumstance, and sensitive enough to the process of action and reaction to avoid being trapped by their own tactics and forced to travel a road not of their choosing. In short, radicals must have a degree of control over the flow of events.”<sup>36</sup> While outlining the importance of being loose, resilient, fluid and always on the move the radical can respond, adapt and redeploy tactics to create situations and alter the frames of news discourse.<sup>37</sup> A radical baits the establishment to finance its own criticism to undermine the perceived omnipotence of the prevailing order. The superior strength of power and the economic imperative that drives sensationalism facilitates its undoing and sheds light on itself as corrupt. Thus, “Any attack against the status quo must use the strength of the enemy against itself.”<sup>38</sup>

With Madison Avenue representing the “moral hygiene” of society, pressing conflict and controversy out of the social sphere as something negative; friction, conflict

and controversy become essential ingredients for a free and open society. Invoking curiosity, irreverence and imagination through satire and ridicule creates a new perspective by “constantly creating the new out of the old” sacred traditions of the past. The tactics comprise a political jujitsu, as it uses the prevailing structure to gain access and deploy a critique of power against power. Inciting questions that agitate convention to break through the reification and synthesis of the prevailing order positions such maneuvers as a democratic intervention.

In what seems to have been taken directly from Alinsky, the BLF staged a kidnapping in order to commandeer the spectacle and invite the press to finance its own critique. It started with a phone call made to Tim Redmond a little after midnight by Jack Napier. As Redmond picked up the phone he was instructed to look out the window of his house to a building across the street, where three feet above the ground and behind a pillar an envelope was placed with further instructions. Having no idea that the BLF had been researching Redmond and surveilling him in the public, Redmond who had, up till then failed to secure an interview with the Front, quickly got off the phone and went across the street and read the message.<sup>39</sup> It read, “Your code name for this operation will be Mr. Roscoe. Be at Bouncers bar at 7:15 Friday night. Order a gin and tonic and sit near the phone booth inside the bar. Wait for our call.” The final lines of the message read, “Please be alone and do not attempt to have anyone follow you.”<sup>40</sup>

By the time Redmond was at the bar, the call didn’t come from the phone booth however, as the phone in the booth was out of order. Instead, the phone behind the bar rang, and the caller asked the bartender to announce that there was a phone call for a Mr. Roscoe. After a brief conversation on the phone, Redmond was instructed to hail a cab to Treasure Island and wait near yet another phone booth. Picking up the phone, at Treasure Island, the caller directed Redmond to a construction site where, in the towel dispenser of the on-site portable toilet further instructions would be waiting. Inside the dispenser, Redmond located a baseball cap with a \$20 bill taped inside and a note that directed him

back to the phone booth. As the phone rang again, the instructions were to take a cab to Edinburgh Castle, put on the hat, and sit at the bar where a new contact would be made.<sup>41</sup>

At Edinburg Castle, Mr. Roscoe was met by a woman who instructed him to follow her out of the bar. On their way out, she placed a blindfold over his eyes. As the bar door opened, Redmond recalls several hands escorting him to a van. To recap, within hours of showing up at Bouncers, picking up messages in towel dispensers, and taking cabs throughout San Francisco, Redmond was blindfolded, put in the back of a van and driven to a basement in the central Bay Area. For this event the basement was designed to look like a “terrorist” headquarters. Ropes hung from the ceiling and maps of the city with push pins stuck in them hung on the walls. As Redmond describes, “They had names like Daphne Boswell, Igor Pflicht and Mr. Glikk, and all of them wore some type of gruesome rubber mask.”<sup>42</sup> While this plot was sure to garner attention, it provided Napier with the forum necessary to articulate the mission and goals of the BLF in the press. As Napier explains, the BLF is not against billboards necessarily, rather, it is against the misuse and abuse of power in using the billboards.<sup>43</sup>

Headquartered in San Francisco, the BLF identifies itself as a privately-held, “Worker-controlled shadow entity with no phone number and no permanent address. Our highly secure operating environment and extralegal status guarantee our clients that acme of service, while our internationally recognized creative team delivers unmatched ‘wow.’”<sup>44</sup> The rather sarcastic corporate message indicates both an elusive presence and a tactic of humor. But, as the message states, the BLF is unlike traditional advertising agencies, in that the BLF is not available for hire and limits its services only to an exclusive list of clientele.

Although the selection of clients is based a complex algorithm only known to insiders, their corporate improvements are pro-bono. “Unfettered by the petty demands of clueless executives and weak-kneed middle manages” provides the Front with a “unique position of independence” and “unlimited creative freedom.”<sup>45</sup> The creative

independence, it is claimed, allows them to unlock messages that are lost “in the bureaucratic nattering’s of some spineless ‘account team.’ We pride ourselves on our total lack of customer service, and our laser-like focus on Message.”<sup>46</sup>

The Billboard Liberation Front’s sarcastic wit, also common to the Guerrilla Girls, is evident in their appraisal advertising, as well. “In the beginning was the Ad,” states the first lines of the roughly two page outline of grievances and goals. Desire, self-worth, self-image, ambition and hope are listed as first taking place in the ad brought to the consumer by the advertiser. The advertiser promotes the ideas and myths that make people who they are and what they will identify with. The power of advertising resides in the method of self-definition, which in taking the most “esteemed position in our cosmology” has replaced other methods of identity.<sup>47</sup>

“Advertising suffuses all corners of our waking lives; it so permeates our consciousness that even our dreams are often indistinguishable from a rapid succession of TV commercials.”<sup>48</sup> All of the different forms of media serve the Ad. Notions of art, science and spirituality, the once noble goals indicating spiritual growth and achievement “have been dashed on the crystalline shores of acquisition; the holy pursuit of consumer goods. The ad defines our world, creating both the focus on ‘image’ and the culture of consumption that ultimately attract and inspire all individuals desirous of communicating to their fellow man in a profound fashion. It is clear that He who controls the Ad speaks with the voice of our age.”<sup>49</sup>

However, distinctions must be made within the different communication media and technologies, although they all serve as conduits for the advertiser. You can avoid television, radio and computers. You can stop buying magazines and subscribing to newspapers. But, of all the different types of media there is one which the public is incapable of avoiding and/or escaping. The “billboard is ubiquitous and inescapable to anyone who moves through our world. Everyone knows the billboard; the billboard is in everyone’s mind.”<sup>50</sup> The BLF seeks “nothing short of a personal and singular billboard

for each citizen. Until that glorious day for global communications when every man, woman and child can scream at or sing to the world in 100Pt. type...until that day we will continue to do all in our power to encourage the masses to use any means possible to commandeer the existing media and to alter it to their own design.”<sup>51</sup>

In the *Art and Science of Billboard Improvement: A Comprehensive Guide to the Alteration of Outdoor Advertising*, Blank DeCoverly cleverly writes of the unprecedented scale of advertising infiltration into the public sphere. “Larger than life, subtle as war, they assault your senses with a complex coda of commercial instructions, the messenger RNA of capitalism. Every time you get in a car, or ride a bus, or witness a sporting event, you receive their instructions. You can’t run and you can’t hide, because your getaway route is lined to the horizon with signs.”<sup>52</sup> As the opening paragraph of the manual indicates, the ubiquity of advertising provides just as many sites for the expression of the public as there are direct hails of consumption. In short, for every ad there is the potential to overturn the myths perpetuated through them.

From the most practical considerations to the most tactical and well planned, the manual provides the public with the subtle subversive practices of alteration. Advocating for simple alterations over complex ones, points to the need to keep the original message intact while undermining its logic. “If you can totally change the meaning of an advertisement by changing one or two letters” the manual states, “you’ll save a lot of time and trouble. Some ads lend themselves to parody by the inclusion of a small image or symbol in the appropriate place...On other boards, the addition of a cartoon “thought bubble” or “speech balloon” for one of the characters might be all that is needed.”<sup>53</sup>

The BLF revolutionized the habitual organization of everyday life by détourning the commercialized signs of mass culture and exposing the logic of its exploitation. Through the appropriation of images they deployed a carnivalization where social and cultural conventions were brought down and debased and the elite were uncrowned. The carnivalesque tactics introduced a dialogue on the streets and promoted heteroglossia,



where the signs of the spectacle were not naturalized but projected as always and necessarily in dispute. However, from words to billboards the ultimate détournement is the creation of situations, in which the media is forced to finance, broadcast and publicize a critique of itself and source of revenue.<sup>54</sup>

While it is important to note that the tactic utilizes détournement it moves beyond it through the carefully crafted press reports and selection of billboards. As the manual indicates, other factors must be considered as well, such as location, physical accessibility, potential escape routes, volume of foot and vehicular traffic during optimum alterations hours, etc. While some signs with large illuminated text can be improved by turning off a few letters, the possibilities of using illuminated boards are only limited to imagination. When planning the improvement action, the manual outlines procedures of accessibility, practicality, security, illumination, and day time hits.

With the publication of “Free Billboards” by Redmond, the BLF spanned three generations using the youngest member at the age of 10 to the oldest – Glikk – in his 60s. The billboard improvements took months plan and execute. There was a crew of up to 12 to survey and photograph the target, prepare the precise projections for the size of the panels to be overlaid, produce new lettering and graphic stencils to duplicate the existing text, adjust the size and font of the text, scout the area for traffic and police, and climb up on the boards with lookouts and descend the billboard without litigious or physical incident. And, in good fashion, the BLF stuck to their principles of using easily removable texts plus leaving a six pack of beer or a bottle of scotch for the clean-up crew.

Three to four people would climb the billboard with as many as ten lookouts. The lookouts however, were not arbitrary placed beneath the board or necessarily in plain sight. Rather, they utilized disguises and occupied critical points around the board. Some occupied corners with full view of oncoming traffic, while others staged domestic disturbances to catch the attention of passersby and the police. But, distraction was the name of the game, as the BLF also staged photo shoots, with multiple cameras, lighting

and a crowd in the center of the street to deflect attention away from the group's members altering the billboard, just over the shoulders of their ground crew. Such staged situations would create a large enough distraction for radio calls to be made and allow safe passage off of the billboard. And, to be safe, a network of escape routes were planned in advance.<sup>55</sup>

As Redmond indicates in his report, other than the deranged press releases, the BLF is unique in that it had a very serious mission. By 1990, there were only a few large corporations that owned the vast majority of the information resources in the U.S. For Redmond, these corporations have the ability to control the flow of political and cultural information. But, such information is not neutral, as it can shape the thoughts and perceptions of the American public. "In theory," Redmond states, "billboards are a purely commercial enterprise; space is available for rent to anyone who can fork over the cash. In practice, the space is open only to those whose message is acceptable to Gannett and Patrick media" (Gannett was one of the larger media firms at this time).<sup>56</sup>

Redmond's report reveals another tactic of the Billboard Liberation Front beyond the anonymity, rehearsed escape routes, projections of letters and font type and the coordinated effort of this organization. Their tactics comprised a confrontation with power, as the billboards, press coverage and official communiqués, announced a message directed to the owners of the billboards. It was a message, assisted through news coverage and announced to advertisers in the bay area and directed at billboard owners. The public would not stand complacently by as public spaces are privatized by commercial interests. The rights to alter and shape public opinion would not be reserved for those in power. In short, the message is clear, no billboard is safe from alteration as the BLF engage in a series of tactics that can be conceptualized as MIJI.

## **MIJI**

In *Americas Army and the Language of Grunts*, E. Taylor outlines three tactics deployed against an enemy to disrupt their communications. MIJ represents the three

ways in which radio transmissions are intercepted and rerouted (meaconing), overtaken (intrusion), and blocked (jammed). While the first three indicate deliberate actions intended to deny an enemy use, (interference) results as an unintended disruption of communication signals. Collectively, Kelly explains, the incidents are called MIJI.<sup>57</sup> The appropriation of billboards reflects a tactic of meaconing as the original ad and commercial supply lines are intercepted with images and the public redirected to ends foreign to the ads original design. However, meaconing also operates at the rhetorical level as well, for not only are the billboards intercepted and the press used to finance a critique of the media, but in their appropriation the public is invited to redirect their attention to the taken-for-granted aspects within the ad itself and question the operation of ideology that is naturalized there. As a tactic of appropriation, meaconing creates sites in which the myths of advertising are intercepted and re-routed.

In *Mythologies* Roland Barthes argues that myths derive from the ideological intervention in discourse as they transform history into nature. The semiotic labor of the sign, the motivating interests and evaluative accents that reflect particular interests are erased from view, giving the sign the appearance as something that is natural and transparent. As a synthesis of ideas and struggle myths convey and reproduce a history without conflict and turmoil. The synthesis eradicates struggle from the sign and moves into a higher order of signification. As myths suppress history and conflict they transforms history into nature and harden perceptual categories along with meaning as timeless, inevitable and unalterable.<sup>58</sup> As Barthes argues, “What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality...things lose the memory that they once were made.”<sup>59</sup>

However, myths can be destroyed through at least three types of operations. In the first, an emphasis is placed on exposing myth by focusing on the actual referents and the literal interpretation. The second places an emphasis on undoing the distortion in the operation of myths by exposing how meaning and form interact with one another thereby

shedding light on the signifier as an impostor. While the first two reveal the underlying intentions motivating myth by either making the connection obvious or unmasking them, the third approach is more dynamic as it places an emphasis on mythical signifiers to elicit “ambiguous signification.” Once exposed the stories invite the public to become readers of myths, “at once true and unreal.”<sup>60</sup> All three, Barthes argues, are political acts.

The poetic alteration and recombination of the images of advertising in this case are used to create a dialogue, to question the unquestioned, and expose the underside of the myths propagated by the culture industries as a political act in itself, and should not be neglected. For, the appropriation of the dominant means and methods of manipulation expose myths and facilitate the expressive dialogue necessary for a healthy democratic culture. These interventions promote a diverse array of voices in the public sphere and battle for and over the concepts that shape perception and incite action. As a political act that exposes myth, the poetics of the Billboard Liberation Front redirect the interpellative hail and reorganize the spaces in which myths are reproduced.

The BLF altered and improved the messages of advertising, in order to engage in a dialogue both in the public sphere as well as through the techniques of *détournement* common to a group of appropriation artists and activists. It began in the 1950s in France to address what their leading member Guy Debord described as the Society of the Spectacle. From the dullness of the advertisements to the inscription of speech balloons on billboards, the use of cultural images to critique an image culture and provoke a revolutionary change in perspective amounts to what Debord described as *Détournement*. The peculiar power of *détournement* derives from the devaluation of the original elements and the revaluation in their new form. From the use of the old, *détourned* objects take on double meanings and clashes head on with social conventions.<sup>61</sup>

In *Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life*, Debord describes *Détournement* as a political strategy that utilizes elements of or within a culture and places them in a new context, so as to re-signify the elements within the often taken for

granted cultural object. Détourned objects make use of forms “that are considered ‘normal’ and not even noticed, and which ultimately condition us.”<sup>62</sup> Détournement is an important element to an understanding of the evolution of the tactics of appropriation. As the spectacle came to mediate and organize relations between persons in society, the poetics of appropriation overturned the experiences of everyday life.<sup>63</sup>

### **Fauxvertising and FSU-ism**

To take over a billboard through the tactical appropriation of space, a space that is organized by urbanism and consumer culture re-organizes space and inserts a plurality of representations in an otherwise univocal expression of consumption. When new figures inhabit these spaces, not only are spatial practices altered, they may potentially alter the entire organizing figures of the urban environment. The urbanism that speaks to and of consumption hails the public as consumers and is repositioned as a democratic space. The multiplication of representations produced by the public converts this space into a democratic one as expression overcomes the right of property.

The Billboard Liberation Front echo the impulse of the SI, through the appropriation of billboards. The improvement of the advertisements that were mediating the social were used to liven up the urban environment of spectacular consumption. But as the BLF contends, the poetics of billboard ‘improvements’ can also be conceptualized as fauxvertising and FUS-ism. “In fauxvertising, an existing message is creatively falsified to reach a higher truth or deeper meaning. It takes an unacceptable sales pitch and turns it into a provocative statement. Instead of harnessing human desire to sell something one may or may not need, the idea is to identify what is really at stake, subvert the ad and jumpstart discussion about issues that concern all of us. Which is the last thing advertisers want us to do, have a debate or foster discussion.”<sup>64</sup>

As Napier explains, advertising is like theft. And when you consider what is at stake in advertising, the battleground is for human consciousness. If, what one does in the world and how one operates derive from the perceptions of that world, then changing

the perception is the first step to changing actions in the world. “It’s either write, or be written. I can raise a pen or a brush in defense of my own mental environment, or allow myself to be the passive, infinitely impressed palimpsest which is the consumer caught in the maw of a marketing campaign.”<sup>65</sup>

The BLF, chooses the former as advertising expands its reach to colonize and exploit the mental and physical environment, failure to take part in contesting the images that shape perception, gives the power of and over the world to be defined by the profit motive. Fauxvertising, is one tactic in the battle for human rights rather than consumer exploitation. For, such tactics provide a site of contestation and dialogue in what is otherwise a manufactured consensus and ideological reification, and such tactics can undermine the hegemonic apparatus by inciting the public to rise above the subject positions accorded in the hail of the advertisement.

As Napier explains, both fauxvertising and FSU-ism (Fuck Shit Up), together operate to embrace the feelings of being effective human beings. “That means taking an active role in shaping the world in which we live...Public space should include areas in which the public can truly express itself, rather than just running around the hamster wheel of commerce at the mall.”<sup>66</sup> The outrage that such alterations and improvements foster creates a dialogue in an otherwise one-way flow of commercial expression. However, when voices undermining this flow are relegated to the margins, democratic culture is diminished in inverse proportion to elite interests. And, “as long as advertising and paid publications monopolize our media landscape, murals and midnight editing such as graffiti and altered billboards are going to be the necessary marginal emendations.”<sup>67</sup>

This is quite serious as “most people are now walking billboards, what with all the clothing logos on their togs. I suppose the next frontiers will be inner and out space. Designer DNA encoded directly onto our protein molecules is a possibility. Of course, anyone who doubts that we’ll eventually be seeing a Nike swoop etched onto the surface of the moon simply doesn’t understand human potential.”<sup>68</sup> But, the BLF awakes the

public to the reach of advertising and their ability to change the flow of communication. “Each ‘viewer’ who sees enough billboard ‘improvements’ might eventually get the idea that each and every brand and/or ad slogan is his/hers to modify (if only in their imagination). Once you change the message it becomes yours.”<sup>69</sup>

The use of billboards in itself, is not considered a bad thing. Rather, as Napier explains, it is the boring and unequal access to billboards that motivates the alterations of the ads. “We at the BLF have NEVER once stated anywhere, anytime that billboards are a detriment to society,” explains Napier. “We truly believe that anyone who wants a billboard should have one, preferably covered in neon, on the roof of their house.”<sup>70</sup> The appropriation of commercial ads draw attention to interpretive dilemmas and cultural instabilities that exist beneath the veneer of “appropriate” assumptions reproduced through advertising. As the image is re-used it works to expose the ideology that reifies the instability of meaning and the taken-for-grantedness of consumption and consumerism. This is a tactic that induces a ‘slip’ in the signifier directing attention to how the poetics of appropriation are explicitly invoked strategies of dialogism resisting sedimentation, deferring meaning and placing the viewer among conflicting and competing layers of context, meaning, and convention.

As the Billboard Liberation Front alters billboards, they unravel the univocal meaning of trademarks and force them to speak in a different voice. At times undermining advertising by exposing the meaning attached to brands through a de-mythologization and at others, critiquing issues of power. Their tactics are similar to those of Jeff Koons, Jean Michel Basquiat, Michael Ray Charles and Renee Cox who have appropriated trademarks that conceal the history and tension in meaning and the reification of cultural memory and expose culture as a field of struggle. As trademarks are elevated the level of the brands and the status of icons, their works ground the images of capital as political exploitation.<sup>71</sup>

There is a use of corporate logos that undermine an African American contribution to cultural progress through co-optation and appropriation by commercial industries. It is, what might be called a hostile if not a violent form of forgetting that reifies inequality demonstrated in the works of Renee Cox and Michael Ray Charles. Cox and Charles have used trademarks and copyrighted images from Aunt Jemima to Wonder Woman to question the use of these representations and re-articulate the mammy image as a site of empowerment. The direct appropriation and alteration of such iconic works through a process of layering and allusion troubles the assumptions and perspective of the originals along with the stereotypes that it fosters.

In these works, Aunt Jemima is no longer a signifier of a product or an exploited stereotype, but stands as a representation that makes visible the historic inequalities and limited roles accorded to African Americans both in the media as well as in 'real' life. As the second order signification, or second meaning, is de-mythologized the image is articulated to social struggle. The myth of the trademark that conceals the social conflict of struggle overflows with new meaning, unbridled from market positions that overdetermine and stabilize the meaning of the signifier as a neutral mark of trade. As a political intervention and ideological struggle over meaning, identities and the constitution of the subject, their poetics constitute both parody and satire of prevailing representations as it transgresses the formal boundaries entrenched in intellectual property law that privileges property over expression and profit over people.<sup>72</sup>

For the Billboard Liberation Front the appropriation of billboards reveals the images unresolved dialogical tension that "inherently" resists easy settlement so as to show how, social norms, conventions, composition, and cultural and historical memory aide in the construction of an interpretive frame and reifies meaning. While the appropriations are largely polysemic, their multiple meanings invite the public to question the univocal posturing of the culture industries. As the *San Francisco Chronicle* indicated, the BLF are heroes in the toxic information overload of our contemporary



landscapes. “Our real heroes are cut-and-paste warriors like the BLF, who put themselves on the line to give us something to think about.”<sup>73</sup>

Like the visual nomadic poacher, described by Certeau, the BLF reinvests the texts and images of billboards with the suppressed polysemic radicality inherent in texts.<sup>74</sup> Within that space something unknown is created by the very semiotic polyvalence of the text and a plurality of meanings to be read off the board is facilitated. As travelers whose tactics must be sized on the wing, they poach, but they also write and inscribe new meaning in a city scape defined, organized, created and occupied through urbanism and commerce. The fly by night tactics constitute a guerrilla ontology that seeks temporary liberation from the prevailing order for, the current systems of production “no longer leaves ‘consumers’ any place in which they can indicate what they make or do with the products of these systems.”<sup>75</sup>

As Certeau argues, the poetics of subversion utilizes elements in culture to ends foreign to the system that the public has no choice but to accept. Lacking the means to challenge this order, appropriation incites an ambiguity into the social field and unhinges the power located in the forced articulations of advertising associations and trademarks. The use and repurposing of billboards is an expressive activity significant in itself, as it exposes the conflict with the increased privatization of public space and the spectacle that elides and suppresses controversy. Regardless of the ultimate effect, the very use of culture in the spaces of organized property relations advances new and alternative meanings in the otherwise unidirectional flow of communication.

In this space a place is created for new, alternative and/or oppositional ways of seeing, feeling, being. Creating these temporary spaces advances a revolution in consumer culture as commodities exchange values are usurped and recreated in a variety of different uses outside of the circuit of exchange. In the places of the old, the improved ad exposes the discourse of advertising as artificial constructions, revealing culture as a contested site of struggle. Denaturalizing the social, political and economic conditions

that are suppressed through marketing campaigns, their tactics reveal how the poetics of the image conceals the contested political terrain of the ad.

To take over a billboard through the tactical appropriation of space, a space that is organized by urbanism and consumer culture inserts a plurality of representations in spaces otherwise reserved and maintained through the univocal expression of consumption.<sup>76</sup> As the guerilla semiotic acts of ideological warfare connects new multi-accidental meaning to social practices and opens a space for democratic expression their poetics reorganize the spaces necessary for the reconstitution of polyvalent subjects. The billboards meaning and purpose is re-articulated to serve different ends – where the use of dominant images and methods of communication against the dominant call upon the subject to identify with the new message and think critically about the old ones. The Front helps create the conditions by which and from which a more diverse array of voices intervene in the public sphere and constitute the spaces of the cultural field as democratic.

As Blank DeCoverly contends, the tactics of the BLF are intended to unearth the hidden persuaders and awake the public from their induced somnambulism. But as the BLF provides manifestos and how-to manuals, the public is invited to be active participants in the creation and control of their environments as well. Their tactics incite questions through a poetics of de-reification and multiply questions over who has the rights and access to the dominant meanings and apparatuses of communication. Their poetics move beyond the tactic of appropriation as a means to alert and wake up the public to the manipulation of advertising and incites the public to take control of the methods of manipulation and mode of address.<sup>77</sup>

In closing, the tactics of the BLF operate as political resistance, as meaconing, intrusion, and jamming to undermine the uni-vocal hail and unidirectional flow of culture. Tactics include reclaiming public space, interfering with the myths of advertising, creating a dialogue over representation and intruding in the discourse of the press through press releases. From improved billboards to press releases and official

communiqué's the poetics of the Billboard Liberation Front call forth new democratic citizens who participate and reinvest new and diverse meaning rather than being subject to it. In so doing, their works constitute the conditions for a radical subjectivity through the dissenting power of appropriation.

### **Culture Jamming**

In the late 1980s and 1990s billboard liberations were not limited to the San Francisco Bay Area. Across the country, in New York City, other activists affiliated with the BLF were taking over billboards to critique the exploitation by marketing agencies in urban populations. But, unlike the clandestine activities of the Billboard Liberation Front that appropriated billboards under the cover of night, Jorge Rodriguez de Gerada took to the streets in open daylight. Gerada's critique lies in the number of billboards that sell tobacco and liquor products in low socio economic status neighborhoods. The ads feature models engaging in upper class activities such as sailing, skiing and golf, and when associated with smoking or drinking, promote the notion that smoking is the path to attain the upper class stature. Unlike the advertisers who send messages into culture without ever being seen, Gerada attempts to create a dialogue and invoke a community discussion about the use of public space and the manipulation of advertising.

Gerada's career started when he founded the New York City Culture Jamming Movement with the art group Artfux. Their strikes would mount on the disproportionate amount of alcohol and cigarette ads in poor and minority areas. As Gerada describes, "We would illegally alter or replace a tobacco or alcohol ad with a new statement and image that spoke about the negative effects of these products."<sup>78</sup> And, in a similar tactic to the BLF, Gerada sent press releases with photographs of the intervention to gain attention to the visual critiques made on the streets.

Gerada's tactics of appropriation are illustrative of the politics of appropriation for unlike the notion that such activities are guerrilla acts or guerrilla art, Gerada prefers the term citizen art instead. Citizen art is motivated by the central notion that billboards

should be a part of the forum in which discourses toward democratic freedom are fostered. Which is to say, the use of billboards as normal sites of dialogue requires that they transcend the momentary seizure of an advertisement and move to a less temporary mode of discourse.<sup>79</sup> As Gerada recounts, “We received a massive amount of attention. Most of the time the press would either print our press releases directly or send a reporter. We considered it a victory every time a newspaper, magazine or newscast let us stand on our soapbox to address this social ill. I like to think that we at least gave a nudge to help get rid of tobacco billboard advertising in the U.S.”<sup>80</sup> His tactical maneuvers, point to what Mark Dery describes as culture jamming.

As Mark Dery explains in *Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing and Sniping in the Empire of Signs*, culture jamming “might best be defined as media hacking, information warfare, terror-art, and guerrilla semiotics, all in one. Billboard bandits, pirate TV and radio broadcasters, media hoaxers, and other vernacular media wrenchers who intrude on the intruders, investing ads, newscasts, and other media artifacts with subversive meanings are all culture jammers.”<sup>81</sup> Dery’s definition of culture jamming illuminates the multidimensional techniques of appropriation in which artist-activists appropriate the visual images and modes of commercial media to broadcast and/or speak dissent. It is a technique that uses the media to critique the media from within.

The term culture jam derives, in part from the San Francisco audio, and now audio and visual, collage band Negativland. Culture jamming, is the use of the power of the media against the media through alterations that improve, edit or augment their visual codes. And, in this augmentation, the appropriated billboard or advertisement works like an x-ray into the semiotic codes and ideological associations made in the ad. Using the power of the media to critique the media speaks both to a strategy outlined by the Situationist International as well as the 1990s Canadian based Media Foundation.<sup>82</sup>

## **Adbusters**

The changing media industry, the prevalence of advertising, and the incredibly shrinking press led some activists, such as Kalle Lasn to publish their own magazines as platforms to protest the irreparable harm of commercial culture to the market place of ideas. From the wreckage of the forestry industry, Kalle Lasn and Bill Schmals, two documentary film makers formed the Media Foundation in 1989 as an environmental advocacy and media studies group. Both the foundation and its publication *Adbusters* were non-profit centers to address hyper commercialism and the degradation of the physical and mental environment.<sup>83</sup>

The Media Foundation was established to address the neglected and systematic suppression of the physical consequences of over production and the mental consequences of commercial overload. The Foundation started when a group of environmentalists and the Wilderness Committee in British Columbia tried to buy airtime on the Canadian Broadcasting Channel to counter the “Forests Forever” commercials of the B.C. logging industry. The “Forests Forever” campaign was a pro-forestry image launched by MacMillan Bloedel and various forestry associations. The ‘commercials’ created by the Foundation stated: “The forest industry has been telling us how well they are managing our forests. But this is how fast they’ve been logging in recent years and this is the level of logging that our forests can actually sustain. For a long time now, there’s been too much logging. Too much environmental damage. Will our children ever forgive us?”<sup>84</sup>

The 30-second commercial was produced for \$2000, but the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) refused to run it, claiming that it was too controversial. The CBC claimed that Canadian Broadcast Policy “does not permit advertisers to buy time for the broadcast of controversial material. For the purpose of this policy, controversy is defined as ‘a matter of public interest about which there is significant difference of opinion and which is, or is likely to be, the subject of public debate. The

principle of this policy is that the airwaves must not come under the control of any individual or group who, because of wealth, special position, etc., might be better able to influence listener or viewer attitudes on a contentious issue.”<sup>85</sup>

After the denial to broadcast, Lasn and a group of environmentalists sent out press releases to expose the double standards of the CBC and a debate ensued in the press over who had the right to buy commercial time on television.<sup>86</sup> Lasn argued that the alternative ads are an essential component to a free market place. As the CBC aired only one side of the issue, the potential to mislead the public due to a lack of diversity in the airwaves had detrimental consequences to the necessary requirements of an informed public making conscientious decisions about the world in which they lived.

The denial to broadcast however, also introduced a conundrum for the CBC, as the Media Foundation’s commercial indicated that logging itself was a controversial issue. This suggested that commercials, those of the Foundation as well as the those of the Logging Industry, were advancing controversial issues. In accordance with policy, the CBC withdrew the forestry ads. Although the actions of the CBC systematically eradicated the issue and silenced the debate from the airwaves, and maintained the airwaves as a controversy free zone, the \$7 million a year campaign was silenced too, and an important point about broadcasting had been made. In Canada, any commercial identified as controversial was denied access to the electromagnetic spectrum and the commercial space would be reserved for advertisements that are beyond controversy.

The Media Foundation’s stance is one that argues for open access to the dominant and prevailing mode of address that has been seized by commercial advertising. By 1990 the Media Foundation had produced four 15-second “Tubehead” ads. In one spot, a father is struggling to pry a television set off his head. While three of the ads were accepted by the CBC, the Telecaster Committee of Canada refused to allow the ads to run. The committee wanted a clear message and an audio disclaimer of each ad that stated “The following are the opinions of the Media Foundation of Canada.” The

additional disclaimer, as the ads already stated “A message from the Media Foundation,” points to the unfair treatment of socially motivated ads, as commercial ads are not required to use audio disclaimers.<sup>87</sup>

By 1991, the Media Foundation revamped the “Tubehead” campaign and introduced eight ‘commercials’ planned again for Boston, Los Angeles and New York. One un-commercial shows a man watching television with a Universal Bar Code tattooed on the back of his neck. “Your living room is the factory,” states the narrator. “The product being manufactured is you.” Another starts with a soft focus and the words “Obsession, fascination, fetish.” But then a question is posed, “Why are nine out of 10 women dissatisfied by their own bodies?” As the camera pans back, a woman is shown vomiting into a sink. “The beauty industry is the beast.” However, not one network in the U.S. would air the ad. As an ABC official stated, airing the ad “would be like shooting ourselves in the foot.”<sup>88</sup> Similarly, a CBS official stated, “We would not broadcast a commercial that denigrated television. We also don’t broadcast commercials that take controversial positions on important topics.”<sup>89</sup>

The centrality of access is a crucial condition for the successful tactical assaults on the media. If the airwaves are a vital public resource, then as Lasn argues, the public should have equal access to commercial spots. And, from within the ‘belly of the beast’ enter an otherwise univocal discourse of consumerism and proliferate a new civic minded message to appeal to, and hail, a public with a base in civic engagement, social equality and a healthier environment, rather than a public defined and constituted through the unattainable ideals of consumption. As Lasn argues, “An effective TV subvertisement (or uncommercial) is so unlike what surrounds it on the commercial-TV mindscape that it immediately grabs the attention of viewers. It brakes their media-consumer trance and momentarily challenges their whole world outlook. It’s guerrilla meme warfare.”<sup>90</sup>

For Lasn, the battle of and over culture must appropriate and re-circulate memes. “A meme...is a unit of information (a catchphrase, a concept, a tune, a notion of fashion,

philosophy or politics) that leaps from brain to brain to brain. Memes compete with one another for replication, and are passed down through a population much the same way genes pass through a species.”<sup>91</sup> Memes become viral through a virtually self-replicating process. Guerrilla meme warfare means building a meme factory to beat the corporations at their game, to deploy the meme as the underside of the real costs of global consumerism and the truth that is disguised in marketing.<sup>92</sup>

Lasn indicates that the problem with gaining access however, revolves around the collusion and closed network of media organizations and advertisers. As Lasn states, “My feeling is, if we lose the ability to buy 30 seconds of air time, we won’t be able to steer into the future because corporations will do that for us. We want to re-invent the media culture, and advertising is just the tip of the spear.”<sup>93</sup> The absence of controversy is as much the result of policy decisions as it has to do with economics. Yet, as Lasn illustrates, “When I deal with NBC and CBS and ABC they refuse to air my messages and give me hocus-pocus reasons on why they can’t.”<sup>94</sup> Although, “it was proven in the 1960s and ‘70s that anti-smoking ads against the giant tobacco industry were so true, so compelling, that eventually the industry had to back off TV because they could not compete with the free marketplace of ideas.”<sup>95</sup>

The denial of broadcast time however, would not be taken lightly by the members of The Media Foundation or the writers and editors of *Adbusters*. The refusal to sell airtime resulted in massive publicity campaigns advanced through press releases and created the conditions to publish their own magazine. *Adbusters*, as well as *Big Noise* its junior version, emerged from these debates as a quarterly publication to “expose the tricks of the ad trade and show you the subtle ways in which advertising affects our lives. How it defines sexuality with a steady flow of semi-pornographic and sexist images; and how it skews the democratic process at election time with ‘pre-packaged candidates.’”<sup>96</sup> *Big Noise*, started as an insert in the magazine, but within four issues was redeveloped



into a glossy magazine to address the then \$130 billion advertising industry that had its sites on teens and tweens.<sup>97</sup>

After two years, The Media Foundation published over 15,000 copies of *Adbusters* to its subscribers, 400 of which were from high schools for their media-literacy courses. The growth of *Adbusters* was a 25 percent increase per quarterly publication. By this time, half of the publications were run in the U.S. and was funded through subscribers, donations and advocacy advertising. The magazine was the primary source of income for the Media Foundation. Its journalists included university professors and volunteers that address the politics and practices of the media. For the editors, Bill Schmalz and Kalle Lasn *Adbusters* was also the forum to discuss and promote the alternative TV spots.<sup>98</sup>

The claims of *Adbusters* in their first issue are alarming, as “One hundred million North Americans spend a quarter of their waking lives watching TV. And 12 minutes of every hour that they sit in front of the television set is spent being subjected to the beautiful lies of advertisers.”<sup>99</sup> But, these figures only begin to touch the surface of advertising, as print and billboard ads are not even mentioned in these figures. For *Adbusters*, the TV commercial is the most powerful communications tool, but is limited to only those who have money or those promoting non-controversial consumer based messages. The public’s perceived immunity to ads does not help matters any, as Lasn notes. Yet, if one looked at their consumption habits however, they are largely living and defining their lives through the media.<sup>100</sup> So, *Adbusters* appropriated the semiotics of advertisements to utilize and subvert the power of ads through an anti-marketing ad referred to as a subvertisement.

### **Subvertisements**

The alternative ads or subvertisements utilize the images of consumer culture, to critique the culture of consumption. These messages “can profoundly influence our culture and our lives,” Lasn claims.<sup>101</sup> “They can bring new ideas and issues into public

consciousness and shape our social agenda. They can be used for prodding corporations, industries and governments into new awareness and action.”<sup>102</sup> As Lasn notes, a “well-produced print “subvertisement” mimics the look and feel of the target ad, prompting the classic double take as viewers realize what they’re seeing is in fact the very opposite of what they expected...It cuts through the hype and glitz of our mediated reality and momentarily, tantalizingly, reveals the hollow spectacle within.”<sup>103</sup>

The alternative ads in the first *Adbusters* publication included a photograph of a horse grazing alone in a cemetery. Across the bottom of the photograph are the words “Marlboro Country.” Another showed a destitute woman facing her first drink of the day, with the text, “Every morning is a Smirnoff morning.” The Smirnoff ad, is striking as it utilizes the look and feel of John Heartfield’s ads , Harrah for butter. Other ads proposed boycotts of major U.S. magazines hooked on tobacco advertising that labeled Philip Morris, “The World’s biggest Drug Pusher,” to the overwhelming financial success of the Absolut vodka marketing campaign.

For Lasn, the 100,000 alcohol advertisements that a young person may see before they even reach the legal age limit to consume alcohol is too extensive. But, Absolut’s campaigns are the most remarkable and admirable in the industry. Within a decade of the ads first run in the early 80s, Absolut was posting over \$600 million in annual sales, during a time in which the alcohol industry was largely in decline.<sup>104</sup> *Adbusters* attacked the promotion of image over substance and the myths produced in the ads that rarely promote the services they perform. As the Absolut parody states, “Any suggestion that our advertising campaign has contributed to alcoholism, drunk driving or wife and child beating is absolute nonsense. No one pays attention to advertising.” The ad works because it is familiar and hardly recognized as a parody. In pulling on the ubiquity and familiarity of the Absolut campaign, the subvertisement both uses the iconic image to expose the underlying and potentially detrimental effects of alcohol consumption.

This is to say, that through the advertising campaigns of Absolut, the vodka bottle as a signifier of potentially harmful and dysfunctional abuse, is de-historicized and re-articulated to an ideal of glamour and elegance. As some critics, such as Horkheimer and Adorno have claimed, advertisements for alcohol is the elixir of life that makes oppressive labor and living in a technocratic society tolerable. It operates to suppress and tranquilize an otherwise revolutionary spirit. The social consequences of drinking, the potential domestic abuse it fosters, the death toll as a result of drunk driving accidents are all concealed through the glamour of that bottle.

For Lasn, the subvertisements are an x-ray into the societal effects that are concealed through advertising and image campaigns and provides a moment of truth to the viewer. But, the ads were not only motivated to shame advertisers and expose the abuse of irresponsible corporations but also, to break the trance of commercials. Lasn illustrates that in a world of manufactured desires, it is time to smash the postmodern hall of mirrors of celebrity iconography, signs and spectacles. The smashing, whether it provokes a consumer system failure in which the image factory is driven to a halt, or provides a momentary rupture in ontological existence, is necessary to break the grip of the surfaces in which consumers are spectators of their own demise.<sup>105</sup>

The reports of the Absolut ads, were actually fairly sympathetic to the motivations of *Adbusters*. As one report indicated, “The full-page ad, which recently appeared in the renegade magazine *Adbusters*, mercilessly lampoons the highly successful marketing of Absolut...This parody is not for laughs. It is a tiny consumer group’s attempt to battle back...it is spoofing Absolut ads to draw attention to a two-pronged message: Consumers are inundated with too many ads; and worse, the ads stress image over substance.”<sup>106</sup> However, the creators of the Absolut campaign did not take such mockery lightly. Yet, they none-the-less confess to the success of their campaign. As Richard Costello, the president of TBWA Advertising stated, “Are we creating an image? Of course we are. In the liquor industry, fashion is important. And we want to be the

most fashionable. When people order a product like ours by name, they're making a statement about themselves – and about us.”<sup>107</sup>

With another Absolut advertisement ready to run, Keith McIntyre, the national marketing manager for Absolut in Canada threatened legal action against *Adbusters*, if any further libel or slander of their trademark was published. This threat became an ideological battle in the news over the right to parody. As Lasn notes, “It sent a chill down my spine because they had the power to put us out of business.”<sup>108</sup> But, after the Media Foundation sent press releases to the *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post*, challenging Absolute executives to a public debate about the matter. Rather than debate the issue, Absolut rescinded their threats.

As Lasn states, “if companies want to sue us, let them. We are small and have no money and it will generate huge publicity. We are small enough so that we can go underground and resurface again.”<sup>109</sup> But as such battles were taking place in the press the battle over appropriation had also been taking place in the courtrooms throughout the U.S. The lessons learned from these cases are substantial as they provided the Media Foundation with the necessary tools and understanding concerning parody and bad publicity – and it most likely taught Absolut and other corporations as well.

Over the next few years, *Adbusters* moved from their tactics of parody to a full out assault on the tenets of consumer culture, creating billboards with the stars of the U.S. Flag re-articulated with corporate logos to creating images depicting corporate influence and branding, as a newborn is branded with corporate tattoos. But they also announced their grievances against Big Tobacco. *Adbuster's* condemned and called out any magazine that published cigarette ads in their publications. From the Camel Cigarettes parodies in which Joe Camel is re-articulated as Joe Chemo with the text “The Surgeon General warns that smoking is a frequent cause of wasted potential and fatal regret” to the cover of *Harper's Magazine*, turned into an ashtray, the tobacco industry was under fire.<sup>110</sup>

*Adbusters* also deployed relentless campaigns of the Gap and Calvin Klein.

While the subvertisements of Calvin Klein address the gratuitous sexuality promoted in the ads, and the unrealistic body ideal represented by their models, the Gap ads speaks to another concern. Advertising in general, enables the continuance of the economy of consumption and to a greater or less degree sublimates desires. Reproduced and reproducing the ubiquitous trace of commodified culture, the images and ideals associated with fashion, alcohol and tobacco legitimate consumer ideology. It positions identity in terms of purchasing, i.e., buying into the construction of identity, fantasies, status, and the representation and route to the fulfillment of desire. As ads, like film, render invisible the hand of production, subvertisements rendered visible the semiotic labor that went into producing the construction of the ideal through a re-articulation of the signifier to a re-contextualized signified.

Exposing the ideological myth of the campaigns, the subvertisement un-couple the images promoted by Absolut and Calvin Kline and re-articulate them to the social conditions and harmful effects suppressed in the original ad. By making the invisible signatures of the ad visible, the rearticulated elements provoke an irritation in the associations advanced in the ad and disrupts the normalizing discourses of the economies of consumption. Which means, the construction of gender and the associative meanings created and naturalized in the ads through celebrity association lose their status and disrupts the illusion of permanence and stability.

The viewer is implicated by the irritation of familiar and historical elements exposed in the space between the image and the public. The poetics therefore reveal how the dominant images reproducing familiar notions are challenged and brought into contact with realities of social and political turmoil. The invitation to disorienting messages brings suggestive and provocative responses while exposing cultural and ideological tensions of viewing norms and conventions. This can potentially challenge

the audience's neat categorizations of accepted and taken-for-granted assumptions of pleasure promoted through advertisements.

The Gap advertisements placed a heavy emphasis on association, where celebrities were pictured wearing Khakis. The response by *Adbusters* exposed the absurdity of the ad by featuring a subvertisement that is reminiscent of John Heartfield's work as it pictured Adolf Hitler with khakis. "Adolf Hitler wore khakis too," reads the caption. The change in tactics, or rather the expansion of the arsenal to include anti-consumerism in print and the air creates discourses around the futility, waste and inequality of over-consumption in the West.

*Adbuster's* website also provides the tools for other citizen, activist and appropriation artists to engage in tactics of their own. The website provides posters and stickers which can be downloaded by the public and put up on the streets in the public's right of way. And the public who engages in this type of activity are able to stay anonymous while they simultaneously form communities and share a membership identity around the poster. This tactic, as Roszak argues in the *Making of a Counter Culture*, reflects membership that develops in opposition to the orthodox culture, formed on the basis of a nebulous symbol that stands as a mark of identity and difference.<sup>111</sup>

The poetics and politics of the alternative ad speaks to a set of operations that utilize détournement as a project of emancipation. As Lasn notes, the media saturated postmodern world has furthered alienation and mental slavery to the image makers of Madison Avenue. The consequences of the one-way flow of communication and the denied access to culture produces a population of lumpen spectators. The battle over the hearts and minds of the public must, open the one-way flow of the spectacle. As the *Adbusters* mission statement describes,

We are a global network of culture jammers: writers, artists, designers, rabble rousers...hackers, philosophers, pranksters, poets and punks who believe that mental environmentalism is the defining social struggle of our era. We vow to change the way information flows and to shake up the production of meaning in

our society. Our aim is to catalyze a sudden, unexpected moment of truth – a mass reversal of perspective; a global mindshift – for which the corporate/consumerist forces never fully recover.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, for Lasn, appropriation is a tactic that can break apart the old syntax of commercials by recreating and inserting a new one into the chorus of culture. But, the new syntax carries the instructions of “a whole new way of being in the world.”<sup>113</sup> Like futurism that sought momentary glimpses into a world provoking sudden enlightenment, the heavenly manufactured creation is exposed and suddenly turns into a hellish reality. This is a sudden glimpse, a satori into the real conditions of existence. Where, “suddenly, the spectacle would be exposed in all its emptiness. Everyone would see through it.”<sup>114</sup> As Lasn describes in *Culture Jam: Uncooling America*,

We will strike by smashing the postmodern hall of mirrors and refining what it means to be alive. We will reframe the battle in the grandest terms. The old political battles that have consumed humankind during most of the twentieth century – black versus white, Left versus Right, male versus female – will fade into the background. The only battle still worth fighting and winning, the only one that can set us free, is The People versus The Corporate Cool Machine.<sup>115</sup>

But, Lasn’s call to action does not end there. A more detailed explanation of the politics and poetics of resistance is described by Lasn in *Culture Jam*, a manifesto written for

unswoothing America, by organizing resistance against the power trust that owns and manages that brand. Like Marlboro and Nike, America<sup>TM</sup> has splashed its logo everywhere. And now resistance to that brand is about to begin on an unprecedented scale. We will uncool its fashions and celebrities, its icons, signs and spectacles. We will jam its image factory until the day it comes to a sudden, shuddering halt. And then on the ruins of the old consumer culture, we will build a new one with a noncommercial heart and soul.<sup>116</sup>

To jam the image factory and bring it to a sudden and shuttering halt through a rebranding strategy and a social de-marketing campaign, to insert real heart and soul back into the people by challenging the prevailing ethos of manufactured insecurity and obedience is a powerful goal. Despite the lack of access to the dominant mode of commercial advertising, *Adbusters* created their own avenue and provided examples for

alternative ads for print, billboards and TV. From exercises in media literacy to Do-It-Yourself Manuals for making commercial spots for roughly, \$2000, *Adbusters* offered a multi-media platform for culture jamming.

### **Kill your TV and Buy Nothing**

As advertising promotes the ideal and constantly prolongs and differs its potential attainment, the Media Foundation attempts to create the “direct-action agitator – the anti-shopping protestor.”<sup>117</sup> The un-commercials, de-marketing, anti-marketing and subvertisements moved from the pages of the magazine of *Adbusters* to commercial time over the air, and back again, to the streets and the places of everyday life, when the Media Foundation developed the campaigns Buy Nothing Day and Turn off the TV week. The promotion of these events were refused by major network TV stations. The corporate financed publicity surrounding the denial to broadcast un-commercials exploded in the press and was even on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*.<sup>118</sup>

Buy Nothing Day started in 1992 on Black Friday in the U.S. and the Saturday following Boxing Day in other participating countries. But, in Britain, BND is referred to as No Shop Day. The day was promoted as an environmental-friendly and health conscious statement against the excess of First World consumerism. The call to action, was, ironically, to get the public to not act and not participate in the consumer binge following Thanksgiving. The campaign was, and continues to be, an attempt to articulate rampant and excessive consumerism with the socio-economic consequences therein. On a very immediate level, life itself as a women was trampled to death at the entrance of a Wal-Mart on Black Friday in 2008 and another used mace on shoppers in 2011.

As Lasn argues, “Christmas is one of the big rituals that has been hijacked by marketing. It’s a spiritual ritual which has been dear to people’s hearts for hundreds of years at least, but with television and the mass media, they’ve somehow managed to convince us that dashing off to the malls and spending a lot of money is the thing to do.”<sup>119</sup> The attempt therefore is to reinvent Christmas and the collective and social



spirit. “The reason we put Buy Nothing Day at the beginning of the Christmas season is that in this long rethinking process, this reinventing the America dream that will go on over the next 2 or 20 years, I think Christmas will be the first thing that people will want to reinvent because they feel in their guts that something very valuable, a spiritual dimension has been lost.”<sup>120</sup>

As Lasn argued, the people living in G-7 countries, roughly twenty percent of the world’s population, consume seventy percent of the world’s resources. And, they release over two-thirds of the greenhouse gases. When roughly eighty-five percent of American children are on an advertising mailing list before they are born, it is hard to deny that “our consumptive way of life is poisoning the air and water, sucking the life out of oceans and forests and draining the spirit out of our personal and cultural lives.”<sup>121</sup>

The activities of Buy Nothing Day have ranged from creating Shopping-free zones with credit card cutting services, to zombie marches and street theatre. And, over the course of the next few years, take-back the streets movements would coincide with the anti-purchasing activities. For Jordan, in the *Art of Necessity* the subversive imagination of anti-road protest and Reclaim The Streets takes on the character of a street carnival in all of its living, dancing and political undertones. “By filling the streets with people freely expressing themselves, RTS not only protests what it is against, but also creates an experiential model of the culture it is for.”<sup>122</sup> Their art was not to be a “representation but presence; their politics was not about deferring social change to the future but about change now, about immediacy, intuition and imagination”<sup>123</sup> As Jordan illustrates, the actions of the RTS transgress the distinctions of the common borders that divide making political acts poetic and poetic acts political. Reclaiming the streets is temporary, where the street as a figure of capitalism, is reclaimed and turned on its head.

The streets are not the only embodiment of capital or the activities surrounding Buy Nothing Day, as stores were also targets of temporary transgression and transformation. Grote’s description of the co-optation of a Disney store by Reverend

Billy points to a performance strategy where the store is a site appropriated to denounce shopping. Viewing entertainment as a means of social control and stores as the environment by which all sense of discomfort is wiped clean, Disney stores create pleasure zones, in which customers can relax and partake in conflict free consuming behavior. But the choice of Disney stores in particular is no accident as the store is designed to manipulate the feelings one has with each character and helps create the conditions to feel good about consumption. As Grote argues, “We can’t hope to overwhelm this level of late-capitalist spectacle, but we can grab it, transform it, and reverse its purpose: we can use it to reveal.”<sup>124</sup>

If Disney attempts to create an anesthetic, a frozen and managed environment that is regulated and organized and manufactured as a utopia, where, from the very moment of entering the store the would be consumer undergoes psychological manipulation to create buyers and channel their action to the “climatic moment of purchase,” “Disney’s greatest weapon is its agitprop (or, more appropriately, anetheprop), so that’s what we use to fight it.”<sup>125</sup> Whether this is the lie that tells the truth or tactical guerilla occupation, Reverend Bill pulls “back the curtain on a bit of fake heaven” in order to create a new one.<sup>126</sup>

The presence of Reverend Bill of the Church of Stop Shopping disrupts the artificial environment. As Grote explains, “Bill talks about his actions as ‘complicating; the shopping experience; what Disney offers up is a life without complications.’”<sup>127</sup> In this attempt to agitate and create a cognitive dissonance, Bill converts Disney’s untarnished environment into the hell underneath the glossy image of Mickey Mouse. Billy’s proclamations reveal the underside of global capitalist corporations and consumer’s complicity in the conditions of reproduction through their purchases. Ultimately, Billy’s poetics consist in live performance and occupation as the entire store is appropriated to stage a theatre of dissent and confront the tenets of consumer culture within the spaces of consumption.

The second campaign launched by the Media Foundation, advocated that the public turn off their televisions and other media devices. For Kalle Lasn, the U.S. itself had become a brand and a free and authentic life was no longer possible in Brand U.S.A. The media is the primary conduit in the constitution of the American consumer, through an endless parade of television commercials, product placements, radio adverts and the systematic infiltration of marketing campaigns in the daily lives of a public continually defined as consumers. From the moment of birth, and even before then, citizens are branded as consumers of the America™. Rather than a medium that facilitates active engagement with one's environment or critical thinking about the prevalence and role of overconsumption, politics, social inequalities, or environmental degradation in our lives television operates like a Huxleyan soma, and induces a consumer trance.<sup>128</sup>

In collaboration with TV Free America and White Dot in the U.K., the Media Foundation advanced a full boycott of Television for a week. The campaign continues to this day during the third week of April. From displacing creativity, productivity, healthy physical activity to reading, National TV-Turnoff Week urged the public to free themselves from the grip and consumer trance that TV promotes.<sup>129</sup> Although the goal of the campaign was to effect Nielson ratings, TV-Free America, White Dot and the Media Foundation estimated that five million viewers turned off their TV in response to the campaign in 1999. As one report indicated, the TV was turned off in 45,000 schools, libraries and religious groups with an estimated 250,000 people throughout the world put up posters, organized community events and wrote letters to newspapers promoting the TV boycott week.<sup>130</sup>

Tom Liacas, the campaign manager at *Adbusters* claims that the statistics and the underlying message that TV is an unhealthy activity for children is the primary reason why networks have rejected to broadcast the ad. From the excesses of television violence to gratuitous violence in news coverage, the potential harm to the mental landscape are astounding. As the commercial indicated, children ages 2 – 11 in the U.S. watch roughly

20 hours of TV each week. While the average American child sees over 200,000 violence acts and witnesses 16,000 murders by the age of 18. Although all the major networks refused to air the un-commercial for the campaign, CNN did.<sup>131</sup>

While CNN was the only channel to broadcast the commercial, they were inundated with abusive calls from people who argued they had the right to buy what they wanted.<sup>132</sup> But the reports quickly moved from covering the atrocity to condemning the ‘puritanical’ impulse and unlikely success of convincing the public to stop shopping. As one report indicates, “All this anti-consumerism in the Green movement is a serious mistake. It alienates normal people, who, since the dawn of time, have always like to acquire more things, given half a chance...Telling people they mustn’t – or worse, that they’re pigs, is a recipe to guarantee the Green movement a permanent place on the margins of political life.”<sup>133</sup>

The reports of the activities of *Adbusters* have ranged however, from guerrilla activists, to the “lunatic fringe.” As Bob Bryan of Scali, McCabe and Sloves stated, “I think one of the mistakes that the media literacy people make is that as soon as you demonstrate that advertising is a carefully constructed illusion about our lives, so what? That doesn’t answer the fact that we love to watch them. We do. Many of us still aspire to be beautiful, successful, rich, whatever it is.”<sup>134</sup>

The significance of Bryan’s report lies in Lasn’s response to such claims. As Lasn explains, the conflict between advertisers and their targets is a war over who defines the issues raised in public. “For the first time in history, perhaps, consumption itself has become a bit of a controversial issue. Advertising, begging the creation of consumption, is going to be increasingly under attack.”<sup>135</sup> But, as another report stated, lacking originality the magazine “comes all over sincere at just the wrong moments. It is in any event hard to jam the media if you’re not very good at writing slogans. Just a hint: ‘Uncool’ as a transitive verb is probably not the place to start. Jamming the media is a

seductive idea. The problem is, the media jams itself with such frequency that it's hard to get a word in edgewise."<sup>136</sup>

### **Interference**

The power of corporations to stifle speech and constitute the public as consumers reveals how and why, the Billboard Liberation Front appropriates billboards and turns the power of the press against corporations through official communiqués. It also reveals the ultimate tactic of the situation, that is, to get the media to finance and bring attention to the critiques of larger corporations to hail democratic subjects. Throughout the 1990s the BLF continued to serve 'clients' by 'improving' the advertisements for Zenith, Subaru, Camel Cigarettes, Chrysler's Plymouth Neon, Levi's and Apple. But it is the appropriation of the billboards for Neon, Levi's and Apple that are most revealing. Both in terms of the anti-corporate critique and the changing tactics of commercial advertising that utilized the strategies of activists to market their products. The marketing strategies of Plymouth Neon and Apple represent a commercial attempt to co-opt cutting edge styles and historical figures in branding campaigns directed at the rebel outsider.

In 1994, Chrysler created an advertisement for their new affordable sedan, the Plymouth Neon. The billboards went up around San Francisco, in which the car was featured against a white background. The text of the ad included the car name and the message "HI." However, in the following weeks advertisers added a "P", "C" and two "L's" to the billboard. What was once a billboard with a simple message that introduced the car, was converted to an advertisement that used the car as the signifier "Hip" and "Chill." Some of the advertisements even gave the car a Mohawk. In short, Chrysler defaced their own ads to attract the hip, cool and a bit subversive consumer.<sup>137</sup>

In response to the re-appropriation of Billboard alteration techniques, the BLF hit over a dozen Neon billboards throughout California. Altering the "Hip" to Hype, adding 666, and for good measure, adding a skull and cross bones to the mix. As Napier, the CEO of the BLF explains, "I give them credit for cleverness. But we can't sit by while

these companies co-opt our means of communication. Besides, they are substandard activity for midnight billboard operators. They're tacky."<sup>138</sup> And, the actions of Chrysler's marketing team were not well received by others either.

Over the course of the next few weeks, the National Graffiti Information Network (NGIN) forwarded over 50 pages of documents, and even a documentary of people heaving bricks through train windows, writing on police cars and scribing initials in glass to the Chrysler Corporation. As NGIN claimed, they hoped that Chrysler's Marketers would see the error of their ways in using graffiti as a choice in marketing strategy. But, the extent to which such documents would alter of the actions of advertising, especially for cars, seems unlikely. At the same time however, the response by the BLF also indicates, that if marketers were going to use the radical tactics of appropriation, a full on assault would ensue.<sup>139</sup>

Over the course of the next year, the BLF hit an electronic Camel Cigarette Billboard, altering the sign of Joe Camel and the words Camel Genuine Taste, to "Am I dead yet." This was the first reported incident in which electronic signs have been improved and altered to communicate an alternative message. But, by 1997 the BLF turned their sites to Levis, and by 1998 to one of the most written about marketing campaigns to date, Apple's "Think Different" campaign. For the Levis ad used the mind binding lines of 1960's nostalgia, the BLF included the face of Charles Manson to the center of the hypnotic lines.<sup>140</sup>

The forced association of 90s lifestyle accessories with the notorious mass murderer of the 1960s, rebrands Levis' as willing to go to any lengths to appeal to the cutting edge demographic. But, strangely, this has not been an entirely foreign notion in marketing. For, at this time the images of Mao and Stalin were becoming common in commercial imagery, as they too were being used on the streets by artists such as Shepard Fairey to critique systems of authority and unquestioned obedience. But, if the images of dictators or serial killers who engaged in mass murder on an unprecedented scale were

not enough for the new and cutting edge imagery of revamped branding campaigns, then perhaps the iconic images of heroes and celebrities would invoke an awe and create a brand and subject position for ‘counter cultures’ to identify with.

In the early months of 1998, Apple engaged in a marketing campaign to brand its company as a forward thinking corporation. Apple, provided some of the first successful home computers in the late seventies. The invention of the Apple II, in the 1980s and the now iconic commercial in 1984, in which a reference to George Orwell’s 1984 was used in a marketing campaign to position Apple’s Macintosh computer as a means to escape conformity, helped create an identity for Apple as an ‘outsider’ brand designed to facilitate creative freedom. Although the branding of Apple took on mythic proportions, in which the apple signifies both creative ingenuity and a battle against IBM, by 1996 and through 1997, Apple was reporting loses of over 1.85 billion dollars. In the span of five years, Apple was losing ground as market share dropped from 10 to three percent.<sup>141</sup>

But, 1997 marked the year that co-founder and former employee, Steve Jobs returned to Apple. In conjunction with Lee Clow and TBWA Chiat/Day, apple launched television spots, web-based events, print ads and outdoor ads on buses, buildings and billboards for its ‘Think Different’ campaign. Jeremy Miller, the spokesman for the firm that created the campaign, illustrates that the campaign was on a quest for a new market appeal and product identity. The identity that Apple sought was based on exploration, innovation, and empowerment.<sup>142</sup>

As Miller states, the campaign, is “a reminder that the Apple Computer Company is still very relevant to those who not only think differently but those who choose to change the whole body of what they think about.”<sup>143</sup> The text of the commercials state, “Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The trouble makers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change

things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do. Think different.”<sup>144</sup>

The images of those described included Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King, Jr., Richard Branson, Muhammad Ali, Almeria Earhart, to name but a few. As Shields explains, “The surprising and contrasting celebrity-images appropriated in the ad create an amphigorical perspective framed as tribute, structured as polemic, and sold as advisement, and this works for those consumers who want and expect an edge, a spin (both visual and conceptual), history and common sense be damned.”<sup>145</sup>

The use of such cultural icons, such as Gandhi who actually spent his entire life fighting against oppression, or the Dalai Lama’s struggle for Tibet, or Martin Luther King, Jr.’s push for civil rights to the point of imprisonment, harassment and eventual assassination, speaks to the manipulation of the meaning of the images of human rights for commercial gain and brand identity. The use of such images, therefore seemed outright manipulative to the Billboard Liberation Front. They appropriated a number of these advertisements to de-commercialize and dis-articulate the images of Apple with the underbelly of the hardships and struggles in which such figures have endured.<sup>146</sup>

The Apple Computer Advertising Enhancement Campaigns, as the BLF called them, were created to coincide with the Web ’98 convention at the Moscone Center in San Francisco. Amelia Earhart was changed from ‘Think Different’ to ‘Think Doomed,’ while the Dalai Lama was improved with the slogan ‘Think Disillusion.’ Other alterations included Alfred Hitchcock: Think Dead; Richard Branson: Think Dork; and Ted Turner: Think Dividends. As the BLF state, “We hope that our work will encourage high-tech advertisers to dig even deeper in their quest to find catch celebrity cadavers with greedy grandchildren to pitch their products. It’s the American way.”<sup>147</sup> As Napier explains, it’s getting more and more difficult for people to speak their minds, and the new campaign inserts such voices into the public arena.



The Billboards themselves were perfect canvases, as their simplicity, image centered, low text and grammatically incorrect slogan provided enough space and semiotic fodder to re-appropriate the image and text and make it speak a new voice, with new and alternative meanings. As Napier explains, it was also to follow through with the command of the billboard itself, as the alteration might get people to think differently about Apple's ad campaign. As the BLF stated, "We applaud Apple's bold exploitation of these heroes, living and dead, and celebrate its decision to pay an honorarium to the Lama's Trust, a non-profit foundation dedicated to buying back Tibetan real estate from the Chinese government, one parcel at a time."<sup>148</sup>

Using such figures for commercial gain, rather than to promote their wellbeing and support their cause, speaks to the commercial logic and evolving tactics of advertising at this time. When the Dalai Lama is used to promote the revamped identity of Apple, whose products are manufactured in China, which is the Lama's oppressor, think disillusioned seems to be a better description of the social, economic, and political circumstances suppressed and mythologized in the Apple ads. As the BLF explains, "The BLF has long adhered to this same self-reliant philosophy, and has executed these unpaid improvements as a unilateral gesture of its bilateral support for Apple and the Dalai Lama. Only through eternal vigilance and the close cooperation of Hollywood, Silicon Valley and Madison Avenue can we ever hope to throw off the yoke of tyranny. Free Tibet! Discounted Tibet! Apple close-out sale!"<sup>149</sup>

Although the tactics of the billboard liberation front span from appropriating billboards as a form of intercepting and rebroadcasting the concealed codes of the ads and intruding in the press through official communiqués, the need to stay anonymous was still a crucial dimension to the success of their operations. By 2000, most of the BLF had full time jobs, families and mortgages, and exposure might put a damper on living securely. Ranging from 18 to 55, the BLF represents an organized set of provocateurs, whose wit,

humor and creativity adds to their elusive character. Although, some of the members are marketers by day, the nights in which they operated indicate a different set of personas.

Although the tactics of the Billboard Liberation Front span the appropriation of billboards to détournement of advertising to the intervention in the press through staging kidnappings of reporters and the use of official communiqués, the need to stay anonymous is a crucial dimension to the success of their operations. While the official communiqués have kept the BLF largely immune from commodification and attacks in the press, some reports were less than gracious to the politics and poetics of the Front. As *Advertising Age* reported, “Still, when the populist appeal of Napier’s views wore off,” one report indicated, “the flaws in his worldview started to bug me. Sure, public space belongs to all of us – but not the real estate that encompasses it. Property owners have rights.”<sup>150</sup>

Although the claim toward property rights systematically suppresses the unequal access to advertising and property, intellectual and physical, the report continued to privilege the rights of those in power. “Outdoor firms own or lease the spaces that contain advertising. So they get to control how those spaces are used, subject to city (community) ordinances – and subject to the approval of consumers, who have an absolute right to vote with their wallets... Secondly, the BLF doesn’t remove the ads altogether; it alters them to suit its own goals, monopolizing the same space with a different message. The group is guilty of the very sin it purports to fight.”<sup>151</sup>

Although this report relies on the tried and not-so-true frame of hypocrisy, what seems clear is the denial to investigate and explain how the Front could monopolize the space in the same manner as the \$200 billion dollar advertising industry. But, the report operates on another level as well. As the report concludes it utilizes the criminal frame to all but undermine the democratic call the BLF positions itself as furthering. As Napier is “more of a masked hood than a masked Hood.”<sup>152</sup>

Other reports utilized sources such as Rick Robinson the creative director at Infinity Outdoor to condemn the hoodlums. “What they’re doing is self-indulgent grandstanding...Think Doomed? Can’t they come up with anything better than that? Here’s an idea – how about ‘Think First,’ before you go up on the billboard?” As Robinson continued, “What they’re doing is still outside the law. How would you like it if these guys decided to repaint your house for you because they didn’t like the color?”<sup>153</sup> Again, what is interesting in this account is twofold, where ridiculing the alteration for Apple, reinstalls the priority of private property over expression, Robinson re-directs the issue of public space and the questioning of the law to a full scale legitimization of it.

The masked guerrilla activists expose what is absent and when denied access in the dominant channels of mass communication and not provided enough contradictory information from official and dominant channels, their efforts to raise consciousness might be hindered by the effective meaconing of culture and intrusion into the mainstream press. From the improvement of the billboards to press releases, the companies and products under revision are also receiving more exposure than they would have without their work. But of greater concern is the extent to which their tactics are also co-opted by advertising and marketing agencies. It is worth questioning if the BLF and *Adbusters*’ parodies and negative publicity helped create the conditions for advertisers to change their tactics and deploy both theatrical stunts and guerrilla tactics to market their brand? What, if they embraced the parody rather than threatened legal action? Would subvertisements actually facilitate a new type of marketing?

One problem is that the potential success of the billboard liberation front derives from the need for marketing agencies to capture niche audiences with cutting edge imagery. As advertiser’s moved in on the styles of the Billboard Liberation Front, a change in marketing strategies seems to have ensued. The result of which indicates that the former has co-opted the guerrilla tactics of the latter. As Napier explains, “The bastards just keep stealing our original ideas without paying us!”<sup>154</sup> However, if the

marketing trends of the 1990s are indicative of things to come in the first decade of the new millennium, the confluence of guerrilla activist technique and branding provides enough confusion in the interpellative hail, that all advertising commands can be looked upon with a question rather than recognition.

One thing however, does remain certain. Whether the BLF and *Adbusters* were egging on corporations or giving them ideas on how to create a hip brand identity for the counter-culture market, the billboard itself is transformed from a direct command to a looming question. Is this an ad or an alteration? This uncertainty leads to enough confusion that ads themselves lose their constitutive hail. Advertising and branding begins to lose its power if such questions override a clear notion of product identity and when the consumer is unable to make sense of the ad. The brand, which is nothing but a forced articulation, is unhinged from the ideals it is associated with. And, the subject position accorded to the consumer dissolves into ambiguity.

When advertising co-opts appropriation as a means to constitute the cynical public as consumers, the streets are filled with a radical ambiguity. Insofar as advertising agencies create ads that look defaced and deface their own ads, it becomes less and less clear if the ad is in fact an ad or the creative work of appropriation artists. As both street artists and advertisers engage in the similar tactics with similar designs, enough interference is created that advertisers may undermine their own power. This reveals the ultimate tactic of the situation, that is, to get the media to finance and bring attention to the critiques of larger corporations and create enough interference through discursive operations to undermine its own constitution.

As it becomes increasingly difficult to decipher advertisement from appropriation, a radical ambiguity emerges in the social field over what distinguishes protest from a marketing ploy. And, as both street artists and advertisers participate interference creates an invitation to stop, think, and invest the message with neutralized meaning. The result is an atmosphere where politically invested images and tactics are subsumed, while

also facilitating a proliferation of meanings in what was once a predominantly uni-vocal command that demanded obedience.

As advertisers moved in and co-opted the tactics of appropriation and anti-consumption, it's worth questioning how pervasive such trends have become today. It is also worth noting that while the BLF tactics were co-opted, they were largely immune from commodification. Although, this didn't stop movie studios from trying. On October 15, 1999 Fox Studios released an adaptation of Chuck Palahniuk's, *Fight Club* in movie theatres throughout the U.S. The movie depicts a protagonist's search of corporeal meaning outside of the consumer lifestyle choices to assume. The search for meaning facilitated infiltrating support groups, forming an underground and anonymous group who physically tear down illusions of perfection by destroying corporate art, defacing buildings, fighting, détourning airplane landing procedure manuals and even liberating billboards. There are even scenes in which the lead characters played by Edward Norton and Brad Pitt, size up their physical appearance in relation to Calvin Klein ads.

While the movie expresses discontent with advertising and perhaps speaks to generation x cynicism, it also capitalized on it pulling in over \$10 million in profit. But perhaps of greater interest is the marketing efforts for Blue Ray release in November of 2009. To promote the Blue Ray release Fox Creative hired Neuron Syndicate to design the cover art and commissioned 5 graffiti artists to create 30 promotional pieces and use stencil designs throughout the streets.<sup>155</sup> Priding itself on "visual and aesthetic power" the syndicate has created packaging designs and implemented branding strategies for some of the largest media companies in the U.S.<sup>156</sup>

### **Concluding Comments**

The tactics of appropriation of the BLF in the late 1980s and 1990s, represents a series of tactics identified as meaconing, intrusion, jamming and interference. In terms of appropriation, the most effective seems to be meaconing, as it not only disrupts advertisements through an unveiling, but rearticulates and redirects them and forces

corporations to pay for subversion. The tactical use of the visual elements of advertisements in order to subvert it, positions activists within the realm of a revolutionary politics. But, it is not limited to just image appropriation and alteration but also includes theatre, activism, street takeovers and the intervention in the press and moving from critiques of consumer culture to the rights of expression over property.

Their works continue, often displaying the appropriated billboards of the Department of Corrections who critiqued the torture at Abu Ghraib to teaming up with other artistic provocateurs such as Ron English for billboard improvements. These improvements within the last few years have ranged from, “ATT works in more places like the NSA” in 2008, to “My Life, My Choice, My Death, Philip Morris,” “You have about 10,000 taste buds, Kill the All” for McDonalds, and “She is a thing, Stella Artois” in 2010. As their improvements throughout the last few years indicate, the BLF continues to express their voice to critique the privatization of public space, the failure of government to protect citizens, the greed and misuse of the public trust by corporations, and the collusion of corporate and government interests that threaten privacy.

*Adbusters* however, entered the world market with the launch of the black dot sneakers within the last decade. The sneakers, which essentially look like the classic Converse All Stars owned by Nike, were manufactured through non-sweatshop labor. And, with the launch of the unswisher, the shoes were a direct attack on Nike’s hipster consumer base and marketed as, anti-sweatshop, anti-logo, anti-corporate, and pro-grassroots and pro-environmental. But despite, or perhaps because of the exposure garnered from their publication, they have also incited the public to occupy wall street. As Lasn notes, occupy derived from a single meme on an ad in *Adbusters*. It was broadcast on Twitter, and eventually caught fire.

The commodification of anti-consumption and the potential to incite action requires further explication however. The next chapter traces the poetics of Shepard Fairey, Robbie Conal and Banksy and the evolving tactics directed to gain access to the

dominant modes of communication and alter the representations from within. Shepard Fairey whose tactics led to arrests for “advertising without a permit,” “possession of a tool of criminal mischief,” and “malicious destruction of public property”<sup>157</sup> was also known within advertising circles as a marketing guru who provides the keys to tapping into an ever elusive fringe market. Fairey in particular points to the commercialization and co-optation of appropriation, as he helped design ads for Absolut Vodka, Apple, Cartoon Network, Levi Strauss & Co, Motorola, Nike, Nissan, Pepsi Cola Co., Saatchi & Saatchi, Sony, Virgin Records and Universal Pictures, to name a few. The following chapter traces tactics of Conal, Fairey and Banksy and the continued cooptation and commodification of appropriation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **UNDERMINING THE ICONOGRAPHY OF POWER**

The political and economic changes in the late nineteen-nineties and the early years of the new millennium brought with them a system of production that both enabled and constrained democratic forms in the public sphere. The forms of entertainment media do not merely express a commercial logic with a profit centered bottom line, but also through their constitutive dimension reproduce and continually reconstitute subjects as consumers to America™. There were structural shifts in the ownership of media proceeding the implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, in addition to the proliferation of media channels facilitated an increasingly fragmented market. As cable programming narrowed their target demographic, advertising upped the ante converting sales appeals and marketing strategies from the mass public to niche markets.

On the outskirts of an increasingly consumer saturated culture, segments of the public were becoming cynical of the promises of advertising and the infiltration of ads in public space. The tenets of neoliberalism advanced through right-wing politicians, as the prevailing media expanded their reach and promoted a more diverse array of ads, a proliferation in the potential for re-articulation also emerged. In every message and hail was the possibility of appropriation. It is from within this environment that artists and activists such as Robbie Conal, Shepard Fairey, and Banksy emerged to expose the aesthetics of power and intervene in the increasingly privatized space.

#### **Robbie Conal**

Trained in abstract Expressionism at Stanford University, Robbie Conal created a series of political portraits to expose the corruption with U.S. politics. “Portraits,” Robbie explains “have always been historical records and idealized symbols of power...When I usurp the portrait vehicle to show no holds barred, almost hideous views of people who misuse power, there is a subtle parody there.”<sup>1</sup> The portraits, however,



were not designed for galleries, but for the public to encounter in everyday life. As Robbie contends, a gallery limits public exposure and tends to contain the message within the confines of institutional walls. “The whole scene” Robbie describes, “just seemed too narrowly circumscribed for what I was now doing – in terms not only of numbers, but by class and education...It was time to plot my escape from the ‘friendly confines’ of the art establishment.”<sup>2</sup>

With the help of John Berley, Conal translated his portraits to posters. Together, they spent the next month in John’s print shop going over the technique of lithography. Lithography, one of the first technologies of reproduction, enabled Robbie to produce his images on a mass scale. In October of 1986, Conal spent his life savings of \$600 to portray Ronald Reagan, Don Regan, Caspar Weinberger, and James Baker as “Men with no Lips” using a Heidelberg press. The motivation behind these works derived from news stories about the Reagan Administration’s political and economic policy decisions to dismantle federal social welfare programs and the involvement in the Iran Contra affair and South America. The lack of critical reportage of these issues was central to democracy. The lack of transparency and the lies about U.S. involvement in arms dealing with Iran proved to be otherwise and the institutionalized silence of social welfare programs provoked an assault on these heads of state.<sup>3</sup>

As Conal explains, “What the hell was that pocket-junta, the Cabinet, doing to our country (and the rest of the world) in the name of representative democracy?”<sup>4</sup> As Robbie started making the images of Reagan, Regan, Weinberger, Baker, Shultz and Casey, he discovered that they were portraits of “ugly old white men with pursed lips—okay, no lips. And it came together—this tight little club of power mongers were: MEN WITH NO LIPS!”<sup>5</sup> The images that ‘represented’ power in the U.S., were converted into emblems of the abuse of power. They were not figured in so much as disfigured, as his portraits magnified the skin of each to highlight the corruption in appearance. Conal

believed these men were misusing donations for china sets, toilet seats and otherwise dismantling government accountability.<sup>6</sup>

So with acrylic wallpaper adhesive in five-gallon cans and wall paper brushes, Robbie and his best friend Lenny jumped in a car and drove around plastering the posters and violating municipal ordinances along the way. “We dubbed my Honda Civic wagon ‘The Gluemobile,’” Conal joked, “popped a little traveling music into the tape deck, and roared off into the wilds of Lalaland. I had made up a demographic plan—hit the beaches; plaster Melrose where the rockers hung out; glue the schools...invade downtown to entertain the nine-to-five white-collar warriors; stick it to the art museums just for fun...We put five hours and 100 miles on The Gluemobile that night.”<sup>7</sup>

Although Conal and Lenny were stopped by a K-9 police unit that night, neither were arrested. The success of that first night led to a similar intervention in March of 1987. For this guerrilla foray, Conal featured Nancy Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Jeane Kirkpatrick and Joan Rivers, as “Women with Teeth.” This image was created and posted to express the differences and representation of power between men and women. Although the role of Nancy Reagan was fairly well known at this time, there was a difference in portraits of power. As for Joan Rivers, well, Conal said that it had a lot to do with the power of the media and the changing appearance of Joan throughout the years. However, to display this image Robbie recruited more activists to assist in the midnight raiding parties on public space.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of 1987 and into 1988 Robbie created and plastered three more posters, “Speak,” “Something Fishy,” “Contra Diction,” and “Contra Cocaine.” Speak was created to expose the hypocrisy of Donald Regan. From selling arms to terrorists to using the profits to support illegal military operations and “circumnavigating Congress and the American people in the name of representative democracy,” Conal felt that Regan’s comments regarding the nature of hypocrisy needed to be exposed.<sup>9</sup> “The American public knows what’s going on. We just don’t have an adequate system of

accountability that works. But I knew that if I addressed the issues, people on the streets would understand.”<sup>10</sup>

Reagan denied having any knowledge of the arms for hostages dealings in Iran, so the first poster would picture Reagan with the caption “Hear.” Reagan’s national security advisor who turned a blind eye to the situation would be pictured with the caption “See,” and as Oliver North kept quiet in the name of national security, his portrait would be used with the caption “Speak.” But in the end, North’s picture was the only one printed and plastered on the streets. Speak was posted in Austin, Texas with the help of the local art and rock scene and Houston with the help of the roller skating motorcycle gang called the Urban Animals.

“Contra Diction” evolved from Conal’s continued discontent with the Reagan administration’s refusal to act on the principles they promoted. “One day he [Reagan] ‘couldn’t remember’ authorizing contra aid,” Conal explained; “another, ‘it was my idea all along.’ And, of course, he was a contradiction! We had a president who not only disregarded Congress, he forgot about it! Time to bore into his head...or, to put it another way, perform a little operation of my own: surgically deconstruct his utterances.”<sup>11</sup>

And with a slight increase in the cost of only \$200, Conal set out on what he called a project of “urban beautification.” By this time, Robbie had a following of guerrilla volunteers. The increasingly growing cadre of activists would meet behind diners where Conal would supply them with sets of fifty posters each, a two-gallon bucket of glue and a brush. By this time, the group consisted of entertainment industry producers, writers and actors, college professors, graffiti artists and students of graphic design. They divided up the city with each team taking a neighborhood. But, before sending them off, Robbie gave them a speech about guerrilla etiquette and provide the phone number of a bail bondsman. “The object of the action was alternative distribution—sharing our concerns about public issues, not troublemaking.”<sup>12</sup>

The success of the Contra Diction guerrilla take-over led to the skeleton image of Oliver North in the portrait, "Contra Cocaine." Astonished that the Reagan administration not only supplied the contras but hired private contractors to transport ammunition into Nicaragua and fly cocaine out of Central America, Robbie created a poster that referenced Day of the Dead skeleton imagery common in Mexico, Central and South America that spoke to the abuse of power in the regions the Reagan Administration was exploiting. For this takeover, Conal teamed up with the Christic Institute to produce and distribute 10,000 posters in eight cities in one night.<sup>13</sup>

In 1988 Conal continued his attack on the Reagan Administration and George Bush. As the once head of the CIA and vice president of Reagan was running for office, Robbie created another image that spoke to the corruption in Washington in the 1980s. With the image of Bush and the caption, "It can't happen here" Conal created a poster that announced a warning, as it referenced a novel by Sinclair Lewis, in which totalitarianism took hold of the American political system. "I'd present George with an anti-campaign poster" just in time for the Republican Party convention in New Orleans Conal commented.<sup>14</sup> The poster also spoke to Bush's brain, or absence thereof, as the "here" is stamped presumably in front of where his brain would be.<sup>15</sup>

Over the next few years Conal created a number of images that culminated in a billboard project of Jesse Helms. The attack on Helms was an attack on censorship as federal funding was denied to artists who failed to produce politically correct art. At this time, federal funding was being used to intimidate artists into producing art that would not challenge culturally accepted notions or speak out against abuses of power. As Conal comments, "Whether it's Helms, or Senator Robert Dole chilling funding of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting because of its 'liberal slant,' or Tipper Gore and Susan Baker legislating song lyrics, these people should have a surgeon general's warning sticker on their rear ends: "Harmful to the Health of the First Amendment, the Future of Art in America, and Rock'n'Roll."<sup>16</sup>

When the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., removed Robert Mapplethorpe's photo exhibit claiming it was obscene, action was needed. To boycott would mean no art, no NEA and no David. "Just Goliath. Maybe that's what Goliath wants."<sup>17</sup> If Helms had his way artists in the U.S. would be sentenced to Disneyland. Artists need to fight back. "What if a confederation of artists, graphic designers, and printers pooled talents and resources to provide pro bono promotional services to progressive organizations?"<sup>18</sup> Thus as Robbie contests, with art under attack, the logical response was an art attack.

The billboard was the most controversial of his works as it was paid for by Conal, removed by National Advertising executives of 3M and eventually put back up. The billboard depicted Senator Jesse Helms with a whole through his forehead and the words "Artificial Art Official." In hopes of achieving wide exposure, Robbie rented a billboard from National Advertising for three months, the three months prior to the North Carolina senatorial elections. Although the image was designed with the caption, "Holy Homophobia!," Conal was told that homophobia was considered a 'bad word' and it could not be used. Under the provision that the caption was not controversial, Robbie changed the caption, and 3M agreed to the use of "Artificial Art Official."<sup>19</sup>

The billboard was only up seven days before Conal was instructed by 3M to take it down. "This is exactly an example of the issue I was trying to protest. I'm saddened but I can't say that I'm shocked. I want the billboard back. I hope some billboard company still believes in the First Amendment."<sup>20</sup> But as this statement derives from an interview with the *Associated Press*, it is no surprise that within the next 24 hours 3M received enough bad publicity for censoring an anti-censorship billboard that they allowed Conal to put the message back up. Although 3M claims no political motivation, Conal advises, "let's not forget that state support of the arts has always been political. By definition. Art has always been a potent cultural weapon. That's why politicians want to control it, sometimes for worse, sometimes—surprisingly for better."<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the nineties, Robbie attacked Jim and Tammy Bakker with the caption “False Profits,” Newt Gingrich with the caption “Newtwit,” and collaborated with the Pearl Jam for more provocative projects. In the collaboration with Pearl Jam, Senator Jesse Helms is surrounded by black-and-white images – that include images of the Klu Klux Klan and a Barbie doll dressed as the Statue of Liberty. An image, Conal explains, that speaks to commercialized exploitive patriotism. According to Conal, anyone who makes a poster that isn’t advertising is at the bottom of an issue. The posters speak to the moment and are made out of desperation to the larger systemic issues. The surface of the poster is not limited to its superficial grievance or blame, but reflects the lower depths of structural inequalities.<sup>22</sup>

There are four images, however, that exemplify Conal’s work both in scope and backlash. While two address the issue of abortion rights two others point to the gross misconduct of police actions in L.A. One poster created in 1992 depicted the Supreme Court Judges of the U.S. with the caption “Freedom From Choice” while the other pictured Chief Justice William Rehnquist with the caption “Gag me with a coat hanger. Abortion is Still Legal.” The then recent decision by the Supreme Court that made it illegal for federally funded family planning clinics to use the word “abortion” fueled these posters.<sup>23</sup>

The posters were a collaboration between Conal and the Greater Los Angeles Coalition for Reproductive Rights. When the group, which consisted of roughly 170 pro-choice organizations contacted Conal to make a poster, he agreed having already started to make a number about the issue. Representatives of the Coalition picked “Gag Me with A Coat Hanger.” Within a week’s time, the group raised \$5000 to print 6,000 posters and gathered enough guerilla volunteers to spread the posters from San Diego to L.A. The guerrilla campaign first took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision, Roe v. Wade. The following night 24 people went out to plaster the streets.<sup>24</sup>

A member of Planned Parenthood said, President Bush's veto overturning the 'gag rule', meant women around the country would not be able to find out what they needed to know. "I said to myself, 'if we can't get this message to people officially, we've got to find a way to get it them unofficially. I wanted to put it up in places where people will see it (so that) they'll understand not only that there's an attempt to prevent them from getting this information, but they'll know that abortion is still legal.'"<sup>25</sup> The week after, the Group used "Freedom from Choice" for the April 5 Pro-Choice March on Washington. The 25,000 posters went up in 76 cities and 70 Planned Parenthood's affiliates participated in the action.<sup>26</sup>

The Freedom From Choice image, the member stated "suggests to people to think beyond just the issue of abortion to contraception, how you behave in your private life, whether you can be sexually active or not, and what you can hear from your doctor. It goes to the issue of personal freedoms and choices of all kinds."<sup>27</sup> The image was later converted to a \$20,000 19x48 foot billboard unveiled on September 14, 1992. This date was selected to coincide with a vote scheduled in Congress on the Freedom of Choice Act, an act that would codify abortion-rights protections established in *Roe v. Wade*. As one member explained, "I am deeply respectful of, and grateful for, the power of his art to galvanize people's involvement, especially the young people who need to take part in our political discourse."<sup>28</sup>

Conal's interventions in L.A. continued with "Casual drug users ought to be taken out and shot" and "Dis Arm." While both directly confront the public with the activities of the Los Angeles Police Department, they also represent a change in poetics, as the photographic image of casual drug users utilizes a visual aesthetic common in John Heartfield's work. For this project 24 volunteers contributed to putting up 2,500 posters from Venice to downtown L.A., that depicts Police Commissioner Daryl F. Gates as a target. Using Gate's own words at the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing on Drugs with the last word crossed out and replaced with 'beaten' to address the bigger

problem of police brutality in America. However, as the group moved through the cities, they were followed by law enforcement who did not stop them, but systematically took down the images immediately after the group put them up.<sup>29</sup>

Dis Arm, was a slice from a seven part series, that used a photograph of a police baton nightstick. While Dis-Obey, Dis-This, Dis-Integration, Dis-Location, Dis-Illusion and Dis-Continue pictures the nightstick in action beating figures of human skeletons, in Dis-Arm the night stick is set ablaze. “The nightsticks”, Robbie explains, “were the match. When they struck Rodney (King), they lit up the city. It’s a symptom of very deep class division in American culture that has been acerbated by 12 years of Republican rule and the systematic dismantling of federal welfare and education programs.”<sup>30</sup> Dis-Arm was reported to have been plastered on over one hundred buildings in commemoration of the one-year anniversary of the riots that followed the Rodney King beating.

In response the Los Angeles County supervisor Michael D. Antonovich accused Conal of “glorifying violence” and sought charges against him for illegally posting his work on private and public property.<sup>31</sup> As, Antonovich, wrote in a letter to the *L.A. Times*, Conal’s works adds to the visual pollution problem. “There are many alternatives open to Conal to legally display his posters, such as buying billboard or bus space. Another option is to contract with owners of constructions sites, as film studios and record companies do.”<sup>32</sup> As Antonovich continued, it was irresponsible to “glorify the spreaders of graffiti at a time when graffiti is the communications network of gangs and is destroying neighborhoods.”<sup>33</sup>

But as Robbie contends, the poster does not incite anti-police violence or promote community unrest. In fact, it promotes the opposite. “Dis Arm” “is an angry and saddened call for peace and an end to government as a crisis management system that includes law enforcement as a form of class and race warfare. An end to government that cuts public education and health and social welfare services for poor people just to



balance the budget and makes equal justice the last resort of crowd control.”<sup>34</sup> While Robbie continued to deploy his tactics throughout the 1990s, it’s important to explicate the tactical poetics of his interventions.<sup>35</sup>

### **Adversarial tactics**

Conal’s tactics utilize grotesque realism as subjects are not encouraged or persuaded to take his position as a propaganda poster would dictate, but rather through an uncategorizable depiction. The debasement and undermining of official symbols of power are placed in the spaces reserved for obedience to the manufacture of consent, so Conal’s portraits encourage a dialogue. The images are wanted posters that convey the look and feel of the front page of a tabloid newspaper. The posters condemned figures of public malfeasance and called for justice. Operating in the space between tabloid and nuisance, Robbie admits that hopefully the posters would invoke a questioning in an otherwise routine and passive passage through the city. “Maybe it would initiate a guessing game. What is it? Who is it? Who did it? And why?”<sup>36</sup>

From the use of the double and triple pun, that facilitates multiple meanings and readings to the juxtaposition of a grotesque image of politicians, the symbols of power are degraded and open a proliferation of meanings, viewpoints and possible subject positions. The ravaged faces and facial contortions are an expression of grotesque realism as the icons of power are debased and brought down to the bodily level of fallibility, and the ideas that they promoted are turned inside out. In carnival the stable, unchanging, perennial hierarchy of values and norms is overturned.<sup>37</sup> Carnival is the “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions.”<sup>38</sup>

As Mikhail Bakhtin argues in *Rabelais and his World*, grotesque realism is a nonofficial and extra political depiction of the world outside officialdom. The spirit of carnival was directed “to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, form conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and

universally accepted.”<sup>39</sup> “This carnival spirit offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things.”<sup>40</sup> As public officials and officialdom are brought down to the bodily realm, in which their portraits, as symbols of power are undermined, Conal unhinges the symbolic power of the official portrait to advance a perspective that is systematically elided from view.

Conal’s works expose the construction of official images and ruptures the established techniques which facilitate the conveyance of official and state power, Conal’s tactics reflect a war over representation. As Conal explains, “I consider my art to be at war, and in the way that I like to fight-not with guns and killing, but culturally, and that’s where my guerrilla postering comes from. One of the tactics of guerrilla warfare is to fight only on your turf and only when you’re ready to fight, because the forces you’re fighting are much stronger and can crush you at any time if you’re not smart. My postering is my line of communication to a large audience.”<sup>41</sup>

Conal continues, “Putting images and text together is something that I borrowed from advertising-streamline semiotics, something that we’re surrounded by everyday day. To turn it around on itself is one of my pleasures.”<sup>42</sup> Robbie defines his actions as minor civil disobedience, as such misdemeanors are minor compared to the high crimes committed by U.S. Government Representatives. In the most direct and unmediated confrontation, Conal’s works are expressions of the powerless against the powerful, using humor and satire through the limited and alternative channels of distribution to unearth and expose the lies perpetuated in the name of democratic freedoms. “I want to try to formulate a new discursive formation that engages a larger audience,” Conal contends.<sup>43</sup> And at the very least keep the bureaucrats and politicians looking over their shoulders. “I think we should take the streets back for discourse about issues that are important to us rather than leaving them to alcohol and cigarette advertisements.”<sup>44</sup>

For Conal, the switch box is the ideal placement for this type of political intervention, as their height is right at eye level at every intersection. With this in mind, the switch box was measured and sized up to properly scale the image. Although Conal contends that the posters should be placed at eye level, he also describes the importance of utilizing the perfect angle. The angle needed to be precise because Los Angelians were particularly apt to “surface semiotics.” But if they were put in the right place they could grab people’s attention. “The posters could be a little surprise on the long drive to work in the morning: a bit of counter-infotainment, a low-level irritant, visual noise squawking away from every traffic light switching box. Like being bitten to death by ducks!” Conal added.<sup>45</sup>

By removing art from the confines of institution and putting them in the public’s right of way, Conal invites a discussion of the abuse of power and democratic dialogue on the streets where the poster works to incite questions and mobilize a diverse array of meaning. According to Conal, “I am interested in the way I engage people’s minds. I adopt standard media strategies typically used – and abused – by Madison Avenue to sell us ideas or products. But I turn these high-gloss strategies inside out, I subvert them by giving people public images that are unslick, ugly shots with difficult-to-decipher verbal cues. When people do a double take and think the thing through, I’ve got them more involved than when they’re passively absorbing what they’re told by the TV.”<sup>46</sup> Additional Conal contends, “I think humor provides a way of operating within the cracks and fissures of the system.”<sup>47</sup>

Conal’s appropriation techniques go beyond the streets as the development of a website and “Guerrilla Etiquette + Postering Techniques” manual provide both a forum to engage with a larger audience and instructions to reclaim public space. The manual written by Robbie, “Patti Party” and “Chocolate Sunflower” provide a step-by-step guide to the politics and poetics of guerilla art. Ranging from the philosophical underpinnings that guides appropriation and intervention in public space to what one should wear, eat

and drive, the manual provides a comprehensive guide for those who are trying to find out how to organize and plan their guerrilla tactics.

In “WHAT WE WANT,” the first section of the manual, Conal outlines the three primary goals of poster activism:

Mass distribution and the most direct form of unmediated expression; counter-infotainment, where the poster introduces critical ideas necessary for a healthy democratic system that supports the Constitution and First Amendment Rights; and empowerment by taking direct cooperative action on an issue that concerns us. For the general public who feel they have no avenues of resistance to the dominant power structure, no community support system, no ability to change their situation. To change apathy and cynicism to optimism.<sup>48</sup>

By the late 1990’s and into the 2000’s Conal continued with attacking both the right and left, although the right a little more for the lack of information necessary to engage in thoughtful democratic practice. Utilizing an aesthetic of Fascism as captured by Orwell in *1984*, Conal created four pieces in which Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, George W. Bush and Carl Rove were all depicted with Newspeak captions that include: War is Peace, Big Brother is Watching You, Ignorance is Strength, and Freedom is Slavery, respectively. All of which is fitting, given the public relations campaigns, systematic propaganda campaigns and the confluence of interests of that administration with major media outlets, in their propagation of Weapons of Mass Destruction rhetoric used to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2002.

But Conal continued using images of Gandhi, the Dali Lama and Martin Luther King Jr., with the captions, watching, waiting and dreaming. The use of these captions and iconic figures, unlike Apple’s advertising attempts, conjure specters from the past, who watch over the present and wait for the unfulfilled dreams of peace, diplomacy and civil rights. But the use of such iconic figures was not unique to Robbie, nor was the Orwellian imagery, Shepard Fairey, Mear One and Banksy intervened in public and private spaces to critique the Bush Administration and incite questions regarding the war in Iraq and government actions conducted in the name of democracy.

## Shepard Fairey

While in attendance at the Long Island School of Design in the summer of 1989, Shepard Fairey created a silk-screened sticker of Andre the Giant. The image would come to be defined as perhaps “the most famous street-art image in history.”<sup>49</sup> Andre Rene Roussimoff, whose notorious career in the World Wrestling Federation was catapulted to fame after fighting Hulk Hogan, was also a movie actor. Staring as Fezzik in *The Princess Bride*, Andre’s image appeared in newspapers and magazines and was not unfamiliar to fans of the World Wrestling Federation or Rob Reiner films.

It is from these newspapers that Fairey cut out the image of Andre and created a two-inch square black and white sticker. It started as a practical joke among friends, when Eric, a friend of Fairey’s, asked him how to make stencils. After flipping through a newspaper Fairey pointed at a picture of Andre and told Eric that he should use the image. But his friend was skeptical, as self-identified skateboarders like them would not make stickers with an image as lame of WWF wrestlers. However, Fairey couldn’t be dissuaded. He replied with eagerness that the image was cool and it was cool because he liked it. Fairey finished cutting the stencil and wrote “Andre the Giant has a Posse” on one side and “7’4”, 520 lbs.” on the other.

In 1988, at eighteen, Fairey moved out of South Carolina and attended the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). At the RISD, Fairey continued to appropriate images but would add alterations to the images. In Rhode Island, the sticker was a medium used to promote bands, political campaigns and political causes. But some of the images did not convey a clear message but instead invoked a question. As Fairey explains, “It was at this point that I began to ponder the sticker as a means of expression and communication for an individual, instead of just representing a band, company, or movement.”<sup>50</sup>

The thoughts that such questions fostered led to more questions about how the sticker and popular culture associations come to define one’s identity. But it was a trip to New York City that would ignite the creative energy necessary to create a sticker that

Fairey would call his own. Inspired by the graffiti on the walls but intimidated to engage in writing, Fairey utilized the sticker as a medium of individual expression. But for Fairey, it was not easy to acquire these images that signified a more rebel youth orientated approach to living. So rather than hunting down and buying these badges of cultural identity, Shepard used his mom's copier to duplicate images from skate magazines and album covers to make his own.<sup>51</sup>

His methods were not limited to Xeroxing images, at the same time Fairey was making paper-cut stencils for spray-paint and silk-screens. Fairey describes, the process as activities that preoccupied his high-school years and they were never intended as art, but rather a way to avoid paying for the images. During the following summer Fairey was working at a skate shop called the Watershed making homemade t-shirts when his boss asked him to make shirts and stickers for the store.<sup>52</sup>

Even though the Andre sticker started as a joke, Fairey was obsessed making more, such as "Gerber baby with Mohawk", "Prevent police boredom, skateboard" and mixed media pieces. One piece was created by appropriating an image, Xeroxing it and painting on it. For Fairey, this technique is as valid as any artwork because the 'original' image is altered and re-contextualized. The technique would be used for the Andre sticker to criticize the close-knit skater cliques in Providence. "This obey giant Posse thing was like the inside joke, skate crew thing, making fun of what it's condemning, making fun of having a crew, but being one, making fun of the language," Fairey justified.<sup>53</sup> "Wrestling was the most uncool thing to über hip skaters, but to associate yourself with it was funny, it was a paradox. I made the stickers, and decided to stick them around almost as an annoyance, a thorn in the side of the people I hung out with. I'd go to a party, and stick one in the medicine cabinet."<sup>54</sup>

It was both a way to be mischievous but also a provocation with the public, as the Andre sticker had no authorial marks as to its purpose or creator. Within the next year Fairey stuck the sticker to every stop sign in Providence. And then, he hit the streets of

New York and Boston. In the early stages of what would be the Andre Campaign, Fairey would run off a few hundred stickers a week at local copy centers using their sticker material. The price of doing so however become uneconomical, and led Fairey to purchase the sticker material at office supply stores for half of the price. But, even then the disadvantages of paper stickers – weathering too quickly outside and the near impossibility of removal indoors, led Fairey to use vinyl. The Vinyl ink and sticker surface was purchased whole and was cheaper to produce. Using a low-fi image on a high grade professional vinyl, furthered confusion over its perceived purpose.

By the summer of 1989 however, the images ubiquity and ambiguity was creating a diverse array of reactions within the public. When, a local paper in Providence “The Nice Paper” printed a picture of the sticker and offered free tickets to a show of choice at “The Living Room” for the name of its creator, Fairey began to realize that he stumbled into something much bigger than a practical joke or a jab at his friends. As Corey Goodfellow reports, some embraced the icon, even spinning lies about elaborate underground movements with secret handshakes, while others condemned the image as a sinister plot. But as confusion grew, so too, did it’s proliferation. And, as friends such as John and Ballard wanted in on the campaign, the image was stuck to cityscapes from Athens, Georgia to New York. Goodfellow adds, the sticker was going viral, it went “out to the public at large and spread like an epidemic.”<sup>55</sup>

After graduating from the Rhode Island School of Design, Fairey moved out to California where the Andre Campaign continued. Sending sticker to friends for them to post up was not about marking territory, as in “Killroy was here” but rather in creating a network of distribution that could facilitate the global take-over of the Andre image. To achieve this goal, Fairey placed classified ads in *Slap* skateboard magazine and the punk zine *Flipside*. The ads included the image and a brief message, “send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for stickers and the lowdown.”<sup>56</sup> Fairey was building a guerilla army,

a grass-roots network of Andre believers. Although the original ads promoted images virtually free of charge, Fairey eventually required a donation of \$.05 per sticker.

The poetics of the Andre image speaks to the tactic of re-articulation and the alternative networks of communication and distribution that delivered this image. As the *New York Times* reported, “Whatever the reason, Andre iconographers are at work from New York to Los Angeles, slapping posters and stickers of the brooding hulk’s face on public walls, apparently as an absurdist swipe at society’s worship of corporate logos.”<sup>57</sup> As more and more people began participating, a grass-roots organization was formed around the distribution of the image. While some of the participants were direct acquaintances, others volunteered. Fairey would send the stencil through the mail, asking those who received it to plaster the image if they liked the idea, others sent away for the stickers. As Fairey recounts, there was a point when he was receiving two letters a day from strangers requesting the sticker.<sup>58</sup> Within the next few years however, Fairey would receive up to 10 letters and 15 emails a day.

The viral nature of the Andre image consists of meme warfare. A meme, is a basic unit of belief or catchphrase that spreads from person to person like a viral infection. While memes can range from celebrity gossip to a fad diet, the Andre meme spread because of its ambiguity. And as the meme spreads so too, does a dialogue about the use of space and aesthetic constructions that convey power and the potential for its rearticulation. A number of alterations to the original image were made by the public. From the image of ET to Pee-wee Herman the public was engaging in a counter movement of appropriation but also belonging. The bootleg versions that used the ‘original’ image became a site for a cultural frame of reference in which a community could center around, using it as a badge of membership while also re-investing it with their own meaning. According to Fairey, “The template also provides a stylistic context with several implicit themes—DIY [Do It Yourself] ethic, fabricated iconography, absurd humor—all of which, to me, are validated by the fact that these bootleggers get my



message and want to perpetuate it in their own way.”<sup>59</sup> The design aesthetic and the phrase both contributed to this. The ‘original’ served as the reference point, but also the image in which a group could identify with their own message as well as Fairey’s.

The phenomenon of the Andre image as meme and its numerous appropriations was unprecedented and caused enough stir for documentary film maker Helen Stickler to cover the phenomena. The pervasive influence of the image and the global network that distributed it points to a group that both identified with the image and wanted in on the hoax. Although Stickler notes that her first impression of the use of the word posse was an attempt of the suburban bourgeois to mimic hip-hop culture, she noted that it was not mimicry in so much as illustrating the terrain where the clash of cultures and the adoption of trends take place. But, the sticker also speaks to the role of appropriation, communication, and the constitution of subjectivity as well.<sup>60</sup>

The distribution of the Andre image points to a loosely held network, a community in which allegiances amongst those who hold interests in common can align themselves. But, as the distribution of the image is placed in the public spaces, it also testifies to the potential to reclaim and take control over the environment that the public is constituted in. From the streets to the inside corners of punk rock zines, the distribution and appropriation of the image operate through common tenets of zine culture. Like Zines, appropriation arts rejects “the corporate dream of an atomized population broken down into discrete and instrumental target markets, zine writers form networks and forge communities around diverse identities and interests. Employed within the grim new economy of service, temporary, and ‘flexible’ work, they redefine work, setting out their creative labor done on zines as a protest against the drudgery of working for another’s profit.”<sup>61</sup>

The juxtaposition between WWF wrestling figures and hip-hop culture might have been the factor that led to an underground network, a posse to the Andre the Giant sticker campaign. The sticker campaign evolved from the initial placement of the Andre image

in the public's right of way, where stickers were otherwise used as marks of identification with the skateboarding and punk scenes. For Fairey, other stickers were a sign that there were dedicated proponents of these subcultures and evidence that something beyond the total void of marketing was lurking beyond the surface of these images. Fairey continued to plaster the image and the sociological implications of the joke came to the fore as the public both noticed and investigated the unexplained appearance of the stickers. The use of an ambiguous image spoke both to the prevalence of images but also the use of public space. "I think a lot of people liked the idea of 'fucking with the program' in a society dominated by corporate imagery. The stickers were a rebellious wrench in the spokes, a disruption of the semiotics of consumption."<sup>62</sup>

For Fairey, public space is the last refuge for free speech and expression unmediated by bureaucracy. The issue of public space brings attention to the unequal access to the public sphere when corporations are able to use the space but citizen taxpayers are not. Fairey clarifies, "I'm a taxpayer: why can't I use public space for my imagery when corporations can use it for theirs? I was baffled by the idea that companies could stick thousands of images in front of people as long as they were paid ads, but that I couldn't put my work in the street...For the most part, I think the merchants and the city governments don't want the public to realize there can be other images co-existing with advertising. This is the exact example I'm trying to provide."<sup>63</sup>

Fairey notes that there are limits to where posters and stickers are placed. Using the space on the backs of signs, electrical boxes and crosswalk boxes and never covering up the words on the sign itself, Fairey takes the rest of public property to be fair game. And, in terms of private property, spaces that appear to be abandoned or boarded up are bombed, unless it already has a lot of graffiti on it. "My opinion about street art is the same as free speech: I'd rather hear or see the occasional thing I was offended by than not have the right to express myself in a way that others might find offensive."<sup>64</sup> But the ambiguity of the image also enables a diversity of interpretations rather than immediate

rejection. As a result, Fairey claims the discussions that followed would not have taken place if the image was easily categorizable.

For Fairey, the art of stickers has as much to do with their placement and integration in the environment as they have to do with the image that is on them. As their placement on polls and crosswalk boxes provide the ease of placement and facilitate their eye-level visibility, they are more impermanent than places much higher. But it was the anti-graffiti ordinances and the actions of those in public who would tear down the stickers at eye level that fostered the move to place stickers in harder to reach places. This also led to an investigation into different adhesives. Appropriating the type of adhesives used by the Government for car registration and used on the inside of newspaper boxes, in addition to places more camouflaged facilitated the longevity needed to reclaim space for a bit more time.

Owning and displaying stickers was a badge of a culture and functioned as a sign of belonging and community membership. As stickers operated at the visual level communicating allegiance to a particular representation, life-style and interest, the power of the sticker transcends the limited graphic material included from within it. They represent a subculture who share in the joke and the politics over the use of space. They represent a protest against the unequal access to cultural resources and the privatization of culture or the colonization of advertising. The image becomes a silent protest and the inside joke that works to frustrate those who have not been let in by it. For the images constitute new subjects and therefore new communities that share in the reconstituted identity. And from it is the possibility of new strategic alliances, a set of diverse tactics, a community of practice that can struggle together to redefine themselves and the cultural landscape. The struggle however, is ever more manifest when such tactics lead to arrests.

The prevalence of the sticker both enables and constrains Fairey's actions. If the police have not seen the image they let Fairey off with a warning. However, Fairey adds, "when 'they' understand that Andre is a sophisticated anti-authoritarian statement, they

attack like a rabid dog...The authorities also don't want the masses to be unsettled. That makes their job a lot harder. So when they get complaints from people who are whining that they hate to look at this thing which they don't understand, they don't want to have to deal with that. They want to eliminate anything they get flack from...It's all about what symbolizes a good, happy society, which is no graffiti, no dog shit on the sidewalk, things like that. It's like saying as long as you keep things looking good on the surface, it doesn't really matter what's going on underneath."<sup>65</sup>

Nineteen-ninety marked the year that Fairey wrote the Manifesto, providing the social and psychological explanation of the sticker. "The GIANT sticker campaign," the first line states, is "an experiment in Phenomenology" [emphasis in the original].<sup>66</sup> "Phenomenology attempts to enable people to see clearly something that is right before their eyes but obscured; things that are so taken for granted that they are muted by abstract observation. The FIRST AIM OF PHENOMENOLOGY is to reawaken a sense of wonder about one's environment. The Giant sticker attempts to stimulate curiosity and bring people to question both the sticker and their relationship with their surroundings."<sup>67</sup>

As the Manifesto explains, the sticker is effective because advertisements and propaganda alike rely on an opposing message, where the image promotes a product or motive. The routine and habitual naturalization of such messages in the public obscure the notion that the word itself can provide the same experiences at no cost to the public. As the sticker provokes a questioning rather than a command it can revitalize the viewer's perception and experiences of everyday life. Since the sticker has no meaning in itself, or no underlying force or motive, but rather exists to agitate the public to react, contemplate and search for meaning in the sticker it works to position the viewer through an unstable association of meaning and perspectives. As the Manifesto illustrates, the proliferation of meanings that the image fosters speaks more to the subject viewing than the denoted meaning. It can facilitate visual pleasure upon viewing it as well as alternative and underground meanings. "The PARANOID OR CONSERVATIVE

VIEWER, however, may be confused by the sticker's persistent presence and condemn it as an underground culture with subversive intentions" [emphasis in the original].<sup>68</sup>

The manifesto illustrates the potential sociological explanations and points to the taken-for-granted and naturalization of advertising. The sticker may illicit condemnation in public as a form of vandalism while advertising is immune to such critiques. For some, advertising's pervasiveness facilitates its power as it appears natural and an accepted part of the cultural environment. For others, the sticker provides a sense of belonging and serves as a badge of membership and a memento from one's environment or travels. "The Giant sticker seems mostly to be embraced by those who are (or at least want to seem to be) rebellious. Even though these people may not know the meaning of the sticker, they enjoy its slightly disruptive underground quality and wish to contribute to the furthering of its humorous and absurd presence, which seems to somehow be antiestablishment or anti-societal-convention."<sup>69</sup>

### **Phenomenology and De-familiarization**

In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger furthers a project of the meaning and being against fundamental and historical conceptions of philosophy. The investigation advances a phenomenological project formulated in the expression, "To the things themselves!"<sup>70</sup> For Heidegger, a phenomenological approach questions the assumptions of what constitutes evidence, knowledge and science and what advances knowledge obtained through the sensuous experiences of concrete materiality. Phenomenology involves both the concept of phenomenon and logos. While the Greek roots of phenomena signifies "that which shows itself, the manifest," phenomena also means, "to bring to the light of day, to put in the light."<sup>71</sup> As Heidegger suggests, phenomena indicates the visible in itself and the totality of what can be brought to light. In this sense, the Andre the Giant has a posse sticker campaign involves bringing to light, or shedding light on both the image and its placement within the urban environment.<sup>72</sup>

The concept of logos signifies discourse, but has also been translated as reason, judgment, concept, definition, ground and relationship. But for Heidegger, logos more accurately signify discourse as it brings to light, or allows it to be seen, just by talking about it. Thus phenomenology invites one too see that which is “proximally and for the most part does not show itself at all: it is something that lies hidden, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground.”<sup>73</sup>

The logos, or dialogic potential of the sticker indicates an utterance that brings to light the reification of advertising imagery, as meaning, severed from history and contingent interest is converted into myth. The image works to expose advertising for what it is, a historical, political and ideological intervention representing a semblance of a timeless or eternal truth. As the poetic re-articulation achieves ubiquity within the city, the image creates a proliferation of sites of contested meaning and the potential for a multiplicity of subject positions and positions the subject as an active participant in meaning and knowledge.

As the poetics of the Andre Image invites a re-awakening of one’s environment beyond the habitual routines of day-to-day life, the project not only advances a Heideggerian phenomenology but also, works to de-familiarize the image before the senses through a re-articulation. In *Art as Technique*, Viktor Shklovsky contends that as perception becomes habitual it becomes automatic. Art however, can de-automatize perception and point to re-experiencing the objects before the senses. The purpose of art, Shklovsky argues “is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because altering perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.”<sup>74</sup>

Which is to say, as the Andre image incites a questioning and discourse by defamiliarizing take-for-granted and harden truths, other images too, are revealed as symbols of power that attempt to persuade, command and conceal their status as an ideological symbol. The ambiguity and the ubiquity of the image forces attention to the uncategorizable elements in the image and provokes a questioning of the visual elements around it. Which is to say, it calls attention to itself through familiar representations only to disrupt the experience of the familiar. In this sense, the sticker is not only a site of phenomenology but also of defamiliarization as it transfers “usual perception of an object into the sphere of a new perception—that is, to make a unique semantic modification.”<sup>75</sup> A vision and semantic modification is created by removing automatized perception.

This re-articulation or re-association derives from both a de-contextualization and re-contextualization of the image in an environment foreign to what has become familiar, or familiarized. The re-articulation of cultural images incites a phenomena where a direct experience with corporeality reveals not only the feeling’s subject and the subject’s feeling, but also how images are constructed through taken-for-granted assumptions and naturalized through ideology concealing their constructions. In this sense, the sticker campaign not only reveals, but introduces a dialogue on the street where the taken-for-granted issues over the use of space and prevalence of advertising while always visible is brought to light.<sup>76</sup>

As Theodore Roszak argues in *The Making of a Counter Culture*, the organization of this group embraces a “style of human relations that characterizes village and tribe, insisting that real politics can only take place in the deeply personal confrontations these now obsolete social forms allow.”<sup>77</sup> They strike against the prevailing ideology and consciousness and attempt to transform the entrenched sense of the self, the other and the environment. In short, they seek psychic and social liberation. As Roszak contends, if the status quo is reproduced by both repression and the support of consensus, resistance

requires not only tactics against power announcing the misdeeds of society but also, it must “transform the very sense men [sic] have of reality.”<sup>78</sup>

Roszak argues that this culture develops an identity around a nebulous symbol that stands as a mark of both identity and difference. This culture also overturns or supplants the authoritative regimes, whether they are political or based in instrumental rationality with those of the experience of human communion. The extent to which each perceiver is provoked or agitated to experience a diverse meaning, the image becomes a site of identification constituted through the subjects investment of meaning. Thus as the intervention assumes an awakening to mythological reification, it equips the subject with the lens to see how ideology achieves a taken-for-granted and ahistorical dimension, as well as, reinvesting the social and galvanizing around newly shared experiences.

### **Dis-obey**

In 1994, just as Plymouth had attempted to use a more subversive street art tactic to market the Neon, Coca Cola experimented with a new design to promote OK soda. The design for the can was the creation of comic book artists. For Fairey, the attempt to hijack an underground comic aesthetic was as appalling as the Neon billboard was for the Billboard Liberation Front. As Fairey indicates, it was a manipulative intrusion exploiting underground culture. So, in response Fairey created an anti-marketing campaign to sabotage the test market before it was even launched in Providence. Using the images in a *Time* article about the campaign, Fairey set out to confuse the public by changing the copy of the ads. The posters were made to fit directly over the OK ads, and by nights end, over 200 posters had been changed from “the more OK you consume, the more OK you feel” to “the more AG you consume, the more AG you fee.”<sup>79</sup>

OK Soda was created to capture a more elusive teen market that was showing a cynicism about corporate advertising. In 1993, the American teen spent \$89 billion on food, clothing, and videos with 3 billion reserved for soft drinks alone. To capture this audience Coke set up an 800 number with false recordings for customers to vent about



the product, created a manifesto, and mailed out chain letters in target markets to mock other company's claims about their products. After a year of field study in which Coca Cola product development researchers identified what they called, "an acute sense of diminished expectations" in the teen market, OK Soda was conceived as the ideal solution to exploit the angsty market.<sup>80</sup>

"It under promises...It doesn't say, 'This is the next great thing.' It's the flip side of over claiming, which is what teens perceive a lot of brands do," claimed a Coke marketing executive.<sup>81</sup> The ironic marketing ploy in which a company denies any grandiose ideal obtained through the use of the product and replaces it with mediocrity, points to a tactic of self-criticism and parody to sell products. Unlike the direct command, irony facilitates an indirect expression, as the statement expresses the opposite of the desired response. But the indirect ironic appeal also demands an active engagement on the part of the viewer. As the public must decipher the intentions and perceived authenticity of a product identified as just okay. Moreover, it invites a further segmentation in the public as those who "get it" act as the taste makers and trendsetters for those not yet "in the know," but want to be.

In 1994 Coke also launched its "Obey Your Thirst" campaign for Sprite, which used a tactic that ridiculed the promises of advertising as well. But as Sprite maintained its "Obey your Thirst" campaign, Fairey attacked their billboards. Using the same font, Fairey appropriated the space of thirteen Sprite billboards by leaving the word "obey" while covering up the Sprite bottle and the words "your thirst." One hit on Mission Street in San Francisco stayed up for four months.<sup>82</sup>

Although the black and white "Andre the Giant has a Posse" sticker was the first in what would become an arsenal of cultural images and an intertextual battlefield of meaning, by 1995 Fairey shifted the template of the sticker to a more streamlined iconographic image. The design of the OK trademark, used simple bold block black letters, on a white background with a red border similar in design to Barbara Kruger's

work, also resembling and perhaps creating the aesthetic fodder for what would become the Andre Icon.<sup>83</sup> But the change resulted from threats of litigation by the World Wrestling Federation. As Fairey was issued a cease-and-desist order from Titan Sports, the owners of the World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc., (formerly WWF), and refused the possibility of the financial burden for licensing the likeness of Roussimoff, or expending the costs necessary to fight trademark infringement, Fairey changed the Andre the Giant image to an icon and [andrethegiant.com](http://andrethegiant.com) to [obeygiant.com](http://obeygiant.com).<sup>84</sup>

Fairey's response to a cease-and-desist order indicates the repression of particular artistic forms, of communities of practice that have utilized such aesthetic techniques since the early 1900's, was chilled. It also gave rise to a different image that would surpass the original in ubiquity and ambiguity. This early infringement led Fairey to elevate the Andre to the icon of a pseudo fascist leader. As Fairey explains, "the Obey icon face evolved at the end of 1995 out of the desire to move further away from the association with Andre the Giant and toward a more universal "Big Brother" (as in George Orwell's 1984) image."<sup>85</sup>

Fairey explains, the move toward a more streamlined icon was both the result of an interest in Russian Constructivist posters and also an interest in commenting on propaganda. It is a tactic that appropriates not only Bolshevism but also the aesthetic elements of Fascist propaganda to parody advertising.<sup>86</sup> It is worth mentioning however, that the new Iconic image appropriates the color design of OK Soda, with the direct command of Sprite's "Obey your thirst" marketing campaign as well. Fairey argues that the concept of obey "is to provoke people who typically complain about life's circumstances but follow the path of least resistance, to have to confront their own obedience. 'Obey' is very sarcastic, a form of reverse psychology. It's a wakeup call"<sup>87</sup>

While the black, white and red color palette utilizes the color schemes of Kruger, and Okay Cola, as well as Fascist propaganda and the Bolshevik posters of El Lissitzky, they were also used for practical purposes as red can be used as a spot color for no

additional charge at photocopy businesses. Using a two color design palate allowed Fairey to make three times as many copies. At this time, the use of a star and the red box with white Italic Bold Futura Font was used for the word “obey.” The reference to Kruger was not a homage in as much as the appropriation of a technique that facilitated thought, as the text and lack of authorial marks was a direct address without a clear or direct sense as to whom one should obey.

And perhaps that is the point, as the tactic appropriates and exposes the interpretative hail concealing the advertising. The stylistic approach can manipulate people as much as, and perhaps even more so, than substance. So the appropriation pulls on a Warholian technique of elevating the everyday to the status of an icon, it also utilizes a Dada tactic of undermining the aesthetics of fascist propaganda. Ultimately, as Fairey notes, “I consider the image the counterculture Big Brother. I’d like to think of it as a sign or symbol that people are watching Big Brother as well.”<sup>88</sup>

The ubiquity and ambiguity of the image also speaks to the construction of power and redistribution of power. As the image was placed in blocks, at times taking over an entire surface, but also placed in numerous locations throughout the U.S., the Obey icon speaks to the omnipresence of advertising and the overdetermined structures of power. Fairey described it like this, “It’s the idea that if you repeat something enough it becomes an icon, and then the power that it gets from people’s curiosity, based on them thinking it must be important because of the repetition. You create something from nothing. You derive power from perceived power, where the perception of the power isn’t based on any true power, but then it is, because it becomes it.”<sup>89</sup>

Fairey’s critique directly addresses the empty simulacra of power, plus he also explains that popular culture had a great deal of influence for the Andre campaign as well. Citing John Carpenter’s *They Live* as a major influence, Fairey started to use the word “obey” in many of the works that would follow, and the icon captioned by a star in nearly all of his works. *They Live* helps explicate his tactics, for in the adaptation of this

Orwellian narrative the main character played by World Wrestling Federation superstar Rowdy Roddy Piper, finds a pair of sunglasses that allows him to see the underlying messages of advertising. One scene even depicts Rowdy moving through the city looking up at billboards and reading “Obey” or “Consume,” and instead of seeing the government seal on currency, the message printed beneath states, “This is your God.”

As Fairey believes, the subversive elements of the movie addresses the role of consumerism in our day to day lives. “People don’t realize they are slaves to consumerism because everything is glossy on the surface. People are just sleepwalking through life, and Obey is my way of splashing cold water on their faces.”<sup>90</sup> Or rather, as Fairey later suggests, the poetics and politics of the “obey” campaign derives from its cumulative and carry-over effect.<sup>91</sup> In this way Fairey’s work gives anyone who encounters it and subsequent ads, a look through the lens of Piper’s glasses.

Fairey adds, “There are so many things that are elevated to icons that are so absurd. Lifestyle advertisers make you associate positive things with their product, but few people question that...I’m hoping that if people question this that maybe that will start a domino effect.”<sup>92</sup> The domino effect relies not only on seeing how the absurd can be elevated to a representation of power but that all images have been elevated in that way. And in doing so, the associations made in other propagandistic and commercial forms are also questioned, as the images are freed from their previous articulations and re-articulated to new images. As such the tactic of appropriation inserts a counter-message that denaturalizes the lifestyles promoted in advertising and the aesthetic elements that are naturalized as signifiers of power.

When the X-Games came to Providence in 1995, Fairey snuck out onto the track of the course and spray painted the icon on the track in hopes of broadcasting his critique into the homes of millions of viewers. Assuming the games would receive coverage via helicopter, Fairey’s silver and black stenciled icon could have been seen throughout the country. As mentioned earlier, taking over public space with the poetic combination and

recombination of images of the dominant culture in public is itself a political act and invites the media to finance its own critique.<sup>93</sup> Fairey clarifies, “When something is illegally placed in the public right-of-way, the very act itself makes it political. My hope was that, in questioning what Obey Giant was about, the viewers would then begin to question all the images they were confronted with.”<sup>94</sup>

By 1996, Fairey claimed to have produced over one million Andre stickers that were plastered throughout the world by his efforts and his loyal followers. As some reports indicated, “It’s everywhere. On stickers, on posters, the sunken, staring eyes, the cryptic words. It stares at you from a series of posters posted onto a construction wall...who is putting them up? What are they?”<sup>95</sup> According to Fairey, the interpretation of the image often says more about the spectator than the image itself that creates a strong personalized relationship with the image.<sup>96</sup> As meaning is imposed on the image from ‘outside’ the spectator’s identity and assumed position constitutes the image’s meaning. Schur illustrates this notion, “Speakers, writers, artists, and viewers bring a set of narrative assumptions about the world when they interpret the meaning of a text. These narrative assumptions frequently are connected to their identity and their experiences. Texts, in and of themselves, may be indeterminate and open to endless deconstruction.”<sup>97</sup>

By taking over public space Fairey’s tactics create new meanings and problematizes the dominant mode of representation, a de-naturalization and de-reification that ultimately exposes the aesthetics and iconography of power. Rearticulating these images and connecting them to social practices facilitates a revolutionary subject and new identities. Fairey’s tactics reflect the struggle to expose the operations of ideology in the objects of the culture industries and repurpose them. As a result, the inflection of alternative evaluative accents invites a posse to galvanize around these poetics.

In *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri contend that a revolution of everyday life toward democratic and community organization requires a constant struggle

over the communicative apparatuses that constitute knowledge. It is a goal that demands a collective making of history. The constitutive power of making history requires a creative imagination that reconfigures its own constitution. “This constituent power makes possible the continuous opening to a process of radical and progressive transformation.”<sup>98</sup> Insofar as communication is that which constitutes subjects and objects of history, radical and progressive transformation demands appropriating communication, which is to say the means of production, and directing them through creative energy.<sup>99</sup>

Re-appropriation “means having free access to and control over knowledge, information, communication, and affects...the multitude’s right to self-control and autonomous self-production.”<sup>100</sup> As Hardt and Negri contend, political autonomy and productive autonomy depends on the formation of the multitude as a posse. Unlike ‘the people’ that synthesize social difference to one identity, the multitude is plural and multiple.<sup>101</sup> The multitude is comprised of a set of singularities that cannot be reduced or synthesized but is an active social subject in common.<sup>102</sup> “Every sovereign power, in other words, necessarily forms a political body of which there is a head that commands, limbs that obey, and organs that function together to support the ruler. The concept of the multitude challenges this accepted truth of sovereignty.”<sup>103</sup>

This challenge is one that puts demands on the system for equal access and active expression conceiving communication as a social product. It demands that the differences of expression are guaranteed even though they are held in common. Common refers to the shared set of practices, languages, style, tactics, conduct and desire deployed for a better future. “Posse refers to the power of the multitude and its telos, an embodied power of knowledge and being, always open to the possible.”<sup>104</sup> Posse therefore constitutes both its mode of production and its being.<sup>105</sup> This can be identified in the networks of followers, the posse, who pasted the Obey Icon from Manhattan to Greece. Sightings of the Icon have also been reported in the press spanning the globe and the

media; from Batman Forever, The Devil's Own, 8mm, and Crank 2 to Jim Morrison's grave in Paris, to the streets of London, Tokyo, Moscow and Singapore.<sup>106</sup>

### **Semiotic Disturbance**

During this period and over the course of the next few years, Fairey also moved in a number of other directions, appropriating images of Castro, Lenin, Mao, Che Guevara, Saddam Hussein, the Communist Star, and images of Chinese and Korean Soldiers in addition to other reference to "big brother" authoritarian iconography. Armed with appropriated iconography of Spain and Latin American Revolutions and World War I and II propaganda posters in style, color and form, Fairey utilized collage and photomontage to stitch together radically different ideas and images.

The appropriation and more direct intertextual references and tactics of guerrilla semiotics at this time pull heavily from Russian Constructivist Propaganda, specifically those of Alexander Rodchenko to the Fascist propaganda of Mussolini and the tactics of Dada to militate against contemporary political, economic and structural constraints. The poetics re-articulate the dominant meanings, symbols, vocabularies and images of consumer and political ideology. They expose how the use of such images and icons are not naturally connected to ideologies, but have been used to articulate and naturalize political portraits as signifiers of power. The images are a form of social commentary that address the power of images to manipulate perceptions, whether in the form of politics or advertisements.

Drawing on and weaving together popular culture, advertising and fine arts related to labor and revolutionary movements re-creates a visual language that unsettles the current regime of symbolic power. The rebellious wrench in the spokes of consumerism is one that immediately addresses the construction of the subject's perspective as a consumer and follower of "big brother" who is continually under surveillance. In a very literal sense, defacing and covering up public space reveals public the veil that continually enforces habitualized routines of obedience and interpellation.<sup>107</sup>

Fairey's work does not simply trouble conventions so as to see the world from an otherwise dominant perspective, but rather invites the public to see it removed from the lens that reproduces the dominant ideology. As such, the placement of such works in the public's right of way, asks us to question how commercial ads operate in a similar fashion to propaganda and invites the viewing position as a transgressive act of seeing.

The multiple layering and stenciling within and against the image also contributes to this re-articulated vision as it stitches together historical icons and re-invents a cultural repertoire of images where a radical alterity is articulated in the streets. This reinvention of tradition, exploits the openness of meaning and invites viewers to invest in them with their own meaning and relevance and bear witness to the cultural struggle that is expressed on the streets. But as the public is invited to invest meaning and construct their identities in relation to these appropriated icons, questions over access, power, and the manipulation of propaganda are introduced in the day to day lives of those passersby.

The use of images with a cultural resonance was done to reveal how presentation and symbolism can override the actual content of the poster. Fairey notes, style conveys more meaning, or subverts the content and substance of the message. The project facilitates this rhetorical effect by promoting a brand without a product and in doing so exposes the prevalence of the image that brands create over the product that it is associated with. In short, it exposes the prevalence of commercial ads that emphasize image over substance and form over content, recreating the critical commentary of the *Society of the Spectacle*, in visual form.

Other posters such as those of Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara indicate the corruptive nature of power and the methods used to quash opposition. The use of authoritarian figures, however, had as much to do with inciting dialogue as it did with agitation. The intent to facilitate a reaction against authority figures and the dictates of obedience; or at the very least to question authority, is explained by Fairey as moving with the direction of the times. "The reason that I have become more direct and overtly



political is that I feel we are in a time of a crisis and there's no time to be wasted allowing people to have epiphanies about authority, conspicuous consumption and the control of public space."<sup>108</sup>

The irony is "meant in earnest," Fairey suggests in *The Washington Post* article, "Obey Giant: The Mandate that Grabbed a Generation." It is "a blow against the empire of phony politicians and ubiquitous corporate influence: We should not obey. We should question authority. We should beware of Big Brother."<sup>109</sup> The use of irony questions the value and assumptions of the hidden and taken for granted as it functions through multiple and contradictory meanings. Irony displays difference and deferral as the meaning transgresses its articulated limits.<sup>110</sup>

"Part of what I'm trying to do," Fairey continues, "is get people to question their assumptions. Since they make assumptions through associations, I try to create new associations incongruous with those assumptions."<sup>111</sup> While the images of these leaders may convey a glamorization of authoritarian regimes for some, since "the mere use of an image causes people to presume that the perpetrator of the image endorses its subject matter."<sup>112</sup> For others, the tactic itself might convey a cool outsiderish message, regardless of the intent of inserting a dialogue in public space.

Fairey adds that, "powerful leaders throughout the ages have been both revered and feared, often depending on whose propaganda system they have been filtered through...People often become symbols that don't represent their real ideas or behavior. Advertising functions in a similar fashion by representing a romantic ideal that the use of a product will almost never yield. By juxtaposing the absurd Obey Giant imagery with the leader, I'm hoping to show that symbols are often appropriated to champion or sell things or ideas they originally had no relation to. With a lot of the dictators, I'm saying 'beware' or 'obey with caution.'"<sup>113</sup>

The expression of American military and economic domination adheres to the messages conveyed in Fairey's images and calls our attention to the political aspects of

his subversive expression. Here, the very flatness of stickers and posters can be understood as both a response to and reproduction of the surface of commodities to which they subvert. As such, Fairey is not only pointing to a place free of commodity incorporation but also, reveals something about the construction of the American citizen/consumer.<sup>114</sup> As a critique in themselves, the flatness of the stickers and posters enables a penetrating depth into the social conditions to which they refer, for the image does not merely point to more surfaces but a depth of social and historical perspective and a phenomenology of being.<sup>115</sup>

Just as revolutions create new iconic heroes and demonize authority that are repeated endlessly on the surfaces of public and private space, Fairey's re-creation of cultural and civil rights leaders such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Angela Davis, recreates a continuity with the past to establish a new perspective informed by a rewritten history of civil rights and disobedience.<sup>116</sup> This re-articulation of civil rights leaders points to the history of inequality, conspicuous consumption and blind obedience and is replaced with a new history of hope, change and citizenship. Also in this re-articulation of citizenship and civil disobedience, Fairey is not only pointing to the historical foundations and situatedness of the present, but also, obstructs a "consumer gloss over" through inter-textual references.<sup>117</sup>

Unhinging dominant articulations, however, is potentially problematic for those that would prefer clear cut distinctions and stable meaning, or those who have interests in securing power. The absence of production or traces of production in the decontextualized images almost demand that the public invest the image with an origin and meaning. But as Fairey's focus indicates, the project is about the use of public space and meaning, as well as the naturalization of commercial images and the unequal access and monetary restrictions that enforce the use of public spaces to those in power.

I want to raise the question about the use of public space. I want to make people think about how they absorb imagery, and how they interpret imagery. Most

people think it's a teaser campaign for something. How ingrained is the symbiotic of commerce that that's the immediate thing you think when you see something? I don't have any political agenda except to make people think.<sup>118</sup>

Using the appropriation tactics of collage common to Dada, Situationism, and Punk the agit-prop of Russian Constructivism, the ambiguous and pithy statements common to Holzer, the visual aesthetic and direct address of Barbara Kruger and the appropriation of space common to the Billboard Liberation Front positions Fairey's work as part of community of practitioners. He elicits a posse whose poetic combination and tactics of appropriation critique representations, insert a multiplicity of voices in the public sphere and constitutes itself as a democratic mode of being. The use of images of authority to re-write the images of history and cultural memory and reveal the constructions of iconography was not a new development during this time. The anonymous street artist known as Banksy had also begun creating sites to question the atrocities of the War on Terror that questioned the authority and aesthetics of power when he placed a mannequin dressed as a Guantanamo Bay detainee in Disney Land and scrawled the walls of buildings with significant intertextual references.

### **Banksy**

The Bristol born street artist known as Banksy is an integral figure to the politics and poetics of appropriation. While Banksy's designs and stencil interventions veer closer to graffiti than the works of Conal or Fairey, his fly-by-night tactics and anonymity position him within a long trajectory of street artists who reclaim public spaces while remaining anonymous. While Banksy utilizes an assortment of techniques from spray paint and stencil work to three-dimensional installations, his method remains firmly entrenched within a tradition of appropriation artists who reclaim the streets and create pockets of resistance, to question both assumptions and priorities of the spectacle.

While Blek Le Rat has been credited as the founder of the stencil technique, it was Banksy's interventions that have stirred enough attention in the media to see his work at auction for astronomical prices. Others such as "Mr. Brainwash" have also re-

appropriated the stencil technique for purely commercial purposes. While his anonymity is not uncommon, as Blek, The Billboard Liberation Front, Guerrilla Girls, and Space Invader have utilized masks and kept their identities a secret except to those few in the know, his place in the limelight has become nothing short of a phenomenal.

In 1993, Banksy turned the walls of Bristol into dialogic spaces, stenciling politically charged messages on the sides of buildings. Often anti-establishment, the images of soldiers and rats throughout the city evolved into an attack within the fissures and fractured walls of hegemonic domination. From London to Palestine, the stenciled graphics created intrigue in the often overlooked and take-for-granted places where turmoil and havoc ensued and incited questions about the priority of consumption, taste and celebrity. Each image invites the viewer to look into the politics of the space they occupy and the meaning behind elided from view.<sup>119</sup>

For some time, for example, Banksy stenciled rats on the sides of walls, in the cracks of building foundations and on street signs throughout London. While some rats held paint brushes and rollers, others were placed as the culprit for the vandalism on the wall. While it has been indicated that the word “rat” is an anagram for “art,” these rodents speak to an allegory about resistance and underground culture more generally. The rat is a synecdoche as it conveys the forgotten byproducts of capitalist and industrial expansion that carry disease, the underside of unbridled industrial expansion without foresight. But as an allegory of and for resistance, the rat also conveys how little by little, a disease can spread like a virus and infect the populace. In short, that rat is both the outgrowth and potential threat of the abject. Banksy explains that rats “exist without permission. They are hated, hunted and persecuted. They live in quiet desperation amongst the filth. And yet they are capable of bringing entire civilizations to their knees. If you are dirty, insignificant and unloved then rats are the ultimate role model.”<sup>120</sup>

The images stenciled on the walls of London buildings include Charles Manson, who comments on the advertising statement of a billboard directly behind him, to stencils

of children wearing gas masks and Che Guevara wearing sun glasses with dollar signs over his eyes. The Guevara image reflects the co-optation of icons of social revolution each subsequent image is slightly more worn and less clear. The deterioration of the image points to the use of a revolutionary image to sell products and the blurred social vision replaced through commodification. While the strength and force of the original loses its revolutionary force and the original clarity and meaning of the work fades away Che is freed from a history of conflict and struggle and conveys a lifestyle brand. It is, as Kruger described, the siphoning off of criticality that leaves an empty shell in its wake.

While most of the images are absent of any accompanying text the texts Banksy inserts in such spaces suggest a satirical punch at the hypocrisy of government bureaucracy, surveillance, conspicuous consumption, and the society of the spectacle. A more frequent example that has spanned Europe, from Paris and London and to Australia, is the stenciled command, “this is not a photo opportunity” on ledges and monuments that overlook Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower and the Sydney Opera House respectively. Other texts have been used to promote the “graffiti removal hotline,” and the “post no bills authorized graffiti area” in San Francisco and the “This wall is a designated Graffiti area” in London. While the San Francisco takeover only lasted a few days, with city workers removing “authorized graffiti area” from the wall, the site in London was used by a number of artists for over 34 days.<sup>121</sup>

Banksy clarifies, “Imagine a city where graffiti wasn’t illegal, a city where everybody could draw wherever they like. Where every street was awash with a million colours and little phrases. Where standing at a bus stop was never boring. A city that felt like a party where everyone was invited, not just the estate agents and barons of big business. Imagine a city like that and stop leaning against the wall – it’s wet.”<sup>122</sup> Banksy suggests, the intervention in public spaces is a means to transform a class society who simply waits and leans against walls in the boredom. They must be awoken to a more lively environment where everyone has the right to speak, be seen and heard. It is

statement that compels people to act rather than just leaning and waiting for life to carry them along.<sup>123</sup> As the “photo-opportunity” messages ironically state, live life rather than replace experience with a copy seen through mechanical eyes.

While such a notion contends with Baudrillard’s critique of simulacra and the hyper real and Debord’s society of the spectacle, where nothing is real until it passes through the spectacle as an image, it is important to indicate a number of Banksy’s other interventions. Some of the most thought provoking projects include altering the meaning of walls themselves. From Holoborn London to the Segregation Walls in Palestine and the checkpoints in Bethlehem, Banksy turned the walls that separate, divide, and contain into canvases depicting windows with scenic mountains painted through the wall itself picturing the other side, and at other times the holes pictured tropical island shorelines.

### **Ready-mades and Inter-textuality**

The intertextual poetics of Banksy’s work utilize iconic photographs to critique corporatism. In one example, the infamous shot of the Napalm girl made popular in the press in the 1970s, that spoke to the atrocities of the Vietnam War, is used to critique the corporate imperialist impulses of Disney and McDonalds. The poetics of this technique resides in placing the meaning of the image as something generated in relations to the ‘original’ image and through the intersection of textual surfaces, as it creates a dialogue among both images and the public’s relation to them.<sup>124</sup>

The dialogue is one that invites the public to recognize the original and the connotations thereof and transpose such meanings to those of McDonalds and Disney. But, the intertextuality also works in the opposite direction as well, as it asks the public to question the purpose of U.S. involvement in Viet Nam. As the associations of war and napalm and U.S. global hegemony are articulated to the signs of McDonalds and Disney, a fairly clear critique of U.S. corporate imperialist expansion is made. Accordingly, the intertextual image creates a dialogue between these images and invites the public to question the affluence of a global corporate hegemony.

The intertextual dimension, as outlined by Julia Kristeva in *Desire in Language*, indicates a process where texts are composites of interaction between the author and reader and with other texts. Mean meaning is derived from the interaction of these references. While some elements may call attention to iconic tropes, the visual style also engages these corporate trademarks as expressions of war and terror. The interaction of such elements calls attention to conflict and visually expresses the influence of the past as they haunt the present. The poetics conjures the atrocities of the past to the surface of the work and rearticulates the trademarks as a site of dialogic tension. As the marks overflow with significance, multiple and contradictory meanings, it replaces the signifiers of amusement with images of war. As images of war are weaved into the trademarks of fast food and theme parks, theme parks and fast are rearticulated to signify U.S. hegemony and military action to promote democracy as the veil a corporate imperialism.

As the years progressed Banksy took on the commercial establishment by liberating billboards throughout London. Claiming, that the graffiti writer has the same right to use public spaces to send a message to the public as does Donna Karan or Ralph Lauren. Banksy argued that he had “a right to affect my urban environment and this image has as much right to be here as that perfume commercial.”<sup>125</sup> In this way, the billboard and bypass liberation has involved a direct confrontation with politics and the commercial entertainment industries.

On the Shoreditch Bridge in London, for example, Banksy placed an image of soldiers with smiley faces on the overpass with a text that he changed frequently, ranging from, “Have a nice day,” “wrong war,” “keep left,” “it’s a free country,” to “another crap advert.” Other interventions have included pasting fake 10 pound bank notes the side of a wall, seemingly falling out of a stenciled ATM machine. Far from defacement, Banksy describes his interventions as a voice of, by and for the people. “The people who truly deface our neighborhoods,” Banksy explains, “are the companies that scrawl giant slogans across buildings and buses trying to make us feel inadequate unless we buy their

stuff. They expect to be able to shout their message in your face from every available surface but you're never allowed to answer back. Well, they started the fight and the wall is the weapon of choice to hit them back."<sup>126</sup>

Banksy adds, "any advertisement in public space that gives you no choice whether you see it or not is yours. It belongs to you. It's yours to take, re-arrange and re-use. Asking for permission is like asking to keep a rock someone just threw at your head."<sup>127</sup> Banksy believes that graffiti is not some kind of lower art form but rather it is one of the more honest art forms available. It is absent of elitism and hype and the price for admission is free to the public, unlike higher institutions of art. Graffiti makes three types of people nervous, other graffiti artists, advertising executives and politicians.

Banksy's tactics have also included infiltrating art museums and inserting prints of his own on the museum walls. One print, "Discount Soup Can," hung on the walls of MOMA in New York for six days before it was removed. As Banksy explains, after hanging the picture of the soup can on the wall he stood around and watched the reactions of the museum goers. The perplexity of the image, Banksy explains, didn't seem to carry over to other so called "Art" pieces. While the public who viewed the can seemed, somehow, cheated with his work, they never the less seemed to appreciate the rest of the work in the museum.<sup>128</sup> But, just what is the difference?

Banksy suggests that "art is not like other culture because its success is not made by its audience... We the people, affect the making and the quality of most of our culture, but not our art. The Art we look at is made by only a select few. A small group create, promote, purchase, exhibit and decide the success of Art. Only a hundred people in the world have any real say. When you go to an Art gallery you are simply a tourist looking at the trophy cabinet of a few millionaires."<sup>129</sup> Banksy's tactic is one that puts the entire art world under the microscope, much like Duchamp's readymades and the Situationists appropriation of works of fine art, as it questions the commodity logic of the work as it becomes "Art" and points to the larger power dynamic in the constitution of "Art."



When the guerrilla take-over of art museums continued, a painting of the Mona Lisa, a familiar template for appropriation arts ranging from Duchamp to Jamie Reed of the Sex Pistols, was overlain with an iconic smiley face.

Other depictions of Mona Lisa have included her stenciled image on London buildings holding a hand-held rocket launcher, or the Mona Moon, where Lisa is pulling up the underside of her gown and revealing her butt to those that pass by. The smiley Mona represents a more grand gesture, or bolder tactic, as it was hung on the walls of the Louvre in Paris. In another example, the intervention into the corridors of MOMA in 2005, only lasted two hours. For this operation Banksy entered the museum and dressed with a prosthetic nose and beard, modified a canvas so that the original oil painting was replaced with a woman wearing a World War I gas mask.<sup>130</sup>

Perhaps speaking to the absence of space free for response to advertising, Banksy's tactics and antics, have also resulted in tagging living animals and giving them signs to hold up in zoos. While the orangutans were photographed holding signs stating, "Help me nobody will let me home" and "I'm a celebrity get me out of here" other animals throughout the country side of the UK were stenciled. Sheep were seen with the words "Turf War," "Banksy," and a skull and cross bones while cows were tagged with "wild style!"<sup>131</sup>

In 2003, Banksy held a "Turfwar" exhibit that caused enough publicity that "Banksy" or "a Banksy" was becoming a commodity to be obtained, rather than the expression of a provocateur who intervened in the institutions of power to reclaim public space and incite a dialogue. The show included photos, prints, manipulated paintings and live animal installations in a warehouse in East London. Banksy's popularity was growing and his art was reaching all-time highs for the sale of street art. At the "Barely Legal" show in Los Angeles in 2006 for example, celebrity's such as Angelina Jolie, Damien Hirst, and Brad Pitt were reported to have spent over 200,000 pounds for a

“Banksy.” The celebrity endorsement created enough intrigue that pieces stenciled on walls were chiseled off, turned into commodities and sold on eBay.

Banksy claims, the commercial side of his work is an aspect that he struggles with. Since money is sexier and more interesting than art, it is easy to fall into the commercial exploitation of the work itself, where the message of the work is overshadowed by its price in the market place. Using art to sell products is a different animal as it puts an artist’s integrity in question. Banksy argues, “Your integrity is one of the few things you are born with; it has a high value. It’s like your virginity – you can only lose it once, so giving it away to some loser that doesn’t deserve it is a waste. But like losing your virginity, you only think about these things in a sensible way long after the event.”<sup>132</sup>

In an attempt to create a stir over the obsession of celebrity in western cultures, Banksy hit 48 record shops across the U.K and replaced 500 copies of Pars Hilton’s recently debuted CD with remixes of his own. The remixes sampled from Hilton’s utterances captured by the mainstream media and her TV show with Gnarlz Barkley beats. Inside the CD case, Banksy provided artwork picturing Hilton with a dog’s head and the text, “Every CD you buy puts me even further out of your league.”<sup>133</sup> This stunt led *Brand Week* to call Banksy, the Guerilla Marketer of the Year.<sup>134</sup> Wait, guerrilla marketer? In order to understand this development, in part, it is necessary to return to the last few months of 1999.

### **Obey™**

On November 23, 1999, almost three months to the date of Sprite filling for the trademark of their campaign slogan, “Image is nothing, thirst is everything. Obey your thirst,” Fairey filed for his own trademark, “Obey.” And again on December 22, 2000 Fairey expanded his trademark to include not only the Obey Giant “counter culture big brother” icon, but also the rights to its placement on clothing. But he was not alone in

this endeavor as Dave Kinsey, Philip Dewolf and Justin McCormack were also listed as owners of the mark. But who were they?

In 1996 Shepard Fairey, Philip DeWolff, and Dave Kinsey founded Blk/Mrkt Inc., a marketing design firm that promotes “underground campaigns that rise and spread.”<sup>135</sup> Blk/Mrkt was formed shortly after the First Bureau of Imagery (FBI) a branding, marketing and design firm specializing in the targeting and ‘acquisition’ of the action sports market created by Fairey, DeWolff, Kinsey and Andy Howell was dissolved. Noting how the ambiguous images of obey in the street fostered curiosity and intrigue, it also created a demand for the same images in the marketplace.

Trademarking Obey, and Obey Clothing Inc., founded in 2001 as a part of One-Three Two Inc., was a response to this demand. Obey Clothing Inc., sells t-shirts, hooded sweatshirts, faux-leather jacket and even back packs. While, these products can be purchased on line, the public can also purchase them in retail stores such as H&M, Target, and Marshalls. As the merchandise is available to the young urban and skateboarding niche audience seeking out such products as signs of allegiance, the placement on the racks in retail stores next to other designer fashion labels speaks to the infiltration of such images into the larger apparatuses of culture. In broadening the scope of retail from online to the shopping mall however, it is worth questioning if the products become just another designer label with “subversive” promises. An obey hoodie retails for \$100. But to what extent does the success of Obey depend on maintaining the illusion that the products are “unique” creations of a street artist who infiltrated the commerce?

As Fairey’s guerrilla tactics of appropriation are articulated to the images and designs of brands and become advertisements both in terms of a product to sell to the public, as well as a branding service to be sold and articulated to commercial products, it is worth questioning just how “uncommercial” Fairey’s tactics have become. For, what follows is not so much the “Manufacture of Dissent – Propaganda Engineering since 1989,” as the banner on the Obey Giant website dictates, but rather, brand engineering,

the manufacture of consent through images, tactics and fashion designs of dissent, revolution and political protest.

In 2003, Fairey created Studio Number One with his wife Amanda. Studio Number One is located in L.A.'s Echo Park. The studio features a ground level gallery called Subliminal Projects, while the upstairs is reserved for offices of Obey Clothing Inc. and design studio. Studio Number One has created branding work for Virgin Megastore, Honda, Dewar's and Saks Fifth Avenue and album and promotional designs for Led Zeppelin, Smashing Pumpkins, Billy Idol, Public Enemy, Snoop Dog, and the Black Eyed Peas. Over the course of the next few years the Studio would create images for the Michael Jordan brand of Nike Inc., to promote Carmelo Anthony, Guitar Center and Experience Hendrix, L.L.C., for a Fairey designed custom Gibson Flying V guitar, and a limited edition poster for a Marc Ecko video game. The game, "Getting Up: Contents under Pressure" follows a graffiti artist as he becomes the most respected in the city. Fairey is also digitally represented in the game as an instructor for the player who is attempting to create huge murals.<sup>136</sup>

Fairey describes the commercial rationale for his employment as having to do with the cultural associations of his work and branding campaigns that revolve around a central issue of authenticity. As Fairey explains, when such companies contact him, it is because they want him to give them the street credibility necessary to convince their desired demographic that the company too, is just like them.<sup>137</sup> In this sense Obey-Giant, Obey Clothing, Studio-One, Three-two-one, and Subliminal Studios, become the tools to manufacture walking billboards that display design work for hire to create the branding associations necessary for marketers to penetrate, capture and constitute their desired target audience. These efforts become promotional tools rather than critiques over the use of public space as the walls display ads and people wear the graphics stitched on Obey clothing. In this process the products transcend the streets, resolve tension and become dehistoricized.

Studio Number One employs seven full time designers and 17 employees. By 2004, Fairey and company had created designs for Red Bull and were hired by Coca-Cola to create street marketing materials for Sprite. The Sprite campaign utilized an urban feel and attempted to get the public to wonder about the new mascot as much as they wondered about Andre.<sup>138</sup> Also in 2004, Fairey co-founded *Swindle* magazine with Roger Gastman. Promoted as a cutting edge fashion and lifestyle magazine which promises a direct relevance to contemporary issues, it also provides the forum for advertisers to target a demographic concerned with fashion, art, and urban culture. Recent issues have included cover stories on the notorious and Oscar nominated director and street artist Banksy, as well as his subject in the film *Exit Through the Gift shop*, Mr. Brainwash. *Swindle* publishes six issues a year and requests that the public asks for permission to use any of the images in the magazine.<sup>139</sup>

Today, the “subversive” art of Obey Giant Inc., is critiqued, parodied, and satirized by other cultural dissidents. In 2008, Baxter Orr re-appropriated the Obey Giant trademark, highlighting the glaring eyes of Andre while placing a Sars mask over the face of the “counter culture Big Brother icon.”<sup>140</sup> The re-appropriation conveys a political statement, making reference to SARS rather than obey and critiques the ubiquity of the Obey trademark. In this way, a corporate trademark that signifies “counter-cultural” fashion is re-fashioned to signify not obedience or even ironic disobedience, but rather a public health concern.

The significance of Orr’s work lies, in part, in Fairey’s response. On April 23, 2008 Shepard Fairey filed an injunction to prevent Baxter Orr from infringing on the Obey trademark. In the cease-and-desist letters sent to Orr, Fairey’s attorneys demanded that Orr either destroy all copies of “protect yourself” or surrender the copies to Obey Giant Art, Inc. Informing Orr that the image “violate[s] both federal and state unfair competition and trademark laws.”<sup>141</sup> While these letters also instructed Orr to refrain from publishing the cease-and-desist letters, they indicate perhaps the final step in the

commodification of appropriation, as trademarks legally secure articulations as marks of trade and entrench a unitary commodity subject before the law.

In 2008, Fairey created a campaign poster for now President Barack Obama. And, within weeks the posters would attract enough attention that *NPR*, *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ran feature stories on their development and design. In what ultimately took about a week to create, Fairey scanned Google images for a picture that would convey, what he calls “Obama’s strength and wisdom.”<sup>142</sup> In numerous interviews, Fairey explained that he selected this particular image because Obama’s gaze conveyed a look into the future while also communicating his leadership role. From the basis of the photograph Fairey simplified the lines and used a red, white and blue palette. He also included the captions “Progress,” “Hope,” and “Change” for three different versions. Utilizing the design elements common to revolutionary portraiture, Fairey transformed the photograph into an idealized and iconic presidential portrait.

Fairey said, “I wanted the poster to be recognizable as my work, and to be appealing to a younger, apathetic audience, yet tame enough not to be seen as radical or offensive to the more mainstream political participants.”<sup>143</sup> The poster invites the viewer to see Obama through the lens of working class patriotism, as a hero who will lead the way toward progressive change. From the simplicity of the message to the color scheme, the poster communicates visually Obama’s stance to unify blue and red states while simultaneously utilizing words that either party affiliation would embrace.<sup>144</sup>

Fairey was not alone, however, as other street provocateurs including Mr. Brainwash and Ron English created posters for Obama by appropriating his image and blending it with political and popular cultural iconography. Eventually, even *Paste Magazine* created an online application called, “Obamicon-me” in which users could upload photos, alter the color and shading and create an image similar in style to the Obama poster.<sup>145</sup> While the first 950 original posters cost anywhere from \$25 to \$45, they soon took other forms from stencils, to fliers, shirts and were put in places that

Fairey had nothing to do with.<sup>146</sup> By November the image had taken root, gone viral and could be spotted on city walls throughout the entire U.S, and was rumored to have been scattered throughout the streets of the U.S., after the election.

For *Time Magazine* “Man of the Year cover, Time commissioned Fairey to create a similar piece and subsequently named Fairey “Icon Maker of the Year.”<sup>147</sup> Having witnessed firsthand the ubiquity of the image, Obama wrote a thank you note to Fairey. The letter, published in the *L.A. Times* stated, “The political messages involved in your work have encouraged Americans to believe that they can help change the status-quo. Your images have a profound effect on people, whether seen in a gallery or on a stop sign. I am privileged to be a part of your artwork and proud to have your support. I wish you continued success and creativity.”<sup>148</sup> The ‘original’ poster was acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in January, after Heather and Tony Pedoesta donated funds to the Smithsonian to purchase the work.

As the design continued to garner greater attention, eventually finding its way into the National Portrait Gallery, detractors of his technique surfaced and the *Associated Press*, the owners of the original image, sought credit for the use of the photograph. Scandal followed, with two years of copyright litigation which exposed deception and contradictions of both Fairey and the AP. The issue of fair use was elevated to the realm of public discourse in the press and Fairey’s role in the spotlight fluctuated from marketing guru to a common street artist. He eventually settled with the A.P.

### **Institutional Giant**

By 2010, Fairey’s work has been showcased in a number of large scale exhibits including the “Duality of Humanity,” “E Pluribus Venom” and “Supply and Demand,” the latter a retrospective held at Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Art and the Andy Warhol Museum. From the streets to exhibition galleries, Fairey’s works utilized the images of power and civil disobedience through an array of intertextual techniques. While such exhibitions become critiques in themselves, in which many flock to the

opening shows to pay for images that critique the unequal distribution of wealth, they also indicate a shift in tactics to a broader multi-platform strategy of image saturation.

In exhibits such as “E Pluribus Venom,” the statement “E Pluribus Unum” located on the U.S. Seal which translates as “from many one” is re-articulated to “from many poison,” Fairey occupies a terrain as a self-styled culture jammer on the one side and marketing guru on the other. From screen prints to multi-media collage, this exhibit showcased a number of symbols of the U.S. Government where even the dollar bill was refashioned. On one side of the bill were the words “Indiscriminate Capitalism” while on the other, “Never Bow to the System/Change the System/Or Create Your Own.”

But the balance of Fairey’s work might be best exemplified in the exhibit the “Duality of Humanity.” Although the images in the “Duality of Humanity” show rarely addressed the confluence and blurred the distinctions of fine, commercial and street art, the images never the less exhibited the multiple and conflictual positions in which ideology suppresses and drives inward. The Vietnam-era photos in the exhibit displayed soldiers with peace signs. While soldiers and guns are juxtaposed against peace signs and flowers, the uneasy position of a subject in tension and process is depicted. Such images invite the spectator into an uneasy and conflictual position occupying multiple and contradictory positions at once.

This technique continued in exhibits such as Supply and Demand, the opening of which Fairey never made as he was arrested on 12 counts of vandalism on the way to the show. At the time of his arrest the Boston Police Department had obtained two warrants on graffiti charges filed against Fairey.<sup>149</sup> The timing of the arrests stirred up a debate in the *New York Times* about the use of public space. While some residents condemned Fairey’s tactics, others condemned Boston’s “puritanical anti-art zealotry.” But as the director of Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Art, Jill Medvedow argued, Fairey drew three times as many visitors than the previous year, claiming, that Fairey raises



“important issues about consent and who decides what we see in public spaces. It gives Boston an opportunity not just to engage but to help lead that debate.”<sup>150</sup>

It would seem that while the arrests helped foster a debate in the press about the use of public spaces, it would also temporarily secure his status as an ‘authentic’ provocateur and enhance his street credibility while entering higher institutions of art. “Supply and Demand” was Fairey’s first retrospective, where over 200 prints of his commercial, political and graphic designs ranging from images of Tupac Shakur and Johnny Rotten to George W. Bush depicted as a vampire, blurred the aesthetic distinctions between commercial representations and government propaganda.

In Fairey’s shows the audience is invited to question the legitimacy of representations of power. Such politically charged works speak to governmental abuse of authority and representation as a contested terrain of struggle. The works invite a questioning toward the symbols and constructions that facilitate both the manufacture of consent and blind obedience. But they also invite a questioning of originality, authenticity and creativity as all of the works derive from the appropriation of photographs. As Fairey explains, “my whole concept is that you can’t judge a book by its cover, that visuals are tools of manipulation – that an image can be packaged in a way so it’s not what it represents.”<sup>151</sup>

Interestingly enough, the 200 pieces on display at ICA, as one report intoned, “confirms Fairey’s status as one of the leading practitioners of street art, a subversive and often controversial genre that includes graffiti, posters, stickers and stencils.”<sup>152</sup> But, when such pieces are exhibited in galleries and go for up to \$85,000, or when the city of Boston commissions Fairey to use specialized spaces throughout downtown and offers bicycle tours of the “art,” it is worth questioning if the politics of the work is subsumed by municipal and commercial interests. Although the images presented in these exhibits address the atrocities of war, the power of propaganda and role of capitalism it is still important to question if the poetics of inciting the public to engage in a systematic

critique of their environment is not undermined. Especially because these images also functioned as advertisements for the show, as well as for his graphic designs and other tactics used to maintain brand identity for hire.<sup>153</sup>

It is important to note that the “The Supply and Demand” retrospective was sponsored by Levi Strauss & Co., based on their longstanding and supportive relationship. For Levis, the museum accorded them interesting opportunities to rebrand their company as both supporter of the arts and part of a tradition of urban youth cynical of advertising. Levi’s vice president of marketing Robert Cameron stated, “Levi’s ® collaboration with Shepard Fairey is the perfect fit. As original as Levi’s ® jeans, Fairey is a groundbreaking innovator who has fast become a cultural icon...Fairey’s audience is seduced by the striking imaginative imagery he creates.”<sup>154</sup>

Within a few months of this collaboration, both Levis and Fairey capitalized on their relationship, each using the other to brand their status as authentic among the commercially apathetic youth. Levi’s painstaking defines their products as authentic and original, “Levi’s is the authentic, original denim brand...Levi’s is the only brand that can provide authentic, vintage detailing...which includes the 501, authentic, original blue jean.”<sup>155</sup> But the drive to articulate authenticity with the Levi’s brand through a collaboration with Fairey is most revealing, as it points to a strategic co-optation and re-articulation of authenticity to the Levi’s brand through the association with a “subversive” street artist with street credibility. In doing so, however, Fairey would be positioned as authentic as well, thereby maintaining the necessary counter cultural capital needed to create the distinction of his brand as “subversive.” Both would prove essential for the successful market penetration of each.

Through the mutually reciprocal constitution, the articulation of each other’s brands attempts to exploit the associations common to both. But, the collaboration did not begin with the Supply and Demand exhibit, it began five years prior at San Francisco Levi’s Store. In 2002, Levi’s sponsored Authentik at the Vortex Gallery in San

Francisco. It was one of Fairey's first major exhibits, and collaboration between Levi's and Obey Giant, in what would become a marketing campaign directed toward the branding of authenticity. From 2002 to 2009, the two entities engaged in several collaborative endeavors directed toward this end, as Fairey created a series of one-of-a-kind "Obey" 501 art pieces, and the two co-designed denim tote bags for the Institute of Contemporary Art show, sold at the gift shop of the museum to commemorate the show.

The collaboration of the Obey X Levi's clothing later in 2009 included a new product line of "hand-customized original, punctuated by 'spray paint' drip details, stenciled art imagery, pins and 'wear and repair' finishing touches." Each piece includes "exclusive branding details" with an Obey Giant tab next to the Levis Red Tab, and the Obey Giant face waistband loop. From jeans to denim jacket and flannel shirts they are fitted with an assortment of obey patches and "covert and custom, exclusive artwork sewn into the interior."<sup>156</sup> The "street-inspired styles for men" is identified as "a celebration of the renegade spirit embraced by both pioneering partners."<sup>157</sup>

The line of Levi's clothing was defined as "highly-collectible" exclusively arranged at select Levi's Store locations.<sup>158</sup> To commemorate the launch, Fairey created a series of four new posters designs and a storefront display. The launch started as a Levis flagship store in Times Square hosted a live public installation event (Obey X Levi's), where the public could witness Fairey designing a collage that would be put up in front of the store. The event was designed to promote the new collaboration.

When Fairey's images are sponsored by companies such as Levis, which happen to be the brunt of the attack for other appropriation street artists such as the Billboard Liberation Front, Fairey's work becomes increasingly difficult to decipher from the advertising that surrounds it. Both in design and purpose, Fairey's work starts to occupy the same marketing terrain and purpose of corporate giants. Levi's is able to profit from such associations so they have continued to collaborate such other artists and designers including Damien Hirst, Stefan Sagmeister, Ryan McGinely and Robert Geller.

## David the Giant

Accounts in the press and business publications suggest that corporate advertisers had taken notice of the anti-consumer images as a successful viral marketing tool, and wanted in on the technique. While some perceived the tactic and image as a critique of the corporatization and privatization of space others were unsure and some were convinced that someone was profiting from the image and “using public space to promote himself.”<sup>159</sup> Others however, labeled Fairey as a “modern-day Zorro,”<sup>160</sup> “wheat-pasting-rebel-cum-international-design-guru”<sup>161</sup> and “Frankenstein’s monster of guerrilla artist-cum-marketing whiz,” and the obey project, a cultural phenomenon, “a mandate that grabbed a generation.”<sup>162</sup>

By this time Fairey occupied a unique position, a nexus in which marketing, fine art, and the tactics of subversion collapsed. Fairey’s role shifted as political provocateur to guerilla marketer of the year, he describes his involvement and collaboration with corporate giants as part of an overall strategy of being a populist artist and a grass roots activist who infiltrated the mainstream and is dictating a relative degree of autonomy from business and art institutions.<sup>163</sup> “I consider myself a populist artist,” Fairey explained to the *Associated Press*. “I want to reach people through as many different platforms as possible. Street art is a bureaucracy-free way of reaching people, be it T-shirts, stickers, commercial jobs, the Internet there are so many different ways that I use to put my work in front of people.”<sup>164</sup>

Fairey clarifies, “I felt in order to satisfy my goals to be a populist [I had] to figure out how to make what I was doing work as a business. In a lot of ways populism and pop culture evolve around sort of the consumer demands, the demand of capitalism...I figured if I could make this work as a business on my own terms I’ll be able to do it my way.”<sup>165</sup> While the association of populism with supply and demand economics is questionable, Fairey adds, “What I’ve done as an artist in the counterculture has always been hopefully with an eye to infiltrating the broader culture...It was a great

example of how grass-roots activism and progressive ideas can affect and tie in with the mainstream.”<sup>166</sup>

Fairey describes working for corporations as an inside/out strategy with a Robin Hood effect, saving street art from corporate infiltration by being the corporate insider himself.”<sup>167</sup> Fairey contends that making art in the streets or for museums does not elide his position as a political provocateur even though he is sought after for his perceived street cred and buzz that resonates with particular demographics. The association that Fairey is pulling one over on “the man” adds to this identity and the market he seeks to exploit and ‘protect.’<sup>168</sup> This is justified as Fairey says because, “the bottom line is, as soon as corporations realize something culturally is resonating with the people they want to reach, they will try to infiltrate it and exploit it.”<sup>169</sup> Unlike corporations, Fairey identifies himself as a savior, a rebellious insider who calls out corporations in distinction to his actions while also providing his services to help them look more authentic.<sup>170</sup> The rhetorical effect creates the illusion of subversion, as his success in the market depends on his status as an urban street artist willing to “exploit the cachet of that genre, and the perceived authenticity and integrity it has.”<sup>171</sup>

While Fairey claims his work is designed to function in parallel to advertising, utilizing the same techniques while calling such techniques into question, with absurdity and antagonism, Fairey explains that selling products was necessary to finance the street art. “I don’t share the philosophy of these guys, but it’s a real coup to be able to do work for them. I take the money I make and put it back into my own projects.”<sup>172</sup> But as Fairey iterates the importance of his artwork, as a great marketing tool, he sees the overlap between his politically suggestive images and commercial work as blurring the boundaries between the two.<sup>173</sup> “I think to have these very impractical delineations between art, design, what’s keeping it real, and what’s commercial, is not very psychologically healthy for most artists and designers.”<sup>174</sup>

Fairey explains and refashions his goals away from the “question everything” ironic dictate of Obey, and instead advocates that “people need to consume with more discretion”<sup>175</sup> But to what extent then is Fairey merely the appropriated arm that facilitates the reproduction of the necessary conditions of reproduction, and reproducing the ideology of corporate entrepreneurship? As a commodity, obey becomes a semblance of what it is not claiming irony as a guise. In exposing contradiction through irony, the commodification of irony forecloses meaning and forces contradiction, difference and deferral to slip back on itself. This dialectical movement is reflected in the movement of Obey, as it began as irony to incite agitation and invite the public to galvanize around anti consumption it comes back, folds in on itself and forecloses meaning. Articulated to mean what it says, the clothing labels stitched into Obey Clothing says it all, it is not Andre but, “Obey<sup>TM</sup> that] has a posse.”

### **Concluding Comments**

The Billboard Liberation Front, *Adbusters*, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, The Guerilla Girls, Shepard Fairey, Banksy and Robbie Conal emerged from the very conditions they critiqued, to address the representations of political and commercial propaganda and the one way flow of communication. But as these appropriation artists entered a diverse array of voices in the public sphere and reclaimed public space through poetic acts that used the aesthetics of advertising against advertising neither corporations nor advertisers sat idly by, for these tactics were also to be utilized by advertisers who engaged in counter strikes of their own.

As marketers co-opt appropriation tactics and commodify artist designs the dominant methods of interpellation are secured and the identities formed around counter hegemonic hails are redirected toward consumption. When the tactics and visual styles are reappropriated for marketing to reproduce consumer capitalism and commodified by the art and fashion industries, it is necessary to question how extensive such trends have become, and what conditions facilitated incorporation. The following chapter, therefore,

traces the development of recent marketing trends in which these artists emerged and their tactics were co-opted, through a proliferation of under-the-radar and stealth techniques identified as guerilla marketing.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE SUBVERSIVE LIMITS OF APPROPRIATION

The extent to which appropriation activities holds political import as the signifier of disobedience or are emptied of meaning when rearticulated to pop culture and co-opted by marketing, is worth questioning. If hegemonic containment constitutes the limits of appropriation, it is necessary to lay bare the socio-economic conditions and evolving marketing tactics that co-opted and commodified their tactics and visual styles. The following discussion places an emphasis on the changing marketing practices against appropriation as the struggle is engulfed. This chapter, therefore, explicates the reasons for co-optation by tracing the tactics of guerrilla marketing used to “cut through the clutter” to create buzz and intrigue and articulate an edgy, street and “authentic” identity.

#### **Rise of Neo-Liberalism**

The late 1970s ushered in an era of increased deregulation of the media industries, the rise of brand-based marketing, the overwhelming increase in the privatization of culture, the continued demise of the welfare state and a shift from the production of industrial commodities to a service and information based economy. Advanced through free-market principles, such changes induced a global ‘competitive’ market structure in which technological changes and the strive for profit facilitated the systematic dismantling of production facilities in the U.S. increasing the outsourcing of labor. Technology facilitated and replaced a successful model of production and distribution, within globalization facilitating the dismantling of government programs. As the plant and factory were replaced, so too were unionized labor positions by temporary and service sector employment.

In a *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey argues that neoliberal practices were initiated in the 1970s and have become the dominant and unquestionable logic behind deregulation, privatization and non-governmental interference. Neoliberalism



reflects a move to uncouple capital from the social and political constraints of Keynesian economics that hinder the free flow of capital and create the conditions to restore the power of the economic elite. The state's role is to create and secure the institutional structure in which such practices can flourish and guarantee, through military, defense, police and legal institutions, private property rights and the health of the market.

But as Harvey indicates, with the exemption of creating markets, neoliberalism dictates that the states intervention must be kept at a minimum, so that the market dictates its own health. The values of the market and exchange is an ethic that, "holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market."<sup>1</sup> Its reigning hegemonic position has become so pervasive that its assumptions have filtered into common-sense ways of interpreting, living in and understanding the world.

Neoliberal ideology was advanced by systematic public relations campaigns, lobbyists and media owners who extolled the myth that free markets fulfill the public interest while concealing the role of government as the grantor and guarantee of a free and diverse market place of ideas. The free market, it was claimed, would foster competition and innovation, while it simultaneously facilitated increased consolidation and the monopoly of power. Harvey maintains that neoliberalism used threats, co-optation and bribery backed by the persuasive power of the state to incorporate freedom, whether political or otherwise, within the neoliberal fold and create "the climate of consent necessary to perpetuate its power."<sup>2</sup>

In *The New Media Monopoly*, Ben Bagdikian argues that as early as 1981 conservatives rallied around the interference of Big Government, which, "accelerated the steady elimination of a genuinely progressive income tax. They adopted the goal of uninhibited corporate power. Political slogans advocating a shrinking government and arguments involving that idea filled the reports and commentary agendas of most of the country's major news outlets. It was the beginning of the end of government-as-

protector-of –the-consumer and the start of government-as-the-protector-of-big-business.”<sup>3</sup> The economic logic of neoliberalism advanced from the late 1970s has resulted in deregulation of the market and the increased privatization of culture.<sup>4</sup>

These developments can be identified in the rise and fall of the fairness doctrine as it was rewritten to further the public’s interests in terms of profit and the continued consolidation of media industries. The elimination of the fairness doctrine in 1987 facilitated the conditions in which the media would be guided by an economic logic to manufacture of consent through official sources and sensationalism rather than the public interest. The elimination of the Fairness Doctrine, meant broadcasters were no longer legally bound to broadcast both sides of controversial issues. Diversity would be up to the discretion of the broadcaster. The elimination of the Fairness Doctrine points to the lack of means available to voice opposition outside of established consensus.

Without controversy and voices critical to dominant representations, larger networks entrenched profit as the necessary criteria for a vibrant public sphere. Moreover, as commercial air time is preserved for non-controversial ads, i.e., those that promote consumption, advertisers are systematically legitimized and their messages in particular and consumption more generally, is naturalized. As such spaces are preserved for advertising, which gives the corporations an unprecedented power over the flow of communication and social critique, citizen participation is elided. Airtime therefore, with limited exception, is off limits for expression other than commercials that promote consumption, as such have become so naturalized that it no longer appears controversial.

The absence of the social critique of advertising and the consequences of over consumption facilitates the myth that the media is the direct result of free competition and a forum in which a diverse array of issues can be debated. Beyond this, however, it creates the conditions by which the airwaves are perceived to be the sole rights of broadcasters rather than the property of the public and the result of governmental policy that must serve the public interest. With such restrictions on the places where

information relevant to citizenship is questioned and debated, the necessary actions and discourses for a healthy democratic community are relegated to public spaces.<sup>5</sup>

### **Media Conglomeration**

Signals of neoliberalism can further be identified in the media law and policy decisions in the late 1990s. For such deregulatory decisions facilitated increased consolidation of media industries and asymmetrical relations over the rights to own, access, produce, display and distribute media. In *Rich Media Poor Democracy*, Robert McChesney writes of the concentration of profit driven media systems and the dangers to a democratic society. McChesney's analysis of the regulatory decisions of the 1980s and 1990s points to the continued conglomeration of the media, the privatization of culture, and the absence of public involvement in the policy making process.<sup>6</sup> Rather than a democratic polity operating in the public interest through public participation in the affairs over its media system, lobbyists and heads of corporations operate through the guise of the public interest and defend their position through neoliberal ideology.

McChesney argues that the private control of the media is defended by the myth of a free market. The market, it is claimed, will provide the public with cheaper services and promote competition. However, the use of the "market" merely justifies and reproduces a myth that substantiates the position of the wealthy and the unequal access to cultural resources. For, the media system is not the result of the free market, but rather the direct result of government policy, grants of rights and subsidies. The Communication Act of 1934, 1987 Fairness Doctrine, the 1993 (fin-syn rules), and the Telecommunications Act of 1996, for example, did not create competition nor were they the result of the free market in and of themselves, but rather were policy decisions that facilitated the neoliberal structure of the industry.

Neoliberalism maximizes the role of markets and minimizes the role of non-market institutions. Without government interference, the ideology of neoliberalism promotes business interests as the interests of society and de-regulation as unhindered

free expression. However, deregulation facilitated a higher concentration of media, excessive intellectual property litigation, the hypercommercialization of culture and an immense accumulation of negative externalities.<sup>7</sup> Hyper-commercialism refers to the influence and saturation of corporate power that “is woven so deeply into the culture that it becomes invisible, unquestionable.”<sup>8</sup> The restructuring of the media industry has not merely allowed media conglomerates to actively pursue their own interests but has enforced a market model under the veil of the public interest.<sup>9</sup>

In 1983, 50 companies vied and competed for the public’s interest, the number has consistently decreased, falling to 29 in 1987, 23 by 1990 and to 10 in 1997. Today the relaxed rules have funneled competition to six major corporations who own the majority of television, film, publishing and online holdings. These companies include General Electric, Walt Disney, News Corp, Time Warner, Viacom and CBS. With combined revenues exceeding, \$275.9 billion, the financial capital at their disposal reflects unprecedented communication power.<sup>10</sup> While the revenue streams consist in the diversification of holdings, and derive from both advertising and the commodification of media content, barriers to entry appear virtually impassible regardless of the “democratization” of the internet.

Enabled through neoliberal Acts and enforced through intellectual property litigation, each of the major firms is able to purchase and own a particular configuration of television networks, TV show productions, television stations, cable channels, music companies, cable TV systems, magazines, newspapers, book publishing and distribution networks, along with the content cross-promoted throughout the media holdings. As McChesney states, conglomeration facilitates financial benefits as:

programs can be extensively promoted across all the company’s platforms; media ‘brands’ can be used to create new programming in different sectors; spin-off properties like soundtracks, books, video games that are generated by movies can be kept in-house; firms have increased leverage with advertisers; they have

increased negotiating leverage with labor and suppliers; and, in a hit-or-miss business like media, the increase in scope reduces overall risk.<sup>11</sup>

The ownership and access of a diverse array media platforms and properties enables companies to exploit both vertical and horizontal integration. While vertical integration “involves owning assets involved in the production, distribution, exhibition, and sale of a single type of media product,” which guarantees places for firms to market and display their products. Horizontal integration applies to a firm attempting to control the greatest amount of output in its particular field. As horizontal integration increases a firm has a greater share of the market, with lower overhead and more bargaining power over prices with suppliers. Vertical and horizontal integration, or synergy enables the monopolization of production and distribution networks.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, smaller firms or firms associated with social criticism are unable to pursue the strategies necessary to compete, for they are unable to access the spaces reserved for controversial free air time.<sup>13</sup> This was clearly identified by the Media Foundation and their denied access to the dominant commercial apparatus. Smaller firms and individuals have reduced financial, employment and technological resources and lack the ability to cross promote or cross sell their products. Due to the absence of a vertically or horizontally integrated structure, they are unable to compete with the primary definers of news, entertainment and culture and are pushed to the margins, specifically the streets, to promote their democratic cause.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the public is limited to the dominant image makers in culture and are subject to non-controversial images necessary for a vibrant culture.

While acts such as the Telecom Act of 1996 allowed a few companies to buy up as much media property as the law would allow, others such as the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, have extended the ownership of their property. Through such acts, the diversity of opinion necessary for the proper functioning a healthy and vibrant democracy and an informed public has been replaced with an economic ethos. The result is an

increased ability of media conglomerates to combine their market share in almost every medium and across international borders. Deregulation has provided support for private self-interested parties that block the path of democratic practice i.e., that of competition and diverse opinion.

The result, as McChesney argues, is a concentration of media ownership, the decline of mainstream journalism, the hyper-commercialization of culture, the globalization of the corporate media through neo-liberal economy, the collapse of public broadcasting, and a First Amendment serving as a tool to protect corporate privilege.<sup>15</sup> The outcome of such neoliberal “de-regulatory acts” such as the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act has furthered a greater concentration of media holdings in which a handful of media companies become, what Bagdikian calls, “the ministry of information and culture.”<sup>16</sup>

The political and economic structure of neoliberalism has fostered greater integration and a global reach of media firms in which a small number of transnational conglomerates have systematic influence of cultural reproduction. Such actions have played “a central role in the development of ‘neoliberal’ democracy; that is, a political system based on the formal right to vote, but in which political and economic power is resolutely maintained in the hands of the wealthy few.”<sup>17</sup> As deregulation furthered conglomeration and undermined competitive markets, corporations have engaged in strategies that maximize profits, reduce cost and minimize risk. Risk is minimized through joint ventures with ‘competitors,’ the diversification of holdings and economies of scale. Competitor is hardly the name for GE and Comcast, who jointly own NBC Universal, or for Time Warner and CBS who both own shares in the CW. These joint collaborations eliminate risk and indicate the close relationship of ownership among these firms. McChesney adds, if synergy has become the principle means and result of media conglomeration, the maintenance of profit driven commercial media requires branding.

The economic war chest at the disposal of advertising agencies is revealing in this regard. On March 17, 2011, Kantar Media, a leading provider of advertising information to the marketing industries, released the U.S. advertising expenditures for 2010. The numbers in this report are astounding, to say the least, as a 6.5 % increase over 2009 shows a robust economy during a monumental downturn in the global economy. The report indicates that the average increase across all media amounts to \$131 billion spent on advertising alone. Yet, even in 2009, advertising expenditures were on the rise showing an increase of over 5% from the previous year. With the top ten advertisers of 2010 roughly the same as 2009, provided here in descending order: Procter & Gamble Co., G.M. Corporation, AT&T Inc., Verizon Communications Inc., News Corp, Pfizer Inc., Time Warner Inc., Johnson & Johnson, Ford Motor Company, Time Warner Inc., and L'Oreal Sa, the economic prowess of a few corporations has hardly changed.<sup>18</sup>

These figures point to dramatic increases in the type of advertising, in response to, and perhaps despite a failing consumer economy and an evolving techno-media landscape. Compared to 2009, television advertising increased by 10.3%, magazine media by 2.9%, internet by 9.9% and outdoor advertising by 9.6%. Comparing these figures to the advertising expenditures in the 1970s is revealing. While roughly \$19.5 billion was spent on advertising in 1970, by 2007 roughly \$280 billion was spent. Accounting for inflation, this number reflects a \$166 billion difference in advertising, more than doubling what was spent in the 1970s. Yet, 80% of advertising expenditures come from four media holding companies. But the change in scope and scale of advertising, has also led to dramatic shifts in type as well.<sup>19</sup>

As Harvey indicates, neoliberalism was advanced through freedoms articulated to consumption as well. Consumer choice was advanced through the freedom to choose among products, as well as through the diversification of lifestyles, modes of address and a range of cultural practices. Neoliberalism depends on consent and thus it cast its net wide enough to create a “neoliberal market-based populist culture of differentiated

consumerism and individual libertarianism.”<sup>20</sup> Capturing both the Republican Party as powerful players in art institutions, New York for example, became an epicenter of artistic “freedom,” lifestyle diversification, and increased consumer niche choices while still operating within particular boundaries that served their interests. All of which, seemed to have proved quite profitable and reinforced elite interests in commodifying art as profitable or similarly condemning art as perverse.

Harvey illustrates, “this political base could be mobilized through the positives of religion, cultural nationalism and the negatively coded, if not blatant, racism, homophobia, and anti-feminism. The problem was not capitalism and the neoliberalization of culture, but the ‘liberals’ who had used excessive state power to provide for special groups (blacks, women, environmentalists, etc.)”<sup>21</sup> These are issues, that not only the Guerrilla Girls, *Adbusters*, The Billboard Liberation Front and Robbie Conal introduced through their works, but also Barbara Kruger, when her “Questions” directly confronted the political mobilization of nationalism and the co-optation of patriotism and democracy to justify Republican actions questioning the abuse of power. Jenny Holzer’s position is quite interesting in this regard as well.

The commercial side of Holzer’s work is embedded within a neo-liberal structure, where the government serves as the guarantor and guarantee of private property rights and global-economic expansion. While Holzer attempted to insert a diverse array of voices in the public sphere, her work was co-opted and funded by the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1996. While the USIA, was created in the 1953 to promote a favorable view of the U.S. to its client states abroad, in 1978 a new division was formed and responsible for creating visual, literary and performance art tours. Since then over 10,000 artists have participated in tours abroad.

Former member Nancy Snow explains, the role of the USIA has two major objectives, to defend capitalism against social change and to capture the ex-colonial world for private enterprise. In *Propaganda Inc.*, Nancy Snow says the USIA utilized the



rhetoric of national security and democracy interchangeably with free enterprise and the free market. As democracy is articulated to actions that promote business interests and the government makes political decisions to support free enterprise and private profit, the accountability of business and the participation of the public is elided.<sup>22</sup> Snow adds, this “neoliberal model of market democracy is not based on a participatory ideal of politics but on one in which the public’s role is minimized, and transnational (and thus publicly unaccountable) private interests carry our political and economic decision making.”<sup>23</sup>

Understanding the extent to which such funding can be conceived as an effort on behalf of the USIA to transmit pro-corporate U.S. imagery and policy by promoting the works of Holzer is critical. But, this is not to ask if Holzer becomes a propagandist for the states, but if or whether she becomes part of the ideological mechanisms in which neo-liberal ideology is promoted abroad and advances America™, because her art is used to promote global economic expansion calling on a diverse array of publics to identify with the diverse array of voices in her work.

When USIA director Joseph Duffy identified a commitment to art as “a tool of diplomatic engagement” one had to question the role of government agencies, particularly those such as the USIA, in funding art to advance a neoliberal economy.<sup>24</sup> When millions of dollars of grants are issued to artists, the potential autonomy of art as a means to critique existing relations seems intricately connected to government and commercial interests.<sup>25</sup> Neoliberalism, Harvey claims, “as the high point of human inspiration turns out to be nothing more than the convenient means to spread corporate monopoly power and Coca Cola everywhere without constraints.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Marketing Revolution & Revolutionary Marketing**

Accompanied by shifts in technology and the expansion of cable throughout U.S., neoliberalism also points to shifts in marketing strategies as well. The deregulation of the market enabled fewer corporations with greater communicative power to encompass a continuously fragmenting market. The result of new technologies, more channels and a

diversification of lifestyle niches therefore offered a hyper commercialism and increased expenditures for advertising. While the preceding accounts point to the trends in ownership to deal with the changing nature of the media scape, it is important to explicate new developments in marketing as advertisers have reacted to an evolving market inundated with more messages. Digital technologies such as TiVo and DVR impact the increasingly fragmented market – due to the expanse of cable and the internet, shifting the balance of power from advertiser to a time-shifting consumer. While these virtual commodities lack a corporeal existence, their promotions invite them.

This change in marketing is tied up with new technological advancement that enables the proliferation of media channels and informational services. But as the number of channels increased so too did the amount of advertising and immaterial online services. Such technological and economic changes demanded that advertisers develop strategies of product differentiation and new tactics to stand out amidst a barrage of images in order to connect with the public through corporeal engagement. But far from the attempts to manufacture distinction among products, consumer culture has been marked by largely homogeneous products from only a few corporations. Monopoly and uniformity follows as companies in competition with one another create similar products.<sup>27</sup> As a result, variety and diversity are subsumed by sameness and ever aggressive attempts to position products as the quintessential maker and representative of taste and distinction.

In *No Logo*, Naomi Klein notes that the result of this environment was branding, for advertisers who sold ideas and lifestyles rather than the product itself.<sup>28</sup> “These pioneers made the bold claim that producing goods was only an incidental part of their operations, and that thanks to recent victories in trade liberalization and labor-law reform, they were able to have their products made from them by contractors, many of them overseas. What these companies produced primarily were not things, they said, but images of their brands. Their work lay not in manufacturing but in marketing.”<sup>29</sup>

Klein argues, that a brand is the core meaning for modern corporations seeking to articulate their products and identities. By the mid-1990s, “‘Brands, not products!’ became the rallying cry for a marketing renaissance led by a new breed of companies that saw themselves as ‘meaning brokers’ instead of product producers...Advertising is about hawking products. Branding, in its truest and most advanced incarnations, is about corporate transcendence...the produce that will flourish in the future will be the ones presented not as ‘commodities’ but as concepts: the brand as experience, as lifestyle.”<sup>30</sup> Successful brands would be those that were able to articulate authentic emotional allegiance to a specific identity and way of life within its promotion.

The value of brands lies, in part, in the manufactured distinction amongst virtually identical products. Brands therefore moved away from expressing products in terms of their attributes and articulated a transcendental meaning and identity to the product. In other words, they promise an ideal exchanged through consumption. Companies spend billions trying to create positive brand associations moving to incorporate culturally valued images and feelings to turn the product into a signifier of identity and way of life. As Alissa Quart explains in *Branded*, “given all the goods jostling for consumer attention, branding became one of the necessities for making products stick in consumer’s minds. The companies doing the best were those that had over the years build up a strong brand and recognizable identity.”<sup>31</sup> Advertisements serve as one vehicle to convey the brand meaning.

Brands, were able to capitalize on trademarks, legally backed associations between a product and logo, or voice, then move beyond them. For brands, the key was an association with a logo creating meaning that could reflect a particular way of life. Often utilizing emotional ties, brands facilitate an emotional connection and loyalty to what the logo conveys. In this way it moves beyond simply reflecting a way of life and articulates membership of this lifestyle to those who buy in. In *Consumed*, Barber contends, “Where trademarks traded in generic goods, brands traded in generic

sentiments, emotions which had little to do with the goods and series themselves but were surgically attached to them by professional market doctors.”<sup>32</sup>

Branding moves away from the direct appeal to buy a product for what it does as it signifies a lifestyle exchanged through its purchase. It is not the product that is sold in so much as feelings, ideas, and identity. Barber adds, as brands hijack “authentic” emotions, desires and feelings of discontent are channeled toward consumption to reproduce the meaning and emotional connection toward the brand. This move led advertisers to turn toward the study of anthropology to better understand how communities develop and rally around symbols to forging authentic and emotional bonds with symbols that reflect their identity and membership.

Kevin Roberts, CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi argues that, it has become necessary to leverage the power of emotion and love and provide the brand with a mystery, sensuality and intimacy in the brand based economy. He says, “Brands that win these moments of truth again and again earn a special place in consumer’s hearts and minds; the strongest of these establish a lifelong bond with consumers.”<sup>33</sup> For Roberts it is necessary to refocus brand strategies to make emotional connections and for ad agencies to become agencies of ideas that can cut through the clutter of branding.

“Brands,” Roberts argues, “were developed to create differences for products that were in danger of becoming as hard to tell apart as chunks of gravel.”<sup>34</sup> The “lovemark” is an extension of this trend as it attempts to re-define the brand in terms of the relationship one has with the product on a personal level. Tapping into dreams is another crucial element in creating the lovemark. According to Roberts, “we have to look at people’s lives in their entirety, the things they hope for and dream about, the things they fear, the things they love, the things they hate and need and want.”<sup>35</sup> Brands that can create connections with these emotions and desires are able to connect with individuals and induce them to need the product.

In *Unmarketable*, Anne Elizabeth Moore argues that branding was an attempt to make a deliberate association between a product and an image or idea. The image was manufactured to establish emotional ties to create a loyalty beyond reason. In the same book, Maurice Levy argues, “This change is from a rational decision to buy a brand to an irrational, passionate decision to be loyal to that brand.”<sup>36</sup> The emotional connection, is thought to persist regardless of any rational decision to use a different product. The love mark is a “forged connection to authenticity” or articulation. It is a “borrowed veil of integrity, a disingenuous stab at honesty. Because, in the end, ‘lovemarks’ describes not an emotional connection but a financial transaction.”<sup>37</sup>

Alex Wipperfurth challenges this notion in *Brand Hijack*, however. He believes brands need to do more than establish an emotional connection, as some are forged to stand for ideals and belonging by conveying meaning and establishing networks of membership. In short, brands become culture as they convey meaning and describe how the world is to be experienced and lived. They reflect and construct world views that constitute and mirror back the subjects constituted through it. The groups that form around brands are bearers of the mark and their membership is communicated through it. As Wipperfurth contends, the new branding ethos moves beyond brands and love marks to articulate a mythology where brands signify tribal membership and foster loyalty based on distinction, authenticity and difference. Successful brands are those that are able to articulate authentic emotional allegiance and way of life to the identity of the brand.

### **From Hunting Cool to Manufacturing Authenticity**

To facilitate the forged link to authenticity marketing agencies have used celebrity endorsement, peer-to-peer viral marketing, hunting for the signifiers of cool to attach to their brands. Cool is far from a new category but its meaning has changed substantially over the years. In the fifties, there were cool cats and hipsters and in the sixties the Beatles were the epitome of cool. Today, hipsters are cool again but what they stand for is far different than cool in the 1950s. Today, cool takes on a universal characteristic, but

not everyone can identify and convey cool, as marketers all vie for it, exploit it, and turn it into a trend. As Juliet Schor illustrates in *Born to Buy*, “marketers have defined cool as the key to social success, as what matters for determining who belongs, who’s popular, and who get accepted by peers.”<sup>38</sup>

Cool has a strange quality, however, as it moves to the mainstream it is no longer cool but popular. The ever elusive concept can be identified through reoccurring themes promoted by marketers in their product design and promotion. A number of themes that convey the cool status include exclusivity, edgy, anti-adult and, at times, expensive. While Schor illustrates that cool is generally expensive and living modestly means to live like a loser, it is important to note that such trends have lost their cool in some circles. The ironic hipsters sporting second hand clothing and the DIY culture who make their own clothes are cool because what they wear is essentially one-of-a kind or nearly impossible to find. Cool today, it would seem, depends on exclusivity and distinction conveyed through images and designs that appear authentic.

Cool, as Kerner and Pressman argue, in *Chasing Cool*, is also sought after because it cuts through the clutter and signifies difference. Trapped by cool, they suggest that “young people gravitate toward it; older people covet it because it makes them feel young. All across the psychographic spectrum everyone wants it, even if they can’t define what ‘cool’ actually is. This collective obsession is why cool moves products like nothing else.”<sup>39</sup> But, as these authors note, cool is a perception, first and foremost and depends on the ability to convey authenticity.

Cool is hunted for by trend spotters in companies who are willing to pay, or reimburse with products, employees who both track consumer movement online with undercover blogging, employ once guerilla artists hoping to capitalize on the association, and by hiring teen consultants. These tactics are derived from anthropological insights as marketers participate and interview the public for the most intimate reasons, desires and motivations. Marketers have also videotaped children in private spaces to develop more

in-depth analysis of daily rituals and the meanings children place on their products. The search for cool and the manufacture of brands as authentic emblems of distinction have led marketers to study and employ the trendsetting youth. And from such insights, they return to the environments where they first located cool to try to blend in and integrate their brands and make direct contact with the public. Such direct contact allows hunters to handout surveys, engage the public and even entice the public to go on “shopalongs” where marketers survey everything purchased and hold informal in-depth interviews over the reasons for purchasing.

In *Branded*, Alisa Quart discusses the use of teen consultants who are also known as corporate trend-spotters and “insiders.” They advise their corporate employers of effective ways to market to their friends. Kids, edgy insiders and those in the know who are privy to new technologies are sought out by cool hunters for their advice and motivations so that such motivation can be more authentically packaged and articulated within the brands, then sold back to them. The payment, is sometimes no more than the products themselves like new fashion from the designer label they are working for. Yet, it is not the branded clothing they are compensated with in as much as an identity. This is the true reason why they “volunteer their services to these beloved brands to show the extent of their identification and devotion.”<sup>40</sup>

Today’s contemporary American teens are the most brand-oriented, materialistic and consumer involved generation in U.S. history. The materialistic drive, however, has less to do with the actual material and its possession as it does with the belief that such objects and brands indicate social status and define who they are.<sup>41</sup> In her research, Schor illustrates that by eighteen months old a child is able to recognize product logos and before their second birthday they can ask for products by name. As they get older, not only are they marketed to through sophisticated attempts to direct their desire toward the acquisition of such products, but they are manipulated in assuming unrealistic body images, gender stereotypes and gratuitous sexuality. And, because of the influence of

advertisers to their peers, they are subjected to pressure to conform to the elusive and ever changing category of “cool.”

Attempts to position brands as signifiers of exclusivity and authenticity facilitated the articulation of the celebrity endorsement and product seeding. To engender the cool aesthetic, brands not only turned to street styles such as hip hop “but psychological attitudes like ironic detachment”<sup>42</sup> In this process, advertising takes on the consumer’s cynicism by criticizing advertising. The attempts have led to appropriated advertising campaigns such as Sprite’s, “Obey your thirst,” featuring NBA professional basketball player Grant Hill who ridicules celebrity sponsored products. But the attempts are merely surface, as the celebrity status of Hill is used not for his credibility but for his status and distinction. In this process, cynicism is used to circumvent the public’s skepticism. Yet, the public who identifies with the brand feels as though it speaks to them and is for them because it was developed by them.<sup>43</sup>

As Klein notes, the market seized on multiculturalism as it focused on youth. A source of carnivalesque imagery, “the \$200 billion culture industry – now America’s biggest export – needs an ever-changing, uninterrupted supply of street styles, edgy music videos and rainbows of colors”<sup>44</sup> In advertising circles edgy has associations with rap and hip-hop, with street and urban culture, graffiti and skateboarding, and African American culture.<sup>45</sup> As Klein notes, “the cool hunt has had to go further afield to find unpilfered space.”<sup>46</sup> Now, articulating a lifestyle, mythology and authentic emotions “requires an endless parade of brand extensions, continuously renewed imagery for marketing and, most of all, fresh new spaces to disseminate the brand’s idea of itself.”<sup>47</sup>

In *The Problem of the Media*, McChesney argues the effectiveness of individual ads has led advertisers to develop strategies farther afield from traditional attempts of manufacturing inadequacy. McChesney continues by explaining how tactics such as urban marketing which reflects a “new paradigm for media and commercialism is being formulated in which traditional borders are dissolving and conventional standards are



being replaced. This is more than a power shift from media firms to advertisers: it is about the marriage of content and commercialism to such an extent that they are becoming indistinguishable.”<sup>48</sup> This has ultimately led advertising agencies and marketing firms to co-opt the tactics of appropriation artists and activists to build authentic brand meaning, as such tactics and works convey the hip and edginess necessary to integrate the cynical but lucrative teen market.

### **Guerrilla Marketing**

To implement the ethos of branding, marketing agencies adopted new techniques. They infiltrated the fringes of mainstream culture to find and develop new brand identities with authentic appeal. Using, peer-to-peer research, cool hunting, teen consultants, and trendsetters, influencers and street teams, they seeded products and deployed viral marketing strategies. Agencies used metaphors of biological warfare to discover and capture the signs and lifestyles of a new generation of hip and edgy trendsetters. McChesney argues, “A crucial development in the early twenty-first century has been the rise of ‘guerilla’ marketing; that is, smuggling sales messages to a particular ‘target audience’ by aggressively spreading ‘buzz’ about a hip new product or using other unorthodox and surreptitious methods.”<sup>49</sup>

While some marketing agencies have created theatrical stunts to create buzz and word of mouth advertising others have utilized an elusive and ambiguous appeal to create an authentic and integrated brand experience. This attempt to reach these consumers in waiting became ever more difficult, the use of guerrilla marketing became one of the most vital tactics to cut through the clutter of competing ad agencies vying for the attention of the market. This approach utilized word of mouth advertising and the press to build brand equity and manufacture an “authentic” emblem of distinction based on the public’s investment of meaning.

The more recent tactic of guerilla marketing as covered in earlier chapters, is illustrative in this regard as the images of appropriation art and the tactics of political

protest were co-opted to create buzz and articulate an edgy, street and hip “authentic” identity for their brand. Guerrilla marketing stands in distinction to the direct appeals of advertising as agencies deployed a series of tactics to reach consumers on their own turf and invited the public to participate rather than simply receive the advertisement through passive involvement. As such, it became a more engaging strategy toward building allegiance to the brand. But more importantly, to facilitate this directive, the tactics of appropriation artists were co-opted and their visual styles commodified by the very culture industries they rallied against.

While the concept of guerilla marketing only begins to find its way into business publications by the end of the 1980s, in part, as a result of the publication of Jay Conrad Levinson’s book, *Guerilla Marketing*, the tactics derive from appropriation. Guerrilla marketing can be classified as the tactics that emerged due to the changing political and economic structure of the media, including; the prevalence of advertising and the development of a highly cynical public more resistant to mainstream promotion. Guerilla marketing, latched on to the presence and confrontational nature of appropriation artists whose tactics facilitated dialogue about the overwhelming presence of advertising and about the commercial promises. This developed from what industry insider Jack O’Dweyer describes as important societal changes in “women in the workforce, children doing the shopping, new family structures, poor reading skills and the use of languages other than English.”<sup>50</sup>

The Kagan Report issued in 1992 indicates that due to a decline in smaller companies and the increased market share of larger companies, fewer and fewer businesses were able to compete and stay afloat. As the report advocates, “the only survivors are likely to be those who, along with deep pockets, have the willingness to fly in the face of conventional wisdom and adopt guerrilla marketing and production tactics.”<sup>51</sup> The Kagan Report added that, the crowded marketplace, the overwhelming

economic power differentials in the media sector and the diversity of niches demanded new advertising and marketing techniques.

Utilizing more subtle methods to target a more ‘precise’ demographic facilitated the co-optation of lifestyles in advertising imagery as unique points of identification. Articulating a way of life or lifestyle to a brand while simultaneously attracting the trend-setting hipster market, has ultimately relied on the tactics of appropriation artists who redirect a one-way hail towards a more participatory and dialogic engagement on the streets. As marketing publications suggest, “To thrash through the jungle of traditional advertising, brands now strive to create ongoing dialogues with consumers.”<sup>52</sup> And, the non-traditional methods that facilitate the most successful endeavors.

So by using the tactics and poetics of guerrilla appropriation artists and cultural revolutionaries, guerrilla marketers started to develop strategies where both products and identities alike would be shaped by a guided consumer involvement. Tom Wells outlines in *Marketing*, how successful guerilla marketing depends on learning from the guerrilla tactics of Chairman Mao. Wells writes, “Unarguably, these principles are as true of the commercial battlefield of the 90s as they were of 30s China...the vast majority of guerrilla marketing campaigns ignore them – to their cost...surely before any client or agency is seduced into a guerrilla campaign they should pause, as I did, and ask themselves: ‘Now, what would Mao Zedong have done?’”<sup>53</sup>

Well’s description of the commercial battlefield is revealing, as it points to the need to explicate just how marketers were responding to and treating the public through these guerilla marketing efforts. The rhetoric has ranged from “preemptive strikes,” “against targets” to “mobile assault tours” when discussing other companies as well as the public, marketers are deploying a similar vocabulary from appropriation artists who “bomb” public spaces. But the use of this rhetoric points to a significant change in the tactics of advertising as it is directed at people rather than privatized spaces. “Traditional advertising is a machine gun,” suggests the Maccabee Public Relations Group out of

Minneapolis. “Guerrilla marketing is a sniper shot targeted directly at consumers... In the wake of the Internet; marketers have realized that targeting is so critical. Consumers have their guard up. What marketers want to do is get around the mental filter that most people erect because they’re bombarded by traditional advertising.”<sup>54</sup>

GoGorilla Media explains in an article in *Adweek*, the mission, is “to bombard and overwhelm consumers with advertising messages as they go about their daily lives.”<sup>55</sup> GoGorilla Media, whose icon is a gorilla face, defines itself as an alternative to traditional marketing, developing strategies to “get in the heads” of consumers as they experience marketing in new and unexpected places. Their media kit advises, that “GoGorilla leverages your advertising message by seeking out the unexpected locales and unexploited tactics that will get your target to sit up and take notice.”<sup>56</sup> According to GoGorilla Media, the \$200 billion purchasing power of the youth demographic makes them vital, if not essential, targets for companies wishing to stay afloat. As the primary decisions makers within their families, and often the trend setters of what is new and hip, new media tactics need to embrace their active roles rather than their passive reception.<sup>57</sup>

Open to what’s cool and new, GoGorilla Media has developed a plethora of under the radar marketing tactics based on the resistance of appropriation artists that directly confronts viewers in virtually every activity. GoSticker’s for example, are used to articulate brand images throughout a number of environments and gets kids to “identify what’s theirs and to stake out their own small slice of the world.” The stickers appeal to the “youthful desire to customize folders, skateboards, walls and more... because stickers are cool, they’re perfect for hip lifestyle brands.”<sup>58</sup>

But perhaps what is most revealing about GoGorilla is their view that “there is nothing more regrettable than empty space with no advertising printed on it.” Their tactics move from simple appropriation to a full out assault through their stealth campaigns using models to talk up brands without ever revealing that they are hired actors. As the “ultimate form of marketing to people under-the-radar, GoStealth can

literally take the form of anyone, anywhere.”<sup>59</sup> But their tactics are not limited to “GoModels” as they use coasters, glasses, swizzle sticks, matches, mints, condoms, money, bookmarks, street stencils, sidewalk billboards, host parties and projected images on the sides of buildings.<sup>60</sup>

In *Strategy* magazine, Max Lenderman clarifies, “Guerilla marketing is a logical step for marketers seeking a point of difference in a sea of competing messages and commercial pervasiveness, especially when targeting the so-called MTV generation, who can tune out a commercial faster than you can say ‘sponsored by.’”<sup>61</sup> Lenderman goes on to illustrate the way this demographic maintains a certain level of immunity and indifference to traditional marketing. The lucrative buy involves an elusive demographic that is persuaded by their peer groups and word of mouth interaction. But unlike traditional marketing, “this is the jungle where guerrillas thrive.”<sup>62</sup>

Lenderman’s insights are revealing as he points to the vitality of the youth market as well as their cynicism and mistrust over the big sell. In an environment where the hip trend setting consumer is the most lucrative it is no surprise that advertising agencies would co-opt the work of appropriation artists and their guerrilla tactics to promote brands. Quoting Che Guevara to Mao, guerrilla marketing becomes the necessary tactic to conduct a clandestine operation with the support and trust of the people. What is “paramount to any successful guerrilla foray, whether in battle or marketing, is the absolute co-operation of the people and a perfect knowledge of the target market.”<sup>63</sup>

Lenderman advances this line of thought suggesting that it is not deceptive because there is no hard sell. Instead its tactics depend on alertness, mobility and attack. “Guerrilla campaigns must not stray away from that directive. Stealth marketing isn’t about conning the consumer into buying a product or brand, it’s about bringing the product or brand into the everyday context of the consumer in a creative and engaging way.”<sup>64</sup> Guerrilla marketing presents a memorable experience based on trust and goodwill rather than merely shock value. It uses, “high-impact, dynamic and

unconventional face-to-face interactions at time and places where the target market is most receptive to learning about and experiencing a brand...Guerilla marketing is inexorably infiltrating into the general marketing mix to break through the white noise.”<sup>65</sup> This movement involves a perpetual battle of sneak attacks as marketing agencies camouflage their efforts and snipe their unsuspecting targets shaping their experiences through a multi-front clandestine assault.

While such rhetoric points to the public conceived as targets rather than human beings, it also points to the death of a life free from advertising because marketing assassins subject the lives of the public to an inescapable barrage of attacks. Guerilla marketing is evolving from tactical strikes and creating an integrated branding strategy, to a method of advertisement that is part of the brand meaning and eventually becomes the environment in which the public finds itself. To facilitate this endeavor, marketing agencies are embracing the countercultures as a means to overcome and exploit cynicism. Street activists, graffiti artists and appropriation art provide the tactics and visual styles to articulate necessary hip, edgy, and authentic identities to their brands.

### **Counter Culture Brands**

Articulating a way of life or lifestyle to a brand while simultaneously attracting the trend-setting hipster market, has incorporated the tactics of appropriation artists who redirect a one-way hail towards a more participatory and dialogic engagement on the streets. While guerilla marketing encompasses a wide array of techniques to create enough wonder and intrigue through often elusive appeals, its unstable meaning, street tactics and participatory push, elides its presence as advertising. Hidden from view it conveys a hip and edgy counter cultural intervention.

The attempt to create a “counter cultural meaning” to a company’s image through the manufacture of intrigue was not unique to Chrysler, Levis or Apple to which the Billboard Liberation Front lambasted. It can be identified through numerous underground marketing attempts like Nokia’s sidewalk chalk drawings to promote its N-

Gage cell phone and also Sony's PlayStation, who engage in tactics of street art to promote dialogue.<sup>66</sup> In what some reports call the end of advertising, the lines between political intervention in the public sphere to question the use of space and advertising, of guerrilla marketing and street art, and appropriation and marketing are virtually indistinguishable.<sup>67</sup>

In 1993, not long before Neon's marketing agency employed guerilla artists to deface their own billboards for the newly launched car, changing the word "Hi" to "Hip," Taunton Cider employed Cowan Kemsley Taylor to engage in a guerilla theatre that utilized both the street theatrical tactics of Veryfine fruit juice with those of graffiti art.<sup>68</sup> This live advertising stunt was concocted to promote a newly released Sega video game called Gods. On Oxford Street, inside a Virgin Megastore, one could peer through the window and see a gamer apparently obsessed with the video game. But in outrage and excitement, the paid actor rushed to the street exclaiming "I am god, I am immortal."<sup>69</sup>

But, if this was not enough to grab the attention of passersby on Oxford Street, it might have been the next move, where the gamer ran back to the building and covered the store front with graffiti.<sup>70</sup> The use of graffiti, live advertising, street theatre and paid actors was an attempt to capture the 18-24 year-old demographic. While the success of this attempt was largely unknown at the time, the re-appropriation of such tactics helped create the conditions for a street war in which the use of actors, images and guerilla tactics were deployed to reclaim the streets and engage those who often block out ads.

Fairey's company, Blk/Mrkt, was a forerunner in this endeavor as it exploited the demand created by the supply of 'counter-cultural' images and the cult following of the Obey campaign. In 1996 Shepard Fairey, Philip DeWolff, and Dave Kinsey founded Blk/Mrkt Inc., a marketing design firm that promotes "underground campaigns that rise and spread."<sup>71</sup> In a meeting with Colgate-Palmolive, Fairey and other Blk/Mrkt representatives were flown in to create a more sexy product design for the generation x consumer. Robert Douglas of Young & Rubicam Advertising notes, Fairey reminded

them that focus groups are limited. But, “Kids respond to artwork. They respond to a more subtle message. Kids like to discover things on their own and make it theirs.”<sup>72</sup> Corporations, Fairey notes, “are looking for something that is connecting with an elusive demographic. The underground hipster or whatever. And then you get more bang for the buck.”<sup>73</sup> The ambiguity of the image generates interest because it can’t be easily explained. As a result, people begin to talk about it and soon it becomes viral. In short, appropriation and guerrilla street art become strategies to manufacture authenticity and foster buzz.

Since 1996, Blk/Mrkt have designed ad campaigns and logos for companies that include DC shoes, PepsiCo, Levi Strauss, Mountain Dew, Motorola, and Universal attempting to exploit this sought after demographic.<sup>74</sup> Blk/Mrkt Inc. redesigned the Mountain Dew logo and can using a two letter and two color design highlighting the letters “m” and “d”. According to Kinsey, the can and logo was part of a re-branding effort. The package design was updated and reworked to re-establish both brand awareness, manipulate existing views of the brand and well and re-position the beverage in the youth market as a “hip hop street brand.”<sup>75</sup> As part of a larger campaign of the cola wars between Pepsi Cola and Coca Cola, Mountain Dew took on new dimension to capture the edgier demographic of self-identified skateboarders, snow boarders and extreme sports fanatics. In short, it was an attempt to exploit the ironic humor, a sense of empowerment, and the subversive mentality of the fringe market.

Blk/Mrkt designs utilized the tactic of appropriation to create brand identity, manufacture rapport and capture the ironic hipster through the ambiguous appeal. Fairey says, “With the rise of underground art seeping into the mainstream, companies can’t follow the same archaic formula. Brands need to deliver their message to young urbanites in an authentic, graphic language that instantly stimulates curiosity.”<sup>76</sup> He explains in *American Demographics*, the rapport with the public starts by occupying



public spaces “as they enthusiastically coalesce and evangelize via a global underground of word-of-mouth networks.”<sup>77</sup>

Guerrilla marketing is an effective strategy to capture the taste-makers. It starts when someone sees the image. By invoking curiosity, the viewer asks someone else, and eventually the image goes viral because everyone is asking about the image. “It’s a whole effect of an image that has a certain charm, memorability, gist, pop, whatever, that generates interest because it isn’t easily explained. With guerrilla marketing, the medium is the message.”<sup>78</sup> Fairey adds, this method was highly effective when promoting the movie *Man on the Moon* for Universal Studios.

For the *Man on the Moon* guerilla campaign, Blk/Mrkt plastered walls, bus benches and poles with images of Andy Kaufman’s alter ego Tony Clifton. While the posters included the text “Andy Lives” they did not provide any explanation regarding the presence of the image in public space. The stickers, stencils and posters were put up in 15 major cities to stimulate curiosity and create, in a word, buzz. As Dee Dee Gordon, the co-president of Look-Look the marketing and trend analysis firm for the Universal picture states, Fairey was hired “because his style of art resonates with youth. He’s created his own grass-roots following.”<sup>79</sup> From skateboards to inner-city hip-hop culture, Blk/Mrkt, identifies the “tastemaker nirvana for marketers” through an ambiguous, edgy appeal in which a diverse array of trendsetters can galvanize around.<sup>80</sup>

In *Brandweek*’s edition of “Guerrilla Marketer of the Year,” Fairey explains that his stickers and posters have street cred with the ‘hard-to-penetrate boarder/musician subculture, one notoriously skeptical of traditional advertising.”<sup>81</sup> He is hired precisely for this reason, as his works speak to the trend-setters, “the portion of the public [who] is skeptical of big corporations and the typical big billboard or print ad approach. They’re the tastemakers, the person probably 15-25 who is willing to take risks with fashion and art and music and everything having to do with popular culture that then ends up influencing everyone from 10-50, in the mainstream.”<sup>82</sup>

NBC and IBM attempted similar tactics as both companies stenciled their logos on city property. But, as IBM and NBC discovered, guerrilla marketing can anger the public as much as it can capture an audience. In the early months of 2001, IBM hired a crew to promote their Linux operating system as a part of a \$1 billion campaign. But the low cost of the guerrilla campaign far exceeded the initial estimates. Comprised of spray painted Linux logos, ranging from a peace symbol, a heart and a tubby penguin throughout the streets of San Francisco, New York, Boston and Chicago, the tags posed questions as to their presence and meaning. However, for city officials in San Francisco, the guerrilla attack caused outrage.<sup>83</sup>

The city located 308 locations where the penguin trademark was tagged. San Francisco responded by holding IBM accountable for \$120,000 in cleanup costs.<sup>84</sup> And in Chicago, they reportedly paid \$180,000.<sup>85</sup> All of which, is potentially cheaper than paying for the type of publicity covered by the press, even when such attempts fail. In *Unmarketable*, Anne Elizabeth Moore contends, campaigns such as these cost roughly \$300,000. Companies on average may pay \$30 - \$500 to artists per piece, or a day rate between \$2,000 and \$12,000. Renting the space for the adds might run upwards of \$60,000, materials in excess of \$10,000, agency fees running roughly \$100,000 and the rest reserved for a cleanup fund. But, when a two minute TV spots might cost \$10 million to shoot, or in the case of the super bowl, cost \$2.5 million per thirty seconds to display, \$300,000 seems like a logical and practical alternative.<sup>86</sup>

The value far exceeds any cost, as street campaigns operate through word of mouth, incite viral buzz and are covered by the press. The multi-platform assault starts at the ground, and the rest is done by the public and the press on behalf of the advertiser. It is important to note that despite the negative news coverage that followed, IBM was still able to garner free publicity and an essentially low cost promotion relative to other promotional techniques. In the end IBM was able to create a brand identity of an anti-authoritarian sort. As an anti-big brother whose subversive strategies speak to a public

who can both relate to the technique and identify the logos as part of an open source network IBM was able to articulate itself not as big brother Goliath, but little David.<sup>87</sup>

The attempt to articulate a more urban and authentic identity to brands by appropriation occurred again in 2003, when Nissan created the Electric Moyo campaign and engaged in defacing their own ads. In what can only be described as the combination and deployment of meaconing, intrusion and jamming, the campaign co-opts the tactics of the Billboard Liberation Front, but takes it to another level. The multi-media campaign was launched in 10 major cities throughout the U.S., to promote the Altima Sedan to a hip and trendsetting demographic. In what should seem familiar to the Chrysler campaign 10 years earlier, Nissan pumped it up a notch as it not only engaged in the re-appropriation of its own billboards with wheat pasted turn tables and boom boxes but also, pirated their own radio ads.

Jon Cropper, the manager for youth and urban communications, described the ElectricMoyo campaign as an attempt to “break through the everyday clutter of advertising and generate positive messages that will resonate with this young audience.” The campaign was designed to cover existing ads, for the “Who Are You” campaign. Ultimately, the attempt was to direct traffic to their online site, and from there perhaps imbed enough cookies to track user movement and develop enough psychographic data to really understand the demographic that was interested in the campaign.<sup>88</sup>

As for the radio spots, pulling almost directly from the pirated TV broadcasts in the movie *They Live*, they interrupted the Nissan Maxima spots that had been running for months prior to the campaign. As the pirate broadcaster announces, "Do not touch your ears. We are adjusting your frequency of truth, recalibrating your setting to fun. ElectricMOYO is here. Before they get a clear fix on my location and stop me from jamming your regularly scheduled station, be sure to hook up with us at ElectricMOYO.com, where the people are free, the knowledge runs naked and everyone gets respect."<sup>89</sup> The street campaign and the radio spots were also coupled with multi-

media events throughout 10 cities. The MC was scheduled to make appearances in more than 150 locations, driving an ElectricMoyo Altima and “disseminating the ideals of freedom, access and respect to multicultural youth.”<sup>90</sup> In some select cities, art demonstrations were held as well as interviewing “local trendsetters from a variety of fields, including film, fashion, art, music, technology and travel.”<sup>91</sup>

Steve White, the vice president of marketing for Nissan explained, "We wanted to develop marketing communications that would directly impact a young multicultural audience in an honest and compelling way. We recognize this group to be an important and highly-influential segment of our business. By incorporating elements such as art, music and a touring MC into our work, we can actively engage this audience, share interesting information, and build upon dialogue we began earlier this year. The Nissan brand and our products are all about design, performance, and innovation. Our approach to marketing should be the same."<sup>92</sup>

And perhaps this is why in 2004, NBC engaged in the same tactic to promote one of its shows. They hired a local firm to stencil “The 4400 are coming” throughout the streets of San Francisco to promote the science fiction miniseries on the USA network. While the Geary corridor, Castro and Haight-Ashbury neighborhoods were bombed more frequently than other places, city officials reacted in a similar way as they did in 2001 with IBM. Bevan Dufty, a member of the Board of Supervisors for the city, claimed, “Given this is the second time it has happened, I want to send the message to these corporations that graffiti is not OK in San Francisco.” However, again the potential charges would not exceed \$100 per site, which is a relatively low cost for the media exposure that such tactics garnered.<sup>93</sup>

In the last few months of 2005, Sony created graffiti-style advertisements on the sides of buildings in major cities, as well. Over the course of one night, the images appeared in high traffic areas throughout the country. They appeared on the sides of apartment buildings in New York and Miami, behind a deli in Atlanta, on billboards in

Chicago El Stations, and on brick walls in L.A. and Philadelphia. The agency that concocted this stunt goes by the name of OMD Worldwide.<sup>94</sup> The images were of various youth characters holding the portable PSP, in what might be considered a more recent attempt to reach the urban market for its portable PlayStation device. But Sony learned a thing or two as they paid building owners for the use of the space.

In other words, what might be mistaken as urban guerilla tactics to reclaim public space, is in fact a further penetration and expansion of advertising in such cities.<sup>95</sup> As Sony took over the streets an illusion is created that they are brands by and for the public, and in occupying the same turf, they are not media behemoths, or goliaths. Moore argues, “despite the giant brand behind these small media tactics, individual consumers crave singularity, a sense of connection...It’s unfortunate that it’s all part of a well-organized, big-money effort described in violent terms like ‘bombardment’ and ‘maximum intrusion’ within the industry.”<sup>96</sup>

As the Sony spokesperson Patrick Seybold revealed in an interview in *Tech News*, the Sony campaign was aimed at the “urban nomad,” described as “consumers who are enjoying their entertainment on-the-go in an artistic and creative way.”<sup>97</sup> However, the response by “urban nomads” point to the misappropriation of such techniques, as the ads were defaced or covered up with spray paint by those tired of the corporate infiltration and co-optation of public space. Messages were scrawled above and between the ads, some indicated more of an x-ray of the ad, suggesting that they were “directed at your counter culture.” Others were more direct, stating “Stop hawking corporate products and big business on our neighborhood walls.”<sup>98</sup>

Such cases reveal the continued reliance and co-optation of methods of political protest for advertising purposes. The issue has created a mix of responses in the art community, where some accuse Sony of “trying to cash in on an art movement where they and the product they are selling don’t belong” using “an army of pimped-out artists.” But, despite such publicity and counter strikes, tactics of appropriation continued to be

co-opted for guerilla marketing purposes. Bob Garfield of *Advertising Age* has advised that the tactics of edgy advertising campaigns, where marketing agencies capitalize on more urban techniques and create buzz about buzz, indicate that traditional advertising methods no longer work for the desired youth market.

These insights are fully embraced by Fairey's involvement in Project 2050. Launched on May 2, 2005, 2050 brings brands closer to the influential trendsetting markets. To achieve this end 2050 offers services that include brand consulting, branded content opportunities, public relations, experimental marketing and trend analysis.<sup>99</sup> Campaigns created to target this demographic focus on the beverage, automotive, gaming, mobile communications, electronics, sports/entertainment and footwear/apparel industries. Matt Pressman the managing director for Project 2050 explains, the market they are after is more resistant to advertising and they don't want to be marketed to. They want to be entertained, seduced and engaged. Christopher White, the president of the project adds, "Project 2050 will provide unique solutions for the growing and diverse requirements of clients in need of capturing the attention of today's multicultural youth."<sup>100</sup>

By the year 2050 "ethnic groups will exceed 50% of the U.S. population, thus becoming the new mainstream... This cultural shift represents the genesis of the agency's name."<sup>101</sup> Thus, Project 2050 "aims to help marketers target urban youth, whether Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American or cool white kids."<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the market for 2050 is comprised of 50 million 16-28 year old ethnically diverse consumers. To promote 2050 as the agency that forges the link between the brand and the "influential multicultural market," Shepard Fairey was hired as the creative design director. As Fairey notes, his role is to create designs to elicit a feeling "for young tastemakers to see a brand as a culturally like-minded peer living in harmony with their world."<sup>103</sup>

In June of 2007, SanDisk engaged in a guerrilla marketing campaign to promote its Sansa MP3 player. Spending under \$1 million for the year, the campaign was headed

by Grey San Francisco as anti-apple promotion. Having discovered a growing demographic discontent with the iPod and its pervasive marketing strategies, GreySF co-opted the tactics and visual style of *Adbusters* and the Department of Corrections. GreySF's marketing director Kari Seitz claims, "People were saying, 'I don't want to be an iPod person; it's not necessarily cool. To understand that not everyone wanted to have an iPod gave us a real advantage. And when we discovered that, there was an incredible opportunity to try and maximize our insignificant amount of spending and do something powerful by being different.'"<sup>104</sup> Armed with the slogan "iDon't" Grey hit the streets with a number of posters targeted to the anti-apple demographic and directed them to [idon't.com](http://idon't.com), the website designed for the ad.

Ranging from iSheep, iChimp, iDroid and iPuppet, the campaign positioned the MP3 player as the anti-establishment device and the iPod as the device for followers, automatons and those incapable of thinking for themselves. As some of the posters state, "Are you an iChimp?," "Have you become an iPuppet," "iSheep, say bahh," "iDroid, programmed to comply," "the walking iDead," and "iFollow" with a donkey (read jackass) pictured on the poster. Ryan Miller, the senior account executive at GreySF, notes, "The reality of the situation was that our budget was a fraction of a percentage of what Apple was spending. We knew we had to do something that was provocative and break through the cluttered space we were playing with."<sup>105</sup>

The street strategy utilized wild postings and the distribution of stickers via used CD stores in venues with "street cred in alternative culture."<sup>106</sup> Similarly, the print strategically utilized alternative weeklies and *The Onion* to attract this highly sought after demographic. While the mainstreaming of the iPod opens up resistance to corporate infiltration, SanDisk had an opportunity to attract the trendsetting public who engage in anti-corporate activities by utilizing an approach similar to the Billboard Liberation Front. But, as the preceding cases illustrate, while this demographic is highly sought after the campaign would have to rely on an anti-marketing strategy to avoid any

potential backlash, as it was essentially using the same street tactics to create brand meaning in opposition to the corporate giant. After all, it was an attempt to do what Apple had done years earlier with its Think Different campaign, but this time with the sense of humor and sarcastic wit common to the BLF.<sup>107</sup>

By 2007 corporations were becoming notorious for employing street artist and their strategies to capture the youth market. No longer underground the discourse surrounding the use of street art and appropriation moved beyond the pages of business and trade publications and to the mainstream press. “Corporations,” one report intoned, “now enlist street artists to lend hoped-for cred to their campaigns, or simply hijack the trappings of subversive art to tart up their guerrilla marketing efforts.”<sup>108</sup> After the Cartoon Network Launched a campaign to promote Aqua Teen Hunger Force other reports appeared. The presence and the ensuing aftermath created enough buzz that U.S. Homeland Security would be called in to shut down major thoroughfares throughout the city of Boston, in what was later called by *Brandweek* as “The Great Lite Brite Bomb Scare.”<sup>109</sup> The reports indicated that two men had been arrested in connection with black electronic devices scattered throughout the city of Boston. The devices were originally reported by a woman riding a city bus who had noticed one on an Interstate 93 ramp support beam, in the Charleston neighborhood of Boston.

Reporting her findings to the police, the Boston PD’s bomb squad approached the box and in a controlled explosion, detonated the device. But as the day wore on, more and more sightings were reported. Soon, traffic was halted and buildings were evacuated. The prevalence of such reports prompted the Boston city officials to contact the Department of Homeland Security and shutdown major highways leading in and out of Boston. While the Coast Guard temporary blocked off a section of the Charles River. By the end of the day, the DHS made a statement assuring the public that there were “no credible reports of other device being found elsewhere in the country.”<sup>110</sup>



But what were they? Were the boxes bombs? Or, perhaps something a little less sinister. The black boxes were small battery-powered light screens with a mooninite giving the finger, that only lit up at night. In short, the boxes were miniature versions of the Hasbro's toy light display, once popular in the 1980's, known as lite-brites, in which semi-transparent colored pegs placed on a backlit board become LEDs. The uproar from this event created enough exposure that, parent company Turner Broadcasting immediately issued a statement regarding the stunts. "The 'packages' in question are magnetic lights that pose no danger. They are part of an outdoor marketing campaign in 10 cities in support of Adult Swim's animated television show Aqua Teen Hunger Force. They have been in place for two to three weeks in Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Seattle, Portland, Austin, San Francisco and Philadelphia."<sup>111</sup> So who was to blame?

Interference Inc., was the third party marketing firm responsible for the mooninite invasion. The founder, Sam Ewen has a history of using guerilla tactics to create buzz working on campaigns for Clorox, CNN, the Weather Channel, MTV, Fila, Vogue, the Discovery Channel, and yes, Interference was the agency behind the notorious Sony Ericsson campaign. For Le Tigre, Interference stenciled the logo onto dirty sidewalks and buildings by scrubbing away the dirt around the logo. To promote the Discovery Channel's Shark Week, Ewen floated a 30-foot shark fin from the Hudson out to the Hamptons for a few weeks. The tactics, Ewen clarifies, move beyond traditional marketing as it creates a one-on-one connection with the public and puts the power back in the hands of consumers. "It's just presenting media in a new way to people. I think that they had enough foresight to say, as a complement to my traditional brand and [media] plan, I need to have something that energizes people, that gets people talking and having fun with this."<sup>112</sup>

Was the campaign a success? While the discovery, detonation and apology received major publicity from the mainstream press, leading the evening news and print

publications for days, it is difficult to say how effective the campaign was.<sup>113</sup> However, some analysts argue, the success and or failure of any guerilla marketing attempts can be measured by the publicity that follows. As Lloyd Trufemman explains in *Brand Week*, “The definitive measure of success is noted when the campaign’s message is picked up by a local or national press outlet and widely disseminated to a large audience via the mass media. Media coverage is the true tipping point of guerrilla marketing. A pure guerilla marketing effort can be inefficient, reaching only relatively small groups of people who actually witness the guerilla event. Without media pickup, broad critical mass cannot be achieved.”<sup>114</sup>

Turner agreed to pay \$2 million to the cities and agencies in Massachusetts as compensation. While half of the payment will be allocated to cover the removal cost, the other half is a “good will” payment.<sup>115</sup> As Turner stated in a statement to the press, “We understand now that in today’s post-Sept. 11 environment, it was reasonable and appropriate for citizens and law enforcement officials to take any perceived threat posed by our light boards very seriously and to respond as they did.”<sup>116</sup> The seriousness of the event promoted Jim Samples of the Cartoon Network to tender his resignation.<sup>117</sup>

Despite all of this, or maybe because of it, Napster engaged in a multi-faceted guerrilla campaign to promote the re-launch of its service in the style of the BLF. To attract two-week trial users, Napster created outdoor postings several weeks before the new launch. The posters depicted a fictitious event and then were “defaced” with the Napster cat icon. In addition to the faux billboards, similar in style and approach to Chrysler’s Neon ads of the mid 1990s, Napster hired people to hold signs stating “Napster is Coming Back,” sponsored nightclub events called, “Napster Nights,” and athletes, such as BMX racer Ryan Nyquist, projected commercial in the streets and created Napster-branded Mini Coopers to drive through urban areas.<sup>118</sup>

The rebranding of Napster relied on attracting the demographic that first utilized Napster as a free music download site. Rebuilding the brand and creating buzz through

e-mail, guerilla marketing, outdoor advertising and web promotions eventually led to print ads on 27 covers of 15 different magazines, including *Time* magazine and *Rolling Stone*. TV ads appeared on ESPN, the season premiere of *South Park*, and ultimately a Super bowl commercial which positioned itself against iTunes.<sup>119</sup> And perhaps the strategy worked in creating impressions and cutting through the clutter. The social media, print, broadcast and guerrilla campaign reached 95.5% of their target audience. As Leland Harden and Bob Heyman add in *Direct*, “Some 24% of the effort was allocated to interactive promotions; this provided greater efficiency in the plan and enabled Napster to move the acquisition cost per trial user from \$144 to \$22.”<sup>120</sup> The success enabled Napster to save 44% from their projected \$3 million print plan.

The Napster campaign reveals the continued attempt to create an illusion of authenticity and street credibility by appropriating the tactics of guerrilla activists and the continued use of anti-advertising where marketing companies no longer identify brand X as an inferior product but identify and position their product in opposition to, specific larger media firms, and apple more specifically. As advertisers co-opt appropriation artist style and turn it into guerilla marketing, fewer and fewer spaces are left to confront the pervasive infiltration of the ad. But it also indicates the rhetorical import of the tactic of appropriation as advertisers continually invest in this approach.

The tactics remain common place in San Francisco and New York. In 2010, the Zynga Game Network Inc., the company behind *Mafia Wars* and *Farmville* on Facebook engaged in a similar tactics. The campaign involved plastering 4,000 decals of fake dollar bills on the streets in 75 locations throughout San Francisco. Upon further inspection, the bills were not real dollars, nor were they the stenciled graphics of Banksy, but decals promoting *Mafia Wars* that directed the public to play the game.

And, in a similar response to IBM’s tactics, the guerilla take-over incited San Francisco’s city attorney Dennis Herrera to send Zynga a letter indicating that such acts were illegal and actionable. Davis Elen, the advertising agency behind the takeover,

responded to Herrera apologizing for the attack indicating that the agency would do what was necessary to remedy the situation. The remedy, as it turned out, would be to foot a \$45,000 bill to clean up the city. But, the tactic of guerilla street takeover gave Zynga free publicity and the counter-cultural cachet necessary when promoting an essentially subversively themed game.<sup>121</sup>

And perhaps this led Fox to employ the same tactics through cryptic campaigns scrawled on the sides of buildings. The symbol was a cane with snakes and a count down. But to what? Was the symbol an apocalyptic dooms day symbol of the end of the world? But what could snakes on a crane be a reference to? Another Samuel L. Jackson movie? No, the snakes on a cane symbol was part of a teaser campaign for Season 6 of Fox's television show *House*. While networks usually reserve their more creative marketing efforts for new shows, Fox in competition with three new medical dramas decided the snakes on a cane teaser was worth the low cost to promote buzz.<sup>122</sup> While the first part of the campaign included the symbol without any context, the second phase added a countdown clock, counting down the days, hours and minutes of the season six premier date. The countdown was featured on websites and during commercials, but had no direct connection to *House* and created a stir online as bloggers made a number of guesses about the symbol.<sup>123</sup>

It is a strategy used by Barbara Kruger and Shepard Fairey, as the public is invited to create their own meaning, where the intervention and recognition stands as both anti-establishment and edgy for some, or nothing at all to others. But the investment of meaning in the image reflects back the meaning invested in it. In this process it takes on an air of exclusivity and the character of a badge recognizable only to a few, and conveys being-in-the-know. These invisible badges constitute status symbols and marks of distinction for cultural insiders privy to the ethos of counter cultures and translates to counter cultural capital.

Like cultural capital, outlined by Pierre Bourdieu, counter cultural capital is a symbolic resource attached to knowledge and one's position in the socio-cultural field. But while one's socioeconomic status influences cultural capital and is reinforced through elite taste distinctions, counter cultural capital develops through knowledge and an insider status in the outskirts and fringes of culture. Counter cultural capital develops from "obscure" tastes associated with subversive and counter cultural knowledge. In so doing, counter cultural capital maintains a distinction between hip cultural insiders and conveys authentic belonging and knowledge based in experience and membership in these groups.

The extent to which knowledge of the ambiguous images facilitate a belonging for some, also facilitates the success of the brand as a tool to target the taste-makers and trend-setters of fringe cultures more cynical of advertising. The air of rebellion that permeates the surfaces of these tactics invite direct phenomenological experience and provides the opening in which the public invests the image with meaning based on their own corporeal engagement. In this process the public is invited into an 'authentic' relationship with the brand and maintains a sense of ownership and loyalty to their own projections. It is not so much the identification with the image but with the induced and associated emotional state that such images invite. The "success" of the ambiguous message amounts to participation in investing and conveying meaning to others.

The success of such operations depends, in large part, in attracting the trend-setting hipsters and mavens, or the opinion leaders within subcultures who will then both convey the message through buzz or will do very little, but because of their status within such groups the product becomes an emblem of status and distinction. The brand as an emblem of distinction moves beyond the elusive and ambiguous symbol operating through a level of counter-cultural capital and revealing to others that one is privy or in the know.

The ability to spread this information, and being the first to do so, illustrates how guerilla marketing exploits a social currency exchanged in social networks. Ewen suggest, “There’s a real social currency aspect where people want to be the first to tell everyone else about it. If you give them something that’s out of the ordinary to talk about, you’re giving them a reason” to spread the word and create buzz.<sup>124</sup> Such trend-setters become “street evangelists” who build allegiance to the brand through the investment of meaning in the product within their own meanings.

Whether the evangelists are paid actors sent to the streets to create buzz at the grassroots level or are the public themselves who inadvertently transfer distinction onto the underlying message, the products appear to be free of advertising and direct commands to purchase. This invites participation of the public to both create meaning and transfers a lifestyle onto the product, where the product now symbolizes a way of life free from, or perceived outside of, consumer culture. The call is one that invites the public to “get in on” a secret display that others may not know about.

Guerrilla marketing tactics have grown to facilitate what Alex Wipperfurth identifies in *Brand Hijack*, as the co-created brand. He defines it as “the act of inviting subcultures to co-create a brand’s ideology, use, and persona, and pave the road for adoption by the mainstream.”<sup>125</sup> It is a tactic that is targeted to a market that will create buzz through stealth operations. The impact and power of guerrilla tactics emerges from the participatory nature of the activities on the streets. Such participation, however, often involves a vexing puzzle to decipher or unleashing polysemy in the streets. Where the vague and ambiguous both facilitate participation of the public in creating identities to assume.

The counter-cultural and ironic ethos that reflect back this identity become the organizing principle that provides a cohesive set of images and marketing strategies toward that group. Such groups then constitute themselves as a public through the shared meanings invested in the images. The ambiguity and multiple readings such designs

elicit, provide a sense of ownership as the public invests the designs with their own meaning. The absence of a clear message does not deride the power of the ads, but improves it and creates the buzz necessary for the constitution of a public based on the participation in the meaning of consumer products. The technique fosters allegiance to the brand because the public is invited to forge an emotional connection to their own projection.

It is important to note that the success and failure of the brand amounts to free-labor on the part of the public, as they invest meaning in the brand and deliver the message to their peers. In what Wipperfurth describes as marketing without marketing, the push for the public to invest meaning, even if it is ridicule, is an essential strategy for today's marketing companies trying to survive. The co-created brand and the brand-hijack are necessary for companies who desire to have their product rise above the clutter and move away from a uni-directional flow from advertiser to consumer and to a grass-roots co-created brand.

The foundation of guerrilla marketing utilizes appropriation tactics straying away from direct command and utilizing an assortment of efforts to create unique and intriguing brand experiences. They appear authentic, foster buzz and eventually lead to word of mouth advertising. These tactics operate under the radar so that they do not appear to be advertisements at all. Often without any identifying information, these tactics hinge on the vague and ambiguous to facilitate a multiplicity of subject positions. Such tactics, ultimately, create an integrated branded experience and enough buzz around the object, that the public will spread the message for advertisers.

This type of advertising shares affinities with and has co-opted appropriation as a means to integrate cynical consumers inviting them to participate in the very mechanisms they have railed against. The co-optation of appropriation tactics runs rampant in guerrilla marketing and the commodification of resistance is then utilized to manufacture the look and feel of an authentic emblem of counter cultures. Eventually, the aesthetic designs

that invite the public to question the uni-vocal command of the advertising industry, through often ambiguous and heteroglot images are articulated to brands.

As a result, the streets become a war of ambiguity financed by the collusion of art, marketing and appropriation artists. As Ewen contends, “A lot of it’s based on what’s happening in the art world or what’s happening in fashion or what’s happening in activism - all of these types of things.”<sup>126</sup> In other words, the relationship between art institutions and commerce provide a more thorough account of hegemonic containment and the arbitrary distinctions lead to the confluence of art, fashion and activism.

### **United by Hegemony**

The urban/outsider/outcast fringe skateboarder brand and following was on display at an exhibit called Beautiful Losers where skateboard decks, album covers and the works of Shepard Fairey all hung on the walls. In *Buying In*, Rob Walker recounts, “Beautiful Losers was a monument to the rejection of mainstream commercial conformity...The fifty or so artists in the show, whose works were produced mostly in the 1990s and early 2000s, are part of a generation of creative people whose primary influences have been...skateboarding, graffiti, street fashion, and independent music.”<sup>127</sup>

The inclusion of skateboard deck art adds to this as skateboarders have been identified as a subculture who endorse and gladly sport the logos of other skaters but are firmly opposed to mega-corporations who try to co-opt their style. As Alissa Quart explains in *Branded*, “skateboarding has long contained commercial inclinations as well as fierce anticorporate strain.”<sup>128</sup> The movement essentially began when a drought in 1975 resulted in empty swimming pools, and the anti-establishment ethos of the surfers-cum-skaters appropriated the curved space and rode the walls like waves.<sup>129</sup>

The articulation of skateboarding and graffiti and urban fashion within brands today speaks to the co-optation of the communities that galvanize around such subversive signifiers. As the skateboard deck, the stickers, and the scene come to show allegiance it’s commercialization invites membership to these otherwise impenetrable groups. What



is promoted is not only an identity or lifestyle, but access to such groups. Whether it is the angsty teenager, the tragically misunderstood twenty something, the thirty year old who wants to be seen as a bit less conformist or morns for a lost cultural revolution, these companies move from branding their products through guerilla tactics and promoting the lifestyle of dissent, to selling exclusive membership and a sense of belonging.

For example, the Toyota Scion, launched in 2003, was marketed to the 63 million Americans born between 1980 and 1994, utilizing a more participatory engagement with the public. The auto manufacturer attempted to move beyond the direct command common to advertising and instead incited a question in niche urban environments with the slogan, “What moves you?” Eliminating the presence of Toyota from the campaign was an attempt to speak to the younger demographic who identified the brand with an older consumer base, and establishes an exclusivity of the brand to create a more authentic relationship with the car.<sup>130</sup>

Toyota, however, was interested in obtaining the 15 percent of their targeted demographic that it defines itself as trendsetters who will influence their peers. The trendsetters are the cinema going, dance club and art gallery enthusiasts. They utilize the do it yourself culture as points of distinction from other groups. As Jim Frely, the vice president of Scion, stated in an interview in *Automotive News*, “the buyers we’re after don’t like to be sold to. They like to express their individuality. They appreciate authenticity, and they like discovering things on their own and on their own time.”<sup>131</sup>

This is why such marketing attempts do not appear to be marketing at all. For example, the cars are often left outside of bars and nightclubs with little to no information regarding their presence.<sup>132</sup> The Scion, which claims itself as a marker of authenticity was strategically placed outside of art shows. And one event in particular deserves attention. In L.A., the Scion was placed outside of the Blk/Mrkt Gallery. But, within the show the corporate logos of Levis, Red Bull and Scion hung on the gallery walls. The creation of buzz outside of such events is central to the brand management and creation

of intrigue about the car. It facilitates active involvement on the part of the early adopters who then become the persuasive influence over friends. The car becomes an emblem of the little known secret, and a few carry the cultural cachet, create a desire and manufacture a demand within various groups. Scott Upham states, the car is targeted to the highly socially active who is considered cool by their friends. “Marketing to hip trendsetters is going to be a much easier penetration of the market, (to) get buzz and word-of-mouth around the product.”<sup>133</sup>

This type of branding manufactures a certain lifestyle via association. In this way, Scion becomes the marker of a way of life rather than merely a mode of transportation and those beliefs are communicated via social networks by these trusted trendsetters. In 2007, Scion continued its way of life branding campaigns claiming, in words once sung by Huey Lewis and the News, “It’s hip to be square.” The Scion xB hit the U.S. market in 2004, as a boxy five-door roadster “aimed at arty young buyers.” But, rather than thinking “outside the box” the campaign was developed to think “inside” it. The campaign, launched in February was developed using the question “Want2Bsquare?”

“In major cities, wild postings with the artwork drew curious people to the site. Street teams distributed flyers that allowed people to create their own box-headed avatars. Mannequins with box heads and the URL scrawled across their shirts popped up in high-traffic areas.”<sup>134</sup> On street corners, in 60-second spots in movies theaters and through viral postings and 16 short films, the same question was repeated again and again. On the streets, squads gave away square squeeze balls and posters featuring the campaign art. By April, art shows were held in New York and Los Angeles sponsored by the “want2Bsquare” campaign. And in an ironic gesture aimed at the kings and queens of irony, Scion armed itself to the hilt to target hipsters in the streets and art galleries, and in underground music clubs letting them know the boxy roadster should be thought of as “a badge of cool.”<sup>135</sup>

Between 2005 and 2008, Scion's annual media expenditures consistently hit the \$30 million mark. This is actually have what the company spent in 2004. While it is difficult to determine if this lower cost and higher impact strategies are successful, after the campaign, the sale of the xB grew 23%, from the previous year. But the sale of their entire line grew only three percent, as their tC and xD lost traction in the market place.<sup>136</sup> However, in 2008, Scion altered their message while maintaining the same tactics with the theme "United by Individuality."

"United by Individuality," plays on uniqueness as it depends on both similarity and difference. As a product falls into a category or a person identities oneself as part of a subculture, he/she is making a distinction between their self and the rest of a larger social group thus claiming their individuality and also identifying themselves as part of a smaller group, hence "united by individuality." As the tagline for their ads states, "Together we are united by the journey, but each of us must choose which road to travel. As you decide which direction to explore, Scion believes your vehicle is more than just a method of transportation, it's a tool for self-expression."<sup>137</sup>

Other than the promotion of consumption as a form of expression, and consumer choice as a democratic principle, the importance of the Scion marketing campaign lies in its street level tactics and sponsorships of club and art events. As such events invite the public to identify the product as integral to the events and the events as integral to the cars, Scion becomes a signifier for a way of life for hipsters, art enthusiasts and music aficionados. Marketing itself as different from the leading manufacturers through Blk/Mrkt art shows, it also creates an illusion of consumer empowerment, for the ultimately blank slate of each Scion allows for more custom alterations of the car. The nearly "completely customizable" car gives a sense that the consumer is in charge and that the automaker is responding to their needs rather than forcing a mass market item down the throats of consumers. As such it enables the consumer to use the car as a way to "Stand out. Be seen. Be different!"

In what is construed as giving the consumer a voice in decision making and proclaiming the freedom to choose products to be consumed in the market place, companies have begun to rely on consumer involvement. And just as the Guerrilla Girls forced art institutions to include representations through subversion, the co-optation and commodification of appropriation reflects a multiplicity of perspectives and a change in representation, to create a wide enough swath to constitute subjects through the styles of appropriation. While Pepsi recently engaged in a marketing campaign in which audience members of American Idol could select their own commercials, in 2011, Mountain Dew continued to revamp its street image when it invited it's consumers to both select new flavors in a campaign they label "Dewmocracy" and from street art designs for their Green Label Art project.

In the Green Label Art project skateboarder Paul Rodriguez and artist Don Pendleton were able to get 35 skate shops to partner with artists to design special editions cans for Mountain Dew. However, the winner will not be picked by executives at Mountain Dew, but by fans of the skate shops. As Mountain Dew indicates, "Green Label Art (GLA) is all about self-expression and individuality. It is a blend of distinct contemporary art forms that reflect a different point of view. The bottles are vibrant expressions of DEW created by a collection of bold, unique artists that drive culture."<sup>138</sup>

But, who are these artists? Since the implementation of GLA, a number of artists who have ranged from skateboard designers to street and graffiti artists and appropriation artists have designed product packaging. From Claw Money's paw with three claws icon – Money, was known for her involvement in the New York graffiti scene and has created a clothing and accessories line in addition to creating brand identities for Nike, Boost Mobile, Calvin Klein, K2 and the Gap. PJ Richardson, is yet another graffiti artist who spent a number of years putting images on the local Muni transit in San Francisco.

Stephan 'Maze' Georges, Dez, Eric Haze, Peat Wollaeger, Adam Juresko, Dr. Revolt, are other stencil, appropriation and street graffiti artists inspired by and/or having

roots in the New York Graffiti scene and the street art of Banksy. The other finalists comprise artists and designers who have created a number of images for cd jackets and are familiar to owners of such works. Jeff Staple has created designs for Apple and Burton Snowboards, Scott Lenhardt for Nike, Haze for The Beastie Boys, LL Cool J, Public Enemy and MTV, Mike Sutfin has designed for skate brands such as DC and Foundation, Stephen Bliss's illustrations for Grand Theft Auto, Nathan Cabrea's designs for Converse, Nike and Levis, and Pushead's works for Metallica and The Misfits.

According to Mountain Dew, this project gives customers a voice in the company. Free labor aside for the moment, such consumer generated designs provide the appearance that the can and image of the company is by and for the people. Moreover, it provides the appearance that Mountain Dew cares about consumer input and provides a point of identification with the consumer that does not derive from ad executives imposing their methods of manipulation on the public, but rather, facilitates the idea that the public is creating the marketing that derives from their experiences and interests. In short, the can becomes the unifying signifier that reflects back their diverse interests and manufactures their consent.

More than providing a point of identification and the association with Mountain Dew as a patron of the arts and of consumer voice, it provides consumers with the appearance of authenticity and a product that not only speaks to their interests but reflects their interests to others. In this reversal, the consumer constitutes the image of identification which will then reflect back the constituting role of the consumer. As such, the product is part of their identification strategies where the consumer can take on ownership of the product. While such involvement may indicate that the consumer has more control over the product, it is important to recognize that more often than not, the public is aiding corporations in creating new meaning for the product rather than changing the product itself. For example, Mountain Dew's democratic choice amounts to

inviting the public to invest their labor to alter the meaning of the brand rather than altering the placement of the product on the market.<sup>139</sup>

In *Brand Hijack*, Alex Wipperfurth argues, the success of these companies and branding campaigns facilitates the democratization of brands as well. The tribes that form and galvanize around such brands are communities “united by a common worldview and shared set of values, and anyone who meets those criteria is welcome to join.”<sup>140</sup> These tribes are created and marketed to through rituals, experiences, and connections that define the group identity. The symbols both convey membership and establish a distinction from nonmembers. Like cults, the brand tribes attempt to create purpose and identify systems in which customs, codes and rituals can be learned. Members who engage, are “rewarded for their efforts by attaining increasing levels of insider status. Eventually, both cultural and brand tribe fanatics become apostles, spreading the message to others.”<sup>141</sup>

Wipperfurth argues, the tactics use seduction rather than coercion. Like cults, brand tribes have closed borders whose symbols and emblems of membership convey insider status to those in the know, and apparent incomprehensibility to those that don't. “The borders set the members apart, encourage strong group identity, and create the foundation for the group's psychological architecture: the ‘us versus them’ mentality. This polarization creates passionate solidarity among the members.”<sup>142</sup> Brand tribes define themselves through activities that distinguish them from what they are not. They “identify a powerful enemy in the outside world and foster a sense of being under attack by that enemy. This tactic reinforces members' commitment to their underdog cause.”<sup>143</sup>

These tactics incite the feeling that a product belongs to a consumer by creating a sense of ownership of the product. And in providing the space and manufacturing the feeling in which the public believes they are feeling a genuine attachment to the brand, the brand is more capable of successful infiltration. This, in part, is achieved through creating the proper context in which the brand can exude an air of authenticity and

exclusivity. From the placement of the car outside of galleries associated with Shepard Fairey to the tactics that promote difference and diversity on the street, Scion capitalizes on the poetics of appropriation by inviting the public to appropriate the car and redesign it to their own ends. But above all, these tactics seduce the public into thinking they are in charge as they repurpose the commodity with their own mythology and folklore. As Wipperfurth advises, “this empowers consumers to interpret the brand to fit their needs, so that they don’t feel like they’re being forced to follow the company line”<sup>144</sup>

The manufacturing of authenticity, consumer “empowerment” and distinction articulates the brand as exclusive and the bearer of the mark as original. Wipperfurth adds that, “All of this exclusivity encourages consumers to feel special, as though they’ve discovered something different—a rarity in this chain store, cookie cutter marketplace.”<sup>145</sup> As they invite the public to exchange the allegiance and meaning of identity politics for the brand, the logo and street tactics become signifiers conveying their membership. Thus, co-opting and commodifying the tactics and resistant styles of appropriation are the means to facilitate this aim.

The privatizing ideology of this trend entrenches the illusion of democratic choice and social mobility, sublimates interests toward consumption, and offers shallow solutions to deep problems. Such active participation in the designs of advertisements, where they reflect the public’s involvement only facilitates a more direct command and obedience. The public feels as though the ad is speaking directly to them, because it derives from their input and reflects back their interests and offers a subject position from their involvement, unfortunately it actually displaces democratic decision making to a choice among products.

### **Branded Legitimacy**

In *Consumed*, Benjamin Barber contends, consumerism depends on the commodification of identity politics and is wrapped up “in merchandizing, marketing, and above all, branding.”<sup>146</sup> Through this process, identity amounts to a reflection of a

lifestyle conveyed through brands “and the products they label, as well as with attitudes and behaviors linked to where we shop, how we buy, and what we eat, wear, and consume.”<sup>147</sup> But, as Barber contends, marketing itself needs branded legitimacy, and the commodification of identity politics “becomes a legitimizing logic when applied to marketing itself and to the consumer culture marketing it rationalizes.”<sup>148</sup> To facilitate this aim companies soaked up the iconography of culture, so their brands would reflect these ideas and project them as an extensions of culture. The result has furthered the spread of ‘art’ in places outside as they become signs of brand identity alongside commercial products vying for distinction and cultural cachet in public spaces.

This is what happened when Levis and Obey joined forces in 2008 to create ‘authentic’ apparel and why by 2009, Shepard Fairey commissioned his studio to create campaigns for Saks Fifth Avenue, that utilized the stream line construction designs of El Lissitzky and Alex Rodchencko to promote shoulder bags as well. Terron Schaefer, the senior vice-president of marketing and creative for Saks, explained that Fairey’s style of Russian Constructivism attracted him to him. Although “constructivist art is directed toward social purpose, our spring campaign is intended to capture attention and be a tongue-in-cheek way of communicating the hottest trends of this season.”<sup>149</sup>

The Saks campaign in 2009 articulated communist revolutionary design to Saks’ new product line with an air of subversion. But the campaign also utilized the direct command of propaganda as well. The promotional material stated, “Arm Yourself with a Slouchy Shoulder Bag.” And another simply stated, “Want It.” The re-association enabled social progress and street credibility to be conveyed in a shoulder bag. While the campaign may be touted as ironic, which Saks claims, the underlying message of the campaign is clear, it commands obedience.

Studio Number One promotes itself as a marketing and design firm who “create iconic and disruptive ideas that promote conversation” using “disobedient methods” to facilitate “cultural relevance and authenticity of voice.” While their client list is too long



to list, their current work for Nike, Coca Cola, Motorola and Levis is illustrative. While the Motorola designs capitalized on Russian Constructivism as well, the designs produced for the Levis-MOCA speaks to the continued collaboration of fashion and art that is more revealing. For the “Art in the Streets” exhibit in 2011, Studio Number One designed the packaging using the aesthetics of appropriation and street art.

This commodification of images of revolution and struggle, often suppress the conflict of and over cultural representations plus it dehistoricizes the struggle by fixing meaning to the commercial representation of a brand. The commodification and joint collaboration of art museums with the fashion industry points to the blurring of lines between art as protected expression and advertising, specifically as the two merge into a branding strategy of selling meaning and conveying a lifestyle articulated to a product. When art and commerce blur, the art institution becomes the mechanism that feeds commerce with the necessary ideas to articulate brands with cutting edge imagery and create myths.

And perhaps this is why, in 2010, Jeff Koon’s work was commissioned in one of the ultimate collapsed distinctions in advertising and the commodification of appropriation. Koons’ work was also used alongside Barbara Kruger’s for the artists inspired Gap tee-shirt collection in 2008, was commissioned by BMW to create designs for the M3GT2 art car. Koons, who is probably best known for a three dimensional sculpture, called “String of Puppies,” derived from an appropriated photograph. Ironically, the sculpture was created to critique suburban American sensibilities and the banality of consumer culture. But, this was not BMW’s first time to create an association with an artist and its brand. The BMW art car first started in 1975 and employed Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella and Jenny Holzer to create an art and advertising object out of its cars. Adding in a bit of irony, the car Holzer designed is covered with the truism, “Protect Me From What I Want.”<sup>150</sup>

Similarly, Keds, launched a Keds Whitney Collection of shoes in 2010 that featured designs from Jenny Holzer, Laura Owens and Sarah Crowner. The “Original Sneaker” with the now famous truism, “Protect me from what I want” were sold exclusively at Bloomingdales stores throughout the U.S. In this process Keds is able to capitalize on the cultural cachet of Holzer and create a sense of exclusivity and membership conveyed through the display of their shoes, reinforced through every shoe on the street and legitimized by the specialized language of insiders privy to the democratic poetics of Holzer’s interventions.

It is important to note that these practices indicate not the product that is sold in so much as feelings, ideas, and a personality assumed. As the recent attempts by Reebok indicate, their new line not only appropriates the designs of Jean Michel Basquiat, but state, “I am Basquiat” above the heel. This approach is not unique to Reebok either, as the 2011 Adidas Originals commercial broadcast for the Spring and Summer of 2011 includes not only Snoop Dog, but black light graffiti artists, low riders with hydraulics and skateboarders grinding rails. The message is simple, as an emblem of distinction and an indicator of membership Adidas is a lifestyle of, by and for the streets that unites the diversity of hip and edgy under the articulatory fold of the Adidas logo. The Adidas narrator states, “At the core of who we are, the real, the truth, the superstar. The streets are calling you. To every individual, answer back ‘We are all originals’.”

As appropriation art is commodified and turned into a fashion trend or co-opted for advertising purposes, its display in public creates the associations necessary for brands to capitalize on the ethos of disobedience and revolutionary struggle to achieve street credibility and counter-cultural capital. Part of the dominant modes of representation and the cultural repertoire of images, includes exhibits, fashion and marketing, so these iconic figures become the designs used to market products and create brand identity. Thus, when the images of civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Angela Davis, Che or Malcolm X are constituted as art, fashion and advertising, the

co-optation and commodification reveals an attempt to manufacture consent through the iconic figures of democratic disobedience. The potential implications are overwhelming, as marketing trends indicate the use of these images for branding purposes rather than the direct promotion of a product.

Examples of the commodification and co-optation of identity politics has also been identified in Apple's Think Different marketing campaign, Shepard Fairey's use of cultural revolution, stream line construction designs and civil disobedience to sell Obey Giant fashion apparel, Coca-Cola's trademark of Obey for what would presumably be Obey Cola, and both Revolutionary Soda and Smirnoff's repeated attempts to utilize the images of revolution for their brand as a symbol of counter culture. Whether in the form of Che Guevara's face, or in their streamline constructionist approach Smirnoff utilizes the aesthetics of appropriation artists and points to the use of communist propaganda for capitalism. The image and its re-appropriation is perhaps one of the most famous and ubiquitous to-date.<sup>151</sup> But, the use of Che to sell vodka positions Smirnoff's continued attempt to create "authentic" brand associations using communists leaders and revolution.

When the commodification and co-optation enabled through art institutions creates the conditions for advertisers to use images to establish brand identity and meaning rather than sell products, marketing moves away from the direct appeal to buy a product for what it does. Without a direct tie to a product, branding becomes the articulation of an idea, meaning and/or lifestyle to a company or product line. This potentially gives marketers and fashion designers free rein, if not an incentive, to use the images of the past as well as those of current artists to create brand identities centered around trendy art through 'co-sponsored merchandise.'

While the preceding cases illustrate an economic incentive for museum curators to go out to the fringes for new, and hip imagery they are accorded a special status as well. For, unlike marketing and manufacturing companies, art institutes are accorded the status of displaying art rather than selling products. The economic incentive may push

street artists into museums, thereby controlling the public's access and limit the amount of critical commentary on the streets. But once established, the conditions of co-optation are set in place, enabling corporations to place such work on clothing or shoes, under the guise of art. As the privileged status of museum walls constitute such works as art, their public display and their placement on tee-shirts, shoes and cars become avenues to articulate and reconstitute their important brand identity.

As a result of these trends it becomes ever more difficult to decipher advertising from street art and political protest from guerilla marketing theatre. Yet as the lines are redrawn and disappear from view, the potential effectiveness of each wears thin. With appropriation valorized as a commodity it becomes the ideological terrain in which subjects are interpellated and the tactics of appropriation are converted into guerilla marketing. Commodified they reemerge within the deeply entrenched structures of consumer capital as myths that reinforce and articulate their poetics to reproduce the logic of capital and interpellate subjects, reproducing the necessary conditions of production.

### **One and the Same**

It should be no surprise that by 2011, advertisers, guerilla artists and activists have converged on the same terrain, using the same tactic and aesthetic elements at the same time, through the use of QR codes. QR codes, or quick response codes, are symbols that are recognizable by smartphone technology. Given the right application, QR codes are designed to direct the smartphone user directly to a website through "hard-linking." The push for QR Codes in print ads and on the streets has reached ubiquity as of late. The skate brand Zoo York among many other fashion, design and media companies have utilized the QR Code to direct the public to their websites. And, in accord with the impulse to create buzz, and co-opt the tactics and visual imagery of appropriation, in this case *Adbusters*, the QR code is also being used for temporary tattoos transforming people into direct portals to the web.

The Ford Motor Company was uniquely engaged in this interactive guerilla marketing campaign in December 21, 2010. Hosted by Neatorama and Mental\_Floss, the CR Code scavenger hunt was held at 11:00 am in an undisclosed location in Manhattan. The exact starting point was kept secret until 10:30, when the two agencies sent a tweet disclosing the location. To participate in the scavenger hunt, participants needed to locate QR Codes throughout the city by scanning the codes and receiving clues to the location of the next code. And, the grand prize for the fastest hunter was a brand new Ford Fiesta.<sup>152</sup> And, in true post-modern form the map for the Ford Fiesta scavenger hunt resembles the psychographic maps of the Situationist International.

While QR codes offer very little information to the human eye, their rudimentary designs, level the playing ground to engage the public on the streets. QR Code generators are fairly easy to come by. Major corporations are engaging in guerilla tactics by plastering QR Code decals in the public's right away, alongside appropriation artists such as Banksy who is doing the same to direct the public to information about his events. Virtually anyone with the proper computer technology can create and try to redirect the public by inviting them to take a picture of the coded message. As an avenue to facilitate intrigue for both marketers and activists alike, the codes have moved from a medium of interactive public involvement into fashion as well. Space Invader, the once street artist provocateur who appropriated the 2-bit graphics of Atari's *Space Invaders* and transformed the image into a tiled intervention on the street, has created QR inspired apparel, turning the tactics of appropriation and the medium of advertising into fashion.

The appropriation of QR codes affords other interesting possibilities, as virtually any coded message can, at least initially be perceived as art, activism or advertising. The streets are filled with these little white and black boxes indicating, a form of high fashion tied to activism and advertising. The conversion of such tactics like visual style of appropriation, guerilla marketing and commercial products, co-optation and commodity converge on each other's status as one and the same. But the QR code does something

special for advertisers, too. Beyond and beneath the indecipherable cryptic message of the little black and white boxes lies a message of surveillance in waiting. These messages command the public to take a picture and enter a realm of ever more ads and cross promotions. For once the QR Code reader directs users to a site, they can be tracked through cookies and programs such as AddThis, that follow and record their movements. Shared activities tabulate precise media metrics, mounting higher degrees of sophistication for precise targeting and capturing missions.

As the guerrilla tactics of appropriation are articulated to the images and designs of brands and become advertisements of a product to sell to the public as well as a marketing practice articulated to commercial products, lines demarcating commercial work from appropriation collapse. In this process the distinction between art, fashion, and politics collapse and become one and the same. The process points to, the incorporation of youthful, edgy and even subversive ideas, the co-optation of the meaning and desires associated with such ideas to promote products and the tactics used by large media firms to connect with the public and articulate their brand as small and personal. As the preceding cases illustrate, guerilla marketing is often engaged by major corporations with brand recognition in attempts to “connect” with a younger demographic who is more resistant to traditional advertising.

Guerilla marketing has evolved from tactical strikes used to whittle away at competition to part of an integrated branding strategy, where the method of advertisement is part of brand meaning. This evaluation points to a change, where the medium is the message and advertising aligns itself with the tactics of appropriation artists whose message and tactics have always been one and the same. This trend capitalizes on the poetics of appropriation by creating a dialogue on the street to bypass the direct hail common to earlier forms of direct advertising. Anne Elizabeth Moore contends in *Unmarketable*, “these advancements in marketing not only keep the industry edgy, but they also serve to mute criticism and rob image reuse of its unique power, thus rendering

these acts of protest null and void.”<sup>153</sup> In short, they indicate the politics and subversive limits of appropriation.

### **Concluding Comments**

These cases point to the blurred distinctions between art, advertising and appropriation today, reflecting diversity on the one hand and an ironic self-mocking approach on the other. It is important to note, that the appearance of democratic participation through the use of the styles of appropriation and participation in design choices, conceals the consolidation of the culture beneath such ads. While these approaches indicate consumer involvement and participation in the meaning and creation of ads, participation is limited to that which produces the dictates of consumer capital.

In *Consumed* Barber contends, “We are seduced into thinking that the right to choose from a menu is the essence of liberty, but with respect to relevant outcomes the real power, and hence the real freedom, is in the determination of what is on the menu.”<sup>154</sup> In essentially confusing the menu for the dinner, these practices are an assault on democracy and democratic participation in the public sphere. Barber adds, “Market philosophy is more than a threat to democracy, it is the source of capitalism’s most troubling problems today: its incapacity to satisfy the real needs of the poor and its tendency to try to substitute faux needs and manufactured wants for the missing real needs of consumers in developed societies.”<sup>155</sup>

Today’s marketing attempts to articulate democracy in terms of consumer choice, liberation and empowerment, although “once reserved for a civic discourse associated with democracy and citizenship, are made over into tools of consumerism and merchandising—the new banners of a ‘consumer revolution’ whose aim is to destroy the public selves...our political revolution once constituted.”<sup>156</sup> As the preceding statement indicates, particular sets of uniformities in taste are reproduced as the multiple meanings of such art works are transformed “into a singular market meaning, namely the potential of a good or service to be bought and sold.”<sup>157</sup> According to Barber, commodification

indicates a market colonization as objects take on a singular meaning based on their consumability. As exchange value supersedes all other values desire is exploited and sublimated toward the reproduction of consumer capital.

So if commodification secures and reproduces articulations, as meaning is attached to and conveyed through brands then the bearers who see their identities reflected in them and are expressed through them, accept brands as the site of forged links of ideological power to discover, hail and constitute a subject. In short, commodification points to the way in which active participation in the creation of brand meaning enables the unification of diverse interests that reflect back and constitute participants as consumers. As a mechanism of hegemonic containment the incorporation of appropriation maintains the limits of dissent as it unites a diverse array of interests under a common name, aesthetic, and tactic and channels participation to reproduce this order.



## CONCLUSION

The dissertation was developed to trace the tactics, visual styles and incorporation of various artists such as Barbara Kruger, The Billboard Liberation Front and Shepard Fairey. The poetics of appropriation conceptualized their intervention through a set of tactics that invited the formation of revolutionary subjects while the politics of appropriation traced the conditions that reproduce a structure in dominance. This approach emphasized culture as a contestation over meaning and experience, appropriation as an ideological struggle and articulation as that which secures ideology to power. The dissertation was developed to account for commodification and co-optation as coordinates of hegemonic containment securing articulation and unifying the diverse array of meanings exposed through appropriation of consumer ideology through commercial representations connected to marketing practices. Overall, this dissertation accounted for the multiple lines of force that reproduces asymmetrical relations of domination over the rights, access, use and display of cultural images to reproduce consumer subjects and the ideology of consumption.

The poetics and politics of appropriation point to a set of hierarchical binary oppositions played out in both their styles and in the form of commodities and guerrilla marketing. The us/them, mainstream/underground, authentic/simulacra are not only reproduced in the commodification of their works, but invites further incorporation as it is used as the limits in which a proliferation of meaning and subject positionalities emanate. However, it is important to note that despite the use, reuse, and appropriation of images stripped from context by artists and activists, their redeployment calls attention to the arbitrary foundations and fictions which reproduce these hierarchicalized distinctions.

### **Poetics of Appropriation**

The tactics and visual aesthetics of appropriation point to the politics of visual dissent, as their practices are an ideological struggle over cultural representation within spaces of consumer capitalism. It is a struggle that is fought through the appropriation of government and commercial propaganda that creating a space to question, incite dialogue, organize around and critique the colonization of the public sphere and the privatization of visual culture by corporate interests. For, such practices de-reify the static conception of the world and the ahistorical intervention of power, as it subverts the prevailing hegemonic representations and authoritative status of the culture industry. The concept of poetics illustrates the techniques and strategies of poetic composition and production used to dis-articulate alternative meanings of culture and of commodity signs, while exposing ideology and investing the social field with a proliferation of meaning to undermine prevailing univocal hegemonic representations and the colonization of public space by advertising.

While the tactics of appropriation are diverse, the unifying thread that connects the appropriation techniques of artists like Barbara Kruger, The Billboard Liberation Front and Shepard Fairey is the use of commodities, codes of advertising, and intervention in public spaces for social, political and existential awareness. The political import of these artists-activists lies in the potential to create sites in which alternative identities are hailed for collection action and social change. Their tactics incite questions through a poetics of de-reification and multiply questions over who has the rights and access to the dominant meanings and apparatuses of communication in culture.

The discursive operation and ahistorical perception of ideology has real material effects as it is reproduced and constituted through subjects. Ideology is the means by which culture is constituted and reproduced, but also the site in which it is struggled over and changed. The tactics of appropriation point to the procedures in which the univocal hail and reification of ideology of the culture industries are refashioned. Exposed as

contingent, historical and serving the interests of capitalist relations of production an array of competing accents were introduced into the social field. Unlike the images of advertising directed toward the public by corporations incessantly projecting an ideal image to strive for, the poetics of artist-activists like the Guerrilla Girls, Jenny Holzer, Robbie Conal, Banksy and *Adbusters* comprise a variety of tactics that critique the images of advertising.

Appropriation deforms and questions the performative character of the constitutive hails of consumption. It inserts a radical ambiguity into the social field and inhibits the image's articulation to a transcendental or universal signified. As the use of advertising images work to de-naturalize the denoted image as simply a reflection, the tactics of appropriation pose questions often, and systematically, elided from view. It invites the viewer to see ads as artificial constructions by shedding a different light on the representation. Unlike the images of advertising that incessantly project an ideal image to strive for, the poetics of this emerging group uses the images of advertising which continually positioned the public as consumers, to critique the system.

The ambiguity of appropriation invites the experience of a subjective and corporeal reengagement with everyday life. In so doing, the tyranny of polysemy is opened up and the interpellation of a singular viewer and author is exposed as multiple and fragmented. In place of a solitary and unitary subject constituted through the ad, a non-unitary and polychrome subject opens up within the discursive field of competing interests and voices. As the appropriation of images are used to expose the dominant representations of commercial advertising along with the myths of commodity fetishism, these artists de-shroud the myth to expose lies and shatter the sublimation of desire that has been directed toward the consumption of products and the manufacture of identities. By inviting a problematic response, the public is invited to form around differences held in common.

The poetics of appropriation draw attention to interpretive dilemmas. For example, instabilities exist beneath the veneer of “appropriate” assumptions reproduced through advertising. As the image is re-used it works to expose the ideology that reifies the instability of meaning and the taken-for-granted assumptions of consumption and consumerism. From the appropriation of advertisements, iconic figures, and billboards by the Billboard Liberation Front, such notions are unraveled and the reification of the cultural field exploits the images through unresolved dialogical tension that “inherently” resists easy settlement. Through tactics that induce a ‘slip’ in the signifier, the poetics of appropriation invoke strategies of dialogism that resists sedimentation, defers meaning and places the viewer among multiple, conflicting and competing layers of context, meaning, and convention.

Appropriation is, therefore, a practice of making culture out of the very mechanisms that marginalize activities. The poetics of appropriation alert public(s) to the methods of manipulation, mode of address and the social, political and economic conditions suppressed through marketing campaigns. Using culture to critique the prevalence of commercial images they subvert not only the mechanisms that limit culture to commerce but also their foundations and fictions. Often through ambiguity and anonymity and without any authorial function their work mobilizes meaning by unhinging commercial power from meaning. Appropriating the images of the dominant culture, artists like Banksy offer the collaged and bricolaged images representing not the sole creation of a unitary author but an assemble of cultural references that derive multiple meanings from the complex articulation of a number of competing accents.

When appropriation artists continually adopt the strategies and poetic techniques of their predecessors from Dada to Situationism, the poetics of appropriation comprise a configuration of tactics used to question authority and re-write history by rearticulating the images and representations of the prevailing order. Their poetics deform and question the literal character or necessity of the constitutive hails of consumption by creating a

carnival funhouse mirror to the hypocrisy and impossible idealized dreams reflected in ads. Through irony, satire and parody, appropriation invests the social with ambiguity that fosters no clear sense and invites viewers to re-think their taken-for-granted assumptions and the positions they assume as a contested site of culture.

Despite the variance in their critiques, the diversity of interests and the shared activities speaks to a form of appropriation based on a shared politics of difference. While each approaches public space and the politics of its use in their own way, the style of appropriation shares characteristics of a common technique, while inflecting its use to serve heterogeneous aims. From direct ridicule to ambiguity, these tactics create a space in which a multiplicity of subjects can organize around.

They operate in spaces often forgotten and taken for granted and hold both politicians and corporations accountable for anti-democratic pursuits. Emerging from within and against the conglomeration of the media, the work of Robbie Conal explores the privatization of culture, brand based marketing and a move away from a welfare state. His tactics reflect a response and critique of specific conditions by inserting the diversity of voices necessary for a healthy and vibrant democratic culture. In doing so, his appropriation points to the larger socio-economic, cultural and political systems that over-determine access to, control over, and ownership of historical memory and position freedom of speech over that of property.

Many appropriation artists create a space to create and engage in active participatory democratic practices where new communities can be built and organized around new ways of seeing, thinking and being. As an ideological struggle against unequal access to cultural production, the tactics of appropriation foster a radical democratic politics as artists/activists such as Jenny Holzer and *Adbusters* reclaims public space by inciting questions regarding the unequal flow of cultural resources and advance democratic participation. As both a mode of production and its being their tactics shatter the representations of power and the univocal hail of the culture industries. They call

forth new democratic citizen subjects who participate by investing meaning and reconstituting their status from subjects to active participants.

Drawing on what, communication scholar, Raymond Williams identifies as the residual traces in culture, appropriation artists form alternative systems of meaning making to debunk the dominant hegemonic representations and destabilize a commercial vision constituted through the prevalence and ubiquity of advertising. Placed on the walls of commerce that command and constitute a unitary subject through univocal hails, appropriation, disrupts reproduction as they redirect the uni-accentual message emanating from bureaucratic and commercial representations and call out for a world of diverse voices. As appropriation practices pose questions regarding democratic access, transparency and the possibilities for change it constitutes itself as a democratic mode of production and being.

The significance of these artists-activists lies in the potential to create sites from the banality of culture in which alternative identities are hailed for collection action and social change. While, these activists performed democracy on the streets they invited the public to reconstitute their identities as democratic subjects of a counter public through a shared engagement of questioning and active creation of meaning from the images and spaces of capital. Using the small crevices on the sides of buildings and billboards over highways, the images announce alternative perspectives galvanizing around an overdetermined field of discourse. These shifts in perspective offer an active engagement with a public and invite participation in the constitution of the cultural field.

In the initial stages of appropriation, the communities that formed represented both an imagined and physical community who perceive their collective allegiance as they left traces of their movements throughout social space, in every sticker posted and left for others to see. This network of practitioners points to a community of practice who galvanized around democratic activities and created alternative channels of distribution through guerilla tactics. As public(s) engaged or rallied around the

distribution of these images they too helped create the places in which alternative identities and communities of practice were formed, democratic ideals acted on and space reconfigured as a site for freedom of expression rather than property.

The articulation of democracy, therefore, takes place within the spaces of appropriated consumer culture and testifies to the presence of cultural space as a contested site of struggle. Within these spaces a plurality of voices announce alternative visions and meaning to the dominant representations. They perform, constitute and reflect the multiple and contradictory conditions of conflict and crisis as part of the social field. The radical juxtaposition of images of the past with those of popular culture, the use of political portraiture with the iconography of power and the radical ambiguity in which it invites, draws out the processes, methods, and aesthetic designs used to manufacture of consent. In so doing, the images point not only to an unresolved dialogic tension, but an always already multiple and contradictory field of discursive modalities – that overlap and dissolve as they are wielded by particular interests and articulated to power.

Appropriation illustrates how the symbols and icons of revolution are fluid, continually under revision, and can be rearticulated to both reproduce or undermine meaning and distinction. The parodic inhabiting of these hails therefore point to the constitution of the subject as neither uniform nor static, but a product of a battle waged in the streets over the rights of the subject who is capable of identifying, rejecting, embracing or overturning the production of power. For, as an assemblage of interests and desires whose phenomenological experience is both shaped by power and appropriation, the subject is revealed as an ensemble of interests with marks of allegiance and community. However, when an elusive community constitutes itself as a public it can be located, defined, contained and labeled for the commercial industry.

### **Politics of Appropriation**

This dissertation sought to explicate the conditions by which and for which articulations are secured to power. It is necessary to explicate the complexly articulated structure in which marketing tactics co-opted the styles of appropriation to help secure and sustain consumer ideology and constitute subjects as part of a consumer public. Incorporation indicates the multiple and complex social formations that secured articulation and reproduced the ideology and underlying structures these appropriation artist-activists rallied against. As the tactics and styles of appropriation were co-opted by advertising and marketing firms, turned into commodities, hung on gallery walls and became virtually indistinguishable from guerrilla marketing, the politics of appropriation established the conditions and limits of hegemonic containment.

In other words, the politics of appropriation emphasized the concepts of hegemony and hegemonic containment to illustrate the political, economic and commercial lines of force that reproduce and sustain a consumer structure and limit the terrain of ideological struggle over commodity signs. Co-optation and commodification are hegemonic articulatory principles that contain appropriation as commercially viable commodities. Their tactics became a mechanism to interpellate subjects and reproduce conditions of asymmetrical relations of power reproducing capitalist relations of production. This indicates a complex and variable structure that reproduces consumer subjects, with the ideology of consumption and asymmetrical relations over the access, use, control, ownership and display of cultural resources.

The politics of appropriation reveal, ultimately, how the democratic potential of appropriation is refashioned to serve as authentic emblems of counter-culture distinction. In this way, the elusive and consumer savvy Generation Y could identify with, organize around and buy into the condition. The containment of the tactics, style and diverse communities plus the array of expression formed around and through them are unified based on co-optation and commodification pointing to the boundaries of hegemonic



containment. As this dissertation revealed, appropriation tactics, once representing a diverse array of voices from the street, were soon employed by the same advertising agencies they once railed against and used to infiltrate the territory once reclaimed by them and contained within the fold of capital. Once the ideological form converges in the commodification and co-optation of appropriation, the use of such tactics, visual strategies and ambiguity fostered the containment of their works within prescribed limits.

As the poetics of appropriation artists, such as the Billboard Liberation Front and Shepard Fairey, who aimed to unearth the ‘hidden persuaders’ and create dissociative moments were rearticulated in an array of under the radar, stealth and guerrilla marketing campaigns, the poetics of appropriation were easily converted into intrigue and buzz generators to manufacture hip, “authentic” and edgy brand identity. This use of the ambiguous appeal of appropriation invites the public to invest their own meaning which facilitates both ownership and allegiance to brands while the tactics convey the needed street credibility and manufactured authenticity to cut through the clutter and stand apart.

Today, such tactics are used to appear non-corporate and create and reflect brand relevance, surprise, “authenticity” and “cool” to a cynical populace inundated with commercial messages. But as this tactic has evolved and is quite diverse in its application, its effectiveness lies in moving beyond the traditional marketing model. Rather than treating the audience as a passive consumer that can be captured it approaches the audience as active participants in the creation of brand meaning whose search for identity promotes the brand as an emblem of distinction.

This dissertation also identifies the subtlety of the press as contributing to ideological containment. Where subversive appropriation is defined as “David” against the media behemoth “Goliath,” the press intervenes in the ideological struggle as it continually articulating the binary opposition that positions artists against the system and creating the counter-cultural distinction necessary to exploit countercultural capital. Thus, in manufacturing authenticity through abjecting appropriation as other, it is more

readily co-opted as their tactics and images are articulated within counter-cultural brands to attract the rebel consumer. Such processes are necessary for hegemonic articulations.

Through these operations the idea of an alternative and authentic underground is kept alive in advertising discourse while the practice becomes part of the mainstream. As the distinction between selling out and authenticity is used in the press, a boundary is reinforced where appropriation artists like Dr. Revolt, Dez, and Eric Haze, are marginalized and invested with oppositional characteristics that in turn facilitate co-optation. The emphasis of binary opposition where underground and subversive cultures are articulated to an identity of authenticity secures the hip, edgy and outsider status of their works. And, any attempt to problematize a binary distinction between “us and them,” of playing the system from within through an “inside out strategy” is elided.

Guerrilla marketing and commodification illustrate how commercial power is continually wielded, absorbing oppositional elements and reflecting back the interests of democracy through the interests of free market capital. By exploiting and smoothing out contradictions, hegemonic incorporation and articulation illustrates how divergent interests and identities are articulated into a unity to reproduce relations of domination and subordination. Articulating diverse interests of the public to a unified conception, the ideology of consumption moves beyond passive compliance or even suppression, because it continually invites active participation, reproducing the prevailing hegemonic order within the overdetermined lines of commerce.

Such strategies point to the re-articulation of appropriation towards that of consumption, as its codes are inserted into a dominant position with a inflection of hip and edgy legitimating and uniting meaning. The validity of the ads then reflects back and constitutes the interests of the public. Brands operate as external articulatory principles that convert the self-organizing character of counter publics into publics of consumption through external forms of street tactics, ultimately reinforced through the active

involvement and investment of meaning of the public and the badges of allegiance that conveys their status.

The concept of articulation points to the active securing of cultural representations. Guerrilla marketing maximizes consent and unifies a public through a multiplicity of sites. Articulations are momentarily secured through a complex web of activities as the tactics of appropriation that invite participation of polyvalent signs are united and wielded together to secure and reproduce consumer ideology. Thus, art institutions, advertising, and the collaboration between the two, defines, situates and contains the images, uniting the diverse voices expressed in their work to reproduce the prevailing order.

Since the commodification of appropriation is articulated as democratic, the public is invited to reconstitute their identities in opposition, as “rebellious” and “democratic” consumer subjects. By employing appropriation today’s artists such as Stephan “Maze” Georges and Adam Juresko to manufacture designs, consumption is articulated as a democratic form of empowerment, and consent is manufactured by the manufacture of dissent. In short, the tactics, styles, and display along with the multifarious expressions of appropriation and meaning invested by the groups who organized around such images are absorbed and united through hegemonic articulations frozen by co-optation and commodification. Thus, the co-optation of the tactics of appropriation and the commodification of images of dissent renews an anti-consumer ethos in commodified form, through the guise of participation and empowerment.

Tracing the tactics and rearticulation of such practices reveals the complex and variable structure of hegemonic containment. If hegemony requires winning and shaping consent so that representations appear legitimate and natural, the role of advertising and commodification point to the intersection of prevailing lines of force that cohere and rearticulate neoliberalism. This overdetermines the ideology of consumption and subjects of capitalism. As appropriation is re-articulated to unify the diverse array of

subjects, the trajectories of guerrilla marketing reveal how consumer ideology is reproduced. In channeling an active engagement and investment of meaning with the sounds, images and products that circulate throughout the social fabric, networks that galvanize and constitute their identities through this display and engagement in word of mouth networks, become subjects of and to consumption and eventually reproduce the necessary conditions of production.

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe argue that articulation of ideology, of a collective will by leadership that unites a historic bloc is “a ‘cultural-social’ unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world.”<sup>1</sup> Hegemony provides an account of social order and reproduction in terms of the complex relations of force that secure consent by continually absorbing opposition and rearticulating it to the interests of the ruling bloc. Through a dialectic and reciprocally confirming mode of cultural production the articulatory practices of guerrilla marketing and commodification articulate appropriation as a means to unite a diverse array of interests to that of consumption.

The reproduction of the hegemonic order is not achieved through repression, in so much as through sublimation, where discontent and protest is reflected in the styles of the culture industry and back to subjects, then channeled toward consumption and the reproduction of consent. Therefore, as the tactics and images of appropriation are co-opted to articulate brand meaning and commodified, so the study of these tactics and the practices of co-optation advanced a more thorough explication of the dynamic relations of communication, capitalism and democracy. As part of a larger structure, the co-optation and commodification of appropriation point to contemporary mechanisms of hegemonic containment and the limitations of appropriation as a tactic of resistance. Hegemonic containment points to the deeply entrenched structure in dominance that absorbs the poetics of Barbara Kruger, Shepard Fairey and the Billboard Liberation and

rearticulates them within the limits of commercial representations to secure consumer ideology.

These cases indicate the components and reason for co-optation. As their street tactics facilitated the feeling of authenticity and exclusivity as the medium becomes the message, its ambiguity invited the public to invest their own meaning. While the images of appropriation reproduced a field of distinction and difference, the ambiguous images constituted the condition in which a communal identity could emerge. Insofar as this group was conceived as the impenetrable and cynical new generation of hip consumers, appropriation becomes the external articulatory principle where an amorphous mass is constituted as a consumer public in waiting, a public with shared identities and interests reflected in the poetics of appropriation. Thus, as marketers co-opted the tactics, ambiguous images, and principles of appropriation they rearticulated the poetics necessary to redirect the public's identification with appropriation towards that of consumption.

Cooptation and commodification of the poetics of appropriation provide the tactics and styles necessary for the reconstitution of the subjects necessary for consumer capital. If the elusive subject identifies with authenticity, originality, irony and the public's right to access, own, distribute and display culture, appropriation, anti-consumer 'rebels' and anti-consumption, furthers a consumption ethos. As marketing agencies blanket the streets with hired actors and staging situations, public space becomes a Futurist performance, where the public is invited to question if they are on the stage of advertising and if they too, have become actors. Thus, when the poetics of appropriation are co-opted and commodified, it becomes ever more difficult to identify advertising from street art and politics and protest from guerilla marketing theater. The significance of which leaves a haunting question, is the writing on the wall part of the show or a grievance against it, and if we too have not become part of the spectacle itself.

However, it is important to note the possibilities opened in this process. Three issues are paramount in this regard: the change in advertising and the systems of representation, the re-writing of history through the production of alternative ways of feeling, being and seeing, and three, the radical potential of the ambiguous subject positionalities that emerge. For in this stage of neo-liberalism the proliferation of advertising that not only an identity to assume, but also a sense of meaning and community by which and the co-optation of a diverse array of voices provides the semiotic fodder by which the social subject struggles.

As Laclau and Mouffe indicate, consumer society has not created the end of ideology or a one-dimensional society, but rather “the multiplicity of social relations from which antagonisms and struggles may originate: habitat, consumption, various serves can all constitute terrains for the struggle against inequalities and the claiming of new rights.”<sup>2</sup> This environment has stimulated new struggles as conflict indicates new points of antagonism and announce the expression of forms of resistance to commodification, bureaucratization and the homogenization of social life. Thus, as advertisers move in on the territory once claimed by appropriation, not only is advertising revealed as constructed and always in a process of change, and thus not universal, but also is revealed as artificial.

Marcuse’s insights are invaluable in this regard as his notions of the aesthetic dimension point to both the ability of revolutionary art to change the men and women who in turn, may establish community and change the world. It is precisely from within such conditions that the rebellious subjectivity is reborn. For in the absence of the categories of the dominant a social subject emerges to radically alter the meaning of the world, rewrite history and incite change. While the culture industries overdetermine a consumer subject position through a proliferation of sites and a multiplicity of methods, the ambiguity in the moments left by advertisers attempting to co-opt appropriation

constitute the conditions by which the public unlearn the concepts of the dominant, turn inward, and share their experience.

This new space of ambiguity therefore opens the possibility for a subject position that is beyond the oversimplified binary of consumer and producer and instead indicates a liminal space for the constitution and proliferation of social subject positionalities. The radical ambiguity that emerges in this process helps create the conditions by which a socially constituted subject with collective meaning and identity emerges. Thus, as these works both enter institutions of art, become commodities and exist in a plurality of sites on the street, not only is history rewritten that includes the voices of appropriation but points to the contingent conditions of identity formation and the continuation of democratically constituted subjects and communities of action as the univocal hail and unitary subject dissolves.<sup>3</sup>

Thus by appropriating the lines of communication and the visual styles that constitute subjects, the incorporation of appropriation points to the processes by which the articulated features of the dominant change and reveal identity as both a contestation at the level of the sign and as always also open, without a final or complete closure. As such, these works and processes indicate the intervention in the dominant that now speak a plurality of voices that announce multiple and contradictory subject positions to assume. They reveal a degree of autonomy as their voices, styles and tactics are used to both intervene in the structures that reproduce the dominant and are used by the dominant in an attempt to speak to groups, by, for and of their representations.

In those spaces constituted by appropriation artist and guerrilla marketer, the discursive spaces, where images and styles of the dominant compete on the same terrain of appropriation artists, as each vie for the attention of the public, constitute the terrain of the social field as a contestation over culture, as meaning, identity and community are struggled over. Thus, incorporation of appropriation points to the continuation of this struggle, spaces in which appropriation and marketing intermingle in the production and

reproduction of culture. It is here, perhaps, that the incorporation of appropriation speaks to the democratic possibilities and the structures that enable and constrain an oppositional politics waged at the level of the sign.

As the subject embodies the ideology of each, juxtaposing the signs of the culture industries with those of appropriation, a new social subject emerges. The social subject constituted through appropriation and the blurring of boundaries of a unitary revolutionary or radical subject poses a threat to an individualism advanced through neoliberalism. As communities galvanize around these images and invest meaning in the places opened in this process, they expand them, opening a space in which the constitution of a unitary subject becomes untenable and a social subject emerges as the necessary ground for the reproduction of a socially inflected social field. Thus, if the commodification and co-optation blurs the line between the politics and poetics of appropriation it brings with it, not the dehistoricized disappearance of resistance, but the very conditions for collective and social change.

While such spaces are filled with ambiguity, it is thus precisely this ambiguity that gives way for the formation of a collective and plural subjectivity who galvanize around an internal regulator principle, where its presence is plural and indeterminate. Thus as agencies develop and co-opt tactics of appropriation the unitary subject constituted through a uni-accentual hail expands and proliferates. The overdetermined drive of the culture industries who increase the radical ambiguity in the social field therefore constitutes the conditions for the social plurality necessary to form social subjects who continually reorganize, mix and reflect intertextual subjectivities who share information in spaces of incorporation. This field is then also and always rife with conflict, exposing itself as a construction to be debated, held under scrutiny and free of the unitary hold of consumer ideology.

These conclusions leave the possibilities of resistance in precisely those spaces of co-optation and commodification; for it is in those places that the possibilities of radical



social subjects emerge. And thus co-optation and commodification constitute the conditions in which a plural and radical social subject with multiple and various vocalities invest the ambiguity brought on by interference with meaning. At once social and shared, the meaning constituted in this process emerges via alternative networks of communication and distribution that transcend the spaces occupied by the guerrilla tactics. While a certain level of commodified meaning is reproduced, the preceding indicates that marketing and branding agencies are not only unable to solidify meaning to their brands but depend on the public perhaps more so than ever before.

While the co-optation and commodification appears at first glance to whittle away the street tactics used to interfere with the dominant ideology of consumption and the unequal access to communication, it is important to illustrate that the politics of appropriation indicate that the appearance is only surface level. For in this process of co-optation and commodification the sense of meaning, identity and community communicated through their deployment provides not only the semiotic fodder necessary for future appropriations but indicate the mechanisms by which the subject is reconstituted and the social field inflected with a plurality of multiple and contradictory accents.

Any strategy found on the bases of such dichotomies cannot eradicate the subjugation that such frameworks further. If the tactics of revolution have failed to replace the dominant unitary hegemonic discourse, it is precisely because they are subject to operate within the limits entrenched by a unitary conception of truth and the subject. Thus, to the extent that the reproduction of the prevailing hegemonic rationality constitutes the subject as a singularity, resistance and agency emerge in multiple, contradictory and fluid annunciations of contradictor hails and thus, selves.

Although it is important to not praise or celebrate such possibilities, it is necessary to illustrate that it is the material street practices that indicate the positivity of the social as a determinant in the designs of revolution and power. Whether these designs are

appropriated to communicate a grievance or co-opted to sell meaning, the images of revolution and the abuse of power have not only entered the long filtered territory of masculine dominated museums and patriarchal representations of gender in advertising, but constitute a plurality of publics with diverse interests as they announce an alternative view on the walls of commerce.

While this is not unique to advertising more generally, its use in public spaces through guerrilla marketing tactics indicate not the threat of continued privatization in so much as the possibilities for resistance in new spaces. United Colors of Benetton for example, have consistently utilized the power of the fashion industry to speak to such concerns and the racial and sexual prejudices that afflict the subtle, and often invisible, puritanical ethos that pervades much of U.S. mainstream culture. While it is questionable just how effective such ads are light of potentially contradictory intentions; mainly to sell clothing and establish a controversial brand identity, they never the less speak to and invite a public dialogue about such deeply held prejudices.

It would be overly simplistic to indicate otherwise give the works and commercial trajectory Fairey and Kruger as well. While their controversial designs are often elided in the fetish of commodities, their invitations to look deeper than their surface level appearance, to the construction of power and the manufacture of consent point not only to resistant subjects in waiting but also reveal the myths used in this process. Thus, while corporations such as the Gap and Levis have benefited immensely from these artists and activists ensnaring in an ever more skeptical consumer base, the potentiality to change how they are addressed remains in the hands of these individuals.

The continually evolving tactics of guerrilla marketing indicate an important shift in their approach. While such changes not only derived from the street level tactics and revolutionary graphic designs, they also played a significant role in changing the subject positions available. This consumer movement indicates therefor not only a ever elusive hip and edgy consumer who pride themselves on their knowledge as marks of distinction

but a public who has the ability to use commodities to change the representations of power and ignore outdated hails that do not adequately address their interests.

Thus in the final hours, the politics of appropriation indicate a systematic change in the approaches advertisers use to address and constitute a public. It indicates a trade by which advertisers give up their ability to interpellate a subject and public and provide instead the places for them to emerge in exchange for a sense of community established through shared resources and the negotiation of meaning. And so by 2010, resistance emerges with the constitutive power to not only reshape the world after its own images but rewrite history and the methods which it deems acceptable.

It is important to note however that the contemporary debates of structure and agency remain alive and well within the spaces carved out by appropriation and co-optation a like. For in every new design and tactic always also lies the possibilities of a parodic re-inhabiting of the hail and its redirection toward material needs of the address. Thus, while the temporary seizure of the poetics of appropriation appear to solidify and redirect resistance toward consumption, corporations must continually invest financial capital and exhaust resources to overdetermine meaning; for the semiotic excess of each signifier indicates the impossibility of a full and final closure. While overdetermination temporarily secures meaning to the service of power, it also reveals a multiplicity of sites for re-appropriation, new identities and subject positionalities and new places for resistant subjects to emerge.

The significance of the BLF is important in this regard as their indiscriminate tactical appropriations announced both their power to commandeer the channels used to constitute subjects as subjects to capital and reflected that every billboard or sign is subject to both parody and satire that undermined the univocal hails of corporations attempting to freeze and stabilize the meaning of brands to a singularity. Moreover, their elusiveness and anonymity proved essential; for their invisibility enabled a degree of autonomy from the determinants of capital. The invisibility and humor of both the BLF

and the Guerrilla Girls remains a vital tactic of resistance and agency, for it accords them with the ability to operate free from market pressures and the discourse of selling out.

The tactic of anonymity thus enables each group to continually invest the discursive field with multiple and contradictory meanings and reasons, as both groups worked as marketers and curators by day and guerrilla activist against those very institutions by night. While this approach has amounted to ridicule and claims of a lack of authenticity, it is worth questioning the singularity that authenticity implies. For in their public condemnation of such institutions and their use of humor they pointed to not a unitary subject in which an authentic self is articulated to or emerges from, but multiple selves with material demands and desires authentic to each. While the very notion of authenticity is in no doubt under erasure in this process, the dividing line between a manufactured and authentic self and revolutionary subject blurs; for each acts in their self(s) interest.

Agency and a revolutionary subject indicates not a unitary subject but rather the possibility to both act in and against your “self” interest. Which is to say, it emerges in multiple and contradictory ideologies held simultaneously within a network of multiple selves. The super imposition of structure and the overdetermine field that imposes singularity over meaning, always and already attempts to solidify the unitary constitution of the “authentic” subject as well. From the mirror and reciprocally confirming constitution of the subject and the constraining and enabling structural field, agency emerges in the movement between being both and neither a subject to capital’s sway as well as a wielder of its influence.

This is not to indicate that difference is necessarily subversive in itself, but rather, indicates that difference is the conditions by which it is constituted. There is no doubt, as Sarah Thornton argues, much to be gained by theorizing the movements of subcultures away from a cultural studies approach that has historically defined these groups in terms of deviance and subjects of hegemony and toward that of building networks of

communication that serve as both a means to distinguish a group away from the mainstream and create distinctions and hierarchies away and from within it. But rather than a rejection of the former in terms of the latter, the politics and poetics of appropriation the mechanisms by which both operate.

While these groups have both invested the discursive field with new meanings and highlighted the means and aesthetic codes by which consumer culture is reproduced, they occupied the uneven structural terrain and assumed multiple positionalities. Such positionalities are constituted through their acts of use, the identities constituted through shared communication, and their ability to move and belong to a plurality of identities. While the discourse of posing solidifies “authentic” cultural insiders who legitimately belong to such groups, posing becomes a mechanism by which brand meaning and its illusionary authenticity is maintained. Thus, the distinctions instilled through posing in close association with counter cultural capital are the mechanism by which meaning is articulated to brands and constitutes identities. The emphasis on distinction is thus intricately connected to the articulation of ideology.

Yet, as identities temporary assemblages they not only indicated an identity in relation to the mainstream, or one as simply deviant because it is different, but one that was constituted through its alternative uses of articulated branded meaning and promoted difference not only in relation to access but within the very constitution of the subject as well. Beyond the multiple positionalities assumed through such acts enables the conditions by which the cultural field with new meaning, identity and community are (re)formulated and (re)produced. The unhinging and rearticulation of brands and the aesthetics of power, the reconstitution of multiple subject positionalities and the movement throughout multiple and contradictory communication networks is necessary for the constitution of counter publics to galvanize, away from and because of their difference, for strategic collective change.

Uniting their diverse interests under a common banner of difference in a counter hegemonic battle; difference enables a dissension on the apparatuses of power inciting new representations and access to reconstitute their identities for new causes. While the reproduction of multiple hegemonies is constituted in this way, so too is it the condition for its reproduction. Thus, resistance and agency resides in the multitudes ability to continually move and reformulate the materials by which culture, meaning, identity and community are shared, struggled over and thus reproduced.

### **Future of Appropriation (Research)**

The appropriation and re-articulation of media in public spaces was a common tactic of appropriation throughout the 1980s, 90s, and 00s. Often through the poetics and politics, such works introduced questions concerning the colonization of public space and the one directional and univocal hail of mass mediated signifiers. Beyond the questions that such amorphous tactics foster, is the potentiality for a new democratic subject position and collective membership of those who rally around their ideas. Consumers participate in meaning construction and shape how life is lived and experienced. Images foster multi-accentual hails and heteroglossia on the streets where appropriation indicates a confrontation within and against increasingly commercialized spaces. While the poetics of appropriation comprise a community of practice that dates back to Dada, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century marketing agencies have joined the ranks by co-opting appropriation.

The infiltration of advertising in the public sphere and the incorporation of appropriation under the name of democracy has irreparable consequences to the proper functioning of free and vibrant culture. As the identities formed around the visual style and tactics of appropriation are redirected toward consumption the tactics and visual styles are re-inscribed and secured as hegemonic articulations of consumer ideology. Such containment undermines a diverse and vibrant public sphere as it converts 'democratic participation' into hyper active consumption. The result entrenches the

dictates of neoliberalism under the name of democracy and replaces the discursive space and participation necessary for a democratic society with a customized consumption.

This study of appropriation reveals both the tactics and points of impasse when mounting an assault against those who profit from dominant representations and the privatization of culture. The study of the co-optation of guerrilla appropriation tactics and the commodification of their style of subversion contributes to the growing body of work on resistance and points to the contemporary mechanisms and structures of hegemonic containment. While this dissertation traced the style, tactics and strategies of appropriation as points of insight into the practices and conditions of subversion, it also traced, the relatively stable and multiple relations of force to explicate and differentiate the articulatory principles by which such forms emerge, are co-opted and become part of the dominant culture where they railed against. Mapping the trajectories of hegemonic containment furthers theories of co-optation and commodification and adds to the complex and variable structure of a neoliberal information economy.

It is important to note, however, that these cases reveal a contested terrain over the meaning of what constitutes art, authenticity, freedom from the economy and commercialization. They also introduce questions pertaining to the role and the power of the economy and commercial advertising in the public sphere. What might be condemned as co-optation never the less intervenes in larger apparatuses of the media, shaping advertising and questioning the role of commercialization. As such, the stories of Barbara Kruger, the Billboard Liberation Front and Shepard Fairey remain points of insight into the structural inequality and systematic asymmetrical relations of domination. Moreover, despite the hegemonic unification of such works their practices point to tendencies rather than a monolithic culture, where interference in the market is created and potentially undermines the effectiveness of advertising, as well as their own approach.

Ongoing attention to and critical analysis of the ideology of consumerism and practices of advertising, media representations, the unequal and systematic asymmetrical

relations of power and the potential for dissent is necessary today. While this dissertation traced the tactics and visual styles of appropriation and subsequent incorporation, it was limited to the developments from the late 1970s and into the first decade of the new millennium. While this time frame was necessary to produce a manageable project and provide a parallel to the rise of neoliberalism, it does not reflect the end of appropriation as a social critique and ideological struggle. Nor does it illustrate an end of guerrilla marketing and commodification. This dissertation lays the ground work for the study of appropriation as a nexus to explicate the dynamic and variable relations between communication, capitalism and democracy, and it also points to a number of directions and questions for research that focus on appropriation, intellectual property, co-optation and commodification, and stealth and buzz marketing.

### **Appropriation and Co-optation**

In June of 2011 for example, the Red Hot Chili Peppers hired Mr. Brainwash who was recently featured in Banksy's documentary *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, to engage in marketing on the streets to promote their new album. As the online magazine, NME describes the promotion as "cryptic street art," it would seem that the cooptation of appropriation tactics that invited a proliferation of meaning through strategic polysemy is still alive and well.<sup>4</sup> But the confluence of art as advertising as self-promotion as branding has created a reaction by those who attempt to keep the integrity of street art as a means for self-expression rather than promoting brand identity.

Trusto Corp, an anonymous appropriation art coalition has retaliated against what some call a hoax and others call exploitation of street art by Mr. Brainwash. Featured prominently in Banksy's Oscar Nominated Documentary, Mr. Brainwash was portrayed as capitalizing on street art to catapult his art and status to stardom. Using similar aesthetic designs as Banksy, Warhol and Fairey, Brainwash followed and co-opted the tactics of appropriation to his own ends. Trusto-Corp, who appropriates familiar trademarks and ostensibly creates new meanings reacted strongly against Mr. Brainwash,



a.k.a., Theirrey Guetta's exploitation of the genre for personal gain. While his identity as a street artist remains in question, the reaction by Trusto-Corp indicates that whether he is a fabrication of Banksy himself, an elaborate prank, or the "real," they would not tolerate phonies who guise their product promotions under the label of street art. As such, they bombed Gueutta's art show promotion with the message, "Locals only, No Fakes, No Phonies," throughout the meat packing district of New York.

Trusto-Corp emerged in 2008 as a reaction against the political rhetoric during the election season. But yet, despite their politically charged intervention, appropriating billboards, producing fake products and phone booth ads and altering subways signs, the group recently held a show of their work for sale in a gallery in SoHo. The rallying cry against phonies and fakes not only positions their work and intervention as authentic, but may also serve to create value for their works as 'truly' subversive and the next fashionable commodity to own. Tracing their work as an ideological struggle over communicative resources and against fakes and phonies introduces an array of concerns in need of explication. Just how have appropriation artists reacted against others who enter the mainstream? What are the articulatory principles in which this battle is waged? Who else is involved and what are their grievances?

### **Guerrilla Marketing and Intellectual Property**

Intellectual property law plays a central role in the economic valorization culture, as it is through the legal apparatus that cultural symbols are valorized and fixed as commodities. In turn, this positions oppositional subjects as perpetrators and/or trespassers that diminish the potential financial return on intellectual property rather than active participates in the creation of culture. Intellectual property law is a coordinate of hegemonic containment as companies with financial war chests articulate meaning and define satire as an infringement of their property interests.

In *Reading Ideologies*, Colin Sumner indicates that the main function of the legal system is "to protect the reproduction of the economic system from external interference

(e.g. from previously dominant economic classes, from political groups, from ideological conservatism or radicalism, from foreign intrusion.”<sup>5</sup> But the law does not merely operate as a reflex that secures economic relations but also, secures the articulation between the economic and the political and cultural relations as well. Sumner adds, “Law is not only ideology backed by instituted social power, it is also instituted social power articulated in and reinforced by ideology.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, the law as both an expression of power and ideology controls social practice. As Sumner illustrates, “the legal system is first and foremost a means of exercising political control available to the propertied, the powerful and the highly educated. It is the weapon and toy of the hegemonic bloc of classes and class fractions whose rough consensus it sustains.”<sup>7</sup> But what battles have been fought over the right of access of culture? And how does IP law entrench a unitary subject?

While the cases against Shepard Fairey and Barbara Kruger can provide insight into the construction of the subject in law and the metaphysical personality constituted through the camera, other artists who appropriate commodities and images should be examined to address the underlying assumptions of the subject produced in law and the potential consequences to a free and open society. In 1997 for example, Tom Forsythe developed 78 photographs for a series of images to address the objectification of women and the normalized beauty myth associated with Barbie. Entitled, “Food Chain Barbie” the photographs positioned Barbie in danger of being chopped up by a blender, turned into desert in a malt machine, cooked by fondue, and otherwise attacked by vintage kitchen appliances. As Forsythe explained, Barbie was used because it “is the most enduring of those products that feed on the insecurities of our beauty and perfection-obsessed consumer culture.”<sup>8</sup>

On August 22, 2001, the federal district court of Los Angeles granted Forsythe a summary judgment, finding the photographs to be fair use, both in terms of copyright and trademark.<sup>9</sup> As the court reasoned, Forsythe’s work constituted parody, and defined

parody according to the American Heritage Dictionary via *Campbell v. Acuff Rose*, as a “literary or artistic work that imitates the characteristic style of an author or a work for comic effect or ridicule.”<sup>10</sup> As the court reasoned, “a parodist may claim fair use where he or she uses some of the elements of a proper author’s composition to create a new one that, at least in part, comments on that authors works.”<sup>11</sup>

While the court explained that the original may be loosely targeted, it was necessary for the original to be perceived as under critique. While Mattel sought to articulate beauty, wealth and glamour to Barbie through marketing and merchandise, Forsythe’s use unhinged such associations and re-articulated the meaning of Barbie as a reflection of the harm of such gender roles and objectification of women. As the court reasoned, indeed, it was Mattel’s “original” message that facilitated such social comment. The court explained, “It is not difficult to see the commentary that Forsythe intended or the harm that he perceived in Barbie’s influence on gender roles and the position of women in society.”<sup>12</sup> The court further reasoned, Food Chain Barbie is fair use, as it is unlikely that it would usurp the demand for Barbie and it is unlikely that Mattel would license Barbie for this type of derivative use. The ruled, “It is not in the public’s interest to allow Mattel complete control over the kinds of artistic works that use Barbie as a reference for criticism and comment.”<sup>13</sup>

However, while Forsyth’s use of Barbie dolls was considered fair use because the court felt it was unreasonable to assume that criticism infringes on potential market harm as it is unfathomable for a company to seek profits by criticizing and tarnishing their own works, recent guerilla marketing trends indicate otherwise. Future research should pay close attention to any corporation claiming intellectual property infringement who have engaged in systematic guerrilla marketing campaigns. For such campaigns may now indicate that parody too infringes on the market value of derivative uses. Thus, guerrilla marketing may become the foundation in which corporations claim criticism as an infringement on derivative use and are accorded greater control over culture. While the

rise of guerrilla marketing subsumes the criticality of appropriation, it may also hollow out parody and leave a hollow shell of fair use in its wake.

Future research should take heed to warnings outlined by Kembrew McLeod, Siva Vaidhyanathan, Rosemary Coombe, and Joanne Demers, to name a few. For the law secures unitary subjects as subjects before the law and fixes meaning as it undermines a diverse array of voices and subject positions, reproduces asymmetrical relations of access, use, and display of cultural resources; positioning subjects as, first and foremost, passive recipients of culture. If communities are constituted on the basis of interaction with appropriated commodities and trademarks, their legal prevention not only limits such works, but entire communities who identify and galvanize around this democratic practice.

Future research should pay close attention to this relationship to adequately explain the conditions and limits of free speech and dissent within a Neoliberal market economy and focus on the recent case of *Patrick Cariou v. Richard Prince, Gagosian Gallery, et al*, as it may re-entrench property rights of those of expression. Prince is an appropriation artist who collaged images of Rastafarian's with popular culture commodities. Research should also trace recent trademark infringement litigation as a response to ambush marketing. Such insights point to the complex and variable relations of marketing and the legal apparatus that reproduces asymmetrical relations of power.

### **Appropriation and Protest: Occupy and the 99%**

Occupy Wall Street was promoted and ignited in part, by two appropriation posters. The first collage derives from Shepard Fairey's Obama campaign poster that blended the visual aesthetic of Hope with the iconic image of Gay Fawkes from the comic and movie *V for Vendetta* by Anonymous. The second was created by *Adbusters*. Unlike the subvertisements of the past the Occupy poster called for direct action on Wall Street both visually and through the accompanied meme/tweet #OccupyWallStreet. The poster depicts a dancer balancing atop the Merrill Lynch bull engulfed in a bloom of

smoke and backed by an army of protesters. Above her is the simple, yet powerful, question, “What is Our Demand?” Below, is the call to action, “#OccupyWallStreet. September 17<sup>th</sup> Bring Tent.”

While the occupation of Wall Street by the 99% “emerged” on September 17, 2011 as part of the OccupyWallStreet movement, they adamantly rejected any affiliation with MoveOn.Org, *Adbusters* or any other group attempting to co-opt their energy and redirect their politics for self-serving ends. The counter public that identifies itself as the 99% consists of individuals who have occupied public spaces from Los Angeles to New York and represent 99% of the public who are not part of the 1% of the U.S. public that owns 99% of the country’s wealth. They comprise a diverse array of individuals with divergent interest that have rallied under inequality.

They have been adversely affected by political and economic decisions and the corruption built into both the policy making process as well as the policies themselves over the last thirty years. They renounce the idea of a free market that is based on an equal playing field and the illusion of unhindered social mobility. Rather, as the group maintains, the economic inequality is systematic and systemic and not the result of their “failure” to make ends meet, budget properly, or hold down a job.<sup>14</sup> The 99% are those who have to choose between paying their rent or paying for groceries, who are not covered by adequate healthcare, who are entrenched in debt, and struggle to make ends meet every day.

As the group maintains, those who accuse the 99% of not working hard enough or planning well enough are the 1%. They, “are the banks, the mortgage industry, the insurance industry. They are the important ones. They need help and get bailed out and are praised as job creators. We need help and get nothing and are called entitled. We live in a society made for them, not for us. It’s their world, not ours. If we’re lucky, they’ll let us work in it so long as we don’t question the extent of their charity.”<sup>15</sup>

No longer silent, the 99% converged on Wall Street to voice their grievances against the 1% and has since received press coverage on an unprecedented scale. They have grown in over 1,000 cities and have entered election discourse for Republican candidates. They have also been subject to both the ideological state apparatus and the state apparatus as the police sprayed mace and removed some protesters by force. As activists are continually arrested, forcibly removed and gassed through chemical weapons they have revealed the power of the state and civil society as, what Gramsci calls, “hegemony protected by the armor of coercion.”<sup>16</sup>

Although their relatively ambiguous tactics to stay elusive point to the continued use of strategic ambiguity, as it facilitates a wide enough umbrella to unite the diverse array of interests under a general grievance, the use of cryptic imagery reflects the continued use of ‘coded’ messages that invite the public to ‘get in on’ the message, invest in it using their own meaning, and create buzz through word of mouth networks that are privy to the special code needed to decipher the meaning of the message. While the group has systematically refused to identify any leaders, perhaps learning a lesson or two from the celebritization of members of the New Left such as Abbey Hoffman as a hegemonic containment mechanism outlined by Todd Gitlin in *The Whole World is Watching*, their ability to fight off co-optation remains an ongoing struggle despite their attempts to organize through people’s assemblies.

This dissertation suggests that if this tactic translates into and is articulated as a sign of hip, authentic, and edgy, it is worth questioning just how long before Occupy is co-opted, turned into a commodity, and ultimately contained to reproducing the interests they are fighting against. Not long apparently. This is perhaps why organizers lambasted Shepard Fairey on November 22, 2011 for co-opting the now iconic face of Guy Fawkes and transposing the aesthetic design of the now famous Obama portrait with the words, “Mister President we Hope you are on our side. We are the 99%.” As an anonymous

organizer of Occupy claimed, the movement is in no way affiliated with any political party, and Fairey's use of the image misrepresented and undermined the groups goals.

Alan Moore, the original artist who created the iconic image of Guy Fawkes is currently creating an Occupy Comic. In response to the prevalence of images which frame the protest in terms of their filth rather than the art that helped inspire the 99% to take action and occupy, Moore is creating a comic to capture the images of protest to confront the media depictions.<sup>17</sup> While Moore's tactic to commodify dissent may prevent representations of the 99% to fall prey to sensationalism and the economics of the press much like the protests in Seattle, recent media depictions by *Time Magazine*, reveal a bizarre battle over the construction of this movement.

Although Fairey changed the text of the poster by November 23, to "we are the hope," so that there is little doubt that he is not trying to capitalize on the movement.<sup>18</sup> The *Washington Post* claims, Fairey was the "First famous artist to lend his talent" when he used a rendition of Angela Davis to "promote" the movement.<sup>19</sup> These recent incidents point to the continued incorporation of tactics that voice inequality and their continued co-optation. But the question remains, how long before the 99% become the next fashion trend, graphic design, and art object.

For their December 2011, Person of the Year cover, *Time Magazine* employed Shepard Fairey to create an image for the "protester," bringing much of this story back on itself, as the visual art that embodies a protest of what is, becomes an image of all that was. As one report in the *Los Angeles Times* suggests, "The Protestor" is a visual mash up of fragmentary sources that includes "Andy Warhol's high-contrast silk-screen technique, Russian Constructivist propaganda... anonymous news photographs, American government-issue engravings (stamps, currency, pamphlets), Barbara Kruger's red-white-and-black Minimalist images with text, psychedelic advertising," all on display, at once controlled and contained within the purview of *Time Magazine*.<sup>20</sup>

The significance of the anonymous figure on this cover lies in creating a depiction of a protester expansive enough to convey protests from the Arab Spring to Wall Street. While such cases reflect the co-optation and commodification of appropriation, they also indicate the continued use of the tactics and visual strategies of appropriation from commercial and governmental propaganda to voice grievances regarding the unequal access to cultural resources. This ongoing battle requires continuous critical attention because the continued incorporation of the tactics and designs of appropriation indicates a continuous threat to democracy.

Future research should continue to explore the relationship between communication, capitalism and democracy through the continued explication of the dynamic and variable processes of incorporation. The preceding analysis provided an account of incorporation, it relied on the published anthologies, interviews and the press as a source. While the press remains a viable channel to explicate the intervention of power in discourse, it is also limited to published and filtered accounts of the thoughts, feelings and general attitudes of appropriation artist, activist and protester. Press accounts are limited to those moments and are unable to capture other tensions, conflict and points of impasse.

This dissertation utilized information pertaining to more canonical figures to explicate how power intervenes in securing articulations, future research should engage new artists and activists, the 99% and modern marketing agencies that work alongside them to derive the current politics and poetics of appropriation. It will require tracing the tactics of artists from their first raids to commodification, to garner a more detailed account. Future research should therefore explore the tactics and visual styles used in practice through ethnographic participant observations. On site interviews and participation in the activities of appropriation and protest are needed as they provide a more thorough account of the production tactics of appropriation as well as the existential struggle of the corporeal subject entangled in the apparatuses of state control. While the



potential publication of such work may inadvertently co-opt appropriation at the institutional level and potentially provide information to marketing agencies to further exploit the poetics of appropriation, there is hope. For exposing the manipulation taking place on a daily basis and “unearthing the hidden persuaders” ultimately provides the knowledge and tactics necessary to advance democratic practice.

## END NOTES

**Introduction**

- <sup>1</sup>Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. (UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.
- <sup>2</sup>Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 40.
- <sup>3</sup>Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 42.
- <sup>4</sup>Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 38.
- <sup>5</sup>Klein, Naomi. *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*. (New York: Picador, 2009), 22.
- <sup>6</sup>See for example, Stewart Ewen, *PR! A Social History of Spin and Captains of Consciousness*, Thomas Frank *Conquest of Cool*, and Vance Packard, the *Hidden Persuaders*.
- <sup>7</sup>“Giant in the Field,” *Denver Westword*, November 6, 2003.
- <sup>8</sup>Gina Kaufman, “Fairey Tale: There’s a Moral to this Wheat-Pasting Story,” *The Pitch* (Kansas City), December 2, 2004.
- <sup>9</sup>Barbra, Biesecker. A. “Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*, ed. Lester Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, 157-172. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).
- <sup>10</sup>N. Stromer, “Embodying Normal Miracles.” In *Visual rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*, ed. Lester Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, 227-240. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).
- <sup>11</sup>Twigg, R. “The performative dimension of surveillance: Jacob Riis’ How the other half Lives”. In *Visual rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*, ed. Lester Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, 227-240. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).
- <sup>12</sup>Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. (IL: University of Chicago press, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> See Susan Bordo. “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity.” In *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Vincent, V. Leitch, William E. Cain, Laurie E. Fink, and Barbara E. Johnson, 2362-2376. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001. And, Jason D. Rumbo, “Consumer Resistance in a World of Advertising Clutter: The Case of *Adbusters*.” *Psychology & Marketing*, 19, (2002): 127 – 148

<sup>14</sup> See, Klein 2002; Quart 2003; Schor 2005

<sup>15</sup> See, Adorno 1990; Barber 2007; Marcuse 1979

<sup>16</sup> See, Debord 2006; Hariman and Lucaites 2007; Jameson 1991; Matusitz 2005

<sup>17</sup> See, Croteau & Hoynes 2001.

<sup>18</sup> See, Hall 2008; Harold 2008

<sup>19</sup> Gary Hall. Digitize this book 2008, (128).

<sup>20</sup> Anne Elizabeth Moore. *Unmarketable: Brandalism, Copyfighting, Mocketing and the Erosion of Integrity*. (New York: New Press, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Frank, “Why Jonny Can’t Dissent.” In *Cultural Resistance Reader*, ed. Steven Duncombe. (London: Verso, 2002), 326.

<sup>22</sup> Harold 2008; Heath and Potter 2008

<sup>23</sup> Jared Heath and Anthony Potter. *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture*. (Canada: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> (Frank, 2002; Hebdige 1979; Heath and Potter 2005; Storey 2006)

<sup>25</sup> (Darts 2002; Rumbo 2002; Sandlin & Milam 2007)

<sup>26</sup> Steven Duncombe. *Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy*. (New York: The New Press, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> (Duncombe 2007; Frank 1998, 2002; Harold 2007; Heath & Potter 2008; Moore 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Hill and Helmers visual rhetoric focused on the semiotics of the image, but also the cultural – its medium and circulation, collective memory, history, and the contextual situations and sites of praxis to derive meaning. An analysis that contextualizes the location, circulation and cultural circumstance with composition requires the explication of these forms as a part of and within specific socio-historical contexts. Which is to say, the conditions by which and for which articulations secure a correspondence. Charles A.

Hill and Marguerite Helmers, Marguerite. "Introduction". In, *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, ed. Charles. A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004). Similarly, Blair and Michel interpret images and places in terms of the material place of the Civil Rights Memorial. But, rather than look at the memorial as an institutional setting that necessarily reproduces power and knowledge, they ask how the materiality of the site creates a space in which difference and resistance are created. As such, their analysis is one that asks how the subject is positioned in terms of agency and also as a mode of being. Carole Blair and Neil Michel, "Reproducing civil rights tactics: The rhetorical Performances of the Civil Rights Memorial," in *Visual rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*, ed. Lester Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, 139-155. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).

LaWare's visual rhetorical analysis of Chicano Murals asks how cultural memory and communities of action are invited to participate and form subject positions around these representations? And how is space -abandoned buildings and neighborhoods transformed into a community space of collective memory and empowerment. LaWare does the analysis by positioning the mural within the context of 'people's art' and the 'community mural movement' of the 1960s and 70s. It is an analysis that also illustrates the history of the images to illustrate how the murals act rhetorically upon viewers. Margaret R. LaWare, "Encountering Visions of Aztlan: Arguments for Ethnic Pride, Community Activism and Cultural Revitalization in Chicano Murals," in *Visual rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*, ed. Lester Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, 227-240. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008). Harold and DeLuca utilize a similar approach to doing visual rhetoric. In their analysis of the circulation of the Emmett Till photograph. However, they move beyond the boundaries of the photograph itself and position their analysis in the context of U.S. racial lynching. Informed by the concepts of power, inscription and the abject, Harold and DeLuca ask how the photo of Till disrupts power. And thus, the question is one that asks how viewers are hailed to see hatred? Catherine Harold and Kevin DeLuca, "Behold the Corpse: Violent Images and the Case of Emmett Till," in, *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, ed. Charles. A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers, 259-275. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004). Similarly, Demo's analysis of the Guerilla Girls is interpreted in the context of the Feminist movement, in the spaces of their work, through interviews and through the rhetorical concepts of 'feminist atom cracking' and Burkes notion of a perspective of incongruity, which illustrates how the juxtaposition of elements problematizes vision and a particular scopic regime that objectifies women. Anne T. Demo, "The Guerilla Girls' Comic Politics of Subversion," in *Visual rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*, ed. Lester Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, 241-256. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).

Stroupe analyzed the rhetoric of irritation through works that "inappropriately" juxtapose the compositional elements of images. As Stroupe suggests, these images require the concealment of their constructed and heterogeneous character, 'the hand of production' and thus an analysis of images that are remade is not what Hariman and Lucaites would

identify as the negotiation of citizenship, but rather as that which irritates a closure on meaning and opens up subject positions by revealing that hand of production. These inappropriate juxtapositions represent an ideologically expressive dialogue, where meaning is unsettled. As such, the analysis draws attention to interpretive dilemmas and cultural instabilities that exist beneath the veneer of “appropriate” assumptions and works to expose the ideology that masks, conceals and naturalizes the heteronormativity, i.e., the instability of meaning. Thus, exposing the slipping signifier directs attention to how explicitly invoked strategies of dialogism resists sedimentation, defers meaning and places the viewer among conflicting and competing layers of context, meaning, and convention. Craig Stroupe, “The Rhetoric of Irritation: Inappropriateness as Visual/Literate Practice,” in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, ed. Charles. A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers, 243-258. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004).

If, as Hariman and Lucaites argue, “the dominant codes articulate dominant social relationships and that the distinctive ideological effect is the formation of subjective identity consistent with that social structure” it is necessary to ask how dominant codes provide the hegemonic framework for interpretation that will constitute the subject with a liberal democratic identity, as subject to reproducing a liberal democratic social order and reproduces democracy as a way of seeing. Robert Hariman, Robert and John Louis Lucaites. *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. IL: University of Chicago press, 2007), 91. Finnegan approaches the work of doing visual rhetoric in a similar fashion to Hariman and Lucaites, in that she illustrates how the Farm Securities Administration photographs served to manage the interpretation of migrant workers and poverty and thus reproduce a scopic regime. In looking at the formal composition, its circulation and appropriation within a field of other images, speeches and commentary Finnegan explicates how such forces both structure the image and reconstitutes practices in its name. Thus, how are images and frames, used to reproduce a dominant articulation? As such, this study investigates the images and image-text which includes news discourse as an articulation of an argument that reproduces a way of seeing consistent with reproducing asymmetrical relations of power. Catherine A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA photographs*. (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2003).

## Chapter One

<sup>1</sup> (Gramsci 2000; Hebdige 1979, 1988; Laclau and Mouffe 2001).

<sup>2</sup> (Althusser, 1969; Grossberg 1996)

<sup>3</sup> (Hall 1980, 1996; Thompson 1988; Williams 1980, 1995)

<sup>4</sup> (Gitlin 2003; Hebdige 1979; Roszak 1969)

<sup>5</sup> Slack, Jennifer. "The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies." In, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, edited by David Morely and Kuan-Hsing, 112-130. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 114.

<sup>6</sup> (Laclau and Mouffe 2001; Marcuse 1979; Negri 2005)

<sup>7</sup> (Grossberg 1996; Hall 1996; Hebdige 1988)

<sup>8</sup> (Ang 1985; Fish ;Fiske 1986; Hall, 1980; Hebdige 1979; Jenkins 1992; Morely 1980; Radway 1984)

<sup>9</sup> (Certeau 1988; Duncombe 2002; Marcuse 1978; Negri 2005; Roszak 1969).

<sup>10</sup> As John B. Thompson illustrates, in *Ideology and Modern Culture*, "By examining the everyday appropriation of media messages in relation to the other aspects of mass communication, we can develop an interpretation of the ideological character of mass-mediated symbolic forms which avoids the fallacy of internalism, and which highlights the ways in which the meaning mobilized by media messages serves to sustain or disrupt, to establish or undermine, the structured social contexts within which individuals receive these messages and incorporate them into their everyday lives" (24).

<sup>11</sup> The conditions by which and for which articulations secure a correspondence involve a complexly articulated structure in which power intervenes in securing ideology and discursive formations overdetermine and sustaining hegemonic representations. Therefore, an analysis of appropriation as ideological struggle must trace the movements, conflicts and points of impasses in the re-articulation of dominant representations to identify the lines of force in which the prevailingly hegemonic articulations are secured and secure such conditions. In the *Sociology of Culture*, Raymond Williams argues that the study of cultural reproduction looks into the social and economic institutions and the alternative definitions of their products in terms of content and effects. As such, it explicates and focuses on "(i) the social conditions of art; (ii) on the social material in art works; and (iii) on social relations in art works" (21). Such an analysis, Williams argues, will overlap with aesthetics, psychology and history. As Williams notes, "What the cultural sociologist or the cultural historian studies are the social practices and social relations which produce not only 'a culture' or 'an ideology' but, more significantly, those dynamic actual states and works within which there are not only continuities and persistent determinations but also tensions, conflicts, and resolutions, innovations and actual changes" (29).

It is an analysis that explores, the actual relations and "the material means of cultural production and, on the other hand, actual cultural forms" (14). As cultural phenomena are embedded in relations of power and conflict and structured social contexts, a structural analysis of appropriation accounts for asymmetrical relations of domination that overdetermine the reproduction of power and accounts for the multiple ways in

which hegemonic articulations are sustained. To study culture with the modes of social and cultural reproduction is to identify cultural forms as emanating from within political, social, cultural organization and economic factors that exert limits and create the terrain of ideological struggle. Thus, a sociology of culture must be concerned with specific artistic forms, which is to say “the general study of sign-systems” and “it puts specific sociological questions and adds, to what would otherwise be internal kinds of analysis, a deliberately extended social dimension” (31). Accounting for the economic conditions of production in addition to multiple and complex and often contradictory relations of production accounts for historical and contemporary diversity. As Williams argues, “It is, then, by learning to analyze the nature and the diversity of cultural formations – in close association...with the analysis of cultural forms – that we can move towards a more adequate understanding of the direct social processes of cultural reproduction (86).

In *Ideology and Modern Culture*, John B. Thompson characterizes the social processes of cultural reproduction as the “relatively stable asymmetries and differentials in terms of the distribution of, and access to, resource of various kinds of power, opportunities and life chances” (150). Identifying the ideological work and the intervention of power in structured contexts, requires studying the multiple mechanisms of hegemonic containment that intervene, sustain and reproduce asymmetrical relations of power. As Thompson illustrates, “It uses social-historical analysis and formal or discursive analysis to shed light on the social conditions and structural features of a symbolic form, and it seeks to interpret a symbolic form in this light, to explicate and elaborate what it says, what it represents, what it is about” ( 22). As Thompson contends, this type of analysis requires asking if meaning “serves, or does not serve, to maintain systematically asymmetrical relations of power. It calls upon us to study symbolic forms in a certain light: in the light of the structured social relations which their employment or deployment may serve, in specific circumstances, to create, nourish, support and reproduce” (7).

<sup>12</sup> (Demo 2000; Harold and DeLuca 2005; LaWare 1998; Stroupe 2004)

<sup>13</sup> (Hall 1980; Williams 1981)

<sup>14</sup> (Gitlin 2003; Hebdige 1979; Roszak 1969)

<sup>15</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*. (CA: The University of California Press, 1988), xii-iii.

<sup>16</sup> Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, 37.

<sup>17</sup> Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, xiv-v.

<sup>19</sup> Although the first Futurist Manifesto was featured in Marinetti's journal *Poesia*, that ran from 1905 – 1909, the front page story in *Le Fiagro* is largely considered the beginning of their movement

<sup>20</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The Variety Theatre Manifesto," in *Futurist Performance*, ed. Michael Kirby and Victoria Nes Kirby (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 184.

<sup>21</sup> Marinetti, "The Variety Theatre Manifesto," 183

<sup>22</sup> The theatre was a place of consumption, where one would sit back and in contemplative detachment view the performance from 'outside' and perceive the acts through the habits and underlying assumptions of conventionalized viewing experiences. The theatre and traditional performances positioned the audience as mere spectators and overtime, such conventions normalized the role of the audience as recipients and passive spectators. Futurism developed tactics to disrupt the distance between the spectator and the taken-for-granted aspects of viewing, vision and visuality that were reproduced in the theatre, art and verse.

<sup>23</sup> Marinetti, "Variety Theatre Manifesto," 183.

<sup>24</sup> Marinetti, "The Variety Theatre Manifesto," 184.

<sup>25</sup> Enrico Prampolini, "Futurist Scenography," in *Futurist Performance*, ed. Michael Kirby and Victoria Nes Kirby (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 206.

<sup>26</sup> Marinetti, "The Variety Theatre Manifesto," 183

<sup>27</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The Variety Theatre Manifesto," 183.

<sup>28</sup> Prampolini, "Futurist Scenography," 206

<sup>29</sup> Enrico Prampolini, "Futurist Scenic Atmosphere: Technical Manifesto," in *Futurist Performance*, ed. Michael Kirby and Victoria Nes Kirby (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 229

<sup>30</sup> Prampolini, "Futurist Scenic Atmosphere: Technical Manifesto," 229

<sup>31</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Destruction of Syntax-Untrammelled Imagination-Words-in-Freedom.," In, *F. T. Marinetti Critical Writings* (New York: Farrar, Stans and Giroux, 2006), 125

<sup>32</sup> Undermining meaning and creating sematic disorder is explicated by Roland Barthes in *Image-Music-Text*. As Barthes claims, there is no perception without immediate categorization and any delay in interpretation involves a disorder to perception leading to questioning, anguish, and traumatism. If a rhetorical code is available, it distances, sublimates and pacifies the anguish. "The anchorage may be ideological and indeed this is its principal function; the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him [sic] to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle



dispatching, it remote-controls him [sic] towards meaning chosen in advance.”(40). For Barthes, the text has a repressive value where trauma and anguish is distanced, sublimated, and pacified by a rhetorical code. Its function is to integrate, reassure, and transform the ‘uncultured’ into a social institution. Thus, to unravel the repressive function of the text is to create disorder as it de-sublimates, incites anguish and undermines the rhetorical intervention in perception. Roland Barthes, *Image-music-text*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

33“Analogy is nothing more than the deep love that assembles distant, seemingly diverse and hostile things. An orchestral style, at once polychromatic, polyphonic, and polymorphous, can embrace the life of matter only by means of the most extensive analogies.” Filippo Tommaso Marinetti , “Destruction of Syntax-Untrammelled Imagination-Words-in-Freedom.,” In, F. T. Marinetti Critical Writings (New York: Farrar, Stans and Giroux, 2006), 125

34 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti , “Destruction of Syntax-Untrammelled Imagination-Words-in-Freedom.,” In, F. T. Marinetti Critical Writings (New York: Farrar, Stans and Giroux, 2006), 125

35 Marinetti , “Destruction of Syntax-Untrammelled Imagination-Words-in-Freedom.,” 130

36 Marinetti , “Destruction of Syntax-Untrammelled Imagination-Words-in-Freedom.,” 128

37 Marinetti , “Destruction of Syntax-Untrammelled Imagination-Words-in-Freedom.,” 128

38As the free play of words embraces the connections to the material substratum of life, it also undermines the unitary perspective of the I. “To rid ourselves of this obsessive I...introduces the infinite molecular life into poetry not as a scientific document but as an intuitive element. It should mix, in the work of art, with the infinitely great spectacles and dramas, because this fusion constitutes the integral synthesis of life.” Marinetti , “Destruction of Syntax-Untrammelled Imagination-Words-in-Freedom.,” 125-6.

39 Antonio Gramsci. *Antonio Gramsci reader: Selected writings 1916 – 1935*. (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 70.

40 Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci reader: Selected writings 1916 – 1935*, 74.

41 When Mussolini took power in 1922, Marinetti not only hailed the Fascist coupe as part and extension of the Futurist program that embraced war, he approached Mussolini with his manifesto. As Futurism turned toward fascism, it’s important to indicate just how fascism co-opted futurism. Benjamin conceptualized the proliferation of mass art and technological reproducibility as a mechanism that would tear artistic works subservience to ritual and the high priests of ‘proper’ interpretation and bring critical awareness to the people. For Benjamin, the new forms of mass communication could

serve as instrumental forces toward progress and raise the consciousness of the people. As critical images could now reach millions of people and they would be able to and have access to scrutinize the world and its representations. In this sense, while mass communication could keep the masses under control and reproduce commodities on a large scale, it also contained within it, the possibilities for its re-articulation toward political mobilization and struggle. As such, the political and emancipatory potential of the avant-garde of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century lie not with Futurism but with Dada. As Benjamin maintains, Dada was able to strike beyond the notions of the original author genius that the auteurs of high modernism sought to keep in place and agitate the audience beyond a mass reaction and towards counter revolution, towards action.

<sup>42</sup> Dickerman and Doherty (4).

<sup>43</sup> This period has been considered the apex of high modernism, with the introduction of marketing, public relations, and war propaganda, a photo-illustrated press, radio broadcasting and the cinema. From propaganda poster campaigns to the development of communication technologies of radio, cinema and newsreels, the flow of information from the war to the domestic front constructed an atmosphere of a highly mediated culture. The emergence of modern marketing, the development and creation of the Creel Commission in the U.S., the proliferation, techniques and systematic public relations campaigns directed to the unify public, were the conditions in which the Dadaists were both embracing and overturning. Subverting the icons of progress, capitalism, instrumental reason, and ordered efficiency Dada disrupted the one-way flow of mass communication by appropriating communicative resources.

<sup>44</sup> Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*. (High Holborn, London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 34.

<sup>45</sup> Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Zurich was a place isolated from the war but nestled within the larger European conflict. The origins of Dada and appropriation can be traced to the Cabaret Voltaire, a night club in which artists and writers met and exchanged ideas. Hugo Ball, the club's founder operated and ran the club with his partner Emmy Hennings. The café was to promote artistic creativity, entertainment, provide a safe refuge, and create a community around an articulated purpose, to perform the very independence in which Zurich fostered. After placing ads in the press, making printed cards and issuing posters of its grand opening, Ball hung futurist posters on the walls of the café. In Munich before the war and after the confiscation and court trial of his poem *The Hangman*, Ball was in direct contact with expressionists Blaue Reiter and Vasily Kandinsky but moved to Berlin where he performed and distributed antiwar manifestos with Hemmings and Huelsenbeck, with Tzara, Arp, and Janco soon to follow in Zurich.

<sup>47</sup> Dickerman and Doherty (25). But the Cabaret was also a place where works of high and low art were thoroughly mixed with poetry, musical compositions and sound poetry. It was perhaps this microcosm of mixed media and the overturning of elite taste based on the distinction that advanced Dada to a heightened and radicalized extreme of avant-garde practice. Richter recounts, “Bells, drums, cow-bells, blows on the table or on empty boxes, all enliven the already wild accents of the new poetic language, and excited, by purely physical means, an audience which had begun by sitting impassively behind its beer-mugs. From this state of immobility it was roused into frenzied involvement with what was going on” (19). The cabaret created a space to shock and agitate a manufactured consciousness and de-shroud the veil of bourgeois ideology. And rather than ideals and moral absolutes, the corporeal body with its impulses, desires and even pathologies was celebrated. Arp’s works hung on the Cabaret’s walls with references to Kandinsky, Rodchenko and Lissitzky. For Kandinsky, the pursuit of abstraction was to move beyond the communicative dimensions of art and instead provoke a sensory response. The idea, as Dickerman argues was to exclude “subject matter that could be named, it would evade intellectual processing and resonate instead with the ‘inner soul’ –the unconscious, pre-linguistic mind that lies beyond everyday modern consciousness” (26). Dickerman describes these activities as an aim directed toward producing “a new type of consciousness, which sat outside of conventional morality and institutional frameworks – and which, reflecting Dadaism’s strong anarchic thrust, might best be described as a kind of assertive and self-consciousness amorality, or individual revolt against systemic orders” (25). The emotional stirring and agitation, the aggressive performances with the audience and unbridled abandon of both undermined bourgeois taste through a complex interaction, where being and knowing, feeling and seeing operated in a dialectical relationship of becoming.

<sup>48</sup> Dickerman (26).

In Zurich on March 30, 1916 a performance by Huelsenbeck, Tzara and Janco took the form of three languages, English, French and German spoken at once. The simultaneous articulation, in each rhythmic differentiation and vocal intonation provokes a semantic overload as each disrupts the other two in ‘legibility’ and ‘decipherability’ as syntax exploded through the vocal gestures of the sound image. But, as Dickerman states, “It was a performance of static and conflict, offering an unspoken analog to the contemporary political situation” (26). The utter incomprehensibility of the play spoke to the dynamics and interests of each country, as conflict and chaos overtook order and cohesion. As Richter states, “The poem carries the message that mankind is wallowed up in a mechanistic process. In a generalized and compressed form, it represents the battle of the human voice against a world which menaces, ensnares and finally destroys it, a world whose rhythm and whose din are inescapable” (31). Not more than a week after this performance, Ball announced that this new form of poetry would focus on phonic rhythm and performative intonation of abstracted phonemes. As Ball notes, “we renounce the language that journalism has abused and corrupted. We must return to the

innermost alchemy of the word, we even give up the word, to keep for poetry its last and holiest refuge. We must give up writing secondhand: that is, accepting words (to say nothing of sentences) that are not newly invented for our own uses (Cited by Dickerman, 28). Dada was moving into a direct confrontation with power as the poems performed an ideological critique by disrupting the performative dimension of speech acts. As Tzara wrote, “Dada; knowledge of all the means rejected up until now by the shamefaced sex of comfortable compromise and good manners; Dada; abolition of logic, which is the dance of those impotent to create: Dada; of every social hierarchy and equation set up for the sake of values by our valets: Dada; every object, all objects, sentiments, obscurities, apparitions and the precise class of parallel lines are weapons for the fight: Dada; abolition of memory: Dada; abolition of archaeology: Dada: abolition of prophets: Dada; abolition of the future: Dada; absolute and unquestionable faith in every god that is the immediate product of spontaneity” (Motherwell, 81)

<sup>49</sup> The rejection of the fountain motivated New York Dada to define itself as a significant movement in the U.S. For Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Man Ray, the use of mixed-media assemblages, found objects, photography, performance art and readymades was a political anti-art movement as the masterwork of art and artistic genius was questioned, ridiculed and subverted. After the war, the publication of New York Dada magazine by Duchamp and Man Ray used the same techniques to parody and expose America’s new found culture of mass manipulation and critique the sales techniques of magazine advertisements. When Rose Selavy, who was Duchamp dressed in drag, appeared on the cover of New York Dada Magazine, Duchamp’s use of gender ambiguity and lewd puns points to the performative dimension of language and gender as a discursive construction. As Taylor suggests, “the cross-dressing Duchamp cleverly manipulated the visual language and codes of the mass media to seal an image of a highly feminized female, who upon closer inspection is revealed to be a sham, the masquerade of an outrageous female impersonator, thus shedding doubt on the art market’s claims for authenticity and objective truth” (296). In 1921 both Man Ray and Duchamp moved to Paris and signaled the end of New York Dada.

<sup>50</sup> Taylor (277).

<sup>51</sup> Baader focused on altering the aspects of textual composition and distribution, from letters sent for publication to the manifestos that were distributed in public places. As Doherty explains, “Baader emphasizes the transactional or relational character of his montage’s presentation of words and pictures, over and against other semiological dimensions. That emphasis is typical of Berlin Dada, and it must be taken into consideration in any attempt to understand the significance of Berlin Dada montage in particular.” (Doherty, 97).

<sup>52</sup> “The Dadaist should be a man who has fully understood that one is entitled to have ideas only if one can transform them into life—the completely active type, who lives only

through action, because it holds the possibility of his achieving knowledge.” Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, 28.

<sup>53</sup> Dadaism Demands: “1. The international revolutionary union of all creative and intellectual men and women on the basis of radical Communism; 2. The introduction of progressive unemployment through comprehensive mechanization of every field of activity. Only by unemployment does it become possible for the individual to achieve certainty as to the truth of life and finally become accustomed to experience; 3. The immediate expropriation of property (socialization) and the communal feeding of all; further, the erection of cities of light, and gardens which will belong to society as a whole and prepare man for a state of freedom. (Motherwell, 41).

<sup>54</sup> Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti Art*, 114.

<sup>55</sup> Removed from their original context, cut up, and transformed the newly created object is a performance of recreation and articulation. As both transgressive and critical, the collage transforms not only the “original” object but also the subject position of the spectator as they move from consumer to producer and critic. As Richter states, “Photomontage in its earliest form was an explosive mixture of different points of view and levels, more extreme in its complexity than futuristic painting. In the specific case of photomontage, with its contrast of structure and dimension, rough against smooth, aerial photography against close-up, perspective against flat surface, the utmost technical flexibility and the most lucid form a dialectics are equally possible” (116). In short, the collage is a tactic to intervene in consumer, institutional and political reality and disrupt their representations and expose the underlying contradictions in which they are based. Both the total work of art and the total work of destruction are present in the process of assemblage. In the assemblage, combination and recombination of printed material harvested from newspapers and placed on the Dada poster-poems, combined with machine parts and objects from everyday life. Dada montage can be identified as the use of material encountered in the mass media, that emphasis and destroys the role of the press and its authorial foundations. And in its public display altered the meanings of public discourse in the press and photo magazines. Thus, the use of collage is significant means for political critique, for if the press was the primary propagator of propaganda and to physically cut up the news was to cut up ideology and re-articulate it in a different form – with different meaning and serving different interests.

<sup>56</sup> As Hans Richter explains, like the collage, “Photomontage in its earliest form was an explosive mixture of different points of view and levels, more extreme in its complexity than futuristic painting. In the specific case of photomontage, with its contrast of structure and dimension, rough against smooth, aerial photography against close-up, perspective against flat surface, the utmost technical flexibility and the most lucid formal dialectics are equally possible (116).

<sup>57</sup> Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, 116

<sup>58</sup> Richter. *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, 116

<sup>59</sup> Herschel B. Chipp, Peter Selz, and Joshua C. Taylor, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968), 62.

<sup>60</sup> Merz, Dietrich suggests, provides a space in which “relations are suggested, images shift against text fragments; they are overlaid with color or show beneath a transparent strip of paper, so that what we as interpreters encounter multiple sites and constellations but rarely find a story line that coheres. Or, when the suggestion of an overall theme does emerge, we cannot relate all the incidents with the composition to it because of the overabundance of competing information” (163). The shifting relation between the text and the image in its multilayered accentuality, provides not one voice or perspective or standpoint in which a singular meaning is derived, but multiple, fragmented and competing meanings within the work itself. The work “Carnival,” for example illustrates this multi-layering technique. The multi-layering of newspaper and product labels, money and textured materials provide a depth to the otherwise simulacra of the flat image. The multiple meanings that such tactics invokes de-naturalizes and de-mythologizes the relationship between sign and referent and signifier and signified.

<sup>61</sup> John Heartfield’s use of photography is significant in this respect. As Heartfield used photographic negatives to show the underside of representations he revealed the images as manufactured thereby eliciting the artificiality of photographic ‘realism.’ In the use of the photographic negative, the photo takes on the appearance and function of an x-ray. From “Fathers and Sons” to the later works “Adolph The Superman” and “Hurrah the Butters Finished”, created in the mid-thirties, Heartfield’s photo-montage techniques expose the absurdity of propaganda and advertising alike. Unlike other appropriation tactics however, Heartfield obscured the technique of construction, thereby giving it the appearance of ‘officially’ sanctioned images. For Heartfield, the power lies in appropriating the aesthetics of commercial and governmental propaganda and revealing the construction of power by making his productions nearly indistinguishable from officially sanctioned propaganda. And thus, Heartfield’s appropriation and re-articulation of photographs provides a penetrating depth to the atrocities masked by the personification of the bureaucratic and technocratic apparatuses of war, authority and atrocity by using the same aesthetics that naturalize and reify power. In Hannah Hoch’s works, the objects of everyday life, mass media and advertising is readily apparent as well. As mechanized labor and commodified production is emphasized, so too is the construction of femininity and reified social relations. The significance of Hoch’s montage is also one that places the body as cut and recomposed by the commodities of industrialization that come to define the body as a productive apparatus of power that subordinates women’s movement and role as subject, as the faceless and less women speak to a male gaze that reproduces the interests of patriarchal capital.

<sup>62</sup> In overlaying multiple and conflicting meaning, the image works to free the meaning of the text and the text to unbridle the referent of the image. As such, the viewer is positioned and hailed not in relation to a unitary viewing position and meaning but as multiple and conflictual positions. But Schwitters' work also bordered on the abstract and utilized elements found in Russian constructionist works. The significance of *Folio 1 Merz Three*, derives in part from its relation to the works of El Lissitzky in style and design. Lissitzky's work, "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge" in which abstraction and typography and diagonal lines are used against conventional word placement and one point perspective, was created to promote "Proun", or the "Project for the Affirmation of the New Art". Lissitzky's notion that aesthetic design could be dis-articulated from the politics in which they sprung and re-appropriated and articulated to new interests that reveals a significant move and parallel to dada explanations of photographic images and the use of mass culture to re-signify.

<sup>63</sup> It should be noted that although Berlin came to be identified as the nexus of photo-montage, it was not the originator as Futurists, Zurich Dadaists and Picasso utilized such techniques, but with different intentions. As Richter states, "The youthful elan, the aggressively direct approach to the public, the provocations, were products of Futurism, as were the literary forms in which they were clothed: the manifesto and its visual format. The free use of typography, in which the compositor moves over the page vertically, horizontally and diagonally, jumbles his type faces and makes liberal use of his stock of pictorial blocks – all this can be found in Futurism years before dada" (33).

<sup>64</sup> Staniszewski (1995) describes collage as "a momentous break in the tradition of Western painting. The organic integrity of oil and canvas was disrupted by the incorporation of mass-produced materials, and the sanctity of pure painting was destroyed. This (1) broke down the barriers between the autonomous, aestheticized space of painting and popular culture and (2) made visible the 'fallacy' of an artist's autonomous and absolute relation to creativity" (211). As she notes, cubists such as Braque and Picasso, "had to use elements that they themselves had not produced, and in this way they acknowledged that artists' ability to create is dependent upon that which is outside of themselves—the codes and languages of their culture" (212). In other words, the collage and the folding of perspectives of cubism are direct problematization of subjectivity, subject positions, of social forces and the structures that enable and constrain art in modernity that were expanded upon in Dada. For it was in the works of dada that the boundaries between the work of art and the everyday world were problematized and the artistic object transgressed its own boundaries.

<sup>65</sup> Chipp, Selz, and Taylor, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, 368.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor 277

<sup>67</sup> Richter. *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, 92

<sup>68</sup> As Selz wrote, any “officialdom that wishes to preserve the status quo or use the artist for purposes of indoctrination is anxious to quell artistic freedom. The alternative, of course, is a free society, flourishing on the subjective concepts, ideas, and forms visualized.” Peter Selz, “Introduction: Art and Politics: The Artist and the Social Order, in *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* ed. Herschel B. Chipp, Peter Selz, and Joshua C. Taylor (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968),

<sup>69</sup> Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, 48

<sup>70</sup> Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, 35.

<sup>71</sup> Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, 60.

<sup>72</sup> Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, 64

<sup>73</sup> Dickerman and Doherty (23)

<sup>74</sup> Benjamin (25).

<sup>75</sup> However, a radical politics of art toward change and struggle demands that art liberates itself from capitalist modes of exploitation, or it will be subsumed to reproduce exploitation. Just as mass production is capable of emancipation, it also serves to re-entrench the interests of the property holding minority.

<sup>76</sup> The tactical mode of Dada worked to violate the tradition of art from within the field of legitimate artistic expression and trouble notions of realism. Moving beyond representation on a picture plane, the tactics of dada as intervention, appropriation and agitation demanded the use of the everyday world of mass consumer objects, as such objects were shaping the world after its own image. Dada was a “subversions of cultural forms of social authority- [to] break down language, working against various modern economies, willfully transgressing boundaries, mixing idioms, celebrating the grotesque body as that which resists discipline and control” (Dickerman, 11). As the mechanisms of advertising and propaganda became ideal reflections, the appropriation of images and style of advertising, propaganda, the press and the mass produced object overturned the univocal posturing of the prevailing systems of representation. Dadaists disrupted the status quo and created a dialogue that would de-hierarchize the establishment and disrupt presuppositions of realism and “authentic” art. The use of mass produced objects was political intervention, for photomontage and collage collapsed perspective, troubled the boundaries between politics and art, art and authorship, and critiqued the rights to and over mass communication. Thus, dada as a community of practice diverges at times from a unified theory of art or production, and instead, stands in for a diverse array of practices motivated by a concern to undermine technological rationality, the abuse of authority, and the pervasive influence of the media. Mileaf indicates that unlike the function of brands or trademarks, Dada did not and could not stand in for a uniform or consistent product. It did not promise reliability and thus sought to subvert the very functioning of branding and trademark itself. “In this way its subversion of the marketplace, which



rewards brand identity just as the mechanisms of cultural capital reward style in art. Unreliable manufacture thus offered a calculated affront to both aesthetic convictions and accepted commercial practice. Precisely by bringing art, hyperbolically, into the marketplace—by packaging it as a common product—Dadaist could demolish the barrier pretentiously erected to safeguard art as a ‘higher value’ and also sabotage regular business operations” (Mileaf, p. 362). Thus, despite the label of dada, dada did not serve the intended purpose of a label for commerce but for the very problematization of such distinctions in which commerce relied.

<sup>77</sup> Just as public agitation, manifestos and sound poetry signaled the beginnings of Dada in Zurich, so too did it signal its end in Paris. In Paris six group performances, two art exhibitions and over a dozen publications over the course of five months in late 1920 and early 1921, addressed “the city’s history as a capital of spectacle, revolt, and commodity exchange” (Mileaf and Witkovsky, 349). Bringing the antics of staged theater to the theatrical stage of the public streets, reached beyond staging events in the Notre Dame cathedral to the acts of conscriptions on advertisements. It is also in Paris that this tradition would continue in a multiplicity of forms, from Surrealism to Situationism and invited the audience through agitation to express their discontent in a radical form of participatory theatre. “To laugh at art, at philosophy, at aesthetics, at ethics, at the established order, at dogmas, at the Absolute which governs all actions, collective and individual, was to make a fool of the audience itself. That is what Dada did, breaking open the categories in which they are contained, and which express, all those principles that are still in any way sacred” (Richter, 181). As Mileaf argues, such provoked action and use of violence breached the newly re-emerging social contracts and attempted to form new bonds in which the community would define itself. The Festival Dada of 1920 “ended in a brawl, with the audience hurling eggs, meat, vegetables, and coins at the players, who themselves led a massacre”, Paris dada was agitating the public to War Sentimentalities and thus breaking the new nationalistic postwar spirit of commodity fetishism (357).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>79</sup> Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990),

<sup>80</sup> Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, 94.

<sup>81</sup> The significance of Debord lies in the practical application of Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism on the streets. This praxis derives in part, from the change in social relations and the urban environment as Postwar France became the subject and perpetrator of capitalist relations of production and turning all objects and social relations into a reified image of itself. In *Capital*, Marx explains the role of the commodity as reifying social relations and reproducing the conditions of capitalist relations of exploitation. For Marx, at first the commodity seems like a very trivial thing. However,

in reality, the commodity is a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. As a value in use, there is nothing terribly exciting about it. As a commodity however, it is imbued with a transcendental character. “It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than ‘table-turning’ ever was (320). In the process of exchange, the commodity’s use value is subsumed to the logic of exchange value and takes on attributes that transcend the utility of the object. Through this process its value in use is subsumed and replaced with a mystical character. As the mystical form is articulated to the object, the commodity reproduces a world in inverted form where ideal essences are exchanged and accorded value and begin to take on an immutable character, and the complex, variable and contradictory relations which produced it are elided. In this process the material practices of production vanish, and the commodity becomes what Roland Barthes identifies as part of a mythological system.

The supra-character and metaphysics of the commodity transforms the world into an image of capitalist relations of production and exchange. The significance of the world changing character of the commodity derives also from the consequences to social life as a result of its proliferation. For, capital not only reflects an inverted picture of the world through the exchange of commodities, but also, estranges the social and material practices and conditions of its production. And in the new character that such commodities assume an image replaces substance and the mutual relations of producers take on the form of relations between products, thereby giving the appearance of the world as natural and unalterable. Thus the spectacle mediates the relations with one’s environment and alienates being as it reproduces the social world after its own image.

In *One Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse contends that bourgeois high culture is a vehicle of both emancipation and mystification of social reality. The ideology of capitalism and commodity fetishism has pervaded society to such a degree that it processes conflict and reproduces it in commodified form. As Marcuse argues, the illusory freedom advanced by advanced industrial capitalist societies are reproduced through the liberation from the construction of false needs. The need to relax or have fun, to behave and consume “in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs” (5). They are subject to a rule external to the self. “No matter how much such needs may have become the individual’s own, reproduced and fortified by the conditions of his existence; no matter how much he identifies himself with them and finds himself in their satisfaction, they continue to be what they were from the beginning—products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression” (5). The forms of administered culture coupled with the impetrative of efficiency and instrumental rationality overwhelms individuals and subsumes autonomy, dissent and the power of negation, converting the individual into a one-dimensional appendage of the system. The stability of this system derives from the self-contained and perpetuating world that allows movement within prescribed parameters. Here both the erotic and destructive are sublimated into controlled modes of

thought and behavior and directed toward and fulfilled through consumption. Thus, in the totally administered society, human freedom and individuality is threatened as consumer capitalism integrates consumers into its modes of thought and behavior.

<sup>82</sup> Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, 47.

<sup>83</sup> Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, 93.

<sup>84</sup> Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, 92-3.

<sup>85</sup> Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, 97-8.

<sup>86</sup> The Situationists viewed urbanism as no different than the spectacle or advertising of Coca Cola, for it was pure spectacular ideology. Urbanism was the projection of linear rationality and technological efficiency as it reproduced social hierarchy without conflict. The argument, vastly similar to those of the Frankfurt School, was one in which the technology of everyday life and the bureaucratic capitalist state reduced people to mere appendages of the machine and eliminated independence and creativity. These cities were the embodiment of totalitarianism and capitalism control over everyday life where the city isolated individuals, separating them from one another, and absorbed any critical resistance through its organization. While the streets were filled with commodities that promised abundance, spiritual abundance seemed to decline in inverse proportion. As commodities dominated the social life the streets turned vacuous and devoid of meaning. And the promise of chance, risk or violence were contained within the spectacle.

<sup>87</sup> The Situationists identified their depression and boredom with modernity. The limited work and relative abundance, the urban planning and the welfare state all resulted in misery and contempt. The people that such a society produced “were members of democratic societies: democracies of false desire. One could not intervene, but one did not want to, because as a mechanism of social control the spectacle dramatized an inner spectacle of participation, of choice. In the home, one chooses between television programs; in the city, one chooses between the countless variations of each product on the market. Like a piece of avant-garde performance art, the spectacle dramatized an ideology of freedom” ( 93). The spectacle was pure ideology of reification, a “never-ending accumulation of spectacles...made a modern world, a world in which all communication flowed in one direction, from the powerful to the powerless...In the spectacle, passivity was simultaneously the means and the end of a great hidden project, a project of social control” (92-3). The spectacle is the prevailing mode of social life as ads, propaganda, consumption are directed to reproduce the conditions of the spectacle. The form and the content of the spectacle is total justification of the conditions and aims of the established system and ensures the permanent presence of that justification. As Debord states, “This society tends to atomize people into isolated consumers and to prohibit communication. Everyday life is thus private life, the realm of separation and spectacle” (93).

- <sup>88</sup> Guy, Debord, "Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life," in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb. (CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 90.
- <sup>89</sup> Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, 168-9.
- <sup>90</sup> In *Our Space*, Catherine Harold illustrates that the SI utilized a perspective of incongruity, where the collage and poster links an incongruous concept "to undermine the authoritative political portrait...the alteration reorganizes the image in a way that not only interrupts the original meaning but creates a new meaning, or opens up potentials for new meanings [and]...sought to force viewers to grapple with détourned artifacts and, hopefully, to derive from those artifacts meanings or responses of their own" Harold., 8.
- <sup>91</sup> Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, 390.
- <sup>92</sup> Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, 168.
- <sup>93</sup> Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. (New York: Routledge, 1979), 102.
- <sup>94</sup> Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, 407.
- <sup>95</sup> Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 125.
- <sup>96</sup> Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 125.
- <sup>97</sup> Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 118.
- <sup>98</sup> V. N. Volosinov. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. (Harvard University Press, 1986), 23-4.
- <sup>99</sup> Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 103.
- <sup>100</sup> Louis Althusser. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 109.
- <sup>101</sup> Althusser. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 115.
- <sup>102</sup> Althusser. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 122.
- <sup>103</sup> Althusser. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 117.
- <sup>104</sup> Althusser. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 123.
- <sup>105</sup> Althusser. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, 118.

106 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 121.

107 As Butler states, quoted at length, “The law might not only be refused, but it might also be ruptured, forced into a re articulation that calls into question the monotheistic force of its own unilateral operation. Where the uniformity of the subject is expected, where the behavioral conformity of the subject is commanded, there might be produced the refusal of the law in the form of the parodic inhabiting of conformity that subtly calls into question the legitimacy of the command, a repetition of the law into hyperbole, a rearticulation of the law against the authority of the one who delivers it... Interpellation thus loses its status as a simple performative, an act of discourse with the power to create that to which it refers, and creates more than it ever meant to, signifying in excess of any intended referent,” Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 122.

108 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 122.

109 Judith Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. (San Francisco, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 99.

110 The text works to ‘quicken’ the reception of the perceived referential through the transference of the denoted element to second-order signifieds, i.e. to connotation. As the text loads the appearance with an ideology and coverts the denoted element into a myth seemingly without history and apparently neutral, the denotative elements assist in the reification of dominant cultural meanings. For Barthes, this is achieved, in part, because the referential quality is conferred onto the text, making it appear innocent, i.e. referential itself. The dialectical relation and reciprocally confirming relation between the text and the image is produced as the text supplants ideology as natural while simultaneously supplanting the text as innocent. The text regulates meaning and attempts to fix the meaning/perception and perception innocents the text.

111 Herbert, Marcuse. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (MA: Beacon, 1979), 7-8.

112 Marcuse. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, 9.

113 Marcuse. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, 72.

114 Marcuse. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, 7-8.

115 Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, 37

116 Michael Warner, “Publics and Counter Publics,” *Public Culture*, 1, 2002 53

- 117 Warner, "Publics and Counter Publics," 87.
- 118 Warner, "Publics and Counter Publics," 55.
- 119 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 407.
- 120 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 408.
- 121 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 406.
- 122 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001), 161.
- 123 Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and socialist strategy*, 192.
- 124 Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and socialist strategy*, 190.
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- 128 Dick Hebdige, Dick. *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 207.
- 129 Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology'; Return of the Repressed in Media Studies", M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran and S. Woollacott (eds.) *Culture, Society and the Media*, London: Methuen, 1982), 75.
- 130 Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology'; Return of the Repressed in Media Studies", 63.
- 131 Laurence Grossberg. "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stewart Hall," in, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morely and Kuan-Hsing. (New York: Routledge, 1996) 141-2.
- 132 Grossberg, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stewart Hall," 142.
- 133 Stuart Hall, "Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse," in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner. (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 98.

- 134 Gramsci. *Antonio Gramsci reader: Selected writings 1916 – 1935*, 193.
- 135 Gramsci. *Antonio Gramsci reader: Selected writings 1916 – 1935*, 192.
- 136 Antonio Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. (International Publishers Co. 1971), 377.
- 137 Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 341.
- 138 Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 344.
- 139 Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 343.
- 140 Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 67.
- 141 Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 112.
- 142 Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 136.
- 143 Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 67-8.
- 144 Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 120.
- 145 Culture is constituted through ideological struggles over legitimate meaning as it sets the limits that define and reproduce the dominant order. Ideological practices are those in which particular socio-political and historical relations between sign and signifier and sign and referent are fixed and naturalized. “Ideology ‘yokes together’ particular social practices and relations with particular structures of meaning, anchoring them in a structure in which their relations to social identity, political interests, etc, have already been defined and seem inevitable.” Laurence Grossberg, “History, Politics and the Post Modern” in, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morely and Kuan-Hsing. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 159.
- 146 Laurence Grossberg, “History, Politics and the Post Modern” in, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morely and Kuan-Hsing. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 159.
- 147 Grossberg, “History, Politics and the Post Modern,” 159.
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- 149 Raymond Williams. *Culture and Materialism*. (London: Verso, 2006), 20.

- 150 Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 37-8.
- 151 Raymond Williams. *The Sociology of Culture*. (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 201.
- 152 Williams, *The Sociology of Culture*, 201.
- 153 Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 50.
- 154 Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 41.
- 155 Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 38-9.
- 156 Todd Gitlin. *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. (CA: University of California Press, 2003), 292.
- 157 Gitlin. *The Whole World is Watching*, 5.
- 158 Herbert Marcuse, Herbert. *One Dimensional Man: Studies of the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. (New York: Routledge, 1991), 57.
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- 160 Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 94.
- 161 Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 96.
- 162 Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 16.
- 163 Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 96.
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- 166 Barthes, *Mythologies*, 143.
- 167 Barthes, *Mythologies*, 11.

## Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> This time also reflects the rise of graffiti as streets and public spaces became sites to communicate and re-inscribe the walls that were inscribing and dictating everyday activities. Graffiti “represents a philosophy of life – of reclaiming the street and being



free to redesign one's own environment. It is an anarchistic art that anyone can participate in by offering pictures to the world while at the same time changing an urban landscape that has been architecturally fashioned by strangers" (Nicholas Ganz, *Graffiti World: Street Art from Five Continents* (New York, NY: Abrams, 2008), 376. By 1975, stylistic standards and bombing methods of graffiti, or writing, was firmly in place. From the mass transit rail cars to public buses, the cultural blueprint and the conditions for street art created one of the most active periods of graffiti art in New York City. New York's financial crisis enabled many artists to take the streets and throw-up their styles on entire railway cars, as there were little funds for cleanup efforts. From the Independent Subway System to the Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit, the subways proved to be a site where writers could send messages from the stock yards to the inner city. From uptown to downtown, the rail cars were appropriated as carriers, a moving system that delivered the messages to other active members in different boroughs of the city, and facilitated the communication necessary to form a community of practitioners. Eric Felisbret, *Graffiti New York* (New York, NY: Abrams, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Brenson, "Art View: Jenny Holzer: The message is the message," *The New York Times*, August 7, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> A Little Knowledge Can Go A Long Way, A Lot Of Professionals Are Crackpots , A Man Can't Know What It Is To Be A Mother, A Name Means A Lot Just By Itself, A Positive Attitude Means All The Difference In The World, A Relaxed Man Is Not Necessarily A Better Man, A Sense Of Timing Is The Mark Of Genius, A Sincere Effort Is All You Can Ask, A Single Event Can Have Infinitely Many Interpretations, A Solid Home Base Builds A Sense Of Self, A Strong Sense Of Duty Imprisons You, Absolute Submission Can Be A Form Of Freedom

<sup>4</sup> Michael Auping, *Jenny Holzer* (New York, NY: Universe Publishing, 1992), 82-3

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 73

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-5

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 87

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 82

<sup>9</sup> After the Survival series, Holzer created Under a Rock, Laments, and the Mother and Child text. However, in these later series Holzer used stone instead of paper or electronics to address issues of hope, despair, fury and madness that would outlive the ephemera character of her other works. Holzer asserts that the use of rock conveyed a durability that would outlast all of us. The rocks were inscribed with news stories, world events and personal concerns. They border on the extremely gruesome as stories of rape and murder are inscribed on the stone. Laments was an exhibit altogether different and

was created in response to AIDS. As Holzer recounts, this “has been the first mass death in my experience since Vietnam. All this had something to do with using sarcophagi and with writing the inscriptions that are the last remarks of thirteen individuals, lost for no good reason” (Auping, 93). Ultimately, these later works, although address victimization and a number of the characters are perpetrators attempts to sympathize with victims and show the atrocity and outrage “in and out of advocacy, through bad sex, murder, paralysis, poor government, lunacy, and aimlessness.” (Auping, 110).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Auping, *Jenny Holzer* (New York, NY: Universe Publishing, 1992), 82-3

<sup>11</sup> Grace Glueck, “And now, a few words from Jenny Holzer,” *New York Times*, December 3, 1989.

<sup>12</sup>As Holzer explains, “My legacy from growing up in the 60s is that I want to make art that’s understandable, has some relevance and importance to almost anyone. And once I’ve made the stuff, the idea is to get it out to the people. I want them to encounter it in different ways, find it on the street, in electric signs and so forth. Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>While the texts remain both anonymous and androgynous, they do not lack any a critique of sex or gender. Rather, as Holzer asserts, “I have made much of my work sex blind and anonymous so that it wouldn’t be dismissed as the work of a woman or the work of an individual...It’s possible that people believed the Inflammatory Essays were written by a man because they are wildly aggressive which, for better or for worse, is commonly associated with male behavior. I use whatever voice I think will be effective.” Michael Auping, *Jenny Holzer* (New York, NY: Universe Publishing, 1992), 79.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Knight, “Televised Text: A new wave from Holzer,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> Amei Wallach, “New ‘Truisms’ In Words and Light,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 2005

<sup>16</sup> Rosemary Sorensen, “And the Word Was Made Flash,” *The Australian*, December 10, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Rosemary Sorensen, “And the Word Was Made Flash,” *The Australian*, December 10, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> (Fredrick Jameson, 1991, p. 5).

<sup>19</sup> Rosemary Sorensen, “And the Word Was Made Flash,” *The Australian*, December 10, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> What is significant therefore is also Holzer’s keen eye to the environment she was working in and of things to come. For, as news reports surfaced of torture at Abu Ghraib and Gitmo, it is hard not to look back to the warnings in Holzer’s Survival Series. As one

line from the Survival Series states, “Die fast and quiet when they interrogate you or live so long that they are ashamed to hurt you anymore.” But, such works have not been lost as the Whitney Museum of American Art held an exhibition of Holzer’s work, named “Jenny Holzer: Protect Protect” in 2009.

<sup>21</sup> The significance of such de-materilization has been exemplified in the works of Donna Haraway, whose ironic political myth of the cyborg illuminates Holzer’s work. The manifesto is a call to action; to reconstruct and rewrite, the ontological and epistemological foundations of socialist feminist politics. The image of the cyborg re-positions identity politics in relation to the material conditions of science and technology and in opposition to the structural domination of hierarchical dualism, totalizing taxonomies, and essentializing categories. “Cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism” (2295). Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other” (2293). But this is not a whole hearted rejection of a return to the organic as a site of resistance nor is it toward a unity derived from essential origins. “The theoretical and practical struggle against unity-through-domination or unity-through-incorporation ironically not only undermines the justifications for patriarchy, colonialism, humanism, positivism, essentialism, scientism, and other unlamented isms, but all claims for an organic or natural standpoint” (2277). For Haraway the aim is to learn from and take pleasure in the potent and taboo fusions of science and technology, for “If we are imprisoned by language, then escape from that prison house requires language poets...cyborg heteroglossia is one form of radical culture politics” (2273).

<sup>22</sup> When the unclassified works first appeared in the US “they were met with an uneasy response. ‘It was 2004-05 and people were still wanting to be loyal to their country. New Yorkers were still recovering from 9/11.’” However, when the works appeared at the Whitney in 2008 “they met a more open and engaged reception. ‘Time has passed, the administration has changed, the war has dragged on, the body count has increased and people have become more curious about how we got there...and maybe how to get out. This time, people stood there and read. And read’” (Liza Power, “Stark material that spells out the realities of war,” *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), December 16, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> As Leon Roudiez contends, in the introduction of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, ideology “includes all those things that we take for granted, that we do not question because we assume they are true-not realizing that instead of being truths they are elaborate constructions that serve whatever group, class, or party is holding power.” Roudiez (8).

<sup>24</sup> “Wednesday Women: Clean and keen, clean and mean,” *The Guardian*, December 14, 1988.

<sup>25</sup> The significance of such claims is explicated by Mikhail Bakhtin in the *Dialogic Imagination*, who illustrates that all texts are constructed as a mosaic of quotations and

how the expression of language simultaneously constructs, mirrors back, and organizes experiences of the world. Language is a hybrid construction of utterances “that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactical) and compositional makers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two ‘languages,’ two semantic and axiological belief systems.” The multi-dimensionality of language, and its living heteroglossia, is a dialogic manifestation of a battle of differing points of view, of value judgments and belief systems in the process of heteroglot becoming. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 304. In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, V. N. Volosinov theorizes ideological struggle as a struggle to maintain and drive inward the historical and contingent character of the interests and value judgments. “The ruling class strives to impart a supra-class, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it, to make the sign uniaxential so accentuating yesterday’s truth as to make it appear today’s.” Volosinov (23-4). In this process ideology achieves reification and signs, cultural objects and representations achieve a supra-class character and speak with one voice – a uni-accent. The disruptive potential of Truisms derives not from an attempt to rule over and master meaning, but rather to unravel and uncouple meaning from power by voicing a multi-accentuality without closure.

<sup>26</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, (1977, 39).

<sup>27</sup> But, perhaps even more interesting is the work she was commissioned to do for 7 World Trade Center. But, this work was composed of quotations from poets and writers from New York. The works at 7 World Trade Center consisted of thousands of words evoking the history of New York, as the texts consisted of the works of Allen Ginsberg to Langston Hughes. Over 65 feet wide and 14 feet tall, the work was placed in the lobby in between the front desks and the blast shield. The collaboration of Holzer with James Carpenter, illustrates an attempt to forge a national identity out of the rubble. The significance of Holzer’s involvement in this process therefore, not only speaks to her co-optation but the use of culture to project an image of the U.S. in which a plurality of subjects can identify around. The collection calls on the diverse interests and tastes and constructs a vision of the U.S. as promoting freedom, diversity and resilience. By, 2008 Holzer had produced works that moved beyond the light displays to the use of bones in *Lustmord* and declassified U.S. military documents in *Redaction*. But, in the redaction piece, the declassified documents, silkscreened on to planes of wood were juxtaposed with an autopsy report invites spectators to question the dialectic of disclosure and withholding. The nameless man in the report addresses the lengths to which the U.S. Government will go and the limits of public knowledge.

<sup>28</sup> Christopher Allen, “Sign of the Time,” *Weekend Australian*, February 13, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Allen, “Sign of the Time,” *Weekend Australian*, February 13, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Rosemary Sorensen, “And the word was made flash,” *The Australian*, December 10, 2009.

- 31 Virginia Trioli, "Graphic Attack," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.
- 32 Carol Vogel, "Three Aphorism Shows are Better than One," *The New York Times*, October 30, 1997.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Virginia Trioli, "Graphic Attack," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Virginia Trioli, "Graphic Attack," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.
- 37 Virginia Trioli, "Graphic Attack," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.
- 38 Carol Vogel, "Three Aphorism Shows are Better than One," *The New York Times*, October 30, 1997.
- 39 Virginia Trioli, "Graphic Attack," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.
- 40 Gallery hopping around New York: A Saturday guide for art lovers," *New York Times*, January 30, 1981.
- 41 Carol Vogel, "Three Aphorism Shows are Better than One," *The New York Times*, October 30, 1997.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 As Kruger explains, appropriation involves, "Using, and/or informed by fashion and journalistic photography, advertising, film, television and even other artworks (photos, painting and sculpture), their quotations suggest a consideration of a work's 'original' use and exchange values, thus straining the appearance of naturalism. Their alterations might consist of cropping, reposing, captioning and re-doing, and proceed to question ideas of competence, originality, authorship and property." Barbara Kruger, "Taking Pictures," in *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 106.
- 44 Hunter Drohojowska-phlip, "She has a way with words; A moca retrospective of Barbara Kruger's works asks provocative questions about how we communicate," *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1999.
- 45 Barbara Kruger, "Interview with Anders Stephanson," in *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 116.
- 46 Kruger, "Interview with Anders Stephanson," in *Appropriation*, 116.
- 47 Kruger, *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art*, 116

- 48 Kruger: Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art, 115
- 49 Hunter Drohojowska-phlip, "She has a way with words; A moca retrospective of Barbara Kruger's works asks provocative questions about how we communicate," *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1999.
- 50 Andy Grundberg, "Photography view: pictures that poke fun at power," *New York Times*, April 1, 1984.
- 51 Grundberg, "Photography View," *New York Times*, Jan 23, 1983.
- 52 Grundberg, "Photography View," *New York Times*, Jan 23, 1983.
- 53 Michael Brenson, "Can Political Passion Inspire Great Art," *New York Times*, April 29, 1984
- 54 Others were more speculative about the political dimension used to define the tactic of appropriation. Early reports positioned the artist as curator or editor, who select images rather than "create" new ones. What follows is a question of whether such statements reify the dynamic relationship between meaning and object and therefore naturalizes the relationship between the two. This is ask, why, given the dominant and prevailing notions of art, would those attempting to problematize the associations, categories and underlying logic of binary oppositions, through a technique that repositions and re-articulates an object to expose or dismantle such distinction, face detractors. In 1983, Michael Brenson of the *New York Times* wrote, that it has to do with the politics of appropriation. "What is new both in the current political art and the debate which surrounds it – is that the definition of "politics" has expanded to the point where, at the moment, it seems as if it might supersede and swallow up all artistic criteria... In other words, the word "political" has become a filter through which all art can be perceived and judged" Michael Brenson, "Can Political Passion Inspire Great Art," *New York Times*, April 29, 1984).
- 55 Michael Brenson, "Can Political Passion Inspire Great Art," *The New York Times*, April 29, 1984.
- 56 Brenson, "Can Political Passion Inspire Great Art," *New York Times*, April 29 1984.
- 57 Brenson, "Can Political Passion Inspire Great Art," *New York Times*, April 29 1984.
- 58 Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London, U.K.: Verso, 1978), 232.
- 59 Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 74.
- 60 Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (The seminar of Jacques Lacan, book 11)*. W.W. Norton and Company, (1998), 72-3.

<sup>61</sup> The foundation of a lack, as Lacan explains, derives from the mirror stage in which the child upon seeing its reflection sees the mirror image as the ideal representation of itself. But in doing so, recognizes itself as precisely both not that and that image. For the reflection of the image reflects back a more controlled idealized child. The mirror and reflection constitutes alienation as the child's identity is split, forever separated from the ideal-self reflected in the mirror and a self that is inadequate in comparison. The ideal ego represents an originary split in consciousness that both alienates and formulates the subject, as subject to the symbolic order and indicates a place from where drives and feelings of inadequacy emanate.

<sup>62</sup> As Lacan indicates, "what determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside. It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects." Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 106.

<sup>63</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, UK: Penguin, 2003), 134.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>65</sup> See Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertising*.

<sup>66</sup> Althusser defines ideology as a misrecognition of the real conditions of existence and represents the imaginary relationship to the real conditions of existence. This misrecognition derives from the ego as pure illusion and consequently reveals the potentiality of illuminating the illusionary foundation of ideology and interpellation. If therefore there "are no subjects except by and through subjection," and a subject is subject to ideology, defined as a misrecognition of their relations of existence, the discursive and scopic operation of ideology constitutes the subject through alienation.

<sup>67</sup> Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 72.

<sup>68</sup> Andy Grundberg, "When outs are in, what's up?," *New York Times*, July 26, 1987.

<sup>69</sup> Kruger, *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art*, 112

<sup>70</sup> Peter Hacket, "Kruger takes her art on to the streets," *The Advertiser*, March 12, 1988.

<sup>71</sup> Grundberg, "When outs are in, what's up?," *New York Times*, July 26, 1987.

<sup>72</sup> Grundberg, "When outs are in, what's up?," *New York Times*, July 26, 1987.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Hacket, "Kruger takes her art on to the streets," *The Advertiser*, March 12, 1988.

<sup>74</sup> Carole Hampshire, "Billboard posers keep you posted," *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 9, 1988

75 Carole Hampshire, "Billboard posers keep you posted," *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 9, 1988.

76 Paul Richard, "Modern chic vs. the masters; behind the veneer, an appreciation of old values," *Washington Post*, December 31, 1989.

77 Letter to the Editor, "Thoughts on Thinking," *New York Times*, October 21, 1990.

78 As Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, states, "This political investment of the body is bund up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic, use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection...the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body." 26.

79 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, NY: Vintage Press, 1995), 27.

80 Helen Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch, William E. Cain, Laurie Fink, Barbara E. Johnson, John McGowan, and Jeffrey J. Williams (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 2046.

81 Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 19.

82 *Ibid.*, 23.

83 Susan Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch, William E. Cain, Laurie Fink, Barbara E. Johnson, John McGowan, and Jeffrey J. Williams (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 2363.

84 Barbara Kruger, *Remote Control: Power, Cultures, and the World of Appearances* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 8.

85 Kruger, *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art*, 111.

86 Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," 2365.

87 W. J. T. Mitchell and Barbara Kruger, "An Interview with Barbara Kruger," *Critical Inquiry*, 17, (1991):



- 88 Kruger, *Remote Control: Power, Cultures, and the World of Appearance*.
- 89 Allan Parachini, "Moca's Writing on the Wall pledge Mural Stirs Little Tokyo Debate," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 1989.
- 90 Shauna Snow, "Paint Rollers get Last Word in 'Questions,'" *The Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 1992.
- 91 Christopher Knight, "Art review MOCA's Flag Mural: It's a Wrap," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1990.
- 92 "Short Takes Museum Mural Wins Approval," *The Los Angeles Times*, Jan 18, 1990.
- 93 Allan Parachini, "Moca's Writing on the Wall pledge Mural Stirs Little Tokyo Debate," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 1989.
- 94 Kruger, *Remote Control: Power, Cultures, and the World of Appearances*, 10.
- 95 Degen Pener, "Egos & Ids; On the Front of Newsweek, A Conflict of Values," *New York Times*, June, 7, 1992.
- 96 Virginia Trioli, "Graphic Attack," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Barbara Kruger, *Barbara Kruger*
- 99 As Kruger states in an interview to *The New York Times*, "I was very pleased to enjoy the access that the Newsweek cover offered, but being in such close proximity to a journalist like Joe Klein was unfortunate. His belief that 'Dan Quayle seems to have nudged Presidential politics perilously close to something that really matters: a debate on values and the American family' is pure Kleinian weaselspeak, and a reminder that journalists as well as politicians have a stake in maintaining the 'values thing.'" Degen Pener, "Egos & Ids; On the Front of Newsweek, A Conflict of Values," *New York Times*, June, 7, 1992.
- 100 "Quick Hits," *The Dallas Morning News*, October 20, 1993.
- 101 Kruger, *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art*, 112.
- 102 As one report indicated, "In Houston, a major part of the action involved equal parts of wit and ice-cream: when the women weren't beating out hypnotic riffs on pots and pans-style drums or do-coordinating the graphics hit squad, they were screaming around town in ice-cream floats, undertaking an action nicknamed Operation Dessert Storm. The

vans passed out WAC leaflets along with a more fondant food for thought – politically incorrect ice-cream cones, with a choice of flavours including Cold War Sundae and Wage Freeze.” “Making History Making Trouble,” *The Guardian*, August 19, 1992

<sup>103</sup>Lucie Young, “Making History Making Trouble,” *The Guardian* (London), August 19, 1992

<sup>104</sup> The Women’s Movement had spread powerful roots in the world after the 1960s. With the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystic* and Simon de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*, that which had no name became public discourse, although within boundaries. With a strong feminist group emerging out of France as well, with publications by *Screen*, the underlying logic of patriarchal culture was being questioned and deconstructed. In the Art world, the 1970’s also signaled significant shifts. With the Women’s cooperative gallery AIR, UCLA’s Woman-house and the works of Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro, women artists who addressed significant power differentials were being recognized in museums and galleries as well.

<sup>105</sup> As the Guerrilla Girls explains, “Although the enrollment and graduation in all of the major (graduate art) schools throughout the country was primarily female, and from 60 to 70 percent of the artists coming into New York City were female, 95 percent of the work being shown in the city was by white males. They found they could not get dealers, they were not being represented in museums, and what they had been led to believe in schools was just not true.” Mary Ann Marger, “A Guerrilla Girl Revolution//Wild bunch of New York Artists Aim for Nothing Less,” *St. Petersburg Times*, October 8, 1987.

<sup>106</sup> Guerrilla Girls, *The Guerrilla Girls Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art*

<sup>107</sup> Guerrilla Girls, *The Guerrilla Girls Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art*

<sup>108</sup> Mary Ann Marger, “A guerrilla girl revolution//Wild bunch of New York artists aim for nothing less,” *St. Petersburg Times*, October 8, 1987.

<sup>109</sup> Eric Gibson, “Masked Avengers Monkey with Sexist Bias in Art,” *The Washington Times*, October 4, 1990

<sup>110</sup> Nancy Tousley, “Guerrilla Girls: These Witty Activists are Waging War Against Discrimination in the Art World,” *Calgary Herald*, October 25, 1992.

<sup>111</sup> As much strategic as necessary the Guerilla Girls anonymity provided the cover to perform clandestine operations in the public while protecting their careers. As GG1 explains in an interview with Whitney Chadwick, “The art world is a very small place.

Of course, we were afraid that if we blew the whistle on some of its most powerful people, we could kiss off our art careers. But mainly, we wanted the focus to be on the issues, not on our personalities or our own work” (Chadwick, 14). They numbered in the millions, one guerrilla girl put it. Millions was an overstatement, but the point is clear. In order to educate the public on these issues the girls created enough misinformation about their own lives, to render the question of their identities moot. And, in doing so, the girls were able to suggest that they were everywhere and might include anyone. Your boss at work, the secretary behind the desk at your office, the curator for the museum, all of these positioned might be filled with guerilla girls. And they were watching. As the Girls explain, “We chose anonymity for two reasons: Women who fought against sexism in the ‘70s were accused of furthering their own careers. No careers can be furthered if no one knows who we are. The second reason is also economic but from the flip side of the argument. Since most of us are practicing artists, our careers might be penalized. You get punished for challenging people” (Helen L. Kohne, “Gorilla Tactics,” *The Miami Herald*, March 13, 1993). But, in doing so the guerrilla girls are also able to raise the issues of inequality and social justice without clouding the issue of their individual personalities. As Kahol states, “The minute you knew who I was, you would start asking questions about my own work and how being a GG has affected it. Then you would start to see the issue of sexism in the arts as an individual problem rather than a social problem. And that would take away the power of a mass movement” (Ann Donald, “Why They go Ape for Feminism,” *The Herald* (Glasgow), July 12, 1995.) The attempt to maintain their anonymity even includes arranging an interview in a large basement painted black at a converted warehouse. When names are given they have been women artists often neglected in art history books. From, Rosalba Carriera, an 18<sup>th</sup> century Venetian court painter to Ana Medieta, the Cuban-born artist who died in 1985. In 1990, the Guerrilla Girls produced and displayed a poster titled, “Guerrilla Girls Identities Exposed” which listed over 550 women. And the girls kept their anonymity in public by wearing gorilla masks.

112 Eric Gibson, “Masked Avengers Monkey with Sexist Bias in Art,” *The Washington Times*, October 4, 1990.

113 Ibid.

114 Katy Butler, “‘Gorilla’ Warriors,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, July 18, 1991.

115 Richard Huntington, “Incognito and Saving the Art World,” *Buffalo News* (New York), April 4, 1995.

116 Chadwick, 8.

117 Regina Hackett, "Guerrilla Girls to the Rescue; No Capes for These Crusaders – Just Gorilla Masks and an Attitude," *Seattle Post-Intelligence*, May 13, 1995.

118 As far back as World War I, the gorilla has been used in propaganda posters as a means to de-humanize the enemy. The most famous was the depiction of the Hun as a Barbarous Brute who is holding a women, seemingly incapable of protecting herself.

119 Anita Chaudhuri, "Gorillas in a Twist," *The Guardian* (London), July, 19, 1995.

120 By the mid-1990s, the Girls were producing and distributing roughly a half-dozen posters a year and engaging the public through sponsored exhibitions, panel discussions and lectures. The public attention of the Guerrilla Girls was significant as *Art forum*, *Mirabella*, and *Ms.* commissioned them to address their work. From posters to lectures, the Guerrilla Girls appropriated the spaces of and mantels of Art, to critique inequality of access to cultural institutions. Ultimately, the fly-by night activities in which the girls distribute public service announcements to combat sexism and racism raises the awareness of such issues out of the naturalizing sphere of the dominant patriarchal manifold. But their tactics also utilize humor through the ironic word play and unconventional approach. From playing with the pun guerrilla/gorilla and constantly wearing gorilla masks, humor provides the veil to protect their identity and remain elusive. "We have fun playing around with our image" explained one Guerrilla Girl. "I think if we hadn't used irony and humor and had come off as shrill and bitter and negative, we wouldn't have gotten our message across." Kerry O'Neil, "Striking at Sexism in the Art World," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 17, 1990. Reclaiming the meaning of girl was also a significant tactic of the guerrilla girls. As one Girl explains, "Calling a grown woman a girl can imply she's not complete, mature, or grown up. But we decided to reclaim the word 'girl,' so it couldn't be used against us. Gay activists did the same thing with the epithet 'queer'" (Robert Armstrong, "Paperbacks; 'Guerilla Girls' Challenge Art World Over Gender Inequities," *Star Tribune*, April 30, 1995). With re-articulation as a tactic, the Girls also have attempted to confound the very language of art. As Wigman points out, "The language of art is heavily masculine. You say that someone had a seminal idea, you talk about a masterpiece. That's something created by a master, and is offensive to artists of colour because it's a word that is bound up in slavery terminology" (Robert Armstrong, "Paperbacks; 'Guerilla Girls' Challenge Art World Over Gender Inequities," *Star Tribune*, April 30, 1995.) As the Girls reveal culture as a struggle over meaning and representation, they point to the art museum as the terrain of ideology. As Kahlo argues, "If you appropriate the very words that demean you, you're recontextualising it and making it your own. That's a basic linguistic principle" (Robert Armstrong, "Paperbacks; 'Guerilla Girls' Challenge Art World Over Gender Inequities," *Star Tribune*, April 30, 1995).

Chadwick explains this vicious dimension, claiming the art market is dominated by male values. The status quo needs to be changed (Rosemary Bailey, "Women: War Paint –

Could the Battle of the Sexes in the Art World at Last be Reaching a Truce, and Traditional Resistance to Feminism be Crumbling,” *The Guardian* (London), April 12, 1990). The problem is that when women explore the conflicts of gender, femininity and representation and the roles they assume, they are positioned women’s work. As male artists do not question these concerns, women’s work becomes gendered through a binary opposition to the ‘gender neutrality’ of male artists. In this process, a hierarchical binary is set up, where men’s work is considered superior and objective and women’s the de-privileged flip side of the binary. As one Guerrilla Girl explains, “There is this myth of the heroic male genius that we have all been taught,” (Kerry O’Neil, “Striking at Sexism in the Art World,” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 17, 1990). As “Frida Kahlo” states, “If a masterpiece can be made only by a master and a master is defined as ‘a man having control or authority,’ you can see what we’re up against” (Eunice Lipton, “Monkey Business,” *Women’s Review of Books*, July 1995). The prevalence of these myths taint and sabotage the success of women artists. But by no means did this satisfy or end the issue of under-representation and racism and sexism in the art world. “The art world, which is supposed to be such an enlightened, liberated situation is in fact worse than corporate American,” explained Girl No. 1 (Paul Geitner, “The Artists: Masked Women Fight Discrimination in Art World,” *Associated Press*, January 4, 1990). The reason, as the Girls contend, is economic and subconscious. “It’s the epitome of the male gaze,” said a local Guerrilla Girl. “It’s a voyeuristic thing, an extreme example of the fact that 90 percent of the time what is labeled and bought as ‘good art’ is from the unconscious male perspective.” (Katy Butler, “‘Gorilla’ Warriors on Sexism in Art; West Coast Guerrilla Girls in San Rafael Show,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 18, 1991.)

Perhaps their tactics worked, as one report in the *New York Times* illustrated, “The group has undeniable helped change the art-world climate, admittedly in a time when society as a whole has been changing. Their posters have illuminated the gap between action and principle in an art world that thinks of itself as usually liberal and enlightened” (Roberta Smith, “Art review; Waging Guerilla Warfare Against the Art World,” *The New York Times*, June 17, 1990.) And others claimed, “Just image the chagrin of a well-known SoHo art dealer who arrives at work to find, on his door, a Guerrilla Girls ‘report card’ naming his gallery as one that shows the work of women artists only 10 percent of the time. Or that of an art critic who sees her name on a list naming those who write about women artists only 10 percent of the time” (Nancy Tousley, “Guerrilla girls: these witty activists are waging war against discrimination in the art world” *Calgary Herald*, October 25, 1992). As some of the tactics of the guerrilla girls rely on shaming gallery owners into looking at their own involvement in the issues, not all reports of the guerrilla girls have been positive, calling their tactics, “a clownish activity, you know. It’s sort of feminist politics reduced to the theater of the absurd,” (Mark Feldstein, “Gender Wars, Part 2. Guerrilla Girls,” CNN. February 20, 1994). As Kramer stated, “I don’t believe in anonymous criticism. I don’t believe in anonymous agitation or activism. I think it’s a cowardly form of political behavior” (Mark Feldstein, “Gender Wars, Part 2. Guerrilla Girls,” CNN, February 20, 1994). And, in text book fashion, such reports positioned the Guerrilla Girls within a history of reports that de-legitimize tactics that appropriate

dominant modes of advertising and consumer culture to critique its foundations and internal logic. The emphasis on their anonymity and tactics detracted from a more systematic analysis of the issues that the Girls address. But as one report indicated, “In an age when female activists have been dismissed as dull and humorless, the idea of poking fun, of turning the tables on the establishment, is part of the Guerrilla Girl’s appeal” (Shermakaye Bass, “Guerrilla Girls Take Aim at Art World,” *The Dallas Morning News*, November 5, 1994). But even twenty years after their start, the press was playing a major part in framing the Girls, as girls. In what is an unbelievable report by the Riverfront Times, the Guerrilla Girls were attacked as trivializing the glorious feminist struggle for equality. “What can you hope to gain from making everyone aware of the quiet ways in which women are discriminated against in the so-called liberal arts and in the world of popular entertainment? Dour is power, sisters. Funny is Futile” (Guerrilla Girls Gone Wild; The Art of Protest,” *Riverfront Times* (St. Louis, Missouri), November 9, 2005).

121 Rosemary Bailey, “Women: War Paint – Could the Battle of the Sexes in the Art World at Last be Reaching a Truce, and Traditional Resistance to Feminism be Crumbling,” *The Guardian* (London), April 12, 1990.

122 Michael Scott, “It’s a Jungle Out There” *The Vancouver Sun*, September 19, 1996.

123 If their tactics facilitate co-optation, and their celebrity status and agitation theatre contribute to this, the media and art institutions become the forums used in a larger strategy to address issues of abortion, civil rights, poverty, healthcare and the atrocities of war from within the institutions they are critiquing. But, the Girls do not necessarily represent a unified front on the issue either, as some advocate for the inclusion in MOMA, while others would prefer to blow it up. In pushing the cultural discourse into a discussion of such issues the girls provide a site of empowerment, as others are invited to critique and address issues of representation. As the Guerrilla Girls ask the public to question the assumptions and stances of feminism, sexuality, gender, class, consumerism, and taste they create sites of resistance.

124 The girls hold a mirror to such institutions through urban guerrilla warfare tactic of bad publicity. As one report contends, “The mere presence of this group in the art world, along with the growing momentum of the 20-year old feminist art history movement, is re asking the bigger and tougher questions: ‘What does it mean to say a piece of art has a ‘masterpiece’ or ‘genius’ quality?’ ‘Who defines quality, and what prejudice does it reflect?’ And, the all-inclusive: ‘How has racial and sexual biases narrowed our understanding of history and culture?’” Kerry O’Neil, “Striking at Sexism in the Art World,” *Christian Science Monitor*, December 17, 1990.

125 Carol Vogel, “Three Aphorism Shows are Better than One,” *The New York Times*, October 30, 1997.

<sup>126</sup> Kim Levin, “Absolute Kruger,” *Village Voice* (New York, NY), November 18, 1997.

<sup>127</sup> Vogel, “Three Aphorism Shows are Better than One,” *The New York Times*, October 30, 1997

<sup>128</sup> Vogel, “Three Aphorism Shows are Better than One,” *The New York Times*, October 30, 1997.

<sup>129</sup> By 1994 Kruger had produced another installation for the Mary Boone Gallery. Compared by one art critic conjuring up the evilness of “Triumph of the Will”, while condemning the charismatic, hatemongering leaders was the emphasis on the “seductive, elegantly orchestrated if ultimately unsatisfying assault on the sense.” (Roberta Smith, “Art in Review,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1994). With every surface of the installation space covered with slogans and images and accompanied with a soundtrack with “generic diatribes – variously racial, religious and sexual – punctuated by the howls of a hysterical crowd and occasional the screams of victims of violence,” “the interaction of word and image often lacks clarity”, reported some critics. And, with other reports, Roberta Smith contends, “there are problems to all this relentless sound and visible fury. For one thing they tend to become self-canceling, reducing the show to a blurry encounter with unspecified hatreds and villains whose effect is overly artificial, theatrical and short-lived. Since it is almost impossible to hear oneself think inside it, there’s not much to think about upon leaving” (Smith, “Art in Review,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1994). The impulse to reconnect with corporeal body to experience and feel rather than conceptualize and burden feeling with the weight of thought is lost in reports. As Robert Rooney contends, the use of montage and the juxtaposition of the uncanny with a visual and political hypothesis to foster multiple subject positions, was “greatly obscured by Kruger’s relentless pursuit of the overkill. To visit the exhibition is to subject oneself to more slogans and preaching than you’ll find in the average Body Shop window... Ultimately, the whole experience is desensitizing. But then, subtlety, thy name has never been Barbara Kruger.” (Robert Rooney, “Modern Masters, Barbara Kruger,” *The Australian*, November 1, 1996).

It was also in Los Angeles that the controversial warehouse incident would present the first retrospective of her work. “Until now,” one report stated, “the larger museums resisted surveying what has been called her ‘theater of dissent.’” Ann Goldstein the curator for the show commentated that Kruger was “one of the first women to address representation and show that pictures and words have determined how we are defined and confined.” (Hunter Drohojowska-Philip, “She has a way with words; A moca retrospective of Barbara Kruger’s works asks provocative questions about how we communicate,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1999). But, her work was not constrained by the museum walls, floor or ceiling in the retrospective as the public was invited to think, re-embody and question the codes used to define and confine them as her work appeared on 15 billboards and a number of postings in both English and Spanish. A videoboard on Sunset Boulevard at Sweetzer Avenue also showed short clips. In the

manipulation of the visual codes that dominate the streets of downtown metropolitan areas, a new semiotic structure is overlain on the surfaces used by advertising to interpellate the public. In such rearticulations, a multiplicity of subject positions are created that do not necessarily provide a coherent or simple explanation of the image and the subjects relation to it. The meanings derived in such spaces are not easily deciphered or signify one voice that promise an ideal to strive for through the purchase of product. Rather, the multi-accentuality of the image enables a proliferation of meanings and subject positions, where associations made through advertising fail to explain and affirm the meaning of the image before them. The significance, therefore, lies in a problematization of the codes and concepts used to decipher images when they fail to confirm reality. For in this failure the artificiality of both the image and text, not only in Kruger's work, but in advertising and political messages is exposed.

130 And, this reporter goes the distance. "The word 'subversive', which was used with monotonous frequency in discussing this work throughout the 1980s, has been exposed as an absurdity – no less of an absurdity than the word 'avant-garde'. Most of this art subverts nothing apart from more conventional attitudes towards art" John McDonald, "Lip Service," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July, 11, 1997.

131 Kruger, *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art*,

132 *Ibid.*, 112

133 Hunter Drohojowska-philip, "She Has a Way with Words," *The Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1999.

134 *Ibid.*

135 Barbara Kruger, "Interview with Anders Stephanson," in *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 115

136 Virginia Trioli, "Graphic Attack," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.

137 *Ibid.*

138 But the press was far from unanimous. As one reporter pined, "Pardon me, but what the fuck does it matter? Kruger cut through the bullshit...It's everywhere. What more do you want from an artist? That's why it's smug and supercilious to say Kruger's art is just 'advertising,' or that she's only preaching to the converted" (Jerry Saltz, "Hostile Witness," *Village Voice*, August, 8, 2000.) At this time, at least in Los Angeles, her work was framed in the press as an achievement, as it "forces open a space for critical thought within mass media representations otherwise characterized by uncritical judgments. In analyzing stereotypes and bending media techniques toward her own purposes as an artist, she relates social experience onto a gray scale – the indicted place where life is actually lived, but where mass culture rarely goes" (Christopher Knight,



“Art Review; How to read art; Barbara Kruger’s insightful subversion of mass media uses accessible means to achieve her complex end,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1999). While other reports defined her work as unnecessarily abrasive, not appropriate for children and “political blather masquerading as art.” And, “when the blather is removed from these art sanctuaries to occupy actual billboards, op-ed pages of newspapers, department store windows and other ‘out-reach’ locations, as Ms. Kruger’s work often does, its political content is all that remains, and no one pretends it bears any relation to the creation of art. In Ms. Kruger’s case, the message is the medium” (Hilton Kramer, “Greed is really bad, says designer Kruger,” *New York Observer*, August, 21, 2000). But, what is significant to this report is a latter statement that suggests that Kruger’s “unearned smugness” makes her work the perfect target for commercial re-appropriation. “Her knowing negativity is perfect for creating the insiderishness, the us vs. them, that lifestyle marketing thrives on” and “As in the most effective commercials, her message is one of comfort and solidarity” (Judith Shulevitz, “Barbara Kruger, Ad Industry Heroine,” *Slate Magazine*, July 19, 2000). As her works are continually questioned for their effectiveness and Kruger as a snubs and sell-outs, her work also introduces questions of pertaining to the role and the power of the economy and commercial advertising into the public sphere.

<sup>139</sup>Virginia Trioli, “Graphic Attack,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.

<sup>140</sup> Virginia Trioli, “Graphic Attack,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.

<sup>141</sup> Virginia Trioli, “Graphic Attack,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 10, 1996.

<sup>142</sup> Andy Grundberg, “When Outs are In, What’s Up?” *The New York Times*, July 26, 1987.

<sup>143</sup> *Hoepker v. Kruger*, 2000 F.2d 340 (2002).

<sup>144</sup> The complexity of this case derives from the combination of the right to privacy, and unfair competition, as well as international policies regarding copyright. Although Hoepker’s image was copyrighted in Germany, the United States gives the same protection to foreign works as it does those produced domestically. While the initial term ran out in 1988, and could have been renewed for another 28, Hoepker did not renew his copyright allowing the image to enter the public domain. As the court explained, “By creating the Kruger Composite in 1990, Kruger engaged in an act which would have violated Hoepker’s copyright specifically, his exclusive right to create derivative works.” However, the court ruled, Kruger and MOCA are free to engage in the use of the restored work for a duration up to 12 months after a formal notice is issued. In terms of the violation of Dabner’s right to privacy claims, the court reasoned that within the state of New York, “a plaintiff must prove (1) use of plaintiff’s name, portrait, picture or voice (2) ‘for advertising purposes or for the purposes of trade’ (3) without consent.” Kruger had a right to use such depictions because they were considered a non-commercial and non-advertising use, and thus protected by the First Amendment.

145 Hoepker v. Kruger, 2000 F.2d 340 (2002).

146 Hoepker v. Kruger, 2000 F.2d 340 (2002).

147 Hoepker v. Kruger, 2000 F.2d 340 (2002).

148 It should be noted that the Martin Luther King estate is an adamant protector of King's image. Unfortunately, the appropriation of African American culture for commercial gain, or its co-optation for political control, has been rampant in the U.S. Such cases de-value their contribution to American culture as actually central to the ways in which U.S. cultural memory has been shaped. For a more detailed explanation of political co-optation see Howard Zinn's *People's history of the United States*. For an explication of appropriation of music, Joanna Demers Steel's *Steal this Music: How Intellectual Property Law Affects Musical Creativity* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006). Thus, while Fairley continually appropriates elements of political protest and social inequality, such as images of Darfur, the audience may not only impose a romantic fantasy, but in doing so operates through a colonial logic of the other. In this process the "other" is positioned, in what Edward Said identifies as the imposition and control of cultures through the discursive construction and knowledge of them.

149 Such actions evoke further questions pertaining to co-optation, or the redefinition of work and the changing shifts to marketing and advertising. For, when such artists license out their work to an art institute and institutes collaborate with a commercial entities like the Gap, commodification is beyond the control of the artist as it is a deal struck without the consent of the artist.

150 "GAP INC.; Gap Introduces Artist Editions T-shirts," *Lab Business Week*, June 1, 2008.

151 "GAP INC.; Gap Introduces Artist Editions T-shirts," *Lab Business Week*, June 1, 2008.

152 As one report suggests, "The word 'subversive', which was used with monotonous frequency in discussing this work throughout the 1980s, has been exposed as an absurdity – no less of an absurdity than the word 'avant-garde'. Most of this art subverts nothing apart from more conventional attitudes towards art...It is a form of political narcissism no less striking than the personal narcissism of the celebrities who bare all in the glossy magazines" John McDonald, "Lip Service," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July, 11, 1997.

153 By 2005 Kruger's recognition was global with an invitation to the 51<sup>st</sup> Venice Biennale's invitation to exhibit her work. The work "Untitled (Façade)" involved plastering a 'tattoo' across the entire pavilion of the once Fascist architecture, the

juxtaposition was more than fitting. But, unlike the standard red, white and black designs she had been noted for, these were red, green and white. Mimicking the Italian flag the words “money” and Power” were overlaid across the pillars of the museum. At the biennale’s Kruger was given the Golden Lion Award for lifetime achievement. The guerrilla girls were also in attendance.

<sup>154</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 37.

### Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

14 P. Segal, "History and Timeline," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

15 P. Segal, "History and Timeline," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

16 Jeff Jarvis, "Free Again," *San Francisco Examiner*, October 9, 1978

17 P. Segal, "History and Timeline," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

18 P. Segal, "History and Timeline," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

19 Jeff Jarvis, "Free Again," *San Francisco Examiner*, October 9, 1978.

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22 P. Segal, "History and Timeline," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

23 P. Segal, "History and Timeline," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

24 Jeff Jarvis, "Lady Bird Would be Proud: The Billboard Liberation Front Struck Again," *San Francisco Examiner*, May 23, 1980.

25 In 1949 the FCC imposed a Fairness Doctrine upon broadcasters to promote issues of public importance and to provide a wide array of viewpoints on controversial issues. The Doctrine promoted the notions that a democratic society necessitates an informed public from a diverse and balanced range of issues. The Act states, the undeniable relationship between a healthy democratic media systems and a vibrant public sphere. The public interest, convenience and necessity are furthered by promoting democratic practices, i.e., informing the public of vital and contrasting issues. As section six states, "It is axiomatic that one of the most vital questions of mass communication in a democracy is the development of an informed public opinion through the public dissemination of news and ideas concerning the vital public issues of the day... Unquestionably, then, the standard of public interest, convenience and necessity as applied to radio broadcasting must be in the light of this basic purpose." The Act further states that it is, "The paramount right of the public in a free society to be informed and to have presented to it for acceptance or rejection the different attitudes and viewpoints concerning these vital

and often controversial issues which are held by the various groups which make up the community.”

This Act defined the public’s right to a diverse array of viewpoints as that which is synonymous with democratic society. This right supersedes any right of the government, broadcasters or individuals working to promote their interests. As section six states, “It is this right of the public to be informed, rather than any right on the part of the Government, any broadcast licensee or any individual member of the public to broadcast his own particular views on any matter, which is the foundation stone of the American system of broadcasting.” To facilitate this interest the Fairness Doctrine imposed a two-fold obligation upon broadcasters. Each licensee of a radio or television broadcast station was required “(1) to provide coverage of vitally important controversial issues of interest in the community served by the licensee, and (2) to afford a reasonable opportunity for the presentation of contrasting viewpoints on any controversial issue of public importance covered by the licensee.” Ultimately, the Doctrine placed heavy responsibility on both the Federal Communications Commission as well as broadcasters, to promote the interest of an informed public from a diverse range of opinions. “Failure to abide by these requirements could subject a licensee to sanctions ranging from an order requiring the licensee to remedy its programming deficiencies to an order denying renewal of its license” (*Syracuse Peace Council v. FCC*, 867 F.2d 654 1989).

However, in 1985 the Federal Communications Commission compiled an exhaustive report entitled the "Fairness Report" declaring the Fairness Doctrine obsolete and "no longer [in] ... the public interest"(Fairness Report, 102 F.C.C.2d 142, 246 1985). The commission found that the Doctrine produced “[a] chilling effect by placing burdens on stations which chose to air numerous programs on controversial issues—including the fear of denial of license renewal...the cost of defending fairness doctrine attacks and of providing free air time to opposing views if a fairness violation is found, and the reputational harm resulting from even a frivolous fairness challenge” (*Syracuse Peace Council v. FCC*, 867 F.2d 654 1989). The commission argued that, “The growth in the number of broadcast outlets reduced any need for the doctrine, that the doctrine often worked to dissuade broadcasters from presenting any treatment of controversial viewpoints, that it put the government in the doubtful position of evaluating program content, and that it created an opportunity for incumbents to abuse it for partisan purposes” (*Syracuse Peace Council v. FCC*, 867 F.2d 654 1989).

However, it was not until the case of *Syracuse Peace Council v. FCC* that the Doctrine was eliminated. Ultimately, the commission determined that the editorial decision of WTVH was an action protected by the First Amendment and should remain free from government interference. “In sum, the Fairness Doctrine in operation disserves both the public’s right to diverse sources of information and the broadcaster’s interest in free expression. Its chilling effect thwarts its intended purpose, and it results in excessive and unnecessary government intervention into the editorial processes of broadcast journalists. We hold, therefore, that under the constitutional standard established by *Red Lion* and its

progeny the fairness doctrine contravenes the First Amendment and its enforcement is no longer in the public interest.” (Syracuse Peace Council v. FCC, 867 F.2d 654 1989). Legally, broadcasters were no longer required to provide a balanced range of controversial issues of public importance, an element required for an informed public in a free society. As economic concerns re-wrote the necessary requirements of the public interest and the responsibility of broadcasters operating in a democratic society the First Amendment was interpreted through a market ideology. This logic paved the way for a weakened public sphere and the places and forums in which a diverse array of voices can thrive. The absence of the Doctrine facilitates the airwaves as a controversy free zone that reproduces and naturalizes consumption rather than promote its discussion.

<sup>26</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Jack Napier, “Press Release, August 1989,” Billboard Liberation Front. <http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/kant.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Igor Pflicht, “Prolegomena to Any Future of Advertising,” Billboard Liberation Front. [http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/kant/IRANT\\_letter.html](http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/kant/IRANT_letter.html) (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Tim Redmond, “Free the Billboards!,” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, January 10, 1990.

<sup>35</sup> Tim Redmond, “Free the Billboards!,” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, January 10, 1990.

<sup>36</sup> Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*. (New York, Vintage: 1989), 6-7.

<sup>37</sup> As Alinsky argues, “Availability of means determines whether you will be underground or above ground; whether you will move quickly or slowly; whether you will move for extensive changes or limited adjustments; whether you will move by passive resistance or active resistance; or whether you will move at all. The absence of any means might drive one to martyrdom in the hope that this would be a catalyst, starting a chain reaction that would culminate in a mass movement. Here a simple ethical statement is used as a means of power” (36).

<sup>38</sup> Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*. (New York, Vintage: 1989), 151.

<sup>39</sup> P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Tim Redmond, “Free the Billboards!,” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, January 10, 1990.

<sup>41</sup> Tim Redmond, “Free the Billboards!,” *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, January 10, 1990.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Jack Napier and John Thomas, “The Billboard Liberation Front Manifesto,” The Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/manifesto.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Billboard Liberation Front, “Corporate Message from the Billboard Liberation Front,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/aboutus.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Billboard Liberation Front, “Corporate Message from the Billboard Liberation Front,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/aboutus.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Jack Napier and John Thomas, “The Billboard Liberation Front Manifesto,” The Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/manifesto.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> Jack Napier and John Thomas, “The Billboard Liberation Front Manifesto,” The Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/manifesto.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Billboard Liberation Front, "The Art and Science of Billboard Improvement: A Comprehensive Guide to the Alteration of Outdoor Advertising," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/ArtAndScience-BLF.pdf> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> Billboard Liberation Front, "The Art and Science of Billboard Improvement: A Comprehensive Guide to the Alteration of Outdoor Advertising," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/ArtAndScience-BLF.pdf> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>54</sup>As Marcus explains, "A situation was created in which society was forced to finance, publicize and broadcast a revolutionary critique of itself, and furthermore to confirm this critique by its reactions to it" (390). But, beyond the published and financed critique of itself, a situation was a construction that would momentarily create a glimpse into the very constructed nature of the spectacle itself. Situations aimed to create a moment of revolutionary consciousness through a guerrilla mentality in which the spectacle was attacked through 'raiding parties.' As the spectacle had no fixed form, neither could their strikes and counter-strikes. Thus, resistance necessitated ephemeral tactics.

<sup>55</sup> Billboard Liberation Front, "The Art and Science of Billboard Improvement: A Comprehensive Guide to the Alteration of Outdoor Advertising," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/ArtAndScience-BLF.pdf> (accessed March 20, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Tim Redmond, "Free the Billboards!," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, January 10, 1990.

<sup>57</sup>E. Kelly Taylor, *Americas Army and the Language of Grunts: Understanding the Army Lingo Legacy*. (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2010).

<sup>58</sup> As Barthes argues in *Mythologies*, "In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves" (143).

<sup>59</sup>Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1972), 143.

<sup>60</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 128.



61 Debord, 90.

62 Debord, 90.

63 Experiments in the détournement ranged from the inclusion of speech bubbles on photo-romance and pornographic photos to advertising billboards, where prepared placards were pasted on them. Détournement was a raid on official culture that problematized the prevailing commercial ethos. As Marcus explains, “The détournement of the right sign, in the right place at the right time, could spark a mass reversal of perspective. The one-way communication of the spectacle reduced all other speech to babble, but now the spectacle would fall back on itself; it would sound like babble, and everyone would see through it. The reversible connecting factor would be grasped, the string would be pulled, the tables would be turned, every yes would become a no, every truth would dissolve in doubt, and everything would change” (Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, 168-9).

64 D.S. Black, “Fauxvertising, FSU-ism and Other Semiotic Attacks on Consensual Reality,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/faux.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

65 Ibid.

66 Jack Napier, “Questions for Redressing the Imposition on Public Space,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/response.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 In 1986, artist Jeff Koons came across a postcard by Art Rogers of the Scanlons which depicted a couple holding puppies on a bench. Koons used the photo as a reference point to create a three dimensional sculpture, called “String of Puppies,” for a 1988 exhibit called the “Banality Show.” The photo, as Koons argued, was a platform upon which his statue was created, but moved beyond the original depiction as it was transformed into social commentary of suburban American sensibilities and the banality of consumer culture. In altering the meaning of the original object for social commentary, Koons was operating in the traditions of artists who comment and alter the meaning of the everyday and taken-for-granted objects. The tradition dates back to Dada and was popularized by Andy Warhol’s appropriation of Campbell Soup Cans and Brillo Soap Boxes. Koons, like Warhol and Dada, created a sculpture largely surpassing the original depiction.

From Brillo soap pad boxes, to Campbell's soup cans, Warhol created a number of pieces that used corporate logos and trademarked symbols. Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> David Bollier, *Brand Name Bullies: The Quest to Own and Control Culture* (Hoboken, NY: J. Wiley, 2005), 54. As Bollier continues, Warhol's "reputation, artistic skill, and market clout enabled him to negotiate with wealthy corporations on an equal if not superior footing. It did not hurt that his images did not directly criticize or confront company products, logos, and characters; any commentary was more subtle, if not straight 'reporting' of the prevailing imagery of our times. For artists with other agendas or lesser reputations, the normal rules of copyright and trademark law would apply. But an artist of Warhol's singular stature and artistic philosophy could negotiate around the rules that govern everyone else." David Bollier, *Brand Name Bullies: The Quest to Own and Control Culture* (Hoboken, NY: J. Wiley, 2005), 55.

<sup>72</sup> In the mid-1980s, Warhol "discovered" Graffiti artist turned art celebrity, Jean-Michel Basquiat who was notorious for appropriating corporate logos in his work as well. Together they elevated the corporate logo of Mobil's Pegasus into high priced art. As Richard Schur argues in *Parodies of Ownership*, Basquiat transformed this textual and oral wordplay by consciously merging avant-garde African American styles with putatively 'working-class' or 'street' styles, thereby forging a synthesis of both popular and high-culture aesthetics. This blended approach deconstructs essentialized or essentializing approaches to identity, where a person's authenticity as an African American appears directed correlated with "a connection to street life. Richard L. Schur, *Parodies of ownership: Hip-hop Aesthetics and Intellectual Property Law* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 122.

<sup>73</sup> Warren Berger, "Altered states; Creativity's roving reporter turns supersleuth and finds secret messages in car trunks, second-hand purses, and on subtly altered billboards," *Advertising Age's Creativity*. June 1, 2000.

<sup>74</sup> In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michele DeCerteau argues that the use of consumer images should be conceptualized as a production, a poiesis – a poetics of composition and production. The importance is not placed on the use of one's "own products" but in the tactical use of the "products imposed by a dominant economic order" (xii-iii). A tactic, Certeau argues, "boldly juxtaposes diverse elements in order suddenly to produce a flash shedding a different light on the language." (37). As Certeau argues, "these 'ways of operating' constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of socio cultural production... deflecting their functioning by means of a multitude of 'tactics' articulated in the details of everyday life" (xiv-v.) A tactic does not occupy a specific spatial or institutional space for the place in which the tactic is used is the place of another. "A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance [it has no base]...a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing.'" (xix).

75 Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, xii.

76 These acts create what Bey refers to as a ‘temporary autonomous zone.’ The temporary autonomous zone is like an uprising which does not directly engage with the State, but rather, is a guerrilla operation “which liberates an area...and then dissolves itself to reform elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it.” As Bey argues, the temporary take-over of public space develops through the formation of a tribe, that shares the “anarchist dream” of a free culture who continually strikes but must remain elusive. As Bey contends, the strength of these tactics lie in their invisibility, lack of precise meaning, and their sudden presence. Eluding the power of the state, the guerrilla tactics that facilitate a TAZ, are ideal “in which the State is omnipresent and all-powerful and yet simultaneously riddled with cracks and vacancies (117).

77 P. Segal, “History and Timeline,” Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).

78 George Rodriguez Gerada, “Culture Jamming,” Projects, <http://www.artjammer.com/jamming.htm> (accessed March 21, 2011).

79 Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs* (New York, NY: Picador, 2002).

80 George Rodriguez Gerada, “Culture Jamming,” Projects, <http://www.artjammer.com/jamming.htm> (accessed March 21, 2011).

81 Mark Dery, *Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing and Snipping in the Empire of Signs* (Westfield, NJ: Open Magazine Pamphlet Series, 1993).

82 Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*.

83 Morris Wolf, “Definitive Articles - Beautiful Liars,” *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), April 21, 1990.

84 Morris Wolf, “Definitive Articles - Beautiful Liars,” *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), April 21, 1990.

85 Liam Lacey, “With a Magazine, an Advocacy Group and an Ad Campaign, Two Vancouver Filmmakers Hope to Shape ‘An Environmental Movement of the Mind,’” *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), February 9, 1991.

86 Morris Wolfe, “Cross Current. Will Alternative Ads Pack Enough Punch to Grab Viewers Attention,” *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), August 2, 1990.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 Lasn, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge – And Why We Must*, 133.

91 Ibid., 123.

92 And perhaps the rhetoric of the *Adbusters* manifesto not only indicates the purpose and intent of their intervention, but also its potential effectiveness. As the manifesto states, “We will take on the archetypal mind polluters and beat them at their own game. We will uncool their billion-dollar brands with uncommercials on TV, subvertisements in magazines and anti-ads right next to theirs in the urban landscape. We will seize control of the roles and functions that corporations play in our lives and set new agendas in their industries. Ibid., 128. However, despite and because of the impetus outlined in the manifesto, reports in the press were indicating that the Media Foundation was gaining a reputation as a “giant pain in the asinine world of advertising and the media. For more than two years now their feisty, irreverent and often sanctimonious magazine has been embarrassing and annoying” advertising agencies, alcohol and cigarette manufacturers and almost every television network in North America. Ken Macqueen, “Adbusters Crack TV Coma,” *Calgary Herald*, December 26, 1991. But, for *Adbusters*, the reports have ranged from hostile to downright abusive.

93 Mia Stainsby, “We’re Living in a Media Trance: Lasn Wants Us to Think about Ads,” *Hamilton Spectator* (Ontario), March 20, 1997.

94 Mia Stainsby, “We’re Living in a Media Trance: Lasn Wants Us to Think about Ads,” *Hamilton Spectator* (Ontario), March 20, 1997.

95 Ibid.

96 Morris Wolfe, “Definitive Articles: Beautiful Liars,” *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), April 21, 1990.

97 Mia Stansby, “The Youth Project: Media,” *The Vancouver Sun* (British Columbia), December 6, 1993.

98 Ken MaQueen, “Adbusters crack TV Coma,” *Calgary Herald* (Alberta, Canada), December 26, 1991

99 Morris Wolfe, “Definitive Articles: Beautiful Liars,” *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), April 21, 1990.

100 Ibid

101 Ibid.

102 Morriss Wolfe, "Definitive Articles - Beautiful Liars," *The Globe and Mail* (Canada). April 21, 1990.

103 Lasn, *Culture Jam*, 132.

104 Bruce Horovitz, "Adbusters Mercilessly Lampoon Leading U.S. Vodka Manufacturer," *The Record* (Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario), April 29, 1992.

105 Lasn, *Culture Jam*,

106 Bruce Horovitz, "Adbusters Mercilessly Lampoon Leading U.S. Vodka Manufacturer," *The Record* (Ontario), April 29, 1992.

107 Bruce Horovitz, "Adbusters Mercilessly Lampoon Leading U.S. Vodka Manufacturer," *The Record* (Ontario), April 29, 1992.

108 Mia Stainsby, "We're Living in a Media Trance: Lasn Wants Us to Think About Ads," *Hamilton Spectator* (Ontario), March 20, 1997.

109 Helen Jones, "Ad Nauseam," *Creative Review*, August 1, 1997

110 Miro Cernetig, "Vancouver Upstart Lights a Fire Under Harper's," *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), October 5, 1995

111 Roszack,

112 Lasn, *Culture Jam*, xvi.

113 Ibid., 107.

114 Ibid., 108.

115 Ibid., 107.

116 Lasn, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge – And Why We Must*, xvi.

117 Judy Jones, "Subvertizing; The Power of Advertising, The Lust to Buy," *The Independent* (London), November, 27, 1996.

- 118 Polly Toynbee, "The Hardest Sell: Persuading Americans to Give Up Shopping," *The Independent* (London), November 27, 1997
- 119 Jim Boothroyd, "Adbusters Take on a Consuming Passion," *The Gazette* (Montreal, Quebec), December 20, 1997.
- 120 Jim Boothroyd, "Adbusters Take on a Consuming Passion," *The Gazette* (Montreal, Quebec), December 20, 1997.
- 121 Mark Sauer, "Let Buyer be Dared for a Day," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, September 21, 1995.
- 122 Steven Duncombe, "Introduction," in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, ed. Steven Duncombe (New York, NY: Verso, 2002), 347
- 123 John Jordan, "The Art of Necessity: The Subversive Imagination of Anti-Road Protests and Reclaim the Streets," in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, ed. Steven Duncombe (New York, NY: Verso, 2002), 349.
- 124 Jason Grote, "The God that People do not Believe in God Believe in: Taking a Bust with Reverend Billy," in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, ed. Steven Duncombe (New York, NY: Verso, 2002), 368.
- 125 Grote, "The God that People do not Believe in God Believe in," 368.
- 126 Grote, "The God that People do not Believe in God Believe in," 368.
- 127 Grote, "The God that People do not Believe in God Believe in," 366.
- 128 Amanda Meade, "Adjust your Mind-Set," *The Australian*, April 28, 1999.
- 129 The image of the un-commercial is a call to parents to take responsibility for their kids. As the commercial begins, a pre-schooler is holding a toy and sitting on the floor in front of a television set. Although the screen is covered up, a news report is aired, in which a newscaster states, "A 49-year-old man went berserk last night..." Then, a voiceover asks, "Where does she get her view of the world? What values will she have? Whose child is she, yours or the networks?" As the camera zooms in on the child and freezes on her face, the narrator continues, "Take back your children. Turn off the TV."
- 130 Amanda Meade, "Adjust your Mind-Set," *The Australian*, April 28, 1999.

- 131 Jennifer Clair, "Free Your Mind—It's TV Turnoff Week!" *University Wire*, April 22, 1999
- 132 Polly Toynbee, "The Hardest Sell: Persuading Americans to Give Up Shopping," *The Independent* (London), November 27, 1997.
- 133 Polly Toynbee, "The Hardest Sell: Persuading Americans to Give Up Shopping," *The Independent* (London), November 27, 1997.
- 134 Hester Riches, "Adbusters sees itself as 'Greenpeace of Mental Environment,'" *The Vancouver Sun* (British Columbia), November 8, 1991
- 135 Hester Riches, "Adbusters Sees Itself as 'Greenpeace of Mental Environment,'" *The Vancouver Sun*, November 8, 1991.
- 136 Jon Carrol, "Jam that Media! Hug that Tree!," *The San Francisco Chronicle*. March 2, 1995.
- 137 P. Segal, "History and Timeline," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).
- 138 Brad Wiener, "Co-opting art? Billboard Highjinks," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, April 4, 1994.
- 139 P. Segal, "History and Timeline," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).
- 140 P. Segal, "History and Timeline," Billboard Liberation Front, <http://www.billboardliberation.com/history.html> (accessed March 20, 2011).
- 141 Ronald E. Shield, "The Force of Callas' Kiss: The 1997 Apple Advertising Campaign, Think Different," in *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*, ed. Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).
- 142 Shield, "The Force of Callas' Kiss",
- 143 Shield, "The Force of Callas' Kiss", 281.
- 144 Shield, "The Force of Callas' Kiss",
- 145Shield, "The Force of Callas' Kiss," 288.

146 Jack Napier, "The Billboard Liberation Front: Think Doomed, June 21, 1998," Press Release, [http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/doomed/doomed\\_pr\\_1.html](http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/doomed/doomed_pr_1.html) (accessed March 20, 2011).

147 Jack Napier, "The Billboard Liberation Front: Think Doomed, June 21, 1998," Press Release, [http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/doomed/doomed\\_pr\\_1.html](http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/doomed/doomed_pr_1.html) (accessed March 20, 2011).

148 Jack Napier, "The Billboard Liberation Front Take a Bite out of the Big Apple, April 28, 1998," Press Release, [http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/lama/lama\\_pr\\_1.html](http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/lama/lama_pr_1.html) (accessed March 20, 2011).

149 Jack Napier, "The Billboard Liberation Front Take a Bite out of the Big Apple, April 28, 1998," Press Release, [http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/lama/lama\\_pr\\_1.html](http://www.billboardliberation.com/images/lama/lama_pr_1.html) (accessed March 20, 2011).

150 Rogier van Bakel, "A letter from the editor; Hoodlum or Hero," *Advertising Age's Creativity*, June 1, 2000.

151 Bakel, *Advertising Age's Creativity*. June 1, 2000.

152 Ibid.

153 Warren Berger, "Altered states; Creativity's roving reporter turns superslueth and finds secret messages in car trunks, second-hand purses, and on subtly altered billboards," *Advertising Age's Creativity*. June 1, 2000.

154 Questions for redressing the imposition on public space. Interview with Jack Napier.

155 <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/2009/09/12/fight-club-dvd-art-gets-tagged/>

156 <http://www.neuronsyndicate.com/>

157 Lee Basford, "Obey Giant has a Posse," *Level Magazine*, August-September 2000.

#### Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> Randy Hoder, "On the Wall: The Art of the Guerilla Poster," *Wall Street Journal*, November 6, 1990.

<sup>2</sup>Robbie Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1992), 6.



<sup>3</sup> As Noam Chomsky contends in *Necessary Illusions*, the absence of critical reporting over these issues has plunged the U.S. system into a totalitarian state, where the concentration of power and wealth dictate 'thinkable thought' and limit debate to the established elite consensus, where government malfeasance is off limits, and corporate shifts in power are not covered by the media. When they are, coverage is in the business section and not tied to the public interest. Where military actions abroad create the terrain on which multinational corporations are able to sell brand USA, through the promotion of corporate and governmental interests the U.S and its clients states defend their actions. "Operations of domestic thought control are commonly undertaken in the wake of wars and other crises. . .requiring measures to reverse the thrust of popular democracy that threatens established power" (32). The media aims in such historical engineering as facts turn into their opposite and the U.S. is always and necessarily the guarantee of peace and democracy abroad. As Chomsky illustrates, "within the reigning social order, the general public must remain an object of manipulation, not a participant in thought, debate, and decision" (Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions*, 131).

<sup>4</sup>Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 6.

<sup>5</sup>Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*

<sup>7</sup>Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*,

<sup>9</sup>Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 12.

<sup>10</sup>Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 12.

<sup>11</sup>Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*

<sup>13</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*

<sup>14</sup>Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 30.

<sup>15</sup> In what Robbie describes as the most dangerous strike to date, to plaster the city of New Orleans during the convention was to tread on territory that was reserved for the very party they were railing against. However, during a closed door hearing, City Public Works Department inspectors ordered Robbie to sign a pledge not to post additional copies of the poster and ordered to take down the posters on bus shelters and traffic

switch boxes. As city inspector Bill White claimed, “The signs contribute to visual pollution” (“City Orders Artist to Stop Plastering Political Posters,” *The Associated Press*, October 21, 1988.) Although posting signs on public property without permission is a misdemeanor that carries a fine up to \$1,000, Robbie claimed that he was within his constitutional rights. “I don’t feel I’ve broken any of the higher laws or principles on which our democracy is founded...I apologize to the city workers I’ve inconvenienced and to the citizens whose sensibilities I’ve offended” (“City Orders Artist to Stop Plastering Political Posters,” *The Associated Press*, October 21, 1988.)

In “we’re all one color – Stop the Killing” Robbie produced an image to address the gangs in L.A. County that led to the deaths of 425 young people. But, this graphic also points to a move from illustration to photomontage, a technique that would be periodically used throughout the next twenty years. As Robbie recalls, the project started when Fred Jones contacted him with a poster idea. He needed an image that would address the turf wars taking place between the Crips and Bloods. An image, for the caption “We’re all one color.” As Robbie recounts, the kids killing and dying in L.A. were not part of a drug cartel but were systematically stripped of hope by government cutbacks and the slashes in public education funding. The unifying theme for the poster needed to transcend this environment through the use of a collective symbolism that stood for unity and membership. As Robbie explains, the handshake was a symbol of societal membership. “Welcoming to those who know the code, but also a form of insulation from an exploitive and hostile mainstream culture” (Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 35). Ultimately Fred’s network of ex-gang members, hip hop artists, church groups and block organizations distributed the posters.

<sup>16</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 49.

<sup>18</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 49.

<sup>19</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 45.

<sup>20</sup> John Horn, “Billboard Blasting Arts Censorship Torn Down,” *The Associated Press*, August 17, 1990.

<sup>21</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 46.

<sup>22</sup> Nancy Kaptianoff, “Fighting Back Via Poster Power,” *The Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1992.

<sup>23</sup> “Abortion Art: Robbie Conal’s Latest Work, to be Unveiled Today, Takes on Four Supreme Court Members,” *The Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 1992.

- 24 Nancy Kaptianoff, "Fighting Back Via Poster Power," *The Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1992.
- 25 Nancy Kaptianoff, "Fighting Back Via Poster Power," *The Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1992.
- 26 "Abortion Art: Robbie Conal's Latest Work, to be Unveiled Today, Takes on Four Supreme Court Members," *The Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 1992.
- 27 Nancy Kaptianoff, "Fighting Back Via Poster Power," *The Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1992.
- 28 Mary-Jane Wagle, "Robbie Conal: The Statement of an Artist," *The Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1992.
- 29 Hunter Drohojowska, "The original Dis-man Robbie Conal is Moving from the Streets into New Territory with a Solo Show, a Book, "Dis-Arm" and other Typically Political Works," *The Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 1, 1992.
- 30 Hunter Drohojowska, "The original Dis-man Robbie Conal is Moving from the Streets into New Territory with a Solo Show, a Book, "Dis-Arm" and other Typically Political Works," *The Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 1, 1992.
- 31 The response by Antonovich is significant as he accused *The Times* of 'reckless' coverage of Conal's work and claimed the paper 'further divid[ed] our community by pitting race against race, ethnicity against ethnicity, by further glorifying gang violence and mob rule' Chuck Philips, "Antonovich Slams Latest Conal Poster Art," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1993.)
- 32 Michael Antonovich, "A Scofflaw, Not a Gadfly," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1994.
- 33 Michael Antonovich, "A Scofflaw, Not a Gadfly," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1994.
- 34 Chuck Philips, "Conal's Latest Tied to Riots' Anniversary," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1993.
- 35 While some attempts to bring attention to political campaigns were meant to incite dialogue, not everyone was receptive. Some condemned Conal as "a cancer on society," and the *Los Angeles Times* as complicit in promoting activities that were "costing taxpayers millions of dollars to clean up and providing one more reason for business to clear out" (Miriam Jaffee, "Is Poster Artists Robbie Conal a Hero or Villain?" *The Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1993). Other reports attacked his poetics suggesting,

“Instantaneous recognition is as important as clarity and brevity. As it happened, however, neither I nor several newsaholic colleagues at The Times” were able to recognize some of the images in Conal’s work (Cathy Curtis, “Fuzzy was He Poster Provocateur’s Latest Effort, Lacking the Clarity of Past Works, Is a Dud Locally,” *The Los Angeles Times*, Jun 14, 1994). As this reporter contends, the use of images that relate back to events that occurred over forty-years ago is ill advised. “Conal seems to have forgotten that he was making ‘people’s art’ for the streets, not work meant to be pondered at length by the cognoscenti in a white-walled gallery” (Cathy Curtis, “Fuzzy was He Poster Provocateur’s Latest Effort, Lacking the Clarity of Past Works, Is a Dud Locally,” *The Los Angeles Times*, Jun 14, 1994).

While some argued Conal’s fame was interfering with his message and would be more effective if such works were coming from an anonymous artist (Antonio Gozalez, “Robbie Conal: The Statement of an Artist,” *The Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1992). Others, suggested that Conal is pretentious and smug and that there is nothing guerilla about being a liberal artist living in Santa Monica (Frank DeSimone, “Disillusioned,” *The Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 1992). The ridicule neglected the larger systematic issues addressed in his work. The work itself was critiqued also as some added to the text others plastered over, ripped holes through and changed the caption altogether. In 1992, three different posters appeared in Venice and Santa Monica parodying Conal’s poster aesthetic. The posters ranged from “Gag Me with a Press Release,” to “Artificial Artist” while another states “Robbie Banal.” The “Gag Me” poster was created by filmmaker Clay Walker, who traveled with Conal for the documentary film “Post No Bills.” For Walker, the motivation of making the posters was to expose the public to Conal’s motivation. “People need to realize that his No. 1 agenda is to promote his artwork through this pseudo-medium of being a guerrilla artist to become a recognized painter”(Hunter Drohojowska, “The Original Dis-man Robbie Conal is Moving from the Streets into New territory with a Solo Show, a book, “Dis-Arm” and Other Typically Political Works,” *The Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 1, 1992). The posters were plastered to coincide with the opening of Conal’s exhibit at the Koplín Gallery in 1992. But Robbie, welcomes the dialogue and sees it as incumbent for an artist to utilize the museum as well as the street. Indicating that such alterations improve the works by making them a more participatory form of agitation. In this way, Robbie incites activities that contribute to a movement that reclaims the streets for serious thought and deliberation of abuses of power. As Robbie contends, “I think we should take the streets back for discourse about issues that are important to us rather than leaving them to alcohol and cigarette advertisements” Neil Kendricks, “Guerrilla Takes His Art to the Streets,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, November 3, 1992.)

There is a danger however, as Robbie achieved a celebrity status throughout the coming years, attention to the political critique can itself be undermined by the sudden value of his street works. As Robbie contends, “While I have no illusions about the power of American culture to absorb any form of resistance, including mine, I think humor

provides a way of operating within the cracks and fissures of the system” (Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 61).

<sup>36</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> As Bakhtin explains, all symbols are filled with change and renewal and the carnivalesque deploys a weird logic of the ‘inside out.’ It was a ‘turnabout’, a continual shifting of top to bottom, front to rear, and involved comic uncrownings, “that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity”(19-20). As Bakhtin argues, the spirit of carnival was directed toward the liberation from a point of view of the world and the conventions, prevailing truths, and universalization of this perspective. “This carnival spirit offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things (34).

<sup>38</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 34.

<sup>40</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 34.

<sup>41</sup> “Robbie Conal-Street Art with an Edge,” *The Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 1991.

<sup>42</sup> “Robbie Conal-Street Art with an Edge,” *The Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 1991.

<sup>43</sup> Jane Greenstein, “Art and Politics Mix for Artist,” *The Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1987.

<sup>44</sup> Neil Kendricks, “Guerrilla Takes His Art to the Streets,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, November 3, 1992.

<sup>45</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> Randy Hoder, “On the Wall: The Art of the Guerrilla Poster,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 6, 1990.

<sup>47</sup> Conal, *Art Attack: The Midnight Politics of a Guerilla Artist*, 61.

<sup>48</sup> Robbie Conal, “Guerrilla Etiquette + Postering Techniques,” Robbie Conal, <http://www.robbyconal.com/guerrilla.html> (accessed April 20, 2011). In “POSTERING TECHNIQUES” Conal advises that construction wall sites and abandoned buildings are the safest targets. But, as Robbie contends it is critical that one respects other activists

posters. “Be careful only to cover up lame-ass ads, like for Celine Dion CD’s or posters for Disney movies)... DO NOT HIT: other graffiti artists' work! Bad-Bad-Bad Guerrilla Etiquette! Our street culture is all about R-E-S-P-E-C-T! Respect other "pieces" original projects...and respect the risks they take in getting up.” Whether working in a team of 2 or a team of 3, Robbie describes precisely who should be the ‘gluer’ and who the ‘poster’, that sites should not be stayed at longer than five minutes, that posters should not be placed in a straight line, never run, ‘hit’ only a place you feel comfortable hitting and drive carefully. Robbie Conal, “Guerrilla Etiquette + Postering Techniques,” Robbie Conal, <http://www.robbyconal.com/guerrilla.html> (accessed April 20, 2011).

<sup>49</sup> Bill Van Siclen, “The Man Behind the Poser,” *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, February 1, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Shepard Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey* (Berkeley, CA: Ginko Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup>Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Cody Goodfellow, “Andre the Giant is Watching You,” Obeygiant, <http://obeygiant.com/articles/andre-the-giant-is-watching-you> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> Cody Goodfellow, “Andre the Giant is Watching You,” Obeygiant, <http://obeygiant.com/articles/andre-the-giant-is-watching-you> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Cody Goodfellow, “Andre the Giant is Watching You,” Obey Giant, <http://obeygiant.com/articles/andre-the-giant-is-watching-you> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*

<sup>57</sup> “Andre the Icon,” *The New York Times*, June 15, 1997.

<sup>58</sup> John Chapin, “D-Town,” *Downtown San Diego’s Community Newspaper*, March-April 1998.

<sup>59</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 342.

<sup>60</sup> The 17 minute documentary was showcased at the Sundance Film Festival in 1996 and received Best Documentary at THAW, and the New York Underground Film and Video Festival. Lee Basford, “Obey Giant has a Posse,” *Level Magazine*, August-September 2000.

<sup>61</sup> Steven Duncombe, “Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture,” (New York, NY: Verso, 1997), 7.

<sup>62</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 89.

<sup>63</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 90.

<sup>64</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 93.

<sup>65</sup> Louis Stephans, “San Diego,” *The Weekly*, January 14-20, 2000.

<sup>66</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Shepard Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Shepard Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962), 50.

<sup>71</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 51.

<sup>72</sup> For Heidegger however, there are many ways in which an object shows itself and depends upon the kind of access one has with the object. The object can also show itself as something that it is not where it *seems* to be something else, which is to say that it resembles something else. This semblance is ‘in actuality’ not what it is. Phenomena depends on these two notions, as that which shows itself but also as a semblance. For Heidegger these two notions are structurally interconnected, as only in showing itself can it take on a semblance of that which it is not. As such, the semblance as a second signification depends upon a positive or primary first signification of the manifest.

<sup>73</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 59.

<sup>74</sup> Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique,” in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 12.

<sup>75</sup> Shklovsky, “Art as Technique,” in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, 21.

<sup>76</sup> That which is hidden or is covered up and only reveals itself ‘in disguise’ so frequently that it becomes forgotten and taken-for-granted is not what it proclaims itself

to be. As a result it becomes unquestionable and perceived unalterable where no questions seem to arise about it or its meaning. In this process meaning “gets understood in an empty way and is thus passed on, losing its indigenous character, and becoming a free-floating thesis.”

<sup>77</sup> Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 54.

<sup>78</sup> Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, 267.

<sup>79</sup> Nathan I. Hara, “Obey?” *LA Weekly* (California), February 15, 2002

<sup>80</sup> Nathan I. Hara, “Obey?” *LA Weekly* (California), February 15, 2002

<sup>81</sup> John Greenwald, “Will Teens buy it?” *Time*, June 24, 2001.

<sup>82</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*

<sup>83</sup> Although the image of Andre remained a steadfast template, the background of the image moved from white to leopard skin, wood grain, flames and other psychedelic geometrical designs. Often used to grab attention, the color stickers were heavily influenced by Fillmore posters of the late 60’s. The appropriation of a Jimi Hendrix psychedelic poster created by John Van Hamersveld was the first to reposition the image using multiple intertextual references. It was also the first fine art print created by Fairey.

<sup>84</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*

<sup>85</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 33.

<sup>86</sup> In *Fascist Spectacle*, Smonetta Falasca-Zamponi argues that fascism deployed an aesthetics to limit and exploit the materiality and corporeal experiences of the human body to unbridled obedience. If “the ‘masses’ crass vulgarity and their preference for matter over soul and spirit constituted a threat to this order” fascism sought to subdue and channel it. The incitation toward action was both a mechanism to reproduce fascism and its potential overturning, as the body and the I, as the representation of individualism, was both needed for allegiance and suppressed to insure a constant state of mobilization. But fascism’s main value was “to believe” and “obey the high authority in the hierarchical structure” (117). Slogans, rallies and images of Mussolini were used to excite the senses of the masses, converting the “herd” into loyal followers. From films and public speeches to posters, an iconography of power looked down upon the public from every corner, with eyes that dictated and much as they seemed to follow. His eyes resembled Gods eyes, as his presence everywhere watched over people everywhere and seemed to see everything. But as much as fascism developed its own traditions, it also appropriated and rearticulated the Roman past for fascist aims. As Falasca-Zamponi contends, “the ambivalent nature of the regime’s references to Rome, however, permitted



different interpretations of the myth to coexist, thus enlarging the chances of popular identification with fascism. Ambiguity paved the way for the normalization of fascism's values" and helped facilitate and channel popular participation in its spectacle (25). These techniques are not uncommon, as Victoria E. Bonnell argues in *Iconography of Power* Bolsheviks fused mythical elements from the past "with contemporary ideology to create a special visual language." The prevalence of this form took on characteristics of propaganda in general, depicting heroes as saints, enemies as the devil, and the worker as icon to re-articulate the dominant meanings, symbols, vocabularies and images to the service of Bolshevik ideology.

<sup>87</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 33.

<sup>88</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 90.

<sup>89</sup> John Chapin, "D-Town," *Downtown San Diego's Community Newspaper*, March-April 1998.

<sup>90</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 30.

<sup>91</sup> Kurt Shaw, "Artist Shepard Fairey Finds Creativity Outside the Box," *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*, October 21, 2009

<sup>92</sup> Nicholas Drake, "Artist Captures Attention with Sticker Based on Andre," *The Post and Courier*, January 14, 1996.

<sup>93</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*

<sup>94</sup> Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 89.

<sup>95</sup> John Chapin, "D-Town," *Downtown San Diego's Community Newspaper*, March-April 1998.

<sup>96</sup> "Artists for Obama," *Creativity*, September 1, 2008

<sup>97</sup> Richard L. Schur, *Parodies of Ownership: Hip-hop Aesthetics and Intellectual Property Law* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 34.

<sup>98</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 406.

<sup>99</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 406.

<sup>100</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 407.

- 101 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 407.
- 102 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 100.
- 103 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 100.
- 104 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 408.
- 105 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 408.
- 106 Lee Basford, “Obey Giant has a Posse,” *Level Magazine*, August-September. 2000.
- 107 “If political posters reach out to a mass audience by visual means, the absorption of the image of the multitudes themselves into the visual vernacular of poster art stands as a logical corollary. Everywhere in twentieth-century political-poster art, whether in the service of an internal organization, a nation state, a political party, or a protest movement, the poster becomes an idealizing mirror in which the collectively can gaze upon itself either in action or as the necessary background for social change. Jefferey T. Shnapp. *Revolutionary tides: The art of the political poster 1914 – 1989*. (Skira 2005), 38.
- 108 Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 94.
- 109 Bret Schulte, “Obey Giant: The Mandate that Grabbed a Generation,” *The Washington Post*, August 9, 2002.
- 110 For a more detailed discussion of difference, see Jacque Derrida, *Difference*.
- 111 Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 93.
- 112 Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 106
- 113 Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 126.
- 114 This also points to the similarities of Fairey’s propaganda and the function of political propaganda in general. See, Schnapp, *Revolutionary Tides*.
- 115 Jameson’s illustration of the overwhelming environment of images, to which Shepard is both subverting and contributing to, is illuminating as he provides conceptualizations to understand not only the perceived effects of this environment but also the methods by which image production calls upon the past in its circulation of the present. This is not to suggest a “random cannibalization of the styles of the past”, but a tactical one, in that the iconic images called upon, are done so to provoke not only recognition, but through a layering and de-layering of vision, misrecognition and denaturalization, or rather de-familiarization. Fredric Jameson *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 494

116 Jeffrey T. Schnapp illustrates, “Political posters mirror the dilemma of the modern individual with respect to society. Massed along the city boulevards, addressed to multitudes on the move on sidewalks, buses, taxis, and trams, each is a multiple but strives, nonetheless, to be more than a mere face in the crowd. Like the modern leader who provides the collectivity with a group identity, with a distance face in an otherwise standardized, faceless world, the political poster strives to individuate itself within a sea of competing posters, to capture the public’s attention, to shape the collective imagination and will” Schnapp, *Revolutionary Tides*, 22.

117 From reproducing and congealing the construction of race, class or gender, images and the cultural apparatuses in which they spring, reify this construction and enable their appearance as truly mimetic, and reproduce the social construction of reality as the natural order of things. As the culture industries and media monopolies continue to operate through free market principles, visual representations become highly concentrated in the hands of big business. The visual messages they send reproduce their necessary conditions of reproduction by interpellating citizens into consumers through highly manipulative techniques within visual representation. As our postmodern culture continues to fragment, the culture industries relentlessly deploy images of the dominant ideology until all are absorbed into its unifying framework. Ultimately, the social authority of the culture industry’s gaze reinforces a totalizing narrative that artfully manufactures consent. This type of explosive resistance opens up the possibilities of looking at visual culture in alternative, multiple, and complex ways.

118 Alison Blasko, “Balancing Act: San Diego’s Blk/Mrkt Strives for Credibility on the Street and in the Conference Room,” *Micro Publishing News*, December 2000.

119 Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece* (London, UK: Century, 2006)

120 Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece*, 95

121 Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece* (London, UK: Century, 2006)

122 Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece*, 97

123 Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece*

124 In *No Caption Needed*, Hariman and Lucaites argue iconic images, such as accidental napalm, “are used to orient the individual within a context of collective identity, obligation, and power. They come to represent large swaths of historical experience, and they acquire their own histories of appropriation and commentary” (1). In constructing a the past, the images provide an idealized sense of identity for particular communities. As such images are seamlessly sutured into the practices of everyday life as they are disseminated, promoted and repeated put on display by large scale business, they reflect an ideology at work. “By ideology, we mean a set of beliefs that presents a social order as if it were a natural order, that presents asymmetrical relations as if they

were mutually beneficial, and that makes authority appear self-evident” (9). Thus, “The ideological code produces a way of taking about the world but one that is necessarily ‘impoverished’ in order to sustain its own contradictions. Images, although they always exceed the code, also, because of their combination of transparency, reproduction, and syntactical impoverishment, operate as highly effective means for relaying the code and thereby both extending and reinforcing the ideological functions” (9). The reproduction of appropriation as commodity integrates and insures the collective features of belonging and reproduces itself as necessary to the reproduction and legitimization of its institutions. Through circulation and appropriation, the image aides in revisiting and revising contradictions – and thus the icon becomes a resource for performative mediation of conflicts. But, as Hariman and Lucaites argue, the widely shared and various interpretations of the image reproduce a liberal democratic order as the public engages, contests and celebrates meaning. And, as I would argue, invests the ambiguity of the image with meaning, “freely” in order that he/she may freely embrace their subjection. As Hariman and Lucaites argue “appropriations are a key feature of iconic circulation precisely because the images are being used to do the work of democratic legitimation. They are used by citizens to negotiate the self-understanding of a democratic society amidst historical change and to work out public opinion and personal attitudes about specific political actors, policies and practices” (38).

125 Banksy, “Banksy,” in *Guerilla Art*, ed. Sebastian Peiter (London, UK: Laurence King, 2009), 29.

126 Banksy, “Banksy,” in *Guerilla Art*, 8.

127 Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece*, 196.

128 Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece*,

129 Banksy, “Banksy,” in *Guerilla Art*, 170.

130 Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece*,

131 Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece*,

132 Banksy, “Banksy,” in *Guerilla Art*, 31.

133 Becky Ebenkamp, *Brand Week*, November 20, 2006.

134 Becky Ebenkamp, *Brand Week*, November 20, 2006

135 Nathan Hara, “Obey?” *L.A. Weekly*, February 15, 2002.

- 136 “Atari and Marc Ecko Announce Exclusive Pre-sell Program for 'Marc Ecko's Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure'; Original Poster Created by Street Artist OBEY: Shepard Fairey Available at Select Retailers Now,” *PR Newswire*, October 3, 2005
- 137 Jim Morekip, “Creative Loafing Online,” *ObeYGiant.com*, March 25, 2000.
- 138 Will Evans, “Street Smarts; Shepard Fairey’s Art, Once Underground, has become a Giant Inspiration,” *Sacramento Bee*, April 13, 2004.
- 139 Noah R. Brier, “Buzz Giant Poster Boy,” *American Demographics*, June 1, 2004.
- 140 Fairey, *ObeY: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 90.
- 141 Richard Whittaker, “Artist Cage Match: Fairey v. Orr,” *The Austin Chronicle*, May 16, 2008.
- 142 William Booth, “Obama’s On-the-Wall Endorsement,” *The Washington Post*, May 18, 2008.
- 143 William Booth, “Obama’s On-the-Wall Endorsement,” *The Washington Post*, May 18, 2008.
- 144 One report explained, “Fairey’s Obama posters derive part of their power from their restraint. A single word—hope, progress – at the base of each poster is a distillation of Obama’s appeal for the faithful, stated with the populist confidence of all caps and a sans serif font. The simple designs echoed the poetic optimism that was the candidate’s stock in trade . . . After eight years of war and fear, in the wake of shame and scandal and on the brink of economic collapse, we’re eager for some vindication and a sense that better times are just ahead. Fairey’s posters offer us a beacon in the night promising us that, from now on, we’ll be on the right side of history. Susannah Schouweiler, “Shepard Fairey,” *City Pages* (Minneapolis), December 24, 2008.
- 145 “Obamicon.me,” *Dayton Daily News* (Ohio), January 23, 2009
- 146 William Booth, “Obama’s On-the-Wall Endorsement,” *The Washington Post*, May 18, 2008.
- 147 “Time Magazine’s Icon Maker of the Year,” *PR News*, January 8, 2009.
- 148 Fairey’s political involvement with the campaign didn’t end there however, as he began creating posters for Rock the Vote to encourage younger people to get out and vote. As, Fairey explains in a public relations newswire press release, “I wanted to make art for Rock the Vote because I feel that many young people need to be reminded that voting is a direct and powerful way to express their opinions and shape policy. Rock the Vote reaches out to younger voters who often have progressive views, but fail to turn up at the polls. I wanted to do anything I could to help Rock the Vote encourage a powerful

group of potential voters to participate in democracy.” The use of Fairey’s work and storehouse of countercultural capital may have shaped democracy as Fairey also teamed up with MoveOn.org during this time. Both Fairey and MoveOn identified the buzz from Fairey’s Hope poster and created a forum for others to create similar posters. Together they created an online art contest and gallery show with a panel of judges that included Fairey, Thurston Moore, Moby and Ross Bleckner. Titled, “Manifest Hope” the gallery highlights the significance of art to grassroots activism. As Fairey describes, art can engage even the most cynical observer through emotion and stimulate an array of cognitive associations or undermine them. “Rock the Vote to Sell Limited Edition Signed and Numbered Shepard Fairey Art on CafePress, *PR Newswire*, August 18, 2008.

149 Abby Goodnough, “Boston Vandalism Charges Stir Debate on Art’s Place,” *The New York Times*, March 12, 2009.

150 Abby Goodnough, “Boston Vandalism Charges Stir Debate on Art’s Place,” *The New York Times*, March 12, 2009.

151 Christopher Borelli, “Street Artist Shepard Fairey at a Crossroad,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 13, 2009.

152 Bill Van Siclen, “The Man Behind the Poster,” *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, February 1, 2009.

153 When the images of Chairman Mao, an Eagle perched atop a gasoline nozzle, or Angela Davis are a part of a gallery exhibition, removed from the context of the street or seen as part of a city commissioned bike tour, the institutional setting of the image reifies and anesthetizes the politics of the image. Articulated and legitimized as an “art object” the images are freed from the context of the street and the weight of history. As a part of the dominant modes of representation and the cultural repertoire of images, the exhibits become show cases for the designs used to market products. In short, the images are de-politicized as they are converted into hip and trendy art. In the end, the images in the gallery reflect the cultural imagery of the dominant owned and contained by those who are able to afford them. As art objects, the works move from the critique of power, the unequal access of culture and the use of public space to the reproduction of power and the use of public space for advertising, as the works function as outdoor ads for-hire, to promote art shows, and maintain brand identity. Thus, when Fairey uses the images of civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Angela Davis or Malcolm X to reclaim public space and reveal the manipulation of images to manufacture consent, but by extension is able to create the associations necessary for ObeyGiant Clothing Inc., and Subliminal One to achieve street credibility and counter-cultural capital, the use of the image promotes the sale of art and the designs available to marketing agencies.

154 “Levi’s ® Collaborates with Influential Street Artist for Exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston,” *PR News*, February 5, 2009.

155 “Levi’s ® Collaborates with Influential Street Artist for Exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston,” *PR News*, February 5, 2009.

156 “Levi’s ® Collaborates with Influential Street Artist for Exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston,” *PR News*, February 5, 2009.

157 “World Renowned Street Artist Shepard Fairey and the Levi’s Brand Team up to Unveil New, Limited Edition Collection,” *PR Newswire*, October 26, 2009.

158 As Fairey explains in *PR News*, “I’ve always felt that keeping my art bold, simple and refined was a way to cut through the clutter . . . The posters I created for Levis are returns to the roots of my style: one side with an industrial propaganda poster feel that connects with the heritage of Levi’s as a brand for workers, and the reverse side reflecting my other biggest influence, punk rock, and the connection of Levi’s to punk and rock in general “World Renowned Street Artist Shepard Fairey and the Levi’s Brand Team up to Unveil New, Limited Edition Collection,” *PR Newswire*, October 26, 2009.

159 But perhaps the disagreement in the press facilitates the type of dialogue that Fairey was hoping to achieve. As the end of one article notes, “Disgusting? Public Art? Advertising? Graffiti? Visual pollution? . . . unlicensed advertising? Is an individual allowed to promote himself in public space, or should he be regulated like a business? John Chaplin, “D-Town,” *Downtown San Diego’s Community Newspaper*, March-April.

160 “Giant in the Field,” *Denver Westword*, November 6, 2003.

161 Gina Kaufman, “Fairey Tale: There’s a Moral to this Wheat-Pasting Story,” *The Pitch* (Kansas City), December 2, 2004.

162 Nathan Hara, “Obey?” *L.A. Weekly*, February 15, 2002.

163 As Fairey contends, “I’ve never said that art, or life, or anything was not without paradox or that anything was perfect. . . In a lot of ways I think the control of public space and how media is used to influence and the structure of power is something I’m calling into question, and so it is probably unavoidable that I will find myself entangled in that very power structure at some point. . . The goal was to do art on the street to make people consider other options for public space.” Patricia Sheridan, “Breakfast with Shepard Fairey,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 26, 2009.

164 John Rogers, “Street Artist’s Star Rises with Obama Portrait,” *The Associated Press*, January 15, 2009.

165 Patricia Sheridan, “Breakfast with Shepard Fairey,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 26, 2009.

166 Patricia Sheridan, "Breakfast with Shepard Fairey," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 26, 2009.

167 "I work as a graphic designer these days, which came about because the work I was putting on the street created enough of a buzz that companies began to feel it would resonate enough to be used for marketing. I had created a demand for my style of work that meant that if it was not supplied to the corporations by me, it would be supplied by other hungry designers. I decided that in doing graphic design I could keep my design skills honed and make enough money to pump even more Obey Giant materials out in public, which I consider truly subversive. This method of financing my campaign also keeps me from having the content of Obey dictated by fine-art market forces. Plus, I've been able to convince some of the corporations to invest in the cultures they try to exploit, helping to create a more symbiotic relationship between the creators and harvesters of culture." Fairey, *Obey: Supply and Demand – The Art of Shepard Fairey*, 93.

168 Will Evans, "Street Smarts; Shepard Fairey's Art, Once Underground, has become a Giant Inspiration," *Sacramento Bee*, April 13, 2004.

169 James Hebert, "Taking it to the Streets; Once a Statement against the Establishment, Public Art is now often used as Marketing Tool," *San Diego Union Tribune*, August 12, 2007.

170 Scott Snyder, "Transworld Stance: Giant Phenomenology," Obeygiant.com

171 James Hebert, "Taking it to the Streets; Once a Statement against the Establishment, Public Art is now often used as Marketing Tool," *San Diego Union Tribune*, August 12, 2007.

172 "Giant in the Field," *Denver Westword*, November 6, 2003.

173 While cooptation and commodification provides street artists with the opportunity to get in on the changing environment or be overtaken by it, the difficulty is in maintaining an upper hand. As Fairey explains, Obey is not resistant to the dominant paradigm. "In some ways, Obey can run parallel to the system, utilizing aspects and subverting others, but eventually its familiarity will render it impotent – it will become wallpaper."

174 Jeff Beer, "Shepard Fairey has a Posse: Iconic Artist Straddles Art and Commerce with Studio Number One," *Creativity*, November 1, 2008.

175 Terry Gross, "Inspiration or Infringement?" Fresh Air, National Public Radio. February 26, 2009.

## Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 3.

<sup>2</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 40.



<sup>3</sup>Ben H. Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly*. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004), 14. As Bagdikain argues, “At the time of these events, the accounts read by most Americans were the propagandistic reports issued by Washington and its foreign embassies, giving ordinary readers and viewers the impression that these moves were either spontaneous or beneficent actions by the United States to oppose communism, further social justice, or prevent threats to the security of the United States” (97). Similarly, by the late 1980s, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky developed a propaganda model to account for the information environment that facilitated big business over democratic practices. As Edward Herman describes, the propaganda model was a framework applied to news coverage to explain press performance in the U.S. media. “A propaganda model focuses on this inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public” (Herman & Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 2).

<sup>4</sup> The effects on national media systems, culture and politics “has been fueled by the globalization of business more generally, the associated rapid growth of global advertising, and improved communications technology that has facilitated cross-border operations and control. It has also been helped along by government policy and the consolidation of neoliberal ideology” (Herman & Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 2002, xiv). As Herman and Chomsky argue, neoliberal ideology provides the rationale for transnational investment and the increased privatization of cultural resource. “These changes...have seriously weakened the ‘public sphere,’ which refers to the array of places and forums in which matters important to a democratic community are debated and information relevant to intelligent citizen participation is provided. The steady advance, and cultural power, of marketing and advertising has caused ‘the displacement of a political public sphere by a depoliticized consumer culture’” (Herman & Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 2002, xviii).

<sup>5</sup> Such political and economic conditions would also facilitate the growth of practices, by which and for which appropriation activists, denied other means of mass communication, appropriated billboards and took advantage of the cash nexus driving the press by providing press releases, rather than funding critiques of transnational corporations during commercial breaks - to contest the hegemonic apparatus of the media. Within this environment battles waged both on the streets, in corporate boardrooms and in law over tension between the rights to and of property over freedom of expression.

<sup>6</sup> Robert W. McChesney, *Rich Media Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> McChesney defines externalities as the unintended social consequence of markets – both positive and negative. “In their rational pursuit of profit, media firms produce vast quantities of violent fare, subject children to systematic commercial carpet-bombing, and produce a journalism that hardly meets the communication needs of the citizenry” (*Rich Media Poor Democracy*, 144)

<sup>8</sup> Robert W. McChesney, *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (Monthly Review Press, 2004), 167

<sup>9</sup> For example, the Telecom Act modified broadcast ownership rules, relaxed the regulatory treatment for Bell Operating Companies, eliminated broadcast comparative license renewal procedures, and deregulated cross ownership and the conglomerate status of the industry under the guise that relaxed regulation would foster competition and innovation. However, the relaxed restrictions on media ownership have led to larger media companies with a greater concentration of ownership. Before the Telecom Act a national television corporation could own up to 12 stations nationwide or could own enough stations to reach a maximum of 25% of U.S. television households. Upon implementation of the Act, the limit on the number of stations was eliminated insofar as the station reach did not exceed 35%. The Telecommunications Act altered restrictions on national radio as well. Where 20 FM and 20 AM stations were permitted prior to 1996, after the implementation of the Act there was no limit. In markets exceeding 45 stations, an entity could own up to eight stations total and five stations in either AM or FM service. Prior to the Act, a company could not own, operate or control more than two AM and two FM stations in the market. Consequently, the audience share of co-owned stations could not exceed 25% of the market. Today Clear Channel owns 1200 stations.

<sup>10</sup> Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*.

<sup>11</sup> McChesney, *Rich Media Poor Democracy*, 184.

<sup>12</sup> For example, a synergistic corporation such as Time Warner can virtually blanket culture through the promotion, display and distribution of a successful film as it utilizes its broadcast properties to promote it, television stations to create programs centered around the film and include add ins, profit from and eliminate competition in developing the soundtracks through its music holdings, lockout and secure book deals with its publishing houses, utilize the advertising spaces to promote the film in its magazine and newspapers and air commercials during its television shows commercial breaks.

<sup>13</sup> “The operating premise of the law was that new communication technologies combined with an increased appreciation for the genius of the market rendered the traditional regulatory model moot. The solution therefore was to lift regulations and ownership restrictions from commercial media and communication companies, allow competition in the marketplace to develop, and reduce the government’s role to that of protecting private property” (McChesney, *The Problem of the Media*, 51).

<sup>14</sup> As McChesney argues, “Ownership does matter, especially in media, where control over ideas, news, and culture rates as a unique power even among powerful corporations. Private ownership of media, in nonegalitarian societies, is not content-neutral or viewpoint-neutral; the best ideas do not automatically rise to the top. Add advertising’s

role, as well as the workings of the oligopolistic marketplace, and private ownership becomes a vise that directly and indirectly pressures content. The ‘market’ can be a most effective censor. Hence, by definition, capitalist control over media poses a serious problem for democratic press theory” (McChesney, *The Problem of the Media*, 225).

<sup>15</sup> McChesney, *Rich Media Poor Democracy*

<sup>16</sup> Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly*.

<sup>17</sup> McChesney, *Rich Media Poor Democracy*, 79.

<sup>18</sup> <http://kantarmediana.com/insight-center/news/us-advertising-expenditures-increased-65-percent-2010>

<sup>19</sup> <http://kantarmediana.com/insight-center/news/us-advertising-expenditures-increased-65-percent-2010>

<sup>20</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 42.

<sup>21</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 50.

<sup>22</sup> Nancy Snow, *Propaganda, Inc.: Selling America’s Culture to the World*. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002)

<sup>23</sup> Snow, *Propaganda, Inc.*, 59

<sup>24</sup> Michael O’Sullivan, “The Shrinking of American Cultural Diplomacy,” *The Washington Post*, September 23, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> While it is important to highlight the complex relationship between the commercial sector and institutions of art, it is the relationship between government funded art and commerce, which is to say between the state and economy, that needs further explication. As the U.S. Government funds some artists while denying others grants, the government’s role becomes the engine for the future of advertising within prescribed limits. As artistic works become the semiotic fodder for advertisements and exist as commodities, the state helps create the conditions for commerce. Thus, as art is funneled into institutes and then converted into commodities, an interesting dynamic reveals itself.

<sup>26</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 38.

<sup>27</sup> As McChesney outlines, the structural shifts from the Telecommunications Act to the mid 2000s also facilitated unequal access to the public sphere. “A wave of consolidation in the 1980s and 1990s produced a situation in which a handful of advertising agency super groups have come to dominant advertising worldwide... In the United States, eight companies receive 97 percent of television advertising; worldwide, twenty media

companies receive 75 percent of advertising spending” (McChesney, *The Problem of the Media*, 141).

<sup>28</sup> As McChesney argues, “But for many brands in oligopolistic markets the differences between them are minimal or irrelevant; they are called parity products...Advertising in such a context must resort to what is called ‘image’ advertising in an attempt to create an illusory difference between brands” (McChesney, *The Problem of the Media*, 142).

<sup>29</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*, 21.

<sup>31</sup> Alissa Quart, *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* (New York, NY: Basic Books Inc., 2003), 8

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Barber, *Consumed*, 178-9).

<sup>33</sup> Kevin Roberts, *Lovemarks* (Power House Books, 2001), 9.

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Roberts, *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Kevin Roberts, *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>36</sup> Anne Elizabeth Moore, *Unmarketable: Brandalism, Copyfighting, Mocketing and the Erosion of Integrity* (New York, NY: New Press, 2007), 94.

<sup>37</sup> Anne Elizabeth Moore, *Unmarketable*, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Juliet B. Schor, *Born to Buy* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2005), 47.

<sup>39</sup> *Chasing Cool*, (xii).

<sup>40</sup> Alissa Quart, *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*, 18

<sup>41</sup> The teen market is significant as it both sets the trends and styles for the adolescent markets but also because they are generally more cynical but all embracing of brands. Children have become the conduits to the consumer marketplace, “the link between advertisers and the family purse.” Having grown up with product placement, association and cross-promotion they are the first adopters and loyal users of new technologies and are more aware of and knowledgeable of new trends. Today’s teens are victims of the contemporary luxury economy. They have grown up in the age of the brand, bombarded and defined by name products and intrusive and clever advertising strategies. Raised by a commodity culture from the cradle, teens dependably fragile self-images and their need to belong to groups are perfect qualities for advertisers to exploit” Quart, *Branded*, xvi. Schor identifies this trend as the “commercialization of childhood,” as an ever more sophisticated marketing strategy expands its reach, effectiveness and audacity. Part of

this trend is associated with the rise of purchasing power. In 1989, children aged four to twelve spent \$6.1 billion in purchases, \$23.4 in 1997, and \$30 billion in 2002. While older kids, twelve to nineteen spent \$170 billion in 2002. Within the family, they are more passionate about consumption and have a virtual abyss of consumer desires often tethering their identity and the notion of the self with products, brands and trends. As Schor states in *Born to Buy*, their worlds are “increasingly constructed around consuming, as brands and products have come to determine who is “in” or “out,” who is hot nor not, who deserves to have friends, or social status” (11).

<sup>42</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*, 79

<sup>43</sup> The rise in cool hunting is associated with the creation of a consuming public who is more resistant to traditional marketing having grown up learning the semiotics of advertising. This, public is the youthful, tech savvy generation who was born into an environment of advertising and conspicuous consumption. The youth market however, is not a natural demographic category, but a manufactured subset of the public. During World War II, for example, marketers identified the American teen market as the next great consuming public who would have more disposable income. But marketing to kids didn't really take off until the 1980s, during what Quart identifies as two monumental events; the release and success of the film and branded products from *Jaws* in 1975 and *Star Wars* in 1977. From bed sheets, sleeping bags and action figures to cartoons and books, these films pointed to the profitability associated with corporate synergy. The second event, according to Quart, occurred in 1978 when Congress blocked the proposed Federal Trade Commission regulations regarding child oriented advertisements. In the years to come, the absence of regulation regarding advertising facilitated a push to market to school kids with purchasing power, or “Skippes.”

<sup>44</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*, 115.

<sup>45</sup> “One striking attempt at guerilla marketing tactics is called ‘urban marketing,’ in which a firm such as Coca-Cola sends teams of cool African Americans...to the sweltering streets to engage in a block-by-block battle to win over the hearts and wallets of lower-income, mostly African-American consumers” (McChesney, *The Problem of the Meida*, 162). Marketers, as Schor illustrates, developed a practice called “bro-ing” to get-in on this trend setting and cool demographic. “Bro-ing, essentially meant hitting the streets to ask the “brothers” about which designer labels were in. Apparel companies, such as Tommy Hilfiger in the 1990s, were the leading “bro-ing” agencies and gave rap stars and other prominent tastemakers free samples to help spread the word. As one reporter surmised, “When a celebrity wears a brand not just because they’re paid, but because they actually like the clothes, that’s the best kind of endorsement... These kids have a bullshit detector like a seismograph.” So, if a celebrity doesn’t appear to be endorsing the product, an illusion of authenticity and street credibility is created and attached to the brand. David Holthouse, “Shirt Happens; Budding Urban-Wear Mogul Takes Phoenix’s MosDef Label to the Streets,” *Phoenix New Times*, April 23, 1998.

- 46 Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*, 79.
- 47 Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*, 5.
- 48 McChesney, *The Problem of the Media*, 153.
- 49 McChesney, *The Problem of the Media*, 161.
- 50 Jack O'Dweyer, "Guerrilla Marketing: A PR tool," *Jack O'Dweyer's Newsletter*, June 6, 1990.
- 51 Steve Brennen, "New Tactics for Survival of the First-Run Fittest; 'Guerrilla Marketing' on the way, Study says," *The Hollywood Reporter*, August 13, 1992.
- 52 "Market Review: The End of Advertising as we know it?" *Cabinet Maker*, May 27, 2005.
- 53 Tom Wells, "Soap Box: Why We would do well to Ape Mao's Guerrilla Tactics," *Marketing*, April 17, 1997.
- 54 John Reinan, "Guerrilla marketing takes the message to the streets," *Star Tribune*, July 21, 2003.
- 55 "Monkeying Around," *Adweek*, August 13, 2001.
- 56 GoGorilla Media Kit. <http://www.gogorillamedia.com/mediakits/mediakit-gogorilla.pdf>
- 57 GoGorilla Media Kit. <http://www.gogorillamedia.com/mediakits/mediakit-gogorilla.pdf>
- 58 GoGorilla Media Kit. <http://www.gogorillamedia.com/mediakits/mediakit-gogorilla.pdf>
- 59 GoGorilla Media Kit. <http://www.gogorillamedia.com/mediakits/mediakit-gogorilla.pdf>
- 60 GoGorilla Media Kit. <http://www.gogorillamedia.com/mediakits/mediakit-gogorilla.pdf>
- 61 Max Lenderman, "'Rocah-bait' marketing comes out of woodwork," *Strategy*. September 9, 2002
- 62 Max Lenderman, "'Rocah-bait' marketing comes out of woodwork," *Strategy*. September 9, 2002
- 63 Max Lenderman, "There's guerrilla – and then there's terrorism," *Strategy*. July 14, 2003.

64 Lenderman, “‘Rocah-bait’ marketing comes out of woodwork,” *Strategy*. September 9, 2002

65 Lenderman, “There’s guerrilla – and then there’s terrorism,” *Strategy*. July 14, 2003.

66 While Frito-Lays was one of the first to use guerilla marketing, when they employed college students dressed as giant bags of popcorn to dance on freeway overpasses and give away free full sized bags of popcorn of the newly launched Smartfood popcorn, the technique points to both guerrilla street theatre and the freebie. The Freebie, has not been isolated to Fritos however, as countless examples of the free giveaway have been utilized to both build consumer trust and loyalty. Jennifer Lawrence, “Fritos Kernels Plot Guerrilla Marketing,” *Advertising Age*, April 9, 1990. In 2002 for example, Mark Crawford ran the London marathon dressed as a Fusli cereal bar to promote the new product. As some reports indicated, “what better way to express the company’s brand values of healthy and active living than to send a sweaty senior marketer panting around the UK’s premier run in a weighty plastic straitjacket?” Although a bit tongue-in-cheek, it is hard to question the tactic in terms of one the most essential aims of guerrilla marketing, exposure. Mathew Arnold, “Proof that Frusli can Last as Long as the Marathon,” *Marketing*, April 25, 2002.

67 “Market Review: The End of Advertising as we know it?” *Cabinet Maker*, May 27, 2005.

68 In 1992 for example, Veryfine fruit juice employed costumed college students to pump over \$100 worth of quarters into parking meters in downtown Minneapolis from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., while distributing coupons for a free bottle of Veryfine fruit juice. Dressed in black and red capes, bubble hats and red t-shirts and shorts, the college students engaged in a form of guerilla street theatre. But, in the tactics were only a part of a strategy, as the meter promotion included TV, radio and billboard ads. Dan Wasco, “Fruit juice marketing gimmick will rescue overtime parkers,” *Star Tribune*, June 12, 1992.

69 “Advertising: Taunton signs up CKT for Drum’s live advertising,” *Marketing*, January 13, 1994.

70 “Advertising: Taunton signs up CKT for Drum’s live advertising,” *Marketing*, January 13, 1994.

71 Nathan Hara, “Obey?” *L.A. Weekly*, February 15, 2002.

72 Bret Schulte, “Obey Giant: The Mandate that Grabbed a Generation,” *The Washington Post*, August 9, 2002.

73 Bret Schulte, “Obey Giant: The Mandate that Grabbed a Generation,” *The Washington Post*, August 9, 2002.

- 74 Bret Schulte, "Obey Giant: The Mandate that Grabbed a Generation," *The Washington Post*, August 9, 2002.
- 75 "Blk/Mrkt Inc.," *Advertising Age's Creativity*, April 1, 2003.
- 76 "Brand and Youth Lifestyle Experts Launch 'Project 2050' to Connect Brands with Today's Youth and Lifestyle Markets," *PR Newswire U.S.*, May 2, 2005.
- 77 Noah R. Brier, "Buzz Giant Poster Boy," *American Demographics*, June 1, 2004.
- 78 Sandra Dolbow, "Guerrilla Marketers of the Year," *Brand Week*, November 12, 2001.
- 79 Michael Dooley, "He Might be Giant," *Print Magazine*, May/June 2000.
- 80 Noah R. Brier, "Buzz Giant Poster Boy," *American Demographics*, June 1, 2004.
- 81 Sandra Dolbow, "Guerrilla Marketers of the Year," *Brand Week*, November 12, 2001
- 82 Sandra Dolbow, "Guerrilla Marketers of the Year," *Brand Week*, November 12, 2001.
- 83 Ashlee Vance, "San Francisco Delivers Bill for IBM's Linux Love Notes," *Info World Daily News*, November 27, 2001.
- 84 Ashlee Vance, "San Francisco Delivers Bill for IBM's Linux Love Notes," *Info World Daily News*, November 27, 2001.
- 85 Moore, *Unmarketable*.
- 86 Moore, *Unmarketable*,
- 87 By June of 2002, the History Channel engaged in a guerrilla marketing campaign that utilized graffiti like postings and street decals to promote Secret Programs. The decals featured a hand pointing to locations throughout the city leading the public on a mysterious quest. Reminiscent of the hand common to dada, the re-appropriation of street tactics emerges in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a strategy to create buzz. "Hide and Seek," *Ad Week*, June 17, 2002.
- 88 Source: <http://www.allbusiness.com/marketing-advertising/marketing-advertising/5737707-1.html#ixzz1cmcNDhd9>
- 89 Source: <http://www.allbusiness.com/marketing-advertising/marketing-advertising/5737707-1.html#ixzz1cmcNDhd9>
- 90 Source: <http://www.allbusiness.com/marketing-advertising/marketing-advertising/5737707-1.html#ixzz1cmcNDhd9>



91 Source: <http://www.allbusiness.com/marketing-advertising/marketing-advertising/5737707-1.html#ixzz1cmcNDhd9>

92 Source: <http://www.allbusiness.com/marketing-advertising/marketing-advertising/5737707-1.html#ixzz1cmcNDhd9>

93 Suzanne Herel, "Graffiti Ad Tag NBC for Possible City Fines," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 24, 2004.

94 Mike Musgrove, "What Looks like Graffiti could really be an Ad," *TechNews*, December 26, 2005.

95 Mike Musgrove, "What Looks like Graffiti could really be an Ad," *TechNews*, December 26, 2005.

96 Moore, *Unmarketable*, 46.

97 Mike Musgrove, "What Looks like Graffiti could really be an Ad," *TechNews*, December 26, 2005.

98 Moore, *Unmarketable*.

99 "Brand and Youth Lifestyle Experts Launch 'Project 2050' to Connect Brands with Today's Youth and Lifestyle Markets," *PR Newswire U.S.*, May 2, 2005.

100 "Brand and Youth Lifestyle Experts Launch 'Project 2050' to Connect Brands with Today's Youth and Lifestyle Markets," *PR Newswire U.S.*, May 2, 2005.

101 "Brand and Youth Lifestyle Experts Launch 'Project 2050' to Connect Brands with Today's Youth and Lifestyle Markets," *PR Newswire U.S.*, May 2, 2005.

102 Larel Wentz, "Hitting the Streets," *Advertising Age*, May 2, 2005.

103 "Brand and Youth Lifestyle Experts Launch 'Project 2050' to Connect Brands with Today's Youth and Lifestyle Markets," *PR Newswire U.S.*, May 2, 2005.

104 "Spending \$1 million or less: Grey San Francisco," *Media Week*, June 18, 2007.

105 Ibid.

106 "Spending \$1 million or less: Grey San Francisco," *Media Week*, June 18, 2007

107 Ibid.

- 108 James Hebert, "Taking it to the Streets; Once a Statement against the Establishment, Public Art is now often used as Marketing Tool," *San Diego Union Tribune*, August 12, 2007.
- 109 Lisa de Moraes, "Don't Hit the Panic Button on your Remote," *The Washington Post*, February 1, 2007.
- 110 Ibid.
- 111 Constantine von Hoffman, "Arrests in Boston Follow Failed Guerilla Marketing Effort," *Brand Week*, February 1, 2007.
- 112 As Ewen continues, "If it creates a desire for them because they think it delivers on that promise because of their experience, then it's a total win." "Guerilla Marketer Sam Ewen Finally Speaks about what Happened in Boston," *Brand Week*, February 19, 2007.
- 113 Michael Powell, "Marketing Gimmick goes Bad in Boston; Light Devices Cause Bomb Scare," *The Washington Post*, February 1, 2007.
- 114 Lloyd P. Trufelman, "Letters: Media coverage is measure of good guerilla efforts," *Brand Week*. December 4, 2006.
- 115 To appease the city and alleviate any concern, Turner Broadcasting Chairman and CEO Phil Kent issued an apology later in the evening explaining that Turner directed a third-party marketing firm to engage in the tactics and for them to remove the devices in all 10 cities. As Kent stated, "We appreciate the gravity of this situation and, like any responsible company would, are putting all necessary resources toward understanding the facts surrounding it as quickly as possible." While Kent suggests that Turner is responsible for the campaign, he reveals just how little Turner knows about the marketing campaigns engaged on their behalf. Lisa de Moraes, "Don't Hit the Panic Button on your Remote," *The Washington Post*, February 1, 2007. As for the two men arrested on the scene, Peter Berdvosky and Sean Stevens, were initially charged with planting a hoax device and disorderly conduct and pled not guilty the following day. But, as the day continued the guerilla marketing attempt was redefined by the city as a marketing hoax. Protesters gathered and bloggers mounted criticizing the city's overreaction. By May however, US prosecutors dropped the charges in exchange for 60-80 hours of community service. After all, it was the city who mistook a marketing stunt for a terrorist plot.
- 116 Constantine von Hoffman, "Turner Pays up in Boston Brouhaha," *Brand Week*, February 6, 2007.
- 117 The cost of deploying emergency works to respond and detonate the devices was estimated at more than \$500,000. Damages that Mayor Menino prosecuted to recoup. As *The Washington Post* reported, "It is outrageous, in a post-9/11 world, that a company would use this type of marketing scheme. I am prepared to take any and all legal action against Turner Broadcasting and its affiliates for any and all experiences incurred during the responses to today's incidents."

- 118 Leland Harden and Bob Heyman, "Napster's Return," *Direct*, February 1, 2009.
- 119 *Ibid.*
- 120 Leland Harden and Bob Heyman, "Napster's Return," *Direct*. February 1, 2009.
- 121 John Letzing, "Zynga Draws Heat in Hometown over Marketing," *Market Watch*, August 20, 2010.
- 122 James Hibberd, "Fox Unveils House Guerrilla Ad Play," *Media Week*, August 26, 2009.
- 123 Hibberd, "Fox Unveils House Guerrilla Ad Play," *Media Week*, August 26, 2009.
- 124 Todd Wasserman, "Guerrilla Marketing goes Tweet," *Ad Week*, November 29, 2009.
- 125 Wipperfurth, *Brand Hijack*.
- 126 Todd Wasserman, "Guerrilla Marketing goes Tweet," *Ad Week*, November 29, 2009.
- 127 Rob Walker, *Buying In*, 27.
- 128 Quart, *Branded*, 105.
- 129 Skating was resistance, transgressive and purely expressive activity. Skaters, as Quart explains "redefine business and governmental spaces as nonprofit places for imagination, athleticism, fun, and wandering. But despite this mythology, skaters are also the most available peer-to-peer marketers around. They aspire to be on skateboard flow teams or, even better, obtaining the higher level of a sponsored amateur team; this way, they get free wheels and other gear from companies so that they can parade the stuff around their respective skate parks before anyone else can do the same." Quart, *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*, 105. The immediate skateboarding craze that followed was facilitated by marketing agencies who sponsored boarders to sell magazines, boards and clothing. But even as Pepsi sponsored skate teams by 1977, the skaters in large part defined themselves as antiestablishment.
- 130 Lillie Guyer, "Scion Goes off the Beaten Path," *Automotive News*, March 7, 2005.
- 131 Lillie Guyer, "Scion Goes off the Beaten Path," *Automotive News*, March 7, 2005.
- 132 *Ibid.*
- 133 *Ibid.*
- 134 "Guerrilla Marketing 2007," *Brand Week*, November 26, 2007.

135 Ibid.

136 Andrew McMains, "Update: Inside Scion's RFI," *Brandweek.com*, September 19, 2008.

137 Andrew McMains, "Update: Inside Scion's RFI," *Brandweek.com*, September 19, 2008.

138 [www.greenableart.com/about.php](http://www.greenableart.com/about.php)

139 The tactics of consumer involvement and interactive participation have also moved to the internet. In what has been identified as a move to "empower" potential consumers by allowing internet users to manipulate corporate mascots, the full absurdity of the manipulative tactics of such techniques reach their apex. To promote Burger Kings slogan, "Have it your way" and continue its attempt to brand the burger franchise by giving the consumer a choice of preselected menu items, the advertising agency Crispin Porter and Bogusky of Miami created a viral marketing campaign called the Subversive Chicken. For the campaign CP&B hired an actor to dress up in a feathered costume and act out 400 different actions in front of a camera in a basement. The basement, having the look of an amateur 80's porn set and films such as *Videodrome* and *Demon Lover*, played to voyeuristic impulse. However, the campaign encouraged viewers to give the chicken a command to perform a particular action. If users typed "breakdance," the chicken would breakdance, creating the illusion of a live video feed and direct correspondence. The illusion that users stumbled upon their own personal dominatrix sight, led reports in *Brandweek* to suggest that the subservient chicken campaign was a brilliant attempt on the part of Burger King by "Empowering consumers to create their own entertainment." The success of such empowerment led to "12 million unique visits in the first six months of the program, which spawned a DirectTV event, Halloween masks and the political parody "Subservient President." Kenneth Hein, "Burger King tastes like chicken, smells like guerrilla marketing," *Brandweek*, November 22, 2004.

140 Wipperfurth, *Brand Hijack*, 160.

141 Wipperfurth, *Brand Hijack*, 140.

142 Wipperfurth, *Brand Hijack*, 143.

143 Wipperfurth, *Brand Hijack*, 145.

144 Wipperfurth, *Brand Hijack*, 84.

145 Wipperfurth, *Brand Hijack*, 57.

146 Barber, *Consumed*, 165.

147 Barber, *Consumed*, 167.

148 Barber, *Consumed*, 250.

<sup>149</sup> David Lipke, “Fairey Tale, Women's Wear Daily(WWD), February 11, 2009

<sup>150</sup>BMW’s track record and more recent attempts to brand themselves as a part of culture has included short movies for their VODCARS campaign. Directed by Guy Richie and starring Madonna, BMW has taken branding to a higher level than their supposed competition. But BMW was far from the only player trying to co-opt appropriation in the creation of a hip and a bit of subversive brand identity.

<sup>151</sup> It stands in a long tradition of appropriating photographs, and specifically Che’s image by Banksy and Shepard Fairey, for uses other than their intended purpose. But, as the image is severed from its context the image of Che loses its socio-historic and culturally specific meaning and is converted into myth. As the photograph is re-worked and re-contextualized it operates rhetorically as an image of political iconography and a symbol of distinction. As the image is articulated to a product for commercial purposes, the product itself gains an associative secondary meaning of rebellion. This occurs in large part due to the trace associations of Che but also because of its ‘illegal’ methods of acquisition and use.

<sup>152</sup> “Participate in ‘QR scavenger hunt,’ win Ford Fiesta,” *Huffington Post*, December 20, 2010.

<sup>153</sup> Moore, *Unmarketable*, 83.

<sup>154</sup> Barber, *Consumed*, 139.

<sup>155</sup> Barber, *Consumed*, 123.

<sup>156</sup> Barber, *Consumed*, 143.

<sup>157</sup> Barber, *Consumed*, 247.

### **Conclusion**

<sup>1</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 67-8.

<sup>2</sup> Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 161.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that guerilla marketing, or rather guerilla distribution and word of mouth selling, was a common tactic in the music industry long before it was employed by mainstream media and advertising industries. But as Juliet Schor contests, “in genres such as hip-hop and rap, CDs cannot succeed without a viral campaign, which is why Sony’s Epic Records dispatched a full time street team to urban clubs to promote groups such as B2K and 3LW.” Juliet B. Schor, *Born to Buy* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2005), 75.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nme.com/news/red-hot-chili-peppers/58025>

<sup>5</sup> Colin Sumner, *Reading Ideologies: An Investigation into the Marxist Theory of Ideology and the Law*, (New York, Academic Press: 1979), 246-7.

<sup>6</sup> Sumner, *Reading Ideologies*, 246-7.

<sup>7</sup> Sumner, *Reading Ideologies*, 247.

<sup>8</sup> *Mattel Inc., v. Walking Mountain Productions* 353 F.3d 792 (2003). 18171-2.

<sup>9</sup> “The district court concluded that Forsythe’s reproduction of Mattel’s copyrighted Barbie was fair use. The district court reasoned that a trier of fact could only conclude that Forsythe’s works were fair use because: (1) his use was parody meant to criticize Barbie, (2) he only copied what was necessary for his purpose, and (3) his photographs could not affect the market demand for Mattel’s products or those of its licensees” *Mattel Inc., v. Walking Mountain Productions* 353 F.3d 792 (2003). 18178.

<sup>10</sup> *Mattel Inc., v. Walking Mountain Productions* 353 F.3d 792 (2003). 18180

<sup>11</sup> *Mattel Inc., v. Walking Mountain Productions* 353 F.3d 792 (2003). 18180

<sup>12</sup> *Mattel Inc., v. Walking Mountain Productions* 353 F.3d 792 (2003). 18182

<sup>13</sup> *Mattel Inc., v. Walking Mountain Productions* 353 F.3d 792 (2003). 18188.

<sup>14</sup> <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/Introduction>

<sup>15</sup> <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/Introduction>

<sup>16</sup> Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci reader: Selected writings 1916 – 1935*, 235.

<sup>17</sup> “Occupy Comics: Alan Moore and David Lloyd of ‘V for Vendetta’ are Onboard,” *Huffington Post*, December 12, 2011. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/07/occupy-comics\\_n\\_1135140.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/07/occupy-comics_n_1135140.html)

<sup>18</sup> “Shepard Fairey’s OWS Poster: The Rise and Fall of Hope,” *Huffington Post*, November 23, 2011. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/22/shepard-fairey-ows\\_n\\_1108791.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/22/shepard-fairey-ows_n_1108791.html)

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/arts-post/post/shepard-fairey-changes-occupy-wall-street-sign-after-complaints/2011/11/23/gIQADCDgoN\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/arts-post/post/shepard-fairey-changes-occupy-wall-street-sign-after-complaints/2011/11/23/gIQADCDgoN_blog.html)

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Knight, “Shepard Fairey Designs ‘Person of the Year’ for Time magazine,” *L.A. Times*, December 14, 2011.

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