

BILLBOARD SUBVERTISING

"The billboard artist's goal is to throw a well-aimed spanner into the media's gears, bringing the image factory to a shuddering halt. We work to unmask the real corporate activity behind the glamorous image. Our actions reclaim these billboards and use them as our own canvasses. After all, it's our walls that are being rented out for business propaganda."

BILLBOARD IMPROVEMENT - HOW TO CLEAN UP YOUR HIGH STREET

Destruction of any of the State's ideological weapons of control will always be a rewarding experience. Most times it may be that you don't need any more than a tin of paint, a little humour and a quiet night to turn a multinational's expensive advertisement into your own guerrilla tapestry. This deals with the direct subversion of the billboard's message - to answer it, question it, or overturn it, all at their expense.

METHODS

If you want to use spray cans then beware illegible scrawl and spelling mistakes. Also: like the hip-hop graffitos, get yourself a pistol grip plastic handle that fits around the can, saving on tired fingers and ensuring that the paint goes in the right direction. These are cheap and easily available at any car-shop. The most effective alterations are certainly the simplest: the addition of one or two letters, or a speech bubble; or pasting over certain words or letters with appropriately coloured paper. A skillfully reworked billboard directs the passer-by to a consideration of the original corporate strategy, in the context of a thoughtful reaction.

For lettering, either paint your slogan on paper better still, find a computer and do the alphabet, one letter on each A4 printout. These are your originals - don't paste them up. When you want a slogan, take each letter in turn and blow them up a copier. With a computer you should be able to find the exact typeface that is already on the billboard. Very impressive was some bright spark's addition to Volkswagon's "We put people in front of cars" by reproducing in exact - type underneath: "And children under the front wheels."

REDECORATING

Use wallpaper paste for the hit, a bucket and a brush. Coat the area to be covered with lots of paste, place on the graphic and go over it again lots of paste (a little PVA in the mix makes it quicker and waterproofs it as well). A broom will get you higher - cut down the head to fit inside the bucket. Watch the billboards for when they change them - if you catch them right you can get plenty of outside studio space and time for your visual banditry. Rather than skulking around - in the middle of the night looking suspicious, put on some overalls, get a gang together and go for it during daylight hours - you'll be able to see what you are doing for starters. Most passers-by we've met think it's a good laugh. If caught while putting it up, "Why officer; look, it peel's straight off again!". "We think tampering's far more effective than just spray painting a billboard because people automatically dismiss that. With our slogans people don't immediately recognise it as agit prop." - AVI Billboard Interventions

BILLBOARD FELLING

The following section is taken from the US EF! book "Ecodefense":

Safety: It is important to remove billboards. It is also important not to get caught (so we can remove more billboards). Personal safety from self inflicted injury is also extremely important when using the methods described below. Never stand in the area where a sign can fall (front or back). Walk outside of this danger zone. Watch the sign closely the entire time you are cutting. Leave the outermost poles

for last. Always have an escape route planned if the sign shows evidence of falling prematurely. Good safety goggles, available at any hardware stores, can eliminate saw dust problems.

Sign-Cutting: Stop periodically to listen for any indication of discovery. Felling is accomplished - by pushing on the outermost poles, aided sometimes with ropes. Use the rope(s) only for monkey wrenching since it may have to be abandoned if your work is disrupted - you don't want it accumulating fibres, dirt and oil stains that can link it with your home or workplace. Store it in a plastic trash bag between jobs.

Evidence that will remain on your clothing includes bits of brush, dirt on boots and knees, and sawdust.

Field Notes: Effective sign cutting requires a three person team: a driver and two cutters. With four; your cutting team can have a look out who can also alternate with the cutters in shifts. A five person team is the largest size for safe operations and permits two teams of cutters and thus faster work at the target site. Axes are the least desirable billboarding tools. Sometimes microscopic marks left on the wood can be matched to a specific axe - saw marks, on the other hand, are usually impossible to match up.

LONG ARM OF THE LAW

If you want to write on a billboard that's too high to reach, you can either get a ladder (which isn't particularly convenient) or build a spray can extension rod. You really need the details & diagrams for this, so see the EF! web site or contact Dead Trees EF! You may have to experiment a bit to get the right measurements to fit your can of spray paint. Although these extension rods are clumsy to use at first, with practice they become very effective.

FUN WITH PAINT

Fill thin plastic bags one third full with half and half paint and thinners (for better splatter); tie up right, squeezing all the air out; carry half a dozen in a box to the target and, standing at an angle - unless you want to cover yourself - throw. Another proven splattering technique involves borrowing a pressurized water-type fire extinguisher from a business or public building. The ones you want are the old red ones with a valve, the same valve as on inflatable tyres. Empty out the contents and relieve all the pressure inside. Next, open the top and use a funnel to pour in a well stirred 50/50 mix of paint and thinners or the preferred water and acrylic-type house paint. Pressurize the extinguisher secretly at a petrol station; watch the pressure gauge to know when to stop. Use this gun to deface billboard ads. Do not attempt to cover the whole sign but make the most of your paint. Clean the extinguisher out after each use or it will clog up. At your earliest opportunity, check your skin, hair and clothes to make sure that there is no incriminating paint on your person. Keep a small can of paint thinners (or water, depending on the type of paint used) and rags on hand just in case.

If you have time to burn and no surfing costs to incur, check out Smashing The Image Factory on ISD's web site: graphics, anti-media, hard politics and suggestions for struggle in the era of the millenium.

The above was taken from an article on subvertising on the UKEF! web site. For more, get in touch with the Subvertising Standards Agency c/o Corporate Watch, or <verify@patrol.i-way.co.uk>