

Culture jammers

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Advertising is in some way an elastic gas, diffuse, perceptible to all our organs... But we have not been aware enough of its beauty, latent, profound, scattered, spontaneous... the first domain of Advertising was the street... Now it surrounds us, envelops us, it is intimately mingled with our every step, in our activities, in our relaxation, and its 'atmospheric pressure' is so necessary to us that we no longer feel it. 'Louis Cheronet, 1927

Advertising is a one-way barrage of cunning and calculated messages that, as much as we'd like to, we can't avoid. And there's no right of reply to it. How can we begin to counter the powerful effect of the 'atmospheric pressure' that Cheronet mentions.

There's growing resentment that we are abused by advertising for products we don't want and don't need, and some groups are reacting creatively by subverting advertising messages and using counter campaigns - this has become known as culture jamming.

<http://www.billboardliberation.com/>The Billboard Liberation Front (BLF) for instance, while perhaps not very effective, has a lot of fun adjusting billboard messages with stick-on alterations. Since 1977, the BLF has been transforming the billboard adverts of companies like Apple Computer and Camel Cigarettes using simple alterations to make provocative statements. The BLF, whose creative work could be considered by some as illegal, do can show, by a recent series of exhibitions and speaking engagements, that their language is gaining legitimacy and support. Most of those involved in the BFL are employed in the advertising industry!

Many other groups, Hocus Focus for example, are also advertising adjustment activists.

The BLF, on their website, offer us 'The Art & Science of Billboard Improvement: a comprehensive guide to the alteration of outdoor advertising' .

<http://www.adbusters.org/>The Adbusters culture jamming site offers a wide variety of spoof adverts parodying many well-known commercials. They also run their own campaigns like Turn Off week which encourages people to turn their TV off for one week a year. Adbusters also offer professional assistance for non profit campaigns through their Powershift Advocacy Advertising Agency

Badads ('It's Swell!') asks us to reflect on how many adverts we see in a day: Go ahead and count...don't forget to count magazine ads, banner ads, radio ads, faxed ads, junk mail, telemarketing calls, TV commercials, ads before movies, product placements, billboards, and spam, spam, spam, spam...Surprised at the number you came up with? Don't be. Advertising has become so common that it's now the background noise to our lives. But in their effort to get us to buy their products and services, advertisers are becoming more and more intrusive. The result: Our entire life experience is being shaped by companies looking to part us from our cash. Advertisers are taking advantage of every space, every moment in our lives to ask for our money?even while we get married or give birth. (No joke. You'll find information about these things on the badads site.)

More info:

<http://www.hocusfocus.org>

<http://www.billboardliberation.com>

<http://www.adbusters.org>

<http://www.badads.org>

<http://www.oneworld.net/uk/campaigns/consumption/front.shtml>