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A black silhouette of a hand holding a hammer, positioned as if about to smash down on a stack of papers. The papers are depicted with horizontal lines and a jagged, broken edge at the bottom. The text 'SMASHING THE IMAGE FACTORY' is printed in large, bold, black, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image, partially overlapping the papers.

# SMASHING THE IMAGE FACTORY

This booklet is an ongoing project.  
Any contributions, criticisms, recipes, abuse, whatever to:  
The Institute of Media Deconstruction  
c/o Box A, 34 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4

A COMPLETE MANUAL OF BILLBOARD  
SUBVERSION AND DESTRUCTION

# THE IMAGE FACTORY

CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

# AIM HIGH

Once upon a time there were five tree planters from a cooperative who, having worked very hard, took a vacation in Seattle. They saw a billboard which had a very phallic jet aircraft torquing across the sign with the caption, "Aim High".

So they did.

They went onto the board, measured it, and got colour samples. They pasted red painted letters onto white butcher paper, got squeegees and other gear, and one evening rush hour they posted a person at one end of the freeway bridge next to the board, and another near an on-ramp in the other direction, all armed with walkie-talkies. The others wheat-pasted the paper onto the sign.

Most observers were amused. Others were hostile. One father-son team got out of their car and demanded that the crew "Come down here right now!!!" The young vandals explained that they had a job to do and ignored these "Love it or Leave it" types. The traffic flow soom compelled the all-American duo to leave. Indeed, it was so heavy that even with immediate warning - cellular phones hadn't yet been invented - the cops would have taken minutes to arrive.

Within 15 minutes the sign was "corrected" and our heroes departed, leaving their spattered overalls and equipment in a friend's boat, which was achored in one of the city's canals. To celebrate they went to a local bar, whose tinted windows turned out to have a commanding view of the scene of the crime. As they entered it was clear that virtually everyone watched them; they were fingered... and the room broke into cheers.

They had relaxed for perhaps 20 minutes when the police arrived like gangbusters, looking for people to assist them in their enquiries. As no one had seen a thing, the cops left.

By noon the next day the board had been re-covered. It looked great... until the next winter rain, when the added letters showed through the wet paper. Next to "Aim High" were the words "Blow Up the Pentagon".

[From Billboard Liberation Front's "The Art and Science of Billboard Improvement"]

## By way of introduction

Earth First's "Ecodefence", an American manual of ecological defence and agitation has now gone out of print - parts of it are getting reprinted in this country in handy fun-size pamphlets.

This is something of a digest of their chapter on propaganda. Some of what you find in the following pages comes from Ecodefence; other sections come about through the author's experiments in copyart and local billboarding antics.

*"The absolutist wanders along the shelves of the ideological supermarket looking for the ideal commodity, and then buys it - lock stock and barrel.*

*But the ideological supermarket - like any supermarket - is fit only for looting. It is far more productive for us if we can move along the shelves, rip open the packets, take out what is useful and dump the rest"*

Take this pamphlet with a similar attitude; i hope you find it useful.

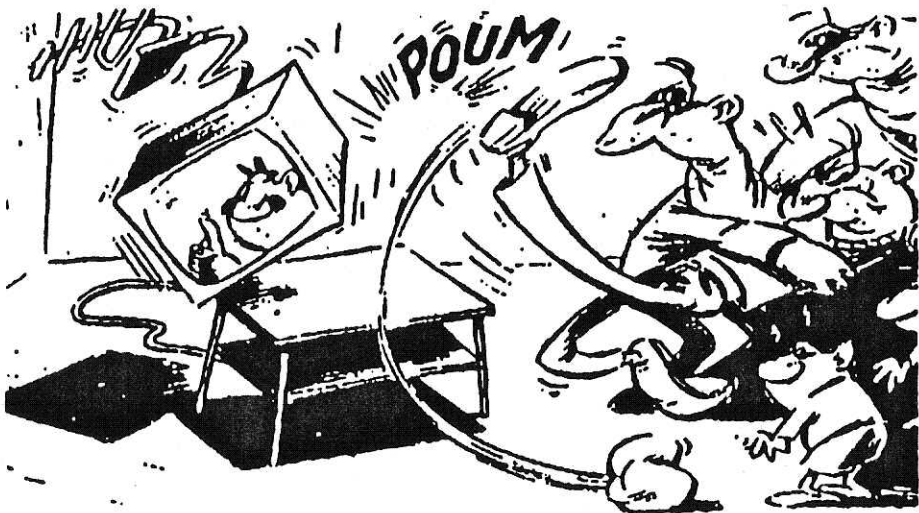
Neither the writer, typer nor printers take any money when you buy this - only the middle men, sorry, i mean distributors, and retailers make a buck (now don't you wish you'd nicked it?).

# BILLBOARD IMPROVEMENT

on how to  
clean up  
your  
high street

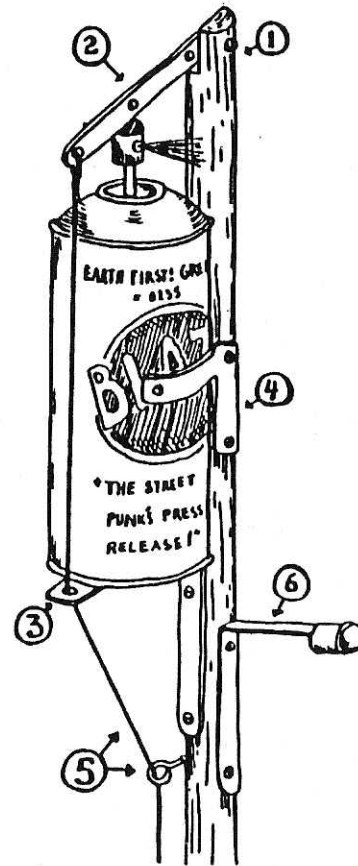
Destruction of any of the State's ideological weapons of control will always be a rewarding experience. Most times it may be you don't need any more than a tin of paint, a little humour and a quiet night to turn a multinational's expensive advertising hoarding into your own guerrilla tapestry.

But maybe there's a tobacco advert that really bugs you. Maybe you've got a graphic that would look good as a poster but would look great - if only it fitted perfectly over that ten-foot high Marlboro-smoking cowboy (and still retain the beautiful sunset over the Rockies). Maybe you'd like to reek a joyful and



# EARTH FIRST'S LONG ARM OF THE OUTLAW

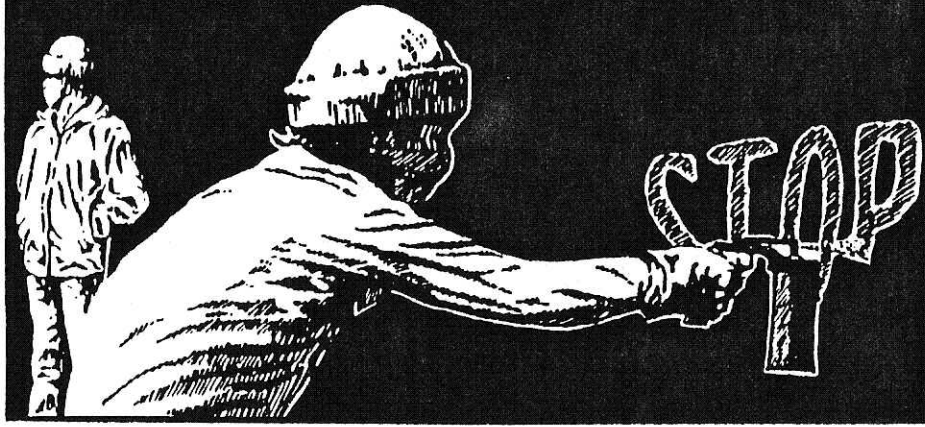
If you wanna write on a billboard that's too high to reach, you can either get a ladder (which isn't particularly convenient) or build a spray can extension rod:



Obtain a broom handle or another solid, strong but lightweight wooden pole (see illustration, #1). At one end, cut out a wedge, half the width of the pole. Fit a flat metal bar to the remaining wood (#2). About one foot from this bar (or the height of your spray can), attach a support clamp on which the can will rest (#3). Fit an angle bracket on each side of the pole, about 8 inches from the end (#4). The spray can should fit between these brackets. Tie a length of plastic coated wire to the flat metal bar (#2) and feed it through a hole in the support clamp (#3) and screw eyes attached the length of the pole (#5). This wire, when pulled, will press down the nozzle of the spray can and paint will spray out. An optional extra is the roll-top of a deodorant bottle, fitted to the support clamp (#6). This will help maintain an even distance between the spray can and billboard. You may have to experiment a bit to get the right measurements to fit your can of spray paint.

Although these spray paint can extension rods are clumsy to use at first (you're not kidding), with practice they become very effective.

# FUN WITH PAINT



One proven spattering technique (that you might find a use for on other occasions) involves "borrowing" a pressurized water-type fire extinguisher from a business or public building (these are the old red water ones with a valve, the same as on inflatable tyres).

Empty out the contents and relieve all of the pressure inside. Next, open the top and use a funnel to pour in a well-stirred 50/50 blend of paint and thinners or the preferred water and acrylic-type house paint. Pressurize the extinguisher secretly at a gas station; watch the pressure gauge to know when to stop.

Use this spray gun to deface billboard ads. Do not attempt to cover the whole sign face, but make the most of your paint. Clean the extinguisher out after each use or it will clog up.

When using the anarcho-sprayer, be sure to wear grubby clothes or overalls, since you will occasionally get splattered. Keep your hair pulled under a hat to keep out paint. A dark wide-brimmed hat can provide splash protection.

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 thinner (or water, depending on the type of paint used) and rags on hand just in case.

subversive doubletake on unsuspecting victims of the advertising machine.

Methods of devastation and total obliteration are covered in the rest of the manual. This section deals with the direct subversion of the billboard's message - to answer it, question it, devalue it, plagiarise it, hijack it, overturn it - at their expense.

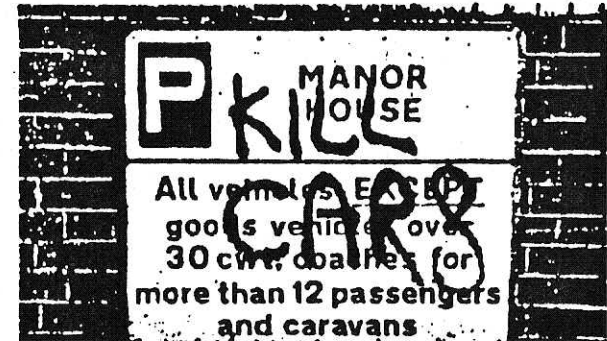
With the use of a few simple tools it is possible to take their glossy hi-tech death culture billboards and turn them back on themselves.

We'll start with straight-up graffiti and work up to do-it-yourself, no holds barred Big Art.

If you want to use spray cans then beware illegible scrawl and spelling mistakes during the excitement. Also: like the hip-hop graffitos, get yourself a pistol grip plastic handle that fixes around the can, saving on tired fingers and ensuring the paint goes in the right direction. These are cheap and readily available at any auto-shop - please boycott Halfords (they're owned by Boots the vivisectors).

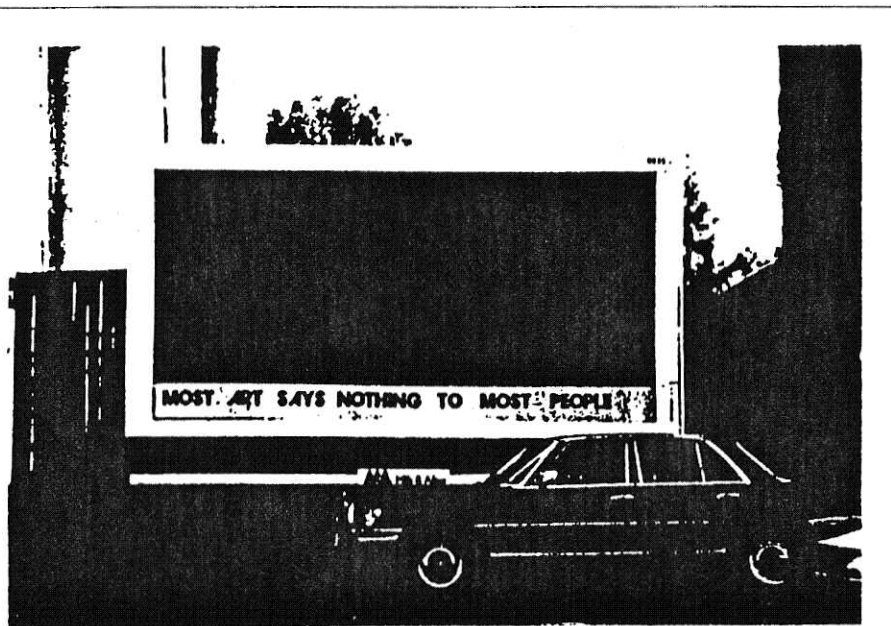
POLICE have condemned vandals for 'disfiguring the environment' with anti-car slogans in the Little-hampton area.

They are appealing for the public's help in catching the wreckers who have been defacing road signs, a bridge, and building site hoardings with the graffiti.



Then there's also pure and simple trashing: fill thin plastic bags one third full with half and half paint and thinners (for better splatter); tie up tight, 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, throw, throw.

But maybe you want to go a little further. Well, 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



*"People tend to do a double take on billboards we've tampered with. We think it's far more effective than just spray painting a billboard because people automatically dismiss that. With our slogans they don't immediately recognise it as agit prop"*

*AVI Billboard Interventions.*

with appropriate colour paper. All over Britain during election time "You can't trust Labour" became "You can trust Labour" by pasting plain white paper over the offending T - i'll leave it up to you to agree with the sentiment or not.

IT MUST BE SAID THAT THE SKILLFULLY REWORKED BILLBOARD DIRECTS THE PASSER-BY TO A CONSIDERATION OF THE ORIGINAL CORPORATE STRATEGY IN THE CONTEXT OF A THOUGHTFUL REACTION.

A huge slogan or subversive graphic on a roadside billboard let's you reach the people these are aimed at - car drivers! - to make plain to them how destructive and alienated a car-obsessed culture really is.

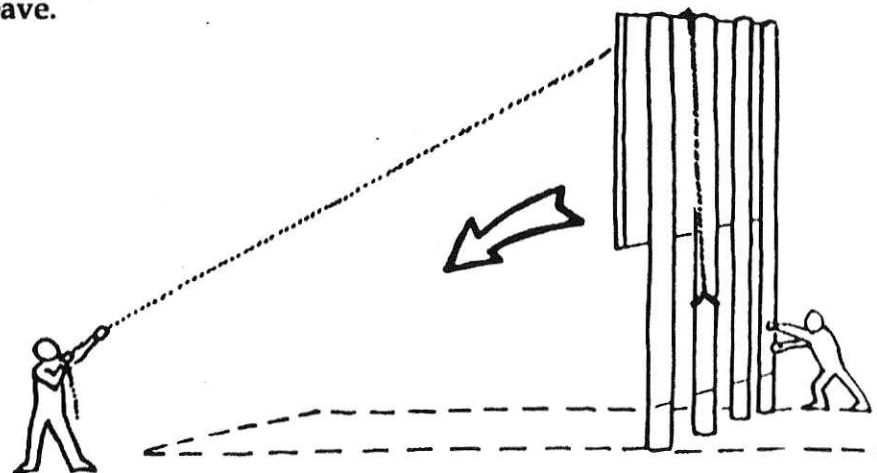
With this in mind, let me introduce to you:

[U.S. billboards are mostly painted straight onto metal]. Sign companies are adding protective metal strips to the sides of wooden poles to prevent cutting. Carry a crowbar to remove these. Sometimes it's possible to dig some dirt away from around the base of each support and cut the wood below the protective metal. Billboarding is dirty work. Evidence that will remain on your clothing includes bits of brush, dirt on boots and knees, and sawdust. If you wear overalls, remove them before the pickup and wrap your tools in them. After a night's work, clean off your boots and launder your clothes. Vacuum your car boot, seats and floor carpets. Drop the vacuum cleaner bag in a public trash can, away from home.

#### FIELD NOTES

\*Effective sign-cutting requires a three-member team: a driver and two cutters. With four, your cutting team can have a lookout who can also alternate with the cutters in shifts. A five-member 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 in the possession of a suspect. Saw marks, on the other hand, are usually impossible to match up. Like files and grinding wheels, their surfaces are constantly changing, and so are the marks they leave.



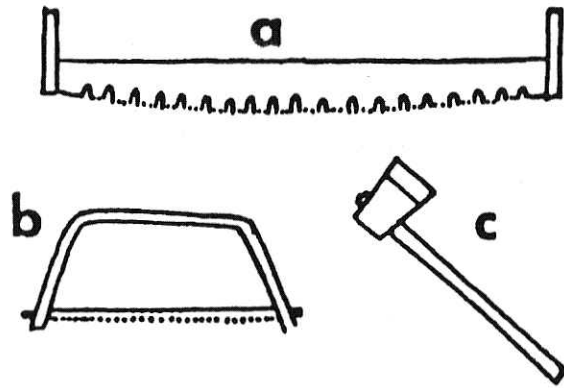
← wind direction →

*Tie the rope high up on a pole and throw the remainder over the top (you may have to weight the end with a rock). Make sure the rope is long enough to keep you out of the danger zone*

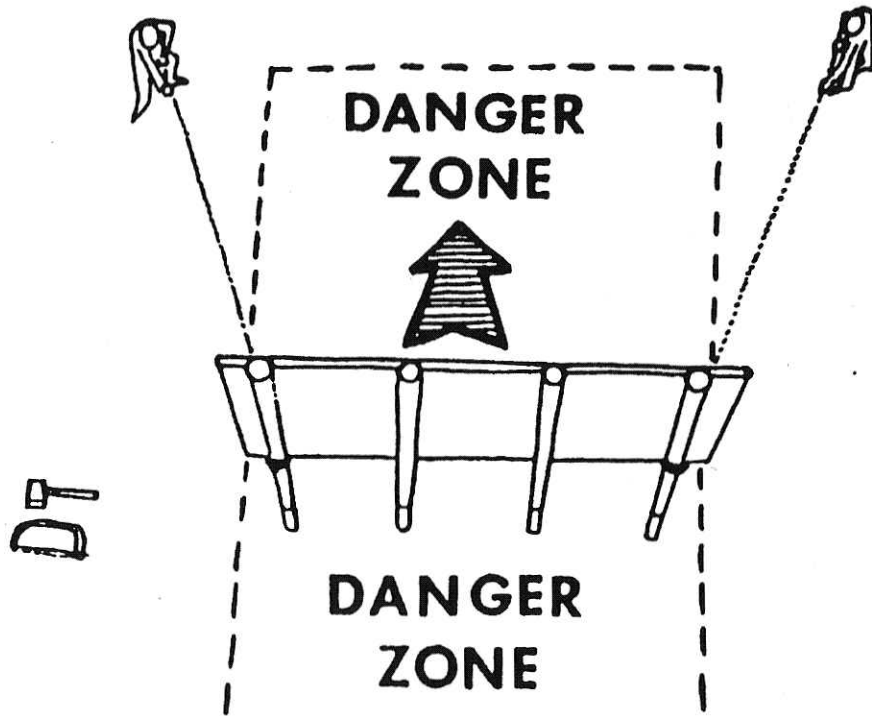
# THE PHOTOCOPIER AS A SUBVERSIVE WEAPON

Get access to a photocopier. It has to be one with an enlargement function. Some will only enlarge up to 141%, others go 200%. The best copiers will go 400% - try to find one of these. Arts Centres might be a good place to start looking.

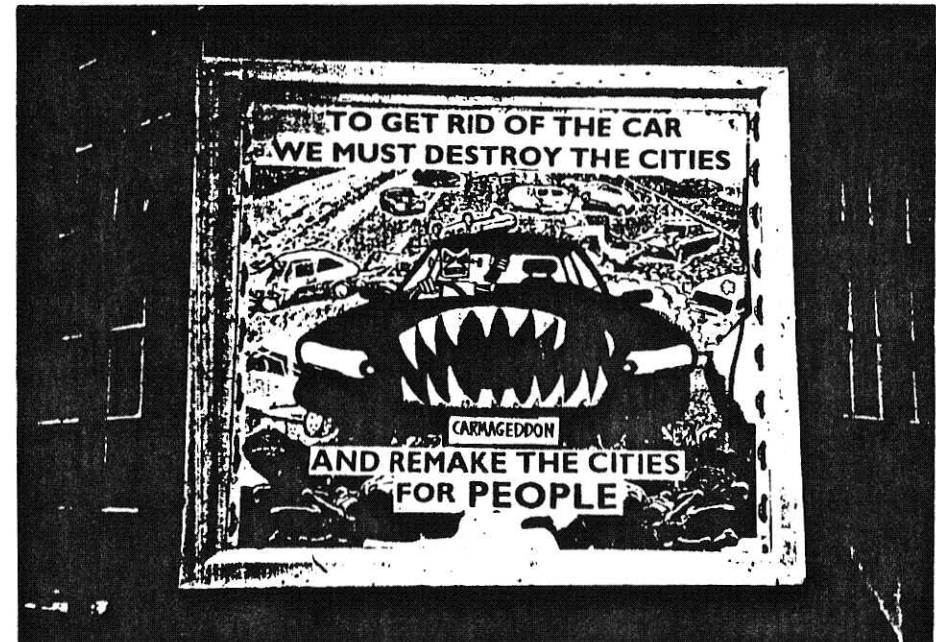
The most accessible and cheapest machines have a set enlargement button; they give 141%. Why 141% - well, it's a magic dimension that always retains the relative dimensions of the two sides (that's why A4 paper is the size it is). Really. Divide the length of an A4 by its width and you get 1.41. What it means practically is that if you take an A4 and blow it up 141% it becomes an A3 (exactly double the area). An A3 blown up 141% again doubles in

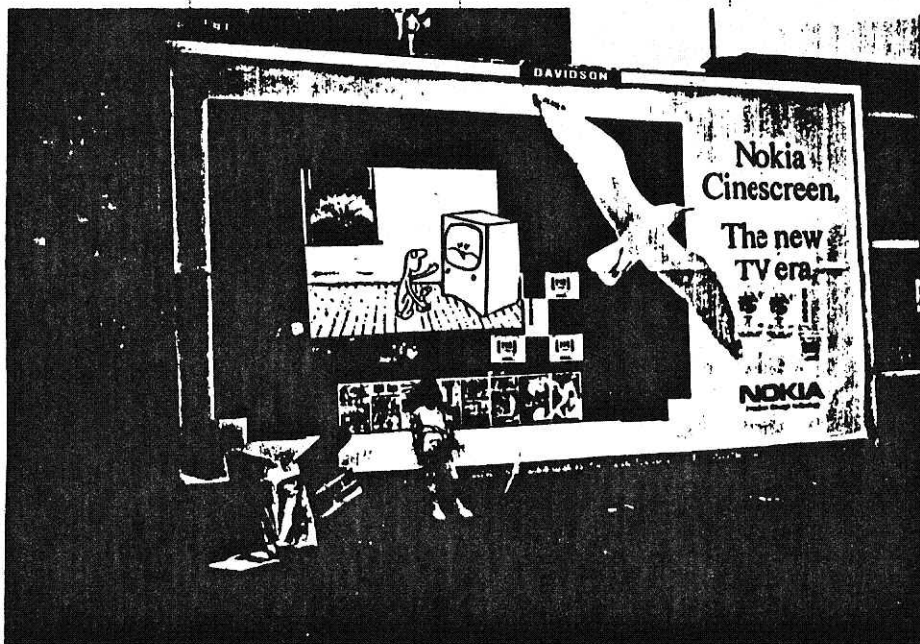


Tools of the trade: A) crosscut saw B) D-frame or bow saw C) axe



Felling with ropes; stay well outside the danger zone.





# BILLBOARD FELLING

THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS TAKEN FROM THE AMERICAN EARTH FIRST'S BOOK "ECODEFENSE". THE BOOK ITSELF HAS GONE OUT OF PRINT AND WAS ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN IN THIS COUNTRY. MUCH OF THE INFORMATION WILL BE APPLICABLE TO CONDITIONS IN BRITAIN.

## 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. Think of the sign as a giant fly-swatter and yourself as the bug. Get the picture? Never stand in the area where a sign can fall (front or back). Walk outside of this danger zone. Don't take short-cuts. Watch a 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.

Sawdust can get in your eyes and prove irritating. A good pair of safety goggles, available at hardware stores, can eliminate this problem. They are essential for contact lens wearers. Remember that goggles are reflective. Always pull them off your face before looking at passing cars.

## SIGN-CUTTING

When sawing, duck down while cars pass if they can see you in the periphery of their headlights. Stop periodically to listen for any indication of discovery.

Felling is accomplished by pushing on the outermost poles, aided sometimes with ropes. See the illustrations for techniques on use of the rope. Use this rope(s) only for monkeywrenching 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.

Dropping a billboard face-up will allow you to inflict additional damage by spray-painting across the front of the advertisement

size exactly (to become an A2). And so on, A1, A0 etc.

Doing this you can take a graphic on A3 and keep doubling (141%) each half of the paper the copier spits out and watch it grow to the size you want.

No problem. Except that this is incredibly wasteful of paper, and time-consuming (though quite straightforward). If you can get at a copier that goes up in 400% steps then you'll be able to miss out all the stages in between.

To explain this method, take an A4 piece of paper. Fold it. It is now 71% of its size (an A5 in fact, which, when enlarged by 141%, will be the A4 again). Fold the paper again - that's 50% (an A6 - put a picture this size on a copier and blow it up 200% and it magically becomes an A4 once more). Now fold the paper twice more and it will be one sixteenth the area of the original A4, the sides being a quarter of the original. If you unfold it, it'll have marks on it, like the grid printed on this page. This is the essence of



# SEIZING THE MEDIA

Wherever we look, wherever we listen, wherever we go: the pornography of billboards, bus side placards, the glut of junk mail, obnoxious bumper stickers and badges, absurd parades, windshield wiper flyers, matchbook ads, business cards, screaming radios, the daily papers, every nanosecond of TV, the package wrapped around everything we buy - at every turn, we are under subtle attack.

The media's screen of aggression and seduction is designed to mesmerise and captivate the largest possible sector of population whose attention is then sold like scrap metal to advertisers and gang raped by their slogans, jingles, and manic images. We are forced to see fun-house mirror distortions of ourselves projected onto a dumpster of products that promise to make us each desirable, sophisticated and correct. Protected by an uncrossable media moat, agents of the State profit from war and relax behind a web of information laws, censorship powers, and vapid explanations that swat the public of detailed intelligence and mass resistance. The media serve the interests of the State but never the interests of the public.

Revolution is the overthrow of government; our aim is to overthrow the media. Armed insurrection is unnecessary in so far as it is words and images which are shot at us, not bullets. But the words and images which keep us in bondage, which inundate us with the political muzak of disinformation, half baked scandals, shock and empty desires are what enable State and corporate men to shoot bullets at people outside our borders, slaughtering people like you and me by the thousands in Iraq, in Panama, Grenada, Nicaragua...

The fact that we must now face and DESTROY is that advertising, entertainment and news have become the government's Trojan horse into the psyche of the public.

We no longer tolerate being besieged with manipulative messages that we don't want to hear and cannot respond to. We no longer tolerate an inaccessible State that censors, blocks and denies information to the public. We no longer tolerate the spectacle that serves to absolve criminals like Poindexter, Bush, North and their lickspittles from crimes of international violence and domestic debt. The time has come to turn the ecology of coercion in on itself. The time has come to veto, overwhelm and subvert the messages of all airborne commercial broadcast media until they are returned to complete public direction, access, and control. The air is public domain, and the airwaves are ours to hear our own voices, see our own colours, enjoy our own conversations and celebrate in the vast community of our cultures.

Our work is the abolition of public captivity as spectators to the ceaseless barrage of billboards, manipulative images, state constructed news and propaganda.

We interpret Freedom of Speech to mean the facilitated ability to both ACCESS and PRODUCE information and cultural material. We call on artists, writers, posterists, activists and networkers from all countries to assist with our project. Vocalise your disgust. Speak up. Fight back. Liberate the public spaces in the zones that most need it - the ones in your everyday life.

IMMEDIAS T INTERNATIONAL c/o NOOSPAPERS PO BOX 2726 WESTFIELD NEW JERSEY 07091 USA

**When our work is done, advertising and billboards will fly beside the Soviet flag in the museum of dead totalitarian experiments.**

400% enlargement.

Easy so far, eh? So do the same origami with an A3.

Now get your graphic as big as you can on an A3. Turn it over and draw lines on to it to make it into quarters, and then again into sixteenths (like you done with the folding lark above). You can then cut the picture up and have sixteen little bits of paper - don't lose them! Each one of these you blow up 397% (not 400% - you don't want to lose any of the graphic off the edges) and hey presto you've now got 16 A3 jigsaw pieces which, when put together, makes you a big fuck off poster 1.6 metres x 1.1 metres. If you start with an original made up of four or more A3's you got big enough to cover whole buildings.

If you can only get to a copier that goes 200% then you have to quarter the picture, blow it up then quarter each quarter again - if you see what i mean. [Laser copiers will do this sectioning for you - it's called 'tiling' - they spew out all the pieces from an uncut A3, ready to go (in colour as well). Great if you got free access to one, but they're usually expensive.]

You can paste all the tiles together indoors with PVA/Copydex/water-soluble glue like you used in school. You can redo bits in coloured paper; pick out bits using coloured toner; or paint



*"Corporations and the Government have the money and the means to sell anything they want, good or bad. We spend time observing the present and ringing the alarm for everyone else"* Orlando Cuevas/Artifux New York

on it; the limits are your imagination.

Mind you, don't try to paste up graphics any bigger than 2m x 1m; if your message is larger, make it up of big chunks and butt the sections together as they go up.

If you want to fit something over an irregular size picture then you have to measure up the original and work backwards. Draw up a scale of what you want to subvert and see how to fit A3's into it. Stare at it long enough and it becomes apparent.

For lettering, you can do leterset and keep blowing it up, but again it's wasteful. Either paint your slogan on paper or, 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 on a copier and blow them up. With a computer you should be able to find the exact right typeface as is already on the billboard.

**A READY ASSEMBLED GRAPHIC CAN BE PASTED UP IN LESS THAN 3 MINUTES.**

Use wallpaper paste for the hit, a bucket and a paint brush. Coat the area to be covered with lots of paste, place on your graphic and go over it again with plenty of paste (a little PVA in the mix makes it set 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 - in our area they get recovered every third Tuesday, so if you catch them right you can get plenty of outside studio space and time for your visual banditry.

And if you get caught while putting it up, "Why officer, look, it peels straight off again!"

Hope this has been of some interest to you (if you got this far!) Enjoy yourselves - once you start doing it, it just seems to flow. Oh, and remember, happiness is subversive when it's collective.

# A MANIFESTO

**publish the method  
generalise knowledge  
increase self-activity**

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, and to assault the billboard itself, to question its given function of marking out urban geographies (areas defined for consumption, the territory devoted to the car, the space set aside for leisure that always seems to lack meaningful participation).

Our actions hope to reclaim these billboards and use them as our own canvasses, to advertise our own campaigns and ultimately recreate our communities for what we would rather see. We can turn the tables on capitalism if we recognise that we can all be artists - if we don't compete, but play, play hard and play seriously.

After all, it's our walls that are being rented out for business propaganda. So we should recycle them to integrate once more the notion of LIFE and the value of LIVING into the urban centres of the 20th century.

Billboard banditry is also excellent preparation for more advanced forms of monkeywrenching. As well as being empowering through having immediate and visible results, it's fun too.