

lots of love from doSummat x (www.dosummat.org.uk)

If you think subvertising doesn't make a difference you're wrong! Loads of people see them and are inspired.



But also they affect the advertising industry greatly. This subvert was outside Manchester Piccadilly Train Station. An advertising executive spotted it on his way to a meeting and decided to withdraw a massive advertising deal. This subvert is now known in the British advertising world as 'the Manchester problem' and is taught as a case study in marketing disasters at degree level.

HOW TO MAKE ADVERTS BETTER



"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."

What is a billboard subvert?

"Subvertising is the art-form of the post-corporate millennium," says Daphne Locke, one of the artists behind the Subvertise.org site. "It is the 'writing on the wall', the sticker on the lamppost, the corrected rewording on the billboard and the spoof message on the T-shirt - but it is also the mass act of defiance of a street protest. The key process involves redefining and reclaiming our environment from the corporate beast".

A subvert can be many things but what it definitely is is when an advert is distorted to be or to mean something entirely different... for example:

It could be a way to say a billboard is talking bullshit:



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. Don't 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.

More tips!

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 I've met think it's a good laugh. If caught while putting it up, "Why officer; look, it peel's straight off again!"

Paint Extravaganza



Ingredients
Paint
Paint thinner
Plastic bags

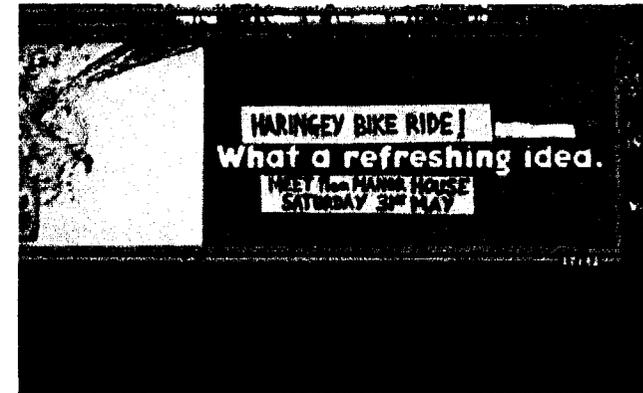
Or

Water fire extinguisher
Paint and thinner
Air pressure thing at petrol station

Method

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.

It could be changed into a community noticeboard

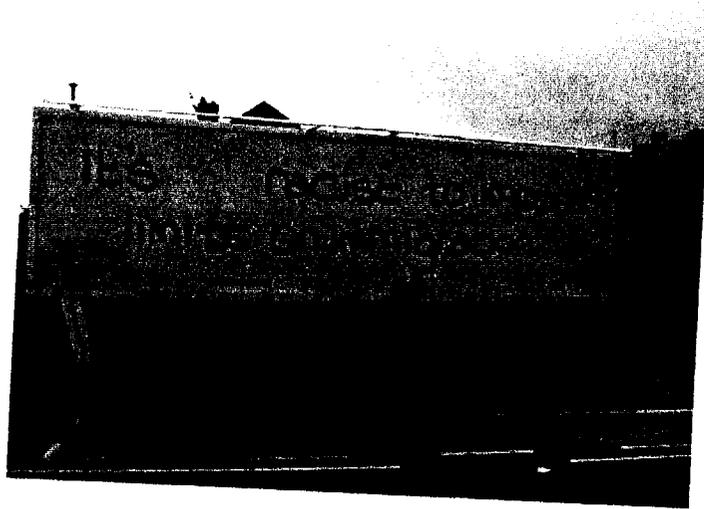


It could be completely taken over!



Recipes to create your own subvert

The simple as pie



Ingredients:

Paint and brush

Method:

Simply paint over a specific word(s) to make it mean something else (before it read 'it's not racist to impose limits on immigration').

Review

Quick, easy and instant requires little thought and preparation. Only downside is that it can only work on certain ads and can sometimes look a bit scruffy.

which bit each is then you're not faffing at the billboard).

Then 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, if it's too high use the ladders!

Stickers



Ingredients

Sticker

Marker or stencil and spray paint

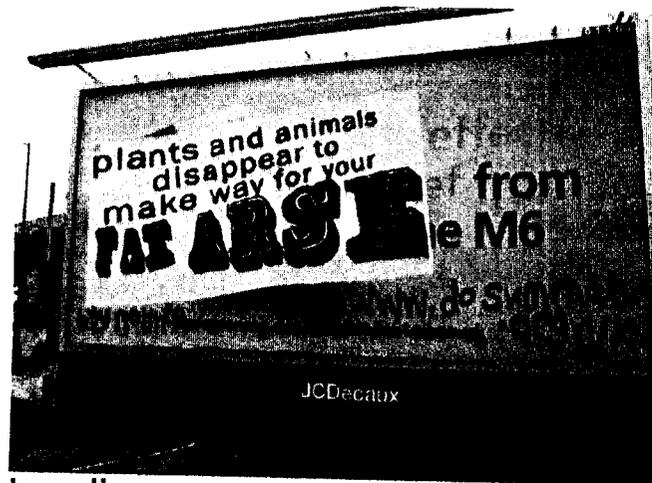
Method

Just write or spray onto a sticker and stick it up!

Review

Quick, easy and pretty safe.

The Take-over



Ingredients:

A good image- either stolen or your own artistry
A projector
Blank wallpaper
Paint and pva mixed (2/3 paint 1/3 glue)
Brushes
Masking tape
Wallpaper paste and Paste Brush
2 litre plastic bottle
ladders

Method

Work out how big the billboard is or how big your image will have to be to cover most of it up. Then measure out the wallpaper and cut to size. Hang it how you will want it to be pasted but don't tick it together yet (it will be easier to move and out up if kept in rolls). Then project the image onto the paper. Outline with pencil then paint on. Leave to dry. Roll up the individual rolls (it's a good idea to write in pencil on the back

The spray way



Ingredients:

Spray paint!

Method:

Think of something funny, witty or factual to say and spray!

Review

It is a spur of the moment thing that you can just do there and then. But it can sometimes look a bit shit and even unreadable (maybe because its usually done when pissed!), due to being a spur of the moment thing you might also have thought of something better to say if you'd taken your time.

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.

Stencil



Ingredients:

A stencil you made earlier
Spray paint

Method

Just make a stencil by cutting out an image or writing out of quite thick card (use a craft knife to be neat). Then hold firmly onto the advert and spray lightly over it (hold the can about 12 inches away from the stencil, and keep the can moving over it to avoid the paint from running).

Review

A stencil makes it easier to read than just spraying free hand and is also quicker when doing it (though takes more prep). It may still look dodgier to passers by than pasting just because of the bad press of spray paint and the noise.

It's a good idea to stick all the pages together how you want it to read with masking tape before you go out. Then roll it up, so that when you get there you can just brush some paste onto the billboard and roll the paper out, smooth down with some more paste, especially at the corners.

Review

This method takes more preparation but looks more professional, easy to read, you can use a spell-checker (!) and can also be more discreet when you are actually putting it up- it's quicker when you're actually doing it than standing spraying a message and looks loads less dodgy,

You can also make an image to paste in this same way over an ad, a bit like a fly-poster. It can look real professional:



Nice and Neat



Ingredients:

- A computer
- A printer
- A photocopier
- Wallpaper paste
- Paste Brush
- 2 litre plastic bottle
(a 2 litre bottle is better than a bucket as it's more discreet and easier to carry)

Method

Find a billboard you hate then use your imagination to think of something good to write on it. Use a computer to make the letters easy to read and print them out A4 size (or bigger if your printer can do it). If the advert has a specific font you can match it up (for example the coke writing) so it looks like it was always there. Then photocopy each sheet. You can't just stick up the printed out copy because it's not waterproof so it will run when you put paste on it and when it rains.

Paint and Paste



Ingredients:

- Spray paint and stencil
 - Or
 - Poster paint and pva glue and paint brush
 - Wallpaper paste and brush
 - Big sheets of paper
- ### Method

Best on bus shelter adverts or the stand alone ones in the street. Think of something good to write or draw, whether it's a notice about an event or whatever then either make a stencil and spray it on and stick it up, or mix the paint with 1/3 pva glue (to make the paint waterproof) and paint it on, leave to dry then stick it up!

Review:

You don't look as dodgy putting it up as painting and spraying straight onto the billboard. You can cover up almost all the advert. You don't need a computer or printer. But if you're not a very good artist it might look a bit shitty!

BRUSHES WITH THE LAW

The thing is adverts are shit and there are bloody loads of em. It's estimated we see 3000 of them a day! They target kids, reinforce racist and sexist stereotyping, they promote consumerism and they generally make us feel shit because we don't look like a model or can't afford what they are selling, or don't have that lifestyle.

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For opening

Subvertising in the UK (and probably everywhere else) is an offence... it is Criminal Damage.

But it's pretty unlikely to get nicked for it. Usually the police just ask you to take it down or take your equipment off you. A good way to get out of these situations if you can't be arsed arguing your cause or going to the nick is to just say you're an art student and your tutor showed you something similar. That you wanted to try it out...and that you had no idea it was illegal.



Do Summat took such offence to the fact that billboard subvertising is illegal that we just thought 'fuck it' and did it really openly one day. We wore white boiler suits with do summat sprayed on the back and walked around Manchester city centre openly subverting billboards and sticking up images and posters, giving out leaflets explaining why as we did it.

None of us got arrested! Or even questioned by the police... in fact a few police cars drove past us whilst we were doing it but didn't even stop!