

THE ART OF



# BRAND SAMPLING

There's no denying that we live in a brand-driven society. Every single day we are bombarded with both overt and covert marketing strategies, brand images and logos. The paper you read, the bus you take to work, the buildings you pass, the very magazine you're reading right now: brands are everywhere and have in some cases – think of Mc Donald's famed Golden Arches and Nike's Just-do-it swoosh – become an almost intricate, irrefutable part of our social consciousness.

While there are plenty of people who have no problem whatsoever with the invasiveness of global marketing, there is also unrest. The unease of - mostly leftwing - activists first came to the surface back in 1989 with the launch of Adbusters, a Canadian magazine that took on corporate America and launched initiatives like the "Buy Nothing Day." Adbusters was also one of the first publications to publish parodies of ads and imagery associated with well-known brands. This subversive act of 'consumer disobedience,' known as culture or logo jamming, gained momentum and before too long brand hijacking, or logo corruption as it is also known, popped up everywhere.

Sampling, customization, DIY advertising

Now CODE introduces the next step: brandsampling. Brandsampling involves playing with the DNA of a brand, that is the very values that define a brand. It might be a nightmare scenario to the less gifted marketer, but fact of the matter is that the modern-day consumer is no longer a passive onlooker.

In 2005 the consumer became something of a producer, being used both as add agency and product developer – think of the Converse Gallery project (movies/commercials made by the consumer) and the Douwe Egberts Yo Oma commercial.

Also, these days sampling is everywhere. Just look at the fashion, music, and TV industry (think Quentin Tarantino). Combine that with that other modern-day trend, customizing, and you have all the preconditions needed for brandsampling. CODE gave it a go and invited internationally renowned artist and activist Marc Bijl to join in on the fun.

Marc Bijl (1973), sometimes described as the enfant terrible of the Dutch art scene, is an artist, activist, ex-Goth and angry young man all rolled into one, and is making waves with what he calls 'corporate graffiti'. Bijl uses the symbols, rules and logos that invade people's daily lives and the public spaces they inhabit in an effort to raise attention to some of the broader socioeconomic and political issues. Example in case: Bijl's own take on the (in)famous Che Guevara portrait. The image of Che has been hijacked by everyone from guerilla warriors in South America and Spain's ETA to fashion designers and wanna-be hipsters who proudly display the Cuban fighter's head on their shirt or backpack as a kind of personal (fashion) statement. Generally speaking, Che Guevara has become almost synonymous with the struggle of the powerless that take on the establishment. In his version of the Che portrait Bijl incorporated George W. Bush's face, the human embodiment of the most powerful country in the world and the nemesis of many of those who revere people like Che.

Inspired by the fact that one of our tennis buddies was told to leave the court for the simple fact that his tennis shoes 'weren't white enough' we decided to sample some brands of our own. We came up with a Fred Perry tennis shirt with the text 'Angstgegner: wir sind nicht die Feind'. The imagery used, complete with the halo of stars, is reminiscent of the well-known Paramount Pictures logo, only in this case the familiar snow-capped mountain has been replaced with the archetypical American eagle. The word 'Angstgegner' (German for 'an opponent you fear') is used frequently in tennis and football journalism but obviously has a dark connotation. The result of our efforts is the perfect tennis shirt: it's white, related to sports but also features a 'fuck you' statement. And all that without even bending the rules.



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