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Jamming the signal: The discourse & literacy practices of billboard liberators

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Jamming the Signal:
The Discourse & Literacy Practices of Billboard Liberators

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Abstract.

This study explores the practices of billboard liberators and attempts to provide an account of discourses that are increasingly important to the lives of the activists involved. On the one hand I view the ongoing practices of billboard liberators as *literacy events* and *practices* (Street, 1998), employing semiotic resources, strategies and skills to produce novel and innovative multimodal texts (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996). On the other, I treat the texts they produce as the realisation of discursive practices, and explore how the intersections between discourses are manipulated and exploited by Billboard liberators in creative, subversive ways, here drawing on aspects of Fairclough's CDA (1995) (*intertextuality* and *orders of discourse)*. I also try to contextualise the production aspects of the pictorial data in greater depth, using data ascertained from an on-line interview with a member of a billboard liberation group.

1. Introduction: Culture Jamming and the Art of the billboard

Culture jamming can be defined as "…the act of using existing mass media to comment on those very media themselves, using the original medium's communication method". (wikipedia 1), and David Cox (1998, website) points to the most common forms of media activism employed by culture jammers. They are, he says, manifold, and embrace self-publishing in all its forms:

> "Self made magazines (or 'fanzines' or 'zines'), techno music produced by teenagers in bedrooms, personal web site production, graffiti, [computer network] hacking and other forms of popular media resistance to the mainstream can reside under the broad banner of media activism."

Cultural critic Mark Dery's definition includes other activities, and provides a clearer description of the ways in which they are intended to subvert:

> "'Culture-jamming' might best be defined as media hacking, information warfare, terror-art, and guerrilla semiotics, all in one…Pirate TV and radio broadcasters, media hoaxers, and other vernacular media wrenchers who intrude on the intruders, investing ads, newscasts, and other subversive media artifacts" (Dery, 1990, website)

A specific facet of culture jamming is *subvertising[2]*, and a technique included under this heading is *billboard liberation*. Also referred to as '*billboard banditry*', '*hacking*',

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'*correction*', '*beautification*', '*sniping*' and '*demotion*' (or 'anti-promotion'), it is similar to subvertising but differs in the respect that it refers specifically to the practice of modifying the content, layout and/or message of *billboard* advertisements. It can involve the addition of spray-painted graffiti which contests or qualifies the original message, as is the predominant method used by the Australian group *BUGA UP*.[3] Alternatively, some activists, such as the New York based activist Reverend Calvin Butts and Chicago's *Operation Clean* simply erase certain advertisements using white paint and rollers. However, several groups of activists dedicated to billboard modification use ever more innovative, creative and inventive techniques to rework the visual and textual features, and therefore the very meanings, of billboard advertisements

2. Aims of study

Lankshear and Knobel (2000, website) describe practices such as billboard modification as 'postmodern literacies', and believe that they "are a medium for young people's opinions, thoughts, creativity, and for demonstrating they clearly are not passive culture consumers, but active culture makers….We believe there is a case for serious consideration of [such literacy practices] within progressive studies of (new) literacies". An exploration of the practices of billboard liberators can provide very valuable insights into discourses that are increasingly important (in both positive and negative ways) to the lives of the activists involved. However, such an exploration necessarily entails scrutiny of the means of representation through which such aspects are communicated.

To pursue this, I shall look at the phenomenon of billboard liberation from two perspectives. I shall first view the ongoing practices of billboard liberators as *literacy events* and *literacy practices* (Street, 1998), employing semiotic resources, strategies and skills to produce novel and innovative multimodal texts. For this I will draw largely on theory from the new literacy studies and in particular Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) grammar of visual design. Second, I shall view the texts produced by billboard liberators as the realisation of discursive practices, and explore the ways in which the intersections between discourses are manipulated and exploited by Billboard liberators in creative, subversive ways. In my analysis of these hybrid texts I will draw on aspects from Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse analysis, in particular *intertextuality* and *orders of discourse*. By centring on these concepts, I hope to identify which discourses the activists draw on and in what order, and which they seek to undermine. At the same time, I also

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[2] The word is a blend of the lexical items 'subvert' and 'advertising' and refers to the practice of making spoofs or parodies of corporate and political advertisements in order to make a statement. Creating a subvertisement (or subvert) can involve either producing a new image or altering an already existing one, and the aim is to effectively sabotage political candidates and campaigns, corporations, and other targets. According to Adbusters, a Canadian magazine and a leading proponent of culture jamming and subvertising: "A well produced 'subvert' mimics the look and feel of the targeted ad, promoting the classic 'double take' as viewers suddenly realise they have been duped. Subverts create cognitive dissonance. It cuts through the hype and glitz of our mediated reality and, momentarily, reveals a deeper truth within" (wikipedia 2)

[3] The group's name is an acronym for 'Billboard-Utilizing Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions' and a pun on the Australian colloquialism 'bugger up' meaning 'to mess-up'.

hope to be able to contextualise the production aspects of the pictorial data in greater depth by drawing on data ascertained from an on-line interview with a member of a billboard liberation group. My informant's her privileged status as an active participant in billboard modification can add considerably to the significance and clarity to my own interpretations as an 'outsider' (Widdowson, 2000).

By adopting this approach, I hope to suggest that that the activities of billboard liberators provide "…nodal points where there is a dialectic translation of micro level knowledge, relationships and subjectivity, into macro level regimes of truth, structural positioning and identity." (Maybin). But before attempting this, it is important to locate bill-board liberation in the context of both new social movements and new literacies.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. New social movements.

A number of theorists have attempted to explain the emergence of contemporary social movements by referring to structural transformations and political and cultural changes which have created new sources of conflict and altered the process by which collective identities are constituted. For example, the popular perspective inspired by Foucault (1980) views the system as being controlled through the manipulation by invisible power centres which organise our lives. Similarly, the German philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas suggests that certain crises of legitimation and hegemony exist in contemporary capitalist societies (1981).[4] He identifies the present intrusion by the state and the market into areas of private life, the "colonization of the life-world", as the predominant source of the present crisis of legitimation (Habermas, 1981: 35). Collective actions can, Habermas asserts, be seen as rational responses to such crisis and as such, 'New Social Movements' (henceforth NSM's) may thus be seen as struggles in defence of this 'life world'. NSMs, argues Habermas, represent defensive reactions seeking to retain or re-create endangered lifestyles. They operate at the level of social integration and are concerned less with redistributional issues than with the "grammar of forms of life" (ibid: 33–4). Thus new movements arise "at the seam between system and life-world" (ibid: 36). Similarly, Melucci observes that the action of NSMs deliberately differentiates itself from the model of political organisation and assumes increasing autonomy from political systems, becoming instead "intimately interweaved with everyday life and individual experience". (Melucci, 1996: p.9) Melucci detects a shift of focus from class, race, and other more traditional political issues towards the 'cultural ground'; a result, he says, of fundamental changes in contemporary society:

> "In societies with high information density, production does not involve economic resources alone: it also concerns social relationships, symbols, identities, and individual needs. Control of social production…shifts to the great apparatuses of

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[4]Alternatively, Lac1au and Mouffe explain SMs in terms of the availability of democratic discourse and the crisis of the hegemonic formation consolidated after WW2, whereas Touraine focuses on the emergence of a new societal type, post-industrial society, characterized by increased levels of reflexivity.

technical and political decision making... It has come to mean controlling complex systems of information, symbols and social relations." (1996: 99)

According to Melucci, this shift in the control of social production means that there are organisers of information which are more powerful and stable than others; they "…inform a wider portion of the field, they are keys to other information" (Melucci, 1996: 178). This form of power or "access to primary codes" is not distributed randomly and it corresponds to a distribution of social positions and power:

> "The establishment of a world media system, a realisation of the last ten years, operates basically as the manufacturer of master codes at the world scale…[which] are continuously spread among the population through the packaging of merchandises, the production of manuals, the counselling activity of experts…What matters is the hidden operation of symbolic forms, patterning people's thoughts, emotions and feelings… The principle power is embedded in their capacity to organise the minds of people… The vast majority of people are simply users in the audience [and] excluded from the discussion on the logic that organises this flow of information; they are there only to receive it and have no access to the power that shapes reality through the controlled ebb and flow of information." (ibid: 179)

Thus, Melucci maintains that "…the real domination is today the exclusion from the power of naming" and is made manifest by "…the un-reflected reception of the names which frame human experiences, consumption, inter-personal relationships: the abiding by the rules implied by these names" (ibid: 182).   And so it follows that new centralities and marginalities are defined by this "privileged control of the production and diffusion of ideas" (ibid: 179). Furthermore, the emergent forms of power are "…neutral and primarily functional in character", and one cannot readily address them as physical, personal, tangible entities of power (ibid: 180):

> "For this reason the problem has to be dealt with at both the cultural and political level. By detecting master codes, it is possible to…render them visible and submit them to public confrontation, thus reducing their impact manifesting in inequalities, stabilisation of privileges, etc. The more public spaces are open, the more codes can be appropriated in unpredictable ways and interpreted differently by the people and the more their ambivalence or polyvalence can be kept open. There is thus room created for negotiating different meanings and establishing the minimum agreement for living together on a shared planet."(181)

Thus, in contrast to traditional actors such as political parties and trade unions (which are concerned with material reproduction and distribution) NSMs operate at the *communicative* level of action and are concerned with "…cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization"[5] (Habermas, 1981: 33). They "…fight for the right to

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[5] Melucci asserts that the very organisational structure of NSMs is in itself an integral component of their 'message' and explains that, since "the action is focused on cultural codes, the form of the movement is a message, a symbolic challenge to the dominant patterns…The medium…is the message" (Melucci, 1985:

realize their own identity, for the possibility of disposing of their personal creativity, their affective life, and their biological and interpersonal experience" (Melucci, 1980: 218). They are at once struggles for "…the reappropriation of time, of space, and of relationships in the individual's daily experience" (ibid: 219). Such contemporary 'struggles' are diverse and can include the eradication of discrimination and subjugation (including rejection of forms of manipulation and regulation), the rejection of traditional roles and the constitution of new identities (with particular focus on the autonomy of the individual, democracy and plurality), the reappropriation of physical space, and the cultural and practical redefinition of our relationship with nature They advocate values of equality and participation.

And so, given that "…in contemporary systems, signs become interchangeable and power operates through the languages and codes which organise the flow of information, NSMs, according to Melucci, take as their prerogative to "…raise cultural challenges to the dominant language, to the codes that organise information and shape social practices" (Melucci, 1996: 8)

Against this background, I would now like to consider 'new literacies'.

3.2. New literacies: Visual, Multimodal and Critical
Doneman (1997) classifies 'communications guerillas' as "…emerging opposition to the pervasive and coercive use of information imagery by powerful groups" (1997: 139). According to Doneman, they are dedicated to promoting the critical interpretation of media texts, and attempt to open such texts to multiple analyses and interpretations of the messages therein and therefore to encourage multiple active responses generated by the readers of texts and not by the message writers. Such literacy practices, he says, include the manipulation of images and meanings in ways associated with "…the arts and the construction of culture, and also with social revolution" (Doneman 1997: 139)

These practices, say Lankshear and Knobel (2000), may provide useful clues about some of the different ways young people understand and practise politics, as they often involve "…a blend of the anarchic, the edge-dweller, the intensely personal, the do-it-yourself ethic, dressed to spoof, critique and subvert mainstream culture and constructions of publishing—and, to that extent ideas about how they understand the nature and role of literacies in political practices" (2000, website) That new literacies and social practices associated with new technologies "are being invented on the streets", they say, raises the question whether curricular pedagogy is the best place to find and learn about new literacies. Such original and contemporary practices also raise wider questions than those concerned with new technologies alone:

> "How will literacy practices be re-defined in relation not only to the emergence of digital technologies, but also to the emergent, bended forms of social identity,

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p.801). In this way, NSMs "challenge established cultural codes and show, by the things they do and how they do them, that an alternative is possible" (ibid: p.812).

work, civic and institutional life, and the re-distributions of wealth and power that accompany economic and cultural globalisation?" (Luke, 2003: 133)

Street suggests that such questions urgently require answering, and that we need to conceptualise literacy "…within broader social orders – what is termed the 'New work Order'[6] and what might analogously be termed a 'New Communicative Order'" (Street, 1998: 1)

A number of writers are currently attempting to address this, and some working in the area of social semiotics and visual design have suggested that literacy needs to be conceptualised in terms of modes other than just 'reading and writing' as these are only one part of what people need to learn in order to be 'literate' in the future (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1990):

> "They are going to have to learn to handle…combinations of signs, symbols, boundaries, pictures, words, texts, images, etc…We are now talking about a wider range of semiotic systems that cut across reading, writing and speech….This shifts attention away from the traditional focus in visual semiotics on 'lexis'…and instead focuses on how [semiotic combinations] become 'statements' [which] create meaning." (Street, 1998: 9)

Street (1998) proposes that such practices point to the need to account for the use of semiotic resources in innovative and independent ways, and to consider within literacy theory the communicative possibilities of the manifold contemporary sign systems as well as the abilities of their users in negotiating diverse modalities in the new communicative order. One of the core concerns of the new literacies project is to address the increasingly multi-semiotic nature of texts in contemporary society, and to explore how texts draw upon and articulate together different semiotic modalities (e.g., language and visual images). The issue becomes not simply *language* but *semiosis* more generally.

In *Reading Images*: *The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996), Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) illustrate how visual images can be read as 'text' and the metaphor of 'grammar' can be applied to the study of visuals. In this sense 'grammar' is not a set of rules for the correct use of language but rather a set of socially constructed resources for the construction of meaning. Such a grammar, Kress and van Leeuwen argue, can be used by individuals to shape the subjectivities of others. They advocate the place of reading images in the school curriculum so that students participate effectively in the changing 'semiotic landscape'. They also believe that visual design, like language and all semiotic modes, is socially constructed and this makes their work useful for teachers seeking to develop critically literate students. It is held by many writers that visual images, like all

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[6] Gee et al define this as "…a shift towards forms of production which employ new ways of making goods and commodities, serving more differentiated markets, or niches, through segmented retailing strategies. So while the old work order stressed issues of cost and revenue, the new work order emphasises asset building and market share" (Gee et al., 1996, pp. vii-viii)]

representations, "…are never innocent or neutral reflections of reality…they *re*-present for us: that is, they offer not a mirror of the world but an interpretation of it" (Midalia, 1999: 131).

I believe that the investigation of the kind of critical visual literacy developed and enacted in billboard modification could be very illuminating in this context.

4. METHODOLOGY
My analysis of billboard modification is three tiered:
1) Analysis of three modified billboards in terms of their semiotic and multimodal features.
2) Identification of the discourses which are articulated together in these texts.
3) Supplementary analysis of data elicited from a member of the group which carried out the billboard modifications.

4.1. Semiotic and multimodal analysis of three modified billboards.
The billboards I selected were obtained from a member of a Bristol-based billboard liberation group. I established contact with this activist via the *indymedia* website which provides links and forums for activists from various and diverse movements. I asked her to take part in my study and she agreed after some initial trepidation (on account that what she does is very much illegal). I asked her to email me a selection of billboards on which she had worked, and the three she sent me are the ones that I will analyse. My only stipulation was that they were all combinations to whatever degree of modes of image and writing. They are text (1), text (2) and text (3) and they can be found below.

Using Kress and Van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (1996), analysis at this level concerns the semiotic modes and features of modified billboards. 'Grammar' here does not refer to a set of rules, such as might be used in formal linguistic analysis, but rather relates to socially constructed resources for the construction of meaning, and I will analyse the modified billboards according to four criteria:

1. *Representation and meaning*: At this level, analysis concerns what processes and represented participants are evident in images, and how participants, processes and actions are conveyed and interact to produce meanings.

2. *Representation and interaction*: This stage is concerned with how the viewer of the image is positioned through design elements. Analysis of interpersonal meaning focuses on the representation of relations between viewer and image, and a number of aspects are essential in establishing such viewer-image interaction: mood perspective, social distance, lighting, colour and modality.

3. *Representation and text design*: This level of analysis focuses on layout and compositional meanings. This involves identifying a number of functional codes that operate in the layout of an image to produce meaning and create coherence.

These codes are: salience, reading path, vectors, the compositional axes and centres and margins.

4. *Analysis of verbal text*: This stage of analysis involves examining the grammatical, lexical and semantic features of the text, as well as typographical features.

Analysis here should address the ways in which semiotic resources are typically 'brought in' from the outside by the activists, as well as the ways in which existing semiotic resources are used to create meanings.[7]

4.2. Discourse analysis

The next stage of analysis draws from Fairclough's (1995) framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, used to investigate language use as discourse and as a form of social practice.

This framework assumes that language use at a local level inserts users into wider patterns and helps them to encode individual conceptions of truth, knowledge, power and subjectivity or 'discourses'. The articulation of these discourses in textual form can provide analysts with the ability to locate such discursive practices within broader social structures, and it is also indicative to a degree of struggles concerning the individual's negotiation of self and sense of identity. Such texts also set up semiotic relationships with other texts and events, and intertextual analysis can show how texts incorporate social practices from a range of different social contexts, and how these are drawn on and combined within specific literacy events. More specifically, this approach will allow me to look cultural hybridity and the interaction across social and cultural boundaries from the 'life-world' back into the 'system' via the billboard modifications.

4.3. Analysis of a personal account from an activist.

The data elicited from the participant is intended to provide an ethnographic perspective on the analysis produced by semiotic and discourse analysis. It will be used to contextualise the billboard modifications, drawing on the activist's views on billboard liberation and her ways of expressing her role as a *producer* (or, rather, re-producer) of texts. This level of analysis is expected to reveal in greater depth the attitudes, values and aspects concerning identity at 'ground-level'. What evidence is there about how the

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[7] Due to the fact that I am interested in eliciting evidence concerning the discursive practices of the billboard liberators themselves, I do not deem it necessary to provide explicit, in-depth semiotic analyses of the billboard advertisements as they stood *before* the modification took place as such analyses would provide only evidence of the discursive practices of the organizations behind the advertisements (brand companies, advertising agencies, etc.). In many cases this may not be of significant concern to the billboard liberators or relevant to their immediate endeavours. However, where content conveyed in the modified billboards is inseparable from or entails significant evaluation of the 'original' advertisements, I will of course investigate such relevant observations as part of my analysis.

informant negotiates her identity as an *individual*, that is, as an individual activist and a human subject, as well as in relation to the immediate group?

At this point, I would like to move to the analyses.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1. Text (1)

In terms of multimodality, this text is highly complex. As can be seen, it contains verbal text, visual texts, various fames within frames and a variety of colours. I wish first to analyse the embedded images before moving on to the text as a multimodal entity.

There are several similarities between the embedded images. It is clear that both images have been taken in, if not Iraq, then at least on the Arabian Peninsula. This is illustrated in the image on the left ('before') by the fact that the represented participants at the forefront (as well as some in the background) are wearing *galabiyya,* the traditional Arab dress worn by men, and a woman can be seen in the top left-hand corner wearing a *burqa.* It is understood that the right-hand image ('after') has been taken in roughly the same geographical area from the background detail, that is, the palm tree and the dwelling behind it with windows in the form of Byzantine-style trellis. However, neither image appears to have been 'staged' - both seem realistic in accordance with their given contexts, and in accordance with similar images which appear elsewhere, such as newspapers. This credibility affords both images high modality. Let us now consider them in turn.

***The 'before' image*:**

Processes of meaning making:
The image depicts a presentational process (concerning an action/event) of an actional kind (action creating a relation between depicted participants). A transactional process is occurring between the represented participants at the forefront; the *actor* (in white) and the *goal* (in blue).

Layout and compositional meaning:
The actor and the goal are at the forefront and therefore have more salience than the background group, which is not only distanced, but also slightly out of focus, decreasing their salience in the overall image. The actors outstretched arm forms a vector towards the produce in the hand of the goal and the gaze of each represented participant forms a vector to the same point in the image. This is the *centre* of the transactional process, and its margin is the rich array of assorted produce. We can therefore infer that the transactional process is one of buying/selling. The lighting source is bright, natural sunlight from directly above the subjects.

Viewer position:
Both the actor and the goal are positioned in profile; their collective gaze addressing the centre. This indirect gaze encodes a mood of offer (it is indirect to the viewer) and in this way the image is subjective; the participants are positioned as objects of the viewers contemplation. However, the actor and goal are framed from the waist up, denoting a social relation to the viewer, and the assembled represented participants in the background (a group comprised of men, women and children) denote a public relation to the viewer.

Summary:
Through its imagery, layout and viewer positioning, this image depicts the 'life-world'; 'people going about their ordinary day-to-day business'. The throng of market-goers interacting in the background and the interactional process being given salience convey thriving commerce, social stability and positive community relations. The lighting denotes hope and optimism, and the centres margin conveys prosperity and self sufficiency.

***The 'after' image*:**

Process of meaning making.
This image also depicts a presentational process, but it is non-transactional in that it has only one represented participant, the actor.

Layout and compositional meaning.
With regards layout and content, it should first be noted that the actor and the background fire have equal salience because, although the actor is foregrounded, the fire (including smoke) is larger in dimensions. Therefore, a reading path is established starting from the

fire (on the left) which is considered in analysis to be *given*, that is, it is an understood departure for the viewer. The reading path continues along the vector created by the actors forearm to the actor himself. The actor is considered as *new*, in that he is crucial in explaining the given. Similarly, bright sunshine can be seen to the left, and is therefore also *given* (familiar to the viewer), and as the reader follows the established reading path, it gives way to the *new* of the black smoke billowing from the furnace below. Furthermore, the upper section of the horizontal axis, representing the *ideal*, is predominantly comprised of sunshine and foliage and as the reader follows the vector created by the (roughly 45°) angle of the actors rifle, this *ideal* acquiesces to the *real* (represented by the lower section of the horizontal axis), that is, the flames, smoke and actor (soldier).

Viewer position:
The mood denoted by this image is one of *demand*, and is established via visual configuration of the actor's direct gaze. This explicit visual address of the viewer and the actor's rigid, upright frame photographed from the frontal perspective combine to form an intimidating whole. Furthermore, the rifle poised at the actors shoulder and the shaded goggles covering his eyes denote unpredictability and potential menace.

Summary:
The mood established through gaze, the personal distance of the actor in relation to viewer and the actor's stance denote confrontation. The equal salience of the fire and the actor, and the configuration of these along the horizontal axes attribute the given (fire) to the actions of the new (actor). Similarly, the depiction of sunshine and fauna as the ideal is exceeded by the real: fire, pollution and militarism.

Text (1) as Multimodal Text.
With regards the embedded images, the words 'before' and 'after' below make it clear in which order they are to be read. However, it is visual codes which make clear *how* they are to be read in relation to each other. The lighting (sunlight) is common to both images, and being on the left-hand side of the 'after' image, follows a reading path established in the 'before' image. This reading path takes the viewer sequentially from the market image (*given*: left-hand horizontal) to the fire (*new*: right-hand horizontal) to the soldier (*new*: right hand horizontal in that image). This reading path of the text as a whole so far, then, can be read aloud as "*from (*what was then*) a peaceful community going about their business in the sun to (*what is now*) explosions, pollution and hostile foreign troops*". The reading path within the 'after' image continues the reading path of the text as a whole, guided by the vector created by the soldier's rifle which points down to the logo in the bottom, right-hand corner of the text (positioned as real and new). The brand name of 'Ikea' has been altered to 'Iraq' which is both effective and efficient in that the lexical items are similar in orthographic structure, and both contain the phonemes [k] and [I]. However, it is primarily significant from a discursive viewpoint because the word 'Iraq' combined with the colours, layout and positioning of the 'Ikea' logo transforms the name of the country into the name of a brand, and conflates the concepts of 'state' and 'corporation'.

From here the reading path leads to the text box along the bottom, starting with: *We've had a billion pound makeover*. In typical advertising style, the simple sentence structure and perfect aspect makes this declarative statement concise and slogan-like. The verbal contraction *we've* lends the sentence an informal tone, while the rhythmical compound noun *billion pound makeover* is synonymous with the use of innovative lexis in the advertising genre. The question is, though: Who is the 'we' addressing the reader if not those who have modified this text? The soldier's frontal perspective, direct visual configuration and close social distance which personally address the viewer immediately make the words attributable to him. Just as within the frame around the image of which he is a part he is merely an actor, so within the context of the text as a whole he is representative of the amassed occupying forces in Iraq.

Come and marvel at the new and improved Iraq: the imperative here encourages the reader to *come* - in-keeping with advertisings persuasive style, and the repeated use of conjunctions ('come *and* marvel', 'new *and* improved') help re-iterate the potential benefits to the reader if they choose to accept the invitation.

The lexical item *makeover* and its near synonyms *new* and *improved* are obviously being used here in an ironic sense - they are presented as antonymous to the semantic meaning of the 'after' image. This being articulated by the personified occupying forces establishes that, in their eyes, the new Iraq is *improved*, and for them something to *marvel* at. The background colour of the text is very significant. The blue, being associated with peace, tranquillity, dignity and being 'therapeutic' occupies the upper horizontal section and so is considered the *ideal*. The red which fills the lower horizontal axis (the *real*) is associated with urgency, heat, blood, danger and hostility.

Discussion of Text (1).
It is clear that aspects from the *Advertising* genre are realised here through the use of the 'before' and 'after' technique, and linguistic analysis shows certain features of language associated with promotion (for example, verbal contractions and multi-word nouns) being drawn in to the realisation of this discourse. *Economic* discourse is realised through the choice of lexical items, and through the logo which depicts *Iraq* as a business, and in particular, politico-economic discourse is realised through the conflation in this logo of the discourses of 'state' and 'corporation'. This could be a critique of the neo-liberalist agenda (economic globalisation) or the popular anti-war belief that the US and UK were acting upon the interests of their respective corporate allies, particularly those in the energy industry. The discourse of the *life-world* is clearly realised through the 'before' image and the sum of its features, and is positioned as 'given' and stands in positive comparison to the realisation of the discourse of *war and militarism* which is made manifest via semiotic features and meanings associated with malevolence in the (new) 'after' image. These respective accounts are reinforced by the use of background colours; peace and tranquillity being the *ideal*, but war and danger being the *real*. The positive sense in which this destruction is conveyed through the verbal text is attributable to the actor in the 'after' image.

5.2. Text (2).

Presentational process:

The process conveyed in this image is conceptual, as denoted by the absence of any action or narrative structure. The image has a didactic function in that it instructs the viewer (in this case, regarding make-up). The type of conceptual process is a suggestive-symbolic one in that there is only one represented participant through which the whole meaning is carried. In this image, mood and lighting are emphasised over detail, with colours and lighting serving important functions in capturing the generalised essence.

Layout and compositional axes.
The represented participant has full salience, as she constitutes the whole image. This salience is increased by the size of the image in relation to the text as a whole. It is significant that the dimensions of her head do not fit into the frame denoting her being more 'real' than the advertisement itself. As this is an advertisement for makeup, it is assumed that the producer of the text deemed it unnecessary to include the full dimensions of her head, as it is to the face alone that make-up is applied. The placement of the image is to the right of centre, denoting 'lightness'.

The reading path begins with the image itself and progresses via the vector created by the represented participants exposed ear to the verbal text on the left (see below). The positioning of the image is to the right side of the vertical axis and so represents the 'new'; the promise of rejuvenation being made to purchasers of the advertised product, and the focus of that promise is the smile, representing the promise of happiness also to the products purchaser. The represented participant's smile is the focus of the image and her cupped hand separates the brand information from the 'rest' of the text, suggesting that the viewer should consider that a unit.

Positioning of the viewer.
The mood is one of offer, because although the represented participant is facing the viewer her eyes remain closed, so the gaze is indirect. Through perspective the viewer is positioned to take a subjective point of view; the represented participant is depicted from

straight-on on the horizontal axis (establishing a connection between the interactive participants and suggesting that they are part of 'the same world') and on the vertical axis also (denoting equality between the interactive participants).

The close-up of the represented participant denotes a social distance in the realm of personal relations, that is, a high degree of intimacy frames the viewer. The high definition suggests a three point lighting source, a key light being the main light source of illumination directed at the participant from behind the camera, down at a 45° from the left, and a softer fill light which fills in the shadows created by the key light, and lastly a back light which shines from behind the subject to differentiate her from the background. Every feature of the participant is perfectly lit, the only shadow being created by her cupped hand, which highlights her prominent cheekbone. Her hand serves to frame her smile (the focus) and her parted hair frames her closed eyes and creates vectors which align with her cheekbones.

Use of colour in this text is minimal; the white background creating a neutral background against which the subtleties of the participants skin-tone and eye-makeup emerge more clearly. It also serves as a comparative tone against which the whiteness of the participant's teeth becomes more apparent, and being associated with clean, clinical environments, this shares a semantic relation with the noun *science*. The red of the lipstick is the only obvious use of vivid colour, and the high saturation helps establish this area as the focus. In this context, the saturated red denotes passion, excitement and used as an accent colour in this way, it can promote expectations and quick decision making.

As mentioned, the reading path of the text begins with the salient image and progresses to the text to the left of it. The interrogative *what if science could make me vile?* invites a response from the viewer. The lexical items *what if* are set in larger typeface than the remainder of the sentence, functioning as an interrogative on their own denoting what will or would be the result if -. In this sense, it complements the pensiveness of the participant with eyes closed, as if she is daydreaming about what might be. However, the adjective *vile* set alongside her smile creates semantic dissonance and suggests that she dreams that science might make her morally despicable or abhorrent. In the text below the interrogative, *with vivisection it does,* the preposition *with* acts to conjoin the two sentences, making the relationship between the two a question and response. The pronoun *it* is a substitution for the noun *science* above which creates a further cohesive tie between the two statements. However, in the second statement, the typeface is slightly larger, and the arrangement of the text non-linear and somewhat chaotic. This visually detaches it from the above statement, but gives it a higher degree of emphasis. This 'cut and paste' arrangement of letters is analogous with anonymous letters, particularly for demands (eg ransom notes). The reading path from here traverses back towards the represented participant and the saturated red of the focus can now be seen to represent blood, danger and hostility. The reading path commences through the vector created by the angle of the represented participant's hand and to the right-hand side of the text. The verbal text here varies considerably in typeface. The brand name L'ORÉAL is in high, bold font and, being on the upper elevation, dominates. The noun *Paris* appears below the brand name, and in the context of this text carries connotations of luxury, indulgence

and high-class commodities. Below this is the free standing adverb clause of reason *Because I'm Stupid*. Similarly to the non-linear verbal text on the opposite side of the text, the lexical item *stupid* has a distorted configuration, and carries a similar emphasis over the verbal text in which it is embedded. Being on the right hand side of the text, this statement is the *new* to its counter statements *given* and so in this context functions as its punchline. As it is in the first person, it is attributable to the represented participant; if the viewer traverses back across the reading path, her expression (closed eyes and wide grin) appear vacant and convey idiocy.

Discussion of text (2)
Aesthetic discourse is prominently realised in this text, especially through the highlighting of the represented participants features. This discourse is especially realised through the accenting of features which are considered desirable in dominant ideology: her perfectly symmetrical face, and the highlighting of certain parts (high cheekbones, full lips). Lighting, colour, size and layout are all drawn on to realise this discourse. Although she is presented as an aspirational figure for women, the mood of offer and the position of the image on the compositional axes (*new*) make her 'accessible' and present the viewer with promise of rejuvenation and happiness through purchasing the product which is associated via lexical choice (*Paris*) with indulgence and luxury. Therefore the positioning of the viewer through perspective (subjective and facing), the positioning of the image on the vertical compositional axis and lexis and grammar (in the form of the interrogative) are drawn on in the realisation of *promotional* discourse. *Science* discourse is evoked through the lexical choice of that term, as well as through the choice of background colour (white). The discourse of *animal liberation* is made manifest through lexical choice, and through the subsequent semantic association with the focus' colour ('blood and hostility'). The emphasis given to certain typographical features is also drawn into this discourse. Lexical choice (*stupid*) which represents *new*, that is, the 'actual' promise for consumers realises the discourse of *criticism*, in this case, critical consumption. Through the positioning of this item as a punch-line, and the way in which it dramatically changes the connotative meaning of the represented participants expression, the discourse of humour is drawn on.

5.3. Text (3)

There are three texts here; firstly, the larger, more salient text which dominates most of the space (subtext A). Secondly, the smaller duplicate text (subtext B) in the lower right-hand corner of (A) and, lastly, the combination of the two (text C). As (A) and (B) are virtual duplicates, I will discuss their common features first.

Each embedded image depicts a conceptual, suggestive-symbolic process (an absence of action whereby one represented participant carries the whole meaning)

Positioning of reader
The mood expressed in these photographs varies slightly. In sub-text (A), the direct gaze of the represented participant expresses *demand* whereas the indirect gaze of the represented participant in sub-text (B) expresses offer. The former encourages the viewer to enter into an imaginary relationship with the represented participant (to imagine themselves in his position) whereas the personal address of the latter is less acute; he is positioned as an object for the viewer's contemplation.

With regards perspective, the viewer is positioned to adopt a subjective point of view. The represented participants are depicted from zero degree angles on the horizontal axis (denoting no difference in power between participant and viewer) and also on the vertical axes (establishing a connection of similarity between participant and viewer). Both factors help to position the viewer as not exceptional or beyond the possibility of being in such a state as the participant. Both images are close-ups and represent close social distance, again establishing a relation to the viewer.

The background colour is a significant code here – black is used to denote strength, determination, power and formality.

Layout and composition:
The reading path in each subtext starts with the framed represented participants which have the greatest salience on account of their allocated visual weight. The chalkboard which each holds has a number and name written upon it in chalk. These are instantly recognisable as 'mug-shots', photographs taken of suspected criminals upon arrest for police records. Within these images upper horizontal axes are comprised of the heads of the represented participants, representing the *ideal*, that is, this section conveys the generalised essence of information concerning the participants (in this case gender, approximate age, ethnicity, etc.) and the chalkboards in the lower horizontal axes represent the *real*; the more specific, factual information pertaining to their current state (that of 'having been arrested'). The reading path in each sub-text takes the reader from the represented participants, along the verbal text on the chalkboards to the verbal text to the right-hand side of each image. The images being on the left of the vertical compositional axis denote 'given' and the verbal text 'new', that is, the archetypal, easily recognisable 'mug-shots' are a familiar and 'agreed upon' point of departure for the sub-texts as wholes and the verbal texts convey meaning that is not yet known, and crucial to the point of the sub-texts as statements.

Turning to text (C), salience is given to text (A) which , in the upper left hand corner, represents ideal (generalised essence of information) and given (familiar/understood by the viewer), whereas text (B) represents the real (more specific, factual information) and new (less known and accepted by the viewers) and this is the direction the reading path follows.

Both text (A) and text (B) include the interrogative *When will your number be up?* The personal possessive pronoun *your* directly addresses the reader and the colloquial *number…up* is informal and means 'to be doomed'. In this context, the term has a semantic relation to the represented participants who, literally hold 'numbers up'. The reading path then leads to the bottom of the sub-texts where the (*given* and *real*) verbal text reads *we're on to you*. The verbal contraction *we're* follows the informal tone established in the verbal text above, and so is informal and easily understood to any reader and *on to you* is colloquial and similarly informal and easily comprehensible. The sub-texts vary in highly significant ways: Firstly, the represented participant in text (A), who is not recognisable to the average viewer, is substituted in text (B) for a highly recognisable figure: the Prime Minister, Tony Blair (in case there is any doubt, his name

is written clearly on the chalk board he holds). The second predominant difference is the terms of address. In text (A) the address is to *benefit cheats,* and in text (B) the address concerns *war crimes.* The dominant, uppermost interrogative is answered by a subsequent interrogative which, in everyday speech, is often taken as a challenge. In this case, the viewer is challenged to weigh against each other the two types of crime (benefit cheating and war crimes) and evaluate them in comparative relation to each other. The reading path ends with the (most new and most real) verbal text, the imperative, *Stop the war*. This feature of text (B) is, structurally speaking, the only difference between the layout of texts (A) and (B), and it's uniqueness gives it additional impact and prominence.

Discussion of text (3)
The discourse of *law and order* is realised primarily via the images but also through the use of lexical choice and background colour. This discourse is set against the discourse of a different kind of law and order; that of international *human rights* which is realised primarily through the plural compound noun *war crimes*, but also through the image of the suit-clad Prime Minister Tony Blair holding aloft a police identification board. However, the most striking discursive evidence in this example of semiotic practice is the realisation of the discourse of the system as realised in text (A) through who is addressing who; of course it is the government addressing members of the public. Similarly the discourse of the life-world is realised through text (B) in that the addressee is the public addressing the government, and Tony Blair specifically.

At this point, it is worth turning to the views of one of the billboard activists.

5.4. Secondary data and reflections on the primary data.

Having looked at the data produced by billboard liberators and explored the semiotic and discursive practices which are variously drawn on and how these inter-relate, it is now worth exploring the way in which an activist reflects on these practices. In doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of how such practices function as literacy practices, that is, the strategies that might typically be employed in interpreting and re-forming multimodal texts like these.

In her online interviews – see the Appendix – the informant raises several points which relate to the discursive practices evidenced in the multimodal texts. Animal liberation (response 2: 4), the focus of text (2), was alluded to at some length by the informant. During her discussion of this text the role of women in the media was raised by her, especially with regards unrealistic representations which she sees as encouraging unrealistic expectations of what women were 'meant' to look like. She makes clear the detrimental effect that she believes this type of pressure from the media has on women (response 2: 13-17). Colonisation of the life-world by the state is also an issue which she points to being a motivation and a justification for her actions:

"The way we see it once the boards in our neighborhood telling a message that we don't want to hear and forcing a shitty product that we don't want to buy then its public space and we have the right to do what we want to it." (response 2: 26-29)

Elsewhere, the informant also discusses her negative feelings towards certain other depictions of represented participants in advertising (response 1: 12-17) and also conveys the importance to the group of defining and promoting critical consumption:

"We probably talk about that more than anything cos that's one of the main things we want to inform people about even when were hitting a board"
 (response 2: 36-39)

However, most significant in this data are the references made by the informant to the practices of meaning-making involved in this kind of production. For example, having read my preliminary analysis of text (1), the informant was surprised by the various processes of interrelated resources and meanings which arose from my analysis of the text in comparison to their own preliminary considerations:

"We thought it through but only things like which pictures we should use and you were right cos [sic] we did talk about the peacefulness of the first one and the proper contrast with the second one. But things like the rifle pointing down to the logo wernt [sic] planned and I hadn't thought about the how the background colours can show different meanings. (response 1: 63-66)

However, it would be rash and quite wrong to assume that the activists are slap-dash in their efforts and have little grasp of the processes of meaning-making and how these might be interpreted. On the contrary, the informant points to an occasion during the modification of billboard (2) when one of the group suggested that part of the text be left untouched so as to create irony.

"…we were about to get started and my mate said we had to put something over the 'because im worth it' bit…Well one of the lads reckoned we didn't because if it still said 'because im worth it' it would make the point that people who buy this shit do actually think that their worth torturing animals for…We had a vote on it and everyone else reckoned that we should paste it over, in case they didn't get the ironic message so we agreed on stupid cos of pretty much what you said about the demented grin…that was the point really to try and make it fit with the photo"
(response 2 :10-15)

This not only shows how prudent the group were in perceiving the ways in which their work might be interpreted, but furthermore how they err on the side of caution lest they alienate 'them' (the texts readers) through an imprecise use of irony. What is also evident here is how they consciously thought about the relationship between modes. Having established that the represented participant in billboard (2) looked 'demented' they combined a word into the existing text which reflected this. These points are telling because they show that the informant and her group not only consider what is possible,

but also what is *appropriate* in a given context, and any doubts may result in restraint. The informant alludes to another example of such restraint, when the group decided not to alter the salient features of the represented participants face:

> "We were gonna mess with her face and maybe black a few teeth out here and there or stick red devil eyes over her eyes but we decided that it was too much." (response 2: 17-23)

However, another reason exists for such restraint in this case and it indicates not merely how the group themselves bring semiotic materials to the construction of meaning, but how they primarily utilise the resources which, ultimately, they seek to undermine:

> "Anyway another reason we left her face was that if your [sic] hitting a definite company then the more you leave of what was there the better cos [sic] its like using thier own methods against them and people can see what the brand is straight away. Corporations spend so much money building a brand so it's a big resource we can use to get a message across if we do it right." (Response 2: 29-33)

This suggests that the group's literacy practices operate from two quite opposite poles. Their task is to be as creative as possible in undermining the message that exists in as damaging as way as possible, but by making as few changes as possible. This is surely challenging enough, but the informant also points out that planning can often be minimal, and decisions are often made ad-hoc, for example,

> "We didn't [sic] plan to change it but while we were there we had the right paint colours and one of the lads came up with the idea on the spot so we went with it." (response 1: 31-33)

The types of practices which are being suggested here seem not to be governed by strict (or otherwise) conventions, and the group work collectively in decision making processes in accordance with an approach to meaning making which is very much an open system of free ideas negotiated from within a flexible group structure. Communal decision making is mentioned several times in this data, and as such is deemed essential to the group's actions and responsibilities: "We all had a say [in] helping to pick the right photo of Blair out. We found the one we used in a magazine and all agreed it was perfect." (response 3: 8-10)

Indeed, group comradeship and solidarity seems as much an issue of friendship as conviction of beliefs. The informant seems impressed by a computer generated text, but laments the individual nature of such a method:

> "…this one was done on a computer so it wasn't really much of a group effort really. It looks good but it's a bit dull to do it this way I reckon. Theres nothing like the smell of paint and the sound of sirens! Haha." (Response 3: 13-16)

Furthermore, the very act of billboard modification which might well put the activists under considerable pressure, as well as in considerable danger is undertaken "…as much cos its naughty and fun as to get a point off our chest" (response 1: 68)

The informant illustrates other certain guidelines which are followed, but not in any martial sense, rather in order that the task at hand is carried out as effectively and efficiently as possible:

> "Normally we all go together and have set tasks each and we each say what were doing before we start so everyone knows what their doing and everyone else aswell" (response 3: 3-4)

Also of great interest with regards literacy strategies here is the rich multiplicity of resources that the group employ. In response 3: p.1, we learn that the smaller replica of text (3) embedded within that text was produced using a digital camera, a laptop PC and the relevant manipulation software. Elsewhere we are told that a group member uses computer aided design software to produce texts from scratch (response 3: 5-8). We are also told that:

> "one of the guys works for a printers and can get really cheap enlarged prints…so we just paste the posters" (response 2: 29-31)

6. Conclusion

Through analysis of the texts produced by billboard liberators and from accounts by the activists themselves, we can see the ways in which 'subvertisements' serve as "a medium for young people's opinions, thoughts, creativity", making it clear that young people "are not passive culture consumers, but active culture makers" (Lankshear and Knobel, 2000: website). Furthermore, their actions are very much "…intimately interw[oven] with everyday life and individual experience" (Melucci, 1996: p.9) as they set about the task of attempting to instigate positive social change, while at the same time fighting for their rights to "…realize their own identity, for the possibility of disposing of their personal creativity, their affective life, and their biological and interpersonal experience" (Melucci, 1980: 218). Overall, I hope to have shown that the activities of billboard liberators provide a point of dialectic translation between micro level knowledge, relationships and subjectivity, and macro level regimes of truth, structural positioning and identity. Beyond that, these subversive, creative social movements can provide clues to the forms that new visual and multimodal literacies might take in the future. This encompasses, of course, critical literacy, and indeed it is worth considering how far the practices of those who 'invent them on the streets' might be adopted in literacy pedagogy in the classroom.

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Wikipedia 1- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_jamming

Wikipedia 2- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subvertising

Response (1):

1   I don't really get a lot of the words you use to describe bits of the billboard and the pictures on it. It wasn't completely over my head but quite a lot of it seemed to be saying in big words whats pretty clear to me anyway. Anyway, im probably trying to say in a roundabout way that im not even gonna try to use the same words back (I

5   could if I wanted I just don't want to! haha) seriously though, even though I don't get alot of the terms I get the point of doing it that way cos its les you see it from a distance instead of right close up. I found myself flicking from your email to the picture of the billboard and leaning right back in my chair cos I was really trying to see it from a distance. Its weird because im so used to looking at it that I cant really

10   step back and see it how you probably do and cos I worked on it I reckon im sorta biased anyway cos I know whats behind the pasted pictures. And im not gonna tell you haha. Ok the first one was a picture of a man who might be thought of as quite ugly with a bowlcut like kids in the seventies had to have and he had buckteeth too and the second one was of a pretty young lady all prim and proper with a perfect

15   white smile and perfect hair. I think it was supposed to be funny but it's a pretty shitty way to sell something especially when its furniture that has nothing to do with the way people look.
Anyway sorry ill tell you what I can about the board. We did this in mid march this year in a village outside Bristol. Its on a main road so we were pretty scared but as

20   you can see theres bushes behind it so we had cover in case we saw police coming or anyone slowed down to see what we were doing. We didn't get any grief but an old pissed scouser bloke walked past and asked what we were doing and we told him we were pasting up an anti-war poster and he just nodded and walked away. When he got far enogh away he turned round and shouted fuckin hippie bastards and

25   started singing rule britania. It was hilarious. Anyway the whole alteration took about 15 minutes I changed the m in million to a b to make it billion by painting over he m with red paint. It was a last minute decision to do that actually cos weve seen the board loads as we all live round there and we talked for a while about hitting it and one of the guys works for a printers and can get really cheap enlarged

30   prints like these ones so we had it all planned that we were gonna just paste the posters up and change the white ikea to iraq. We didnt plan to change the m to b but while we were there we had the right paint colours and one of the lads came up with the idea on the spot so we went with it. Its more truthful I think cos its more like the amount that was really spent over there so I reckon it makes the whole thing work

35   better Anyway like I say another girl changed the iraq in white at the bottom and the lads did the posters. There were only four of us by the way theres usually six but this time just four of us did it. The iraq logo in the corners pretty interesting eh? I really liked the way you couldn't work out wether it was meant to show a comment on the fact that the war WAS for oil (sorry haha) or wether it was deeper than that like to

40   show neoliberal. Not really sure what that is but pretty sure it's the same as globalisation from how your using it.

We hadn't planned to do the logo either but one of the lads not the printer the other one reckons hes a bit of an artist and said he really wanted to do it and explained that he could either alter the letters that were already there or make a flyer to just stick

45 over it. We all talked it through and said that it would probably take too long to alter it so he made a flyer but when weed worked the board and stepped back he said it looked shit. We were all howling cos he can be really pretentious like that hes a proper perfectonist so we got a couple of pics – this isn't one of them this is a couple of days later after the rain had pulled the corner off the pic of the soldier. Anyway I

50 was saying we left and went for a booze and he disappeared off after like 10 minutes and came back an hour and a half later saying hed been back and taken the flyer off and painted it on instead. He didn't tell us he was gonna do it cos he knew weed take the piss something cronic. It does look good though. Oh yeah what you said about the soldier being shown as the whole allied forces was nice cos I hadn't really

60 thought about stuff like that like the way the words were being said by him.Its really interesting cos you talk about links between the different bits that we probably didn't think about at the time. We thought it through but only things like which pictures we should use and you were right cos we did talk about the peacefulness of the first one and the proper contrast with the second one. But things like the rifle

65 pointing down to the logo wernt planned and I hadn't thought about the how the background colours can show different meanings. Anyway it was taken down about a week later which is pretty good actually most times they only last a couple of days but we do it as much cos its naughty and fun as to get a point off our chest. Ive gotta go now cos im in an internet café and my times nearly up. Get in touch if theres

70 anything else you need to know about this ive attached a board that was done in new york recently and I think youll like it so enjoy!!! See ya x

Response (2)

1 I think you've picked up on the gist of this one but it is a bit simpler than iraq. Either that or im getting to know the words better! This one is from last year sometime im really sorry but I cant remember exactly but I think around july or august. Its in a pretty industrial area of Bristol so it was fairly out of the way. Obviously animal lib

5 is the main point here in fact it was the only point when planned it at first. We agreed that we were gonna make smile into vile and add the with vivisection it does and we printed one letter and went to the board and held it up on a stick to see how the size looked or if we needed to make it fatter. We did so we went back and resized it and printed all the other letters out then went back really early in the morning like about

10 4 or 5. Anyway we were about to get started and my mate said we had to put something over the because im worth it bit. Well one of the lads reckoned we didn't because if it still said because im worth it it would make the point that people who buy this shit do actually think that their worth torturing animals for and that theres such a big deal about looking pretty in the media in the way it nearly every ad tells

15 women their not beautiful enough that f we kept because im worth it as it was it would say a lot of women do feel that its worth it because of the pressure of the media. We had a vote on it and everyone else reckoned that we should paste it over,

in case didn't get the ironic message so we agreed on stupid cos of pretty much what you said about the demented grin so im glad you found it to be humour aswell cos
20 that was the point really to try and make it fit with the photo. We were all doing impressions of the sound her laugh would make, it was pretty funny. We were gonna mess with her face and maybe black a few teeth out here and there or stick red devil eyes over her eyes but we decided that it was too much. The thing we have to bear in mind is that we have to be quick because at the end of the day what were doing is
25 illegal and some people think its vandalism – mainly the companies that we hit though so it doesn't really count. The way we see it once the boards in our neighborhood telling a message that we don't want to hear and forcing a shitty product that we don't want to buy then its public space and we have the right to do what we want to it. Anyway another reason we left her face was that if your hitting a
30 definite company then the more you leave of what was there the better cos its like using thier own methods against them and people can see what the brand is straight away. Corporations spend so much money building a brand so it's a big resource we can use to get a message across if we do it right. It was also interesting what you said about showing science through the white coloured background although I cant say
35 that we discussed it really probably cos we were just thinking about animal lib only. Also what you said about criticism of consumerism is spot on. We probably talk about that more than anything cos that's one of the main things we want to inform people about even when were hitting a board with a message that doesn't really have anything to do with the message already there we talk about ways we might get a sly
40 dig in at consumerism. Anyway im off so get in touch when you need to . see ya x

Response (3)

1 This ones pretty cool cos it was done on a laptop so its pretty slick. It only took one person about 20 minutes to put together and the same person went and pasted it up. Normally we all go together and have set tasks each and we each say what were doing before we start so everyone knows what their doing and everyone else aswell.
5 But he just took a digital photo and photoshopped it. He did design his own copy of it as well as he could on his computer but the font was a bit shit and the dimensions were pretty dodgy then he realised it would just be easier to take a photo and do it that way. We all had a say but really it was his baby. The main input that the rest of us had was pretty much just helping to pick the right photo of Blair out. We found
10 the one we used in a magazine and all agreed it was perfect. For a start he was standing at a desk wih his hands stretched out and facing each other so then all that needed doing was to slap a chalkboard in there. Also he was wearing a suit which really made it look like he was about to appear in court. But like I say this one was done on a computer so it wasn't really much of a group effort really. It looks good
15 but it's a bit dull to do it this way I reckon. Theres nothing like the smell of paint and the sound of sirens! Haha.