

# THE GUERRILLAS

*Project Number One | August 22 - August 31*

WORTH 50 POINTS

FALL 2005

INTRO TO GRAPHIC DESIGN  
NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

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**SEEK ATTENTION** { *One of the most important responsibilities of a graphic designer is to effectively communicate visually with clients and the general public – by making sure the concept and content work in harmony toward the goal of creating intelligent and focused design.*

**01 ASSIGNMENT : THE GUERRILLAS**

To engage and challenge the public through the medium of design. Student will brainstorm questions, beliefs, statistics, personal causes and / or propaganda that will be made into a design piece; the piece will be placed in an environment / manner where the public can interact with the work.

*Project Outline : Up to 1 typed page which discusses final project idea, public statement possibilities, why you chose that topic / subject matter, how you will create the project and where you will display the project*

*Content / Statement : Determined by student (brief but effective), final should include two variations of the same theme*

*Medium / Project Size : Determined by student*

*Photographic Documentation : Should depict the effectiveness of your project in relation to the public environment*

*\* Under no circumstance is there to be destruction of any public / private property (unless it is yours, or you receive permission) or littering of any sort.*

**02 PROJECT TIMELINE : DUE DATES**

- **August 22** : Project introduction and presentation, Brainstorm and sketch  
*Brainstorm and sketch - Formulate ways to visually depict the guerrilla project including overall mood, colors, font type, media...then procede to sketch these ideas.*
- **August 24** : Discuss Project #1 outline, Individual meetings, Studio  
*Discuss Project #1 outline - Be able to inform the class of your project's intent*
- **August 29** : Individual meetings, Studio  
*Individual meetings - Be prepared to meet with me individually to discuss any problems you might face, and to give a status update on your project*
- **August 31** : Project #1 Due, Critique  
*Project #1 Due, Critique - Present final TWO variations of your project, along with photo documentation*

**03 PRESENTATION : GUIDELINES**

The final two photos should be mounted to one piece of heavy black illustration board (8" x 15" board size). An example of the actual project should also be included and turned in; mounting will be case-by-case. I will be scrutinizing your craft; put careful effort into your project presentation, as a portion of your grade will rely on it.

**04 GRADING : A B C D F**

*Project worth : 50 total points*

<i>Outline &amp; Sketches :</i>	<i>10 points</i>
<i>Layouts and Concept :</i>	<i>30 points</i>
<i>Documentation and Craft :</i>	<i>10 points</i>

*Note : No portion of this project may be turned in late for credit.*

*Artists drop while they shop*  
*“Shop droppers” alter packaging of retail goods to spread messages*  
*by Amanda Cantrell*  
*CNN / Money. July 20, 2005*

NEW YORK – Ingenious guerrilla marketing or retail sabotage?

That’s the question surrounding “shop dropping,” a new movement that a handful of prankster artists are perpetuating throughout retail America. Shop dropping, also known as “reverse shoplifting,” entails altering the packaging of retail merchandise and depositing the products back onto the shelves.

Ryan Watkins-Hughes, a Brooklyn-based photographer who operates a Web site about shop dropping, conceived a project in which he replaced the packaging on canned goods with labels containing his original photographs and an address for a Web site containing more of his artwork.

“I have a few friends that do street art and graffiti art, and I always appreciated the prankster side of that and the subversive quality of that work,” he said. “I had these cans lying around, so I said hey, why not get them back into the stores and sneak them back on the shelf?”

Watkins-Hughes figured out a way to put the barcodes back on the products so they could be scanned and purchased, and “shop dropping” was born. He said that shop dropping can serve a variety of purposes, but the original idea was to “subvert commercial space for artistic use.

“Part of it, of course, is to come up with this way of putting your artwork where someone wouldn’t normally see it,” he said. “But there is a lot of commentary about commercial transactions. Everything is commodified – food, shelter, health insurance – and this is toying with the idea that art is commodified in a gallery setting, so why not mix and match the location of where you expect to buy things? You’re subverting this commercial space by altering what people expect in that space.”

But some worry it could create a consumer safety problem. Scott Wolfson, senior public affairs specialist with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, had not heard of shop dropping but acknowledged that it could pose problems if packages altered by shop droppers did not comply with his commission’s regulations.

“We have certain labeling requirements, on small parts with children’s toys, for the product safety itself,” he said. “There are child-resistant caps on vitamins with iron and household chemicals. Our attention would be on counterfeiting (of packaging), where a federal standard would be violated where someone’s personal safety is at risk.”

Wolfson pointed out that the Food and Drug Administration has labeling requirements of its own, which raises another set of problems for altered packages.

Coming soon from a corporation near you?

Nevertheless, the movement has created a buzz in the art world, and a shop dropping-themed exhibition at San Francisco’s Pond gallery drew media attention earlier this year.

Don’t be surprised, then, if you start seeing major corporations appropriating this trend, as they have done in the past. Retail consultants point out that major corporations have been taking cues from the art world and employing street marketing as a means of reaching consumers in non-traditional ways for years.

Last year, Random House took to the sidewalks of New York City’s East Village to promote Fight Club author Chuck Palahniuk’s latest book, *Diary*. The company stenciled the novel’s logo and the author’s name onto the side walk with red paint.

*Continued...*

Wendy Liebmann, president of WSL Strategic Retail, a marketing and retail consultancy, said the notion of the shopping environment becoming a locus of both traditional and guerilla marketing techniques has caught on in recent years.

“It’s become a new wave phenomenon, not only by fringe designers, painters, marketers, but by established companies who are looking for new ways to reach consumers, but in ways consumers find innovative,” she said, noting that retailers and marketers are looking for ways “to create integrity from the street up as opposed to the corporation down. It seems like a continuation of that process that’s developed quite aggressively over the last few years.”

As for the notion of altering soup cans, Liebmann quipped, “Andy Warhol is probably rolling over in his grave right now.”

The artistic allure of... Wal Mart?

Of course, artists have long used commercial spaces to spread political messages. Wal-Mart has proved to be an irresistible target for “retail sabotage,” as evidenced in the San Francisco shop dropping exhibit earlier this year.

Artist Packard Jennings created a fake Mussolini action figure and packaged it in a box that advertised others in a fictional series, including Wal Mart founder Sam Walton. He returned the package to the store, attempted to buy it, and filmed the transaction as part of the exhibition.

Most shop droppers avoid getting caught in the act, however.

Watkins-Hughes said he has only been caught once and simply bluffed that it was for a school project.

“He was actually pretty good natured about it,” said Watkins-Hughes of the store’s manager. “He said we could do it. But the thing he was concerned with was us taking photographs in the store for fear of corporate espionage. He didn’t even notice the cans first; he noticed the camera.”

Watkins-Hughes has announced an open call for submissions of paper artwork the size of can labels for an upcoming exhibition. He is asking for two copies, so that one can be placed on a can and shop dropped and the other can be exhibited in a gallery setting.

While the name is new, the concept has been in practice by activist “guerilla art” groups for some time. Since 1989, the Barbie Liberation Organization has been tackling what it sees as sexism among children’s toys; the group swapped the voice hardware of Barbies with those in GI Joe dolls and replaced the products on store shelves. Shoppers expecting to push a button on Barbie’s back and be greeted with the doll’s familiar bubbly voice instead heard a masculine voice bellowing, “Vengeance is mine!” while unsuspecting G.I. Joe owners were greeted with a chirpy feminine voice proclaiming, “I love shopping!”

Some shop droppers are just merry pranksters. Photographer Marc Horowitz was shooting pictures for a Crate & Barrel catalogue and wrote “Dinner with Marc,” followed by his home phone number, onto a dry erase board built into a piece of furniture he was photographing. The scribble was meant to make the shot seem more realistic, so imagine Horowitz’s surprise when he was subsequently deluged with phone calls from catalogue recipients looking to make dinner plans.

Horowitz couldn’t resist turning it into a project and launched his “National Dinner Tour,” in which he is driving around the country and having dinner with people who responded to his ad. Horowitz has been chronicling his adventures on his web log and is currently putting together a TV show about his high jinks, which he is shopping around to networks, according to his web log.