

# SHOP DROP

*Project Number One | January 09 - January 23*

WORTH 75 POINTS

SPRING 2006

**SPECIAL TOPICS : PACKAGING  
NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY**

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**SHOP DROP** { *One of the primary responsibilities of package design is to effectively attract the attention of the general public, while visually communicating the product / message to them. Concepts and layouts for packaging need to be well-organized, intelligent and focused.*

01 **ASSIGNMENT : SHOP DROP**

To engage and challenge the public by integrating unfamiliar packaging into a familiar environment. Each student will brainstorm questions, beliefs, statistics, personal causes and / or propaganda that will be made into a package. The piece will be placed in an environment where the public can interact with the work (package should not be based on a self-promotion concept).

*Project Outline : Up to 1 typed page which discusses final project idea, public statement (if dealing with a cause), why you chose that topic / subject matter, how you will create the package and where you will display it*

*Medium / Project Size : Determined by student*

*UPC Inclusion : Final package should have the original UPC code re-applied to it; also include the original contents and parent company information*

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

02 **PROJECT TIMELINE : DUE DATES**

- **January 09 : Project introduction and presentation, Brainstorm and sketch**  
*Brainstorm and sketch - Formulate project ideas / concepts, begin to research styles for the shop drop project including overall mood, colors, font type, media.*
- **January 11 : Discuss Project #1 outline, Individual meetings, Studio**  
*Discuss Project #1 outline - Be able to inform the class of your project's intent*
- **January 16 : 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*
- **January 18 : Intermediate Critique**  
*Intermediate critique - Present project to class for feedback*
- **January 23 : Project #1 Due, Critique**  
*Project #1 Due, Critique - Present final project, including photo documentation*

03 **PRESENTATION : GUIDELINES**

Two photos (one close shot and one that shows the environment) should document the "drop", they 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. I will be scrutinizing your craft; put careful effort into it.

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

Project worth : *75 total points*

Sketches :	<i>10 points</i>
Concept & Outline :	<i>20 points</i>
Package Layout :	<i>35 points</i>
Presentation and Craft :	<i>10 points</i>

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

*THE BLO -- BARBIE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION -- STRIKES*

*By Brigitte Greenberg*

*Associated Press Writer*

SAN DIEGO (AP)

When 7-year-old Zachariah Zelin ripped off the Christmas wrapping, he squealed with delight. Santa brought the talking G.I. Joe doll he wanted. Problem was, Joe talked like Barbie.

His doll stands at the ready in its Army fatigues, machine gun and hand grenades at its side. But it says things like, "Want to go shopping?"

The BLO has claimed responsibility. That's Barbie Liberation Organization.

Made up of more than 50 concerned parents, feminists and other activists, the BLO claims to have surreptitiously switched the voice boxes on 300 G.I. Joe and Barbie dolls across the United States this holiday season.

"We have operatives all over the country," said one BLO member, who wished to remain anonymous. "Our goal is to reveal and correct the problem of gender-based stereotyping in children's toys."

Among the messages the tampered G.I. Joe utters are, "I love school. Don't you?" and "Let's sing with the band tonight."

In a deep voice, the altered Barbie says, among other things, "Dead men tell no lies."

The BLO claims a few other doll voices were reversed in Canada, France and England. The group contends Barbie teaches sexism and passivity in girls, and G.I. Joe influences boys to act violently.

A spokesman for Hasbro Inc., the maker of G.I. Joe, called the BLO's attack "ridiculous."

"This will move us to have a good laugh and go on making more G.I. Joes," said Wayne Charness of the Pawtucket, R.I.-based toymaker. "Barbie dolls and G.I. Joes are part of American culture."

A spokeswoman for Barbie's creator, Mattel Inc. of El Segundo, would say only that no consumers have complained.

When Zachariah was asked whether he wanted Santa to take back the feminine Joe, he responded sharply, "No way."

"I love him. I like everything about him," he said as he and three neighborhood friends played with the doll. "He's teaching me not to fight."

His parents are thrilled, too. Although Zachariah has water guns, his parents say they oppose violent toys and were unwilling to buy the G.I. Joe.

The doll was Zachariah's grandparents' idea. The parents were shocked, but tickled, when the doll turned out the way it did.

Zachariah's parents said they are not part of the BLO, and had never heard of it.

"I think it really became an educational toy. I'm really happy it worked out this way," said Zachariah's mother, Susan Orlofsky. "Our job is to help him understand so that he doesn't think he has to be a soldier. I think it's amazing."

*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.

*Reveries Magazine. October 6, 2005*

### Shop Dropping

The art of substituting handmade copies of mass-produced items on supermarket shelves — known among its proponents as “shop dropping” — is growing into a “nationwide network” online, reports Benjamin Genocchio in *The New York Times* (10/2/05). Sometimes called “reverse shoplifting,” the movement, [shopdropping.net](http://shopdropping.net), apparently began last summer with packaged goods. It has since inspired Zoe Sheehan Saldana, an artist from Brooklyn, NY, who first “bought two outfits ... from a local Wal-Mart. She then reproduced the items, in similar-looking material, bought from a fabric shop, and, finally, returned to the store and put the copies — with price tags, bar codes and all the identification markers from the originals — on the racks where she had found the originals. She did not seek a refund, and, in fact, kept the store-bought items.”

So, you’re wondering ... huh? Why would she do this? “Was she, by stealth, trying to bring couture to the masses? Or was her project a comment on lost manufacturing jobs in the United States? Or maybe even a comment on the art scene’s ascendant commercialism?” Benjamin Genocchio offers his take: “The trick, it dawned on me, was not to heed what this project seems to say so much as look at what it does: Zoe Sheehan Saldana, [zoesheehan.com](http://zoesheehan.com), in an era of mass production and hyper-conformism, had found a way to assert her individuality and creativity using the infrastructure that serves to suppress it.”

She also put together an interesting art exhibit, where she displays photographs of her creations alongside the originals, now on display at *Real Art Ways* in Hartford, Conn. What does Wal-Mart make of it? Corporate headquarters did not return calls for comment. Store managers at the Hartford Wal-Mart where Zoe did her deed, were unaware of her actions. The director of the Connecticut’s Department of Consumer Protection said that he didn’t think the project violated any health or safety laws, but thought it might “possibly violate trademark and copyright laws.” Or maybe it violates nothing other than the “boundaries of artistic freedom and expression.” As Benjamin Genocchio observes: “In an era of rampant conservatism and consumerism, artists like Zoe Sheehan Saldana can be counted on to give voice to our growing collective disaffection.”

*Droplift.org. July, 2000*

What is the Droplift Project?

The idea came suddenly.

Manufacture our own CDs, go into chain stores, and leave them in the appropriate bins. Down among the established pop hits and top 40 product, these CDs await those curious few who take them to the counter.

Then what? Witness the confused faces of cashiers and customers alike when the CD does not show up in the inventory. But they'll most likely make the sale, and the CD known only as THE DROPLIFT PROJECT will go home with yet another customer. Mission accomplished.

On the weekend of July 28th, 2000, all across the United States and Internationally, ordinary citizens will walk into record stores with copies of THE DROPLIFT PROJECT hidden on their person. They will proceed to leave them, well filed, in the stacks, and they will walk out.

Why do this? Surely the artists know they won't get any MONEY from this puzzling act.

Ah, but perhaps you are starting to understand already.

The artists on THE DROPLIFT PROJECT make and find recordings of the stuff we all hear on radio, TV, in the news, on other CDs and tapes, and from everywhere around us. Then we cut it all up and rearrange it to make new art, social commentary, parody, and contemporary criticism.

It's nothing new. Artists have been making collages for the last hundred years. The world of Fine Art has long recognized the artist's right to use found objects in a new context to make a comment.

The world of music has been a little behind.

Record companies reject our works outright, wishing to avoid unpleasant harassment lawsuits. CD Plants, acting on an RIAA mandate to curb piracy, are skittish about pressing material that might contain recognizable samples. Even free music venues on the Internet refuse to allow sample-based works.

Is it illegal? Depends on who you ask. We know we are protected by the First Amendment and the Fair Use clause of the Copyright Act. Apparently the Music Industry does not follow such things.

The atmosphere of stark panic about the creative reuse of material has really got us in a bind. Our only recourse was to manufacture and distribute a disc on our own.

In this way we find ourselves in the awkward position of acting in a way that is seen by some as criminal.

So here it is! Listen to it! We're not doing this for our health. This is a deliberate attempt not only for our talents to be heard, but to encourage some discussion about artists' use of sound samples in their work. If you like the disc, spread the word! Write an article, play it on your radio show, make tapes for friends, and help us get it out there!