

THESIS

Recent Propaganda:

Jeffrey Lush

Submitted by

Jeffrey Lush

Art Department

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

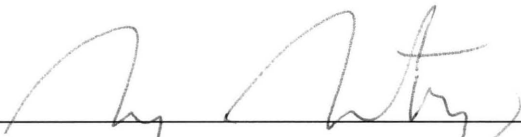
FALL, 2003

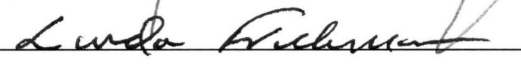
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

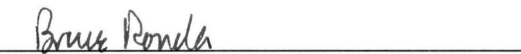
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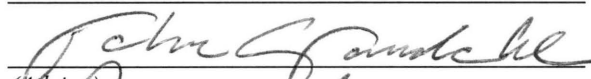
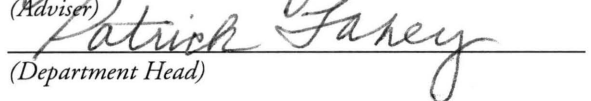
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION
BY JEFFREY LUSH ENTITLED RECENT PROPAGANDA BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN
PART REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF FINE ARTS.

Committee on Graduate Work








(Adviser)

(Department Head)

Jeffrey Lush: Recent Propaganda

“next to of course god america i
love you land of the pilgrims’ and so forth oh
say can you see by the dawn’s early my
country ‘tis of centuries come and go
and are no more of what it we should worry
in every language even deafanddumb
thy sons acclaim your glorious name by gorry
by jing by gee by gosh by gum
why talk of beauty what could be more beaut-
iful than these heroic happy dead
who rushed like lions to the roaring slaughter
they did not stop to think they died instead
then shall the voice of liberty be mute?”

He spoke. And drank rapidly a glass of water

E.E. Cummings

The title of the show is a little ambiguous. It could have as easily been named *How to Make Wheat Paste*, or *An Apology to Seymour Chwast*, but those titles seemed equally as enigmatic. The posters for the show, and late-night postings came about as a result of events after September 11, 2001. The brutal act of the downing of the World Trade Centers in New York City was about to be replaced with an equally brutal act of invading Iraq. The United States, in the fall of 2003, was on a singular course to save the world from terror, and, unilaterally, strike against a sovereign nation. With shaky evidence of Weapons of Mass Destruction, America headed to war. My goal, then was to express my displeasure, in whatever terms I could, be they vocal or visual. I figured that the best medium for me was that of the serigraph and a bucket of wheat paste.

I have been in the graphics field in some capacity for the last 15 years. During that span, the computer has given designers the ability to control the production of artwork with much more fidelity than ever before. These technological means have had a two-fold effect. And one of the benefits has already been explained, that of more control of the printing process. However, graphic designers are trained to complete projects quickly and efficiently, and the computer has given artists the ability to copy and mime successful and previous campaigns. The latter of the two “benefits” of the computer has been the most vexing. Our printed forms of media are being designed by people with little knowledge of design history, principles of layout, and effective messaging keep the aesthetics of low quality. The discipline has gotten so concerned with how to operate the computer, that design becomes secondary to the method that produces it. My goal was to return to a real sense of our own visual culture and history in order to protest the war that seemed so inevitable. I turned to my history books, my favorite movies, ideas, ideas, ideas.

*Jeffrey Lush
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Fall, 2003*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is dedicated to:
Wayne and Linda Lush. Thank you for all your
help and patience.

A big thank you goes to:
my Grandfather, Bill Lush, from whom I found
my political and historical roots. And Linny Frickman
for her friendship and that intellectual push.

With special thanks and love to:
Juhl Wojahn, Scott Lindsten, Laurie Anais Smith, Corey Drieth,
and Doug Dertinger. Without you, there would have been no
interesting work coming from me.

And also:
thanks to my son, Shelby Owens-Lush, without whom, I
would have no vision for the future.

Not to forget:
the members of the WPA. I don't know all of you, but the
project would not have been completed without you.



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Chapter One

HOW TO MAKE WHEAT PASTE

CHAPTER ONE

...I woke up and every billboard on my street had been “jammed” with anticorporate slogans by midnight bandits. And the fact that these squeegee kids who slept in the lobby of my building all seemed to be wearing homemade patches on their clothing with a Nike “swoosh” logo and the “Riot.”

Naomi Klein

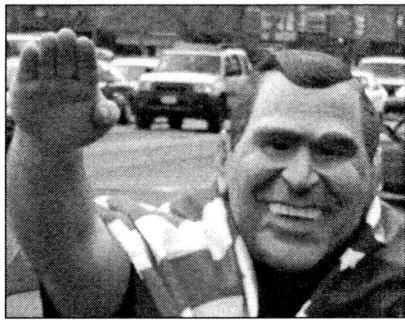
Wheat pasting posters made me feel like I was actually participating in some sort of civil function; I was engaging in a critical part of discourse called dissent. Everyone should do this at one point in their life. I noticed more and more people feeling similarly. I started printing posters and giving them to people that I saw on the street or met through friends. There was it seemed lots of people galvanized against the war in Iraq. The following text is taken from a website documenting unusual means of campaigns: <http://www.breakyourchains.org/savedlinks/wheatpasting00.htm>:

Wheat Pasting Made Fun and Simple
by lauren liberty Thursday March 27, 2003 at 09:42 PM
Whether you're pasting artwork, political posters or fliers for a show, wheat paste is a good medium to glue them up with.

DIY: Wheat Pasting Made Fun and Simple
By lauren liberty

Supplies needed:
Wheat flour
Water
Paint brushes or inexpensive sponge brushes
Fliers and/or posters
Container with lid
Gloves*
Plastic bag*
* Optional

Whether you're pasting artwork, political posters or fliers for a show, wheat paste is a good medium to glue them up with. Unlike wallpaper paste, wheat flour is cheap and easy to get



Approximately May, 2003

a hold of. If you're going to be doing a lot of pasting, a bucket with a lid, a handle, and a paint roller work well. Otherwise a plastic container with a lid will hold enough.

Pour dry wheat flour into the container about 1/3 of the way full. Slowly mix it with water, stirring as you do so. You want the wheat paste to be thin enough to paint onto walls but thick enough to stick.

To put something up paint the wall with a thick layer of paste and smooth your poster over it. Make sure you glue the edges down. Don't paste over the poster or you won't be able to see it. Wheat paste is not clear. If you're

worried that the poster might get damaged in the weather, or if you want to make it harder to take down, spray a clear coating of shellac over it. The wheat paste sticks best to surfaces like cement. If you put the poster up well enough the only way anyone is going to be able to take it down is by buffing it off.

If you're worried about being linked to the crime, wear gloves and carry a plastic bag with you. If you see a security guard or a police officer, put all your wheat pasting supplies in the bag. To make it even less suspicious wear some nice light-colored clothing (so that the wheat paste doesn't show up on it) and carry a Gap shopping bag. Play it off.

Remember, it's best to wheat paste with a purpose. It's a great way to make a political (or anti-political) statement or put up your artwork for others to enjoy. Good luck and have fun!

My method for making wheat paste varied from the above model, and I did find some shortcuts to use instead. There were an abundant amount of recipes on the web that varied so much, I ended up using a recipe that my Grandmother used for wall-paper and papier-mâché when she was a young mother. Below is the recipe:

1. Mix one cup water and one cup wheat flour in a blender, keep the mixture smooth
2. Pour the mixture into a sauce pan and heat, continually stirring the mixture. Lumps will appear if you do not keep stirring. Add a pinch of sugar to make it extra sticky.
3. Stir the mixture till it softly boils.
4. Remove the mixture from the sauce pan and blend till it is smooth. Keeping the mixture smooth will maintain a uniform paste and will adhere well.

In fairness to the people that helped me, I did not make all the wheat paste and nor did I do all the postings. I can't speak of other's methods, but these worked best for me.



Approximately February, 2003



Chapter Two

AN OPEN APOLOGY TO SEYMOUR CHWAST

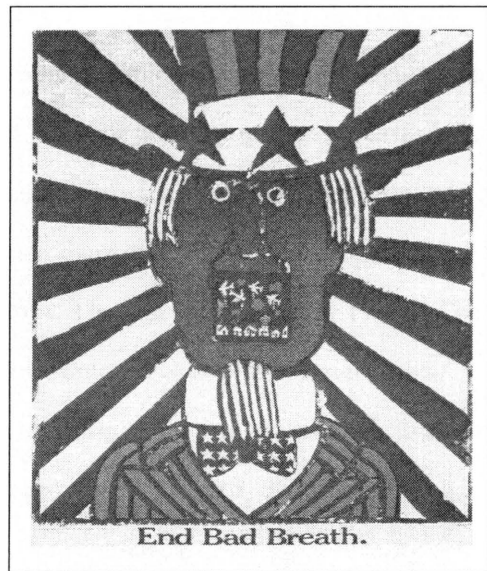
CHAPTER TWO

Those old guys stole some of our best ideas.

Frederic W. Goudy¹

Dear Mister Chwast. I am a thief. I do not write this out of shame. I do not write this for fear of reprisal. I write this as an homage to the profession that we share. This also does not absolve me. I admit to placing a reproduction of your poster, *End Bad Breath*, from a history book on my scanner and scanning it. You are not the only one that I have offended. Trepkowski, Orosz, Kubrik, Orwell and Roosevelt; I have offended them as well. Events in the political realm just got so bad, that it was too difficult not to resurrect some great moments in design history and learn from them.

September 11, 2001 changed the way in which we live in the world, Mr. Chwast. I don't have to tell you this. I'm sure you were all too aware of what transpired in the city from your New York office. I saw the event from my television, getting ready for school. I remember the first tower falling down. I wasn't witness to the excising of a city's heritage. I was witness to



Seymour Chwast, *End Bad Breath.*,
Woodcut and Offset, 1968.

¹Heller, Stephen and Lasky, Julie. *Borrowed Design, Uses and Abuses of Historical Form* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993) p. 34.



Tadeusz Trepcowski,
Nie!, 1953.

the administration of President George W. Bush though, and I watched as America made Iraq the scapegoat. Someone had to do something as our democracy seemed to slip out of our hands. Please don't hold my appropriation as criminal.

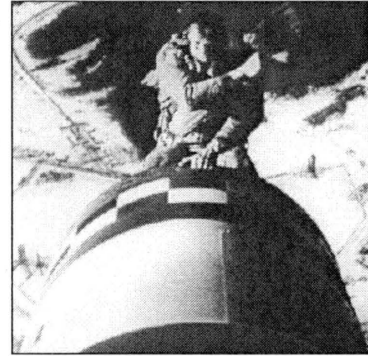
Milton Glaser wrote, "...every generation has to make its own discoveries, even if they are old discoveries."² And that brings me to an interesting point. The recession in the late 80s and early 90s spawned some creative thinking on the parts of business management theorists. Previous to the time period, companies

produced goods, which was in line with concerns of the machine and industrial age. These theorists decided that, "...successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products."³ What this seems to have done, is create a vacuum for graphic designers. Myself? I went back to school in 1993. I was printing t-shirts at a local place. I was continually laid off in the winters, and school seemed like a good idea. A degree offered steady employment, security and insurance. Who wouldn't want that? Meanwhile, the brand was seeping onto college campuses. Colorado State itself had new sign installed on the corner of a busy intersection. The sign featured dates and times of sporting events and other important information to the general public. The sign was funded by Pepsi®. The people who lived near it, hated it, and eventually, it was moved back off the street. It was argued that the sign would interfere with automobiles being able to see the stoplight that was on the same corner. The Pepsi® logo, though is still prominently placed, overwhelming the logo and logo-type of the university. This problem, the problem of corporations taking over the public space, was not endemic to Fort Collins, or the Front Range, or even Colorado. The United States was seeing an extreme amount of corporations encroaching onto public

²Heller, Stephen and Lasky, Julie. *Borrowed Design, Uses and Abuses of Historical Form* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993) p. 34.

³Klein, Naomi. *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999) p. 4.

space. We were seeing Starbucks® and Wal-Marts® crop up in our cities and our local businesses suffer. Naomi Klein writes that, “For the most part... branding’s insatiable culture thirst just creates ... Marketing that thinks it is culture.”⁴



Film Still from *Dr. Strangelove*, directed by Stanley Kubrick, 1964.

Now, Mr. Chwast, you went to school at Cooper Union. You have taught at numerous institutions. I went to art school at a state school, and I know how preposterous the above quote is. Artists are taught to express something. Well, not really just something, something profound. Something that communicates to a wide group of people and make them realize their being. Graphic Design was being peopled with anyone that could get a computer and have business cards printed. There has always been people that come into the field without academic training. But they studied, they feel. I hope that this doesn’t sound elitist, but what about our art? What about our culture?

Jean Baudrillard argues that we are in an era marked by hyperreality. Our constructed reality is a simulation of what is real. Certainly we see this in the assortment of reality shows that are on the television. Our signs become empty of meaning as the, “...real becomes not only that which can be produced, but that which is already reproduced... .”⁵ Now this looks like a tautology to me, but it does make sense. Style seems to be what our corporations want for branding matter. Microsoft® rebrands itself with every new product launch. United Parcel Service ditches a well-thought-out and time tested logo for a mark that is in keeping with current trends and usage of filters in Adobe Photoshop. Paul Rand writes in *Design, Form and Chaos*:

What has always kept the designer and client at odds is the same thing that has kept them in accord. For the former, design is a means for invention

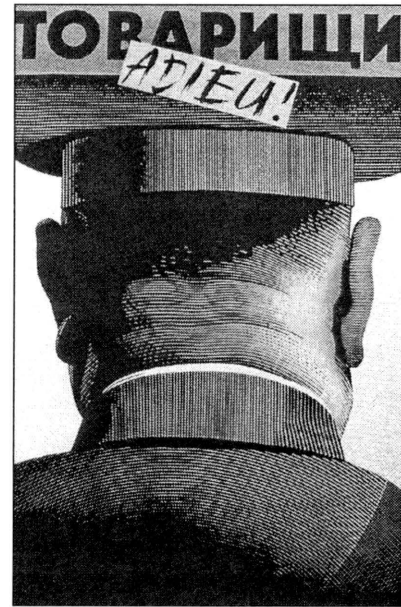
⁴Klein, Naomi. *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999) p. 66.

⁵Baudrillard, Jean. *The Hyper-realism of Simulation in Art in Theory* ed. by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1992.) p. 1050.

and experiment, for the latter, a means of achieving economic, political, or social ends. But not all business people are aware that, in the words of a marketing professor at Northwest University, “Design is a potent strategy tool that companies can use to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. Yet most companies neglect design as a strategy tool. What they don’t realize is that design can enhance products, environments, communications, and corporate identity”⁶

The designer is someone with aesthetic concerns. The business person is concerned with results. The above quote was from an article in 1987, and business theorists learned that retaining a design staff was propitious to their livelihood. Mr. Chwast, if you will humor me, please think back to the Reagan era. Naomi Klein characterizes it as, “...the time of the Big Government bogeyman and deficit hysteria, when any political move that was not overtly designed to increase the freedom of corporations was vilified as an endorsement of national bankruptcy.”⁷

April 12, 1993, is called Marlboro Friday in marketing circles, it is a day that Marlboro reduced prices and forced all the other name brand cigarette producers to lower their prices too. The brand was as good as dead, thought Wall Street, and marketing budgets shrank. Other businesses though, were doing quite well. Microsoft, Apple, Calvin Klein, Starbucks and the like were posting profits, and were learning from corporations like Coke, Disney, and McDonald’s that they were selling brands and image rather than products.⁸ The last list of companies also were interested in expanding into the world market. It was the brands expansion that helped lead to the WTO riots in Seattle in 1999.



István Orosz *Comrades, ADIEU*, 1989.

⁶Rand, Paul. *Design, Form and Chaos* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993) p. 12.

⁷Klein, Naomi. *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999) p. 30.

⁸Klein. pp 12–17.

People were becoming concerned of the effect of Western Culture and consumerism on our environment and other people and cultures around the world.

I'm sure that you are asking yourself, "What does this have to do with plagiarism?" Well, if you bear with me a little longer, I will get to that point. Corporations were

emboldened by the successes of the economic boom leading up to 1999. Media driven campaigns in print, radio, television and the internet fueled the need for designers. The culture was already substantiating media as concrete reality, and the corporate engine delved ahead.



A posting at Starbucks® June, 2002, app. 2:00 am

Business was sacrosanct. The

Seattle riots, to my mind, bear a

striking resemblance to the student riots in Paris in 1968. Liz McQuiston writes that, "The Ecole de Beaux Arts went on strike, and students occupied the studios and print workshops. ...they worked 24 hours a day producing a mass of posters and wall newspapers that were pasted in the streets. By all accounts, it was a very organized operation."⁹ Reclaim the Streets, a group started in London in 1995. It reacted to laws passed regarding clubs in the city. People from subcultures in London, got together and jammed intersections, demanding changes to public space and law.¹⁰ The techniques they use are creative. We even have had our own RTS in Fort Collins in May of 2003. It protested the war as a scaffold was erected at a busy intersection of the city. Mr. Chwast, I was not there to witness it. I heard about it on

⁹McQuiston, Liz. *Graphic Agitation, Social and Political Posters Since the Sixties* (London: Phaidon, 1993) p. 54.

¹⁰Klein. pp 311-312.

National Public Radio on my way home from school.

There is only one ally against growing barbarism — the people, who suffer so greatly from it. It is only from them that one can expect anything. Therefore it is obvious that one must turn to the people, and now more than necessary than ever to speak their language.¹¹

Bertholt Brecht said that, and I really believe it. Maybe it is my naivete, or my training as a commercial artist. I believe that people will think and be creative, if they are given an opportunity. Our media,

though creates a problem.

Mr. Chwast, the American

brand of capitalism is

rampant consumerism. Our

Commander-in-Chief uttered

something similar to this

when he asked all Americans

to do their patriotic duty

and purchase goods after

September 11th. I was

shocked, but perhaps Baudrillard will explain more: “The cool universe of digitality absorbs

the worlds of metaphor and of metonymy, and the principle of simulation thus triumphs

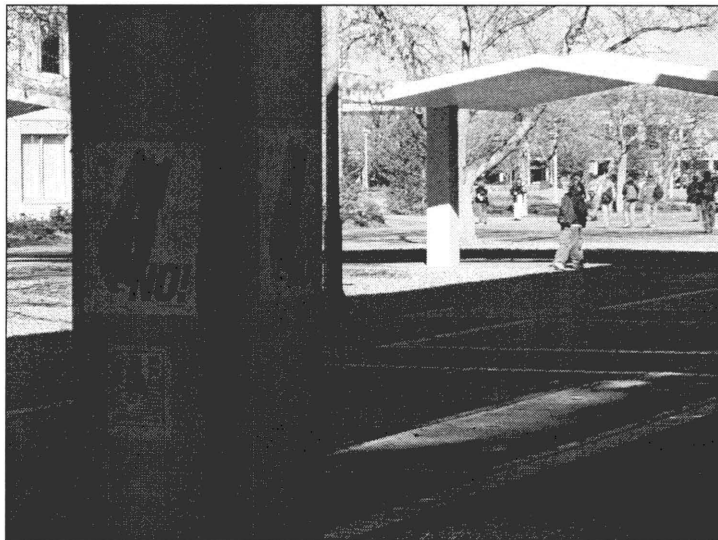
over both the reality principle and the pleasure principle.”¹² Maybe we forgot how to grieve.

And we, collectively, could only muster what we had seen on television, or the movies. We

could only go through the act of being outraged, so we found an easy target. The successes of

the 90s turned into the recession of the oughts. As I stated earlier, our world was changed by

September 11th, and we won't know the consequences of the decisions that are being made



Posters up on a campus.

¹¹Brecht, Bertholt. *Popularity and Realism in Theory* ed. by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1992.) p. 1050.

¹²Baudrillard. p. 1051.

in our behalf for a very long time. We need history to serve as a guide, even if it is form that we are utilizing. Mr. Chwast, we need to discover what we can be.

My feeling about this project was unexpected. I did brand the project as the WPA, the Worker's Progress Administration.

I also put an email address on the posters and only got responses that the posters were "cool." One of the postings ended up in the Cache la Poudre, a river that I love to fish, and I had an understandably upset post. Another question I was asked was if I was being intentionally misleading, and losing my viewers. Quite a few didn't understand the WPA reverence. But, one night after a posting, I did catch a drunk gentleman riding down the street, on his bike, four freshly wheat pasted posters in his hand. He, weaving a serpentine line to his house at 2 in the morning; he rode down the street, illuminated in the orange glow of the incandescent lights, on his way home.

Mr. Chwast, thank you for your patience. This project was very important to me, I learned a lot about what I need to do as a designer. Now that I have my MFA, I'm sure I will teach. Wish me luck Mr. Chwast



Posting on a bus stop, app. 1:30am.



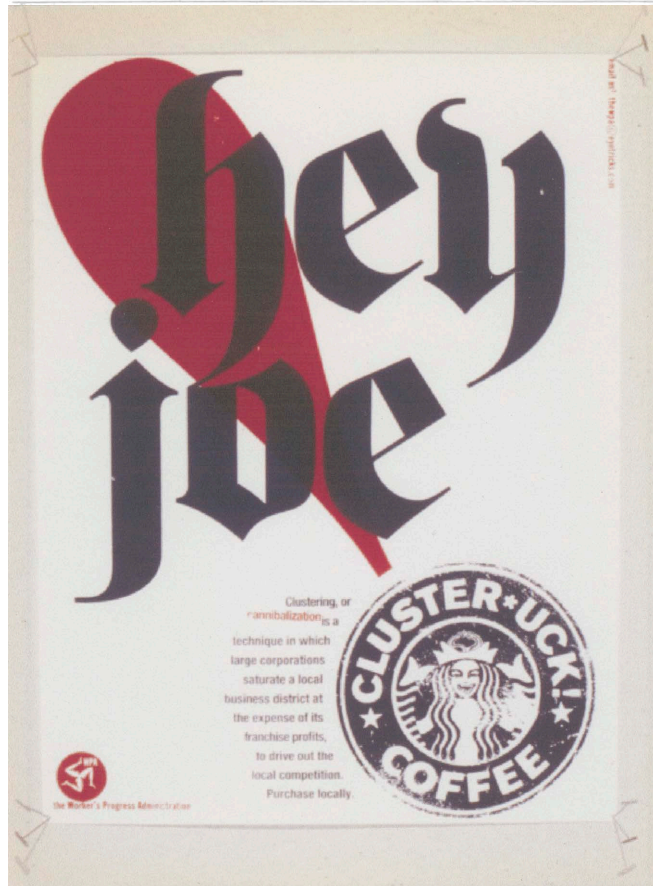
City Workers taking a posting down, app. 10:30am.



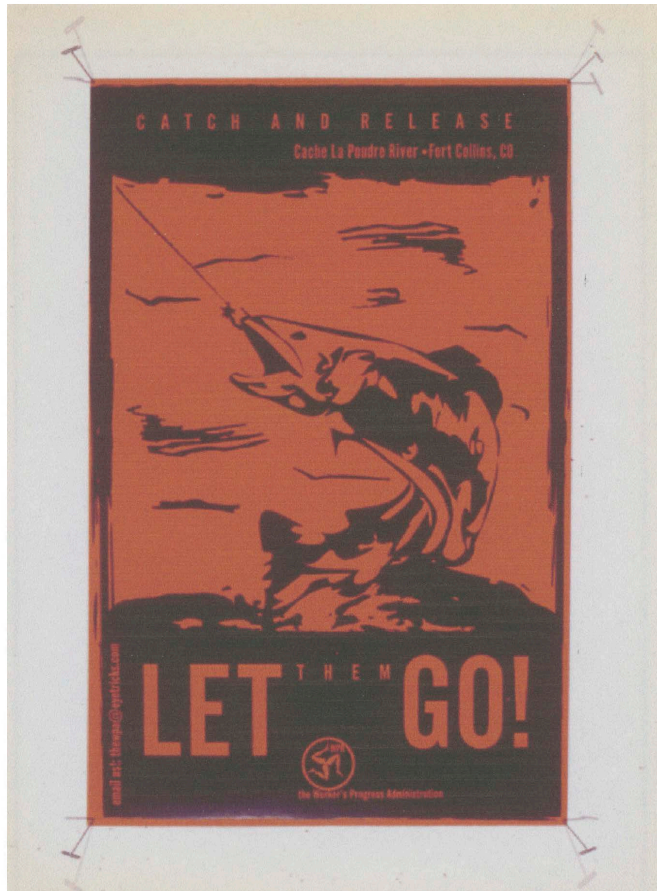
PLATES



*Hey Joe! No. 1, Silkscreen,
June 2002, 20" x 27".*



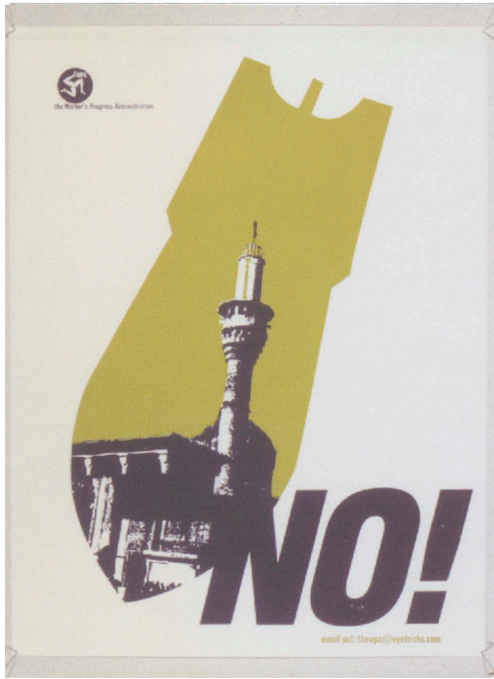
*Hey Joe! No. 2, Silkscreen,
May 2003, 17.5" x 23".*



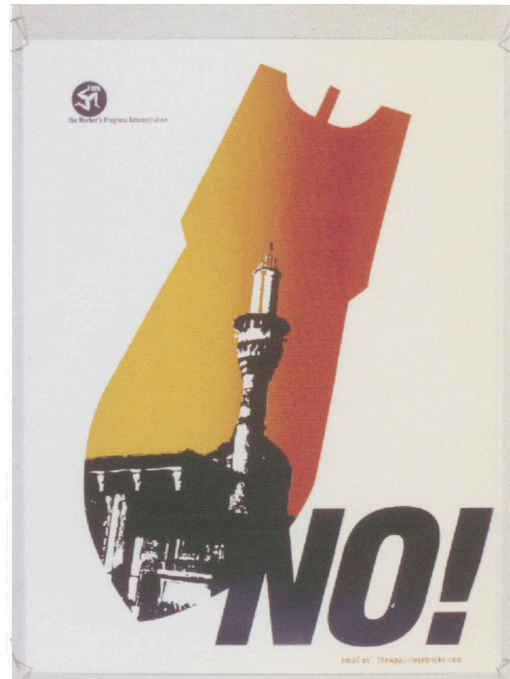
Let Them Go!, Silkscreen,
June 2002, 12.3215" x 19.5".



Ex-Patriot Act., Silk Screen,
February 2003, 19" x 25".



No!, Silkscreen,
November 2002, 17.5" x 23".



No!, Silkscreen,
November 2002, 17.5" x 23".



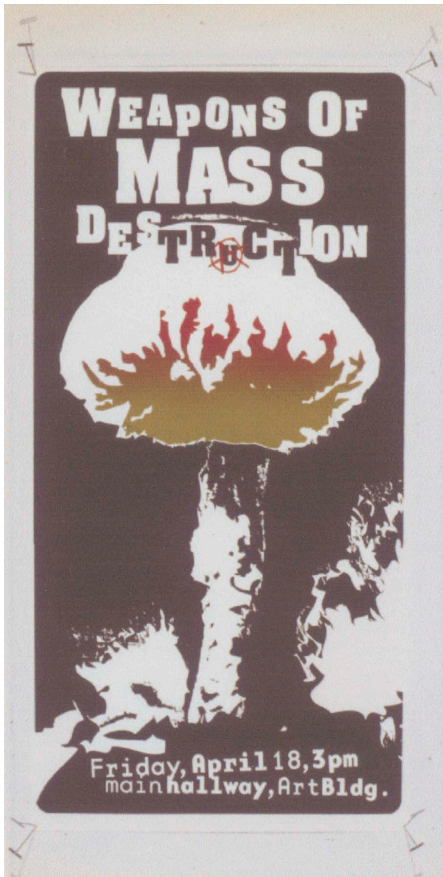
Patriotism/Nationalism, Silkscreen,
December 2002, 26.3125" x 17.3125".



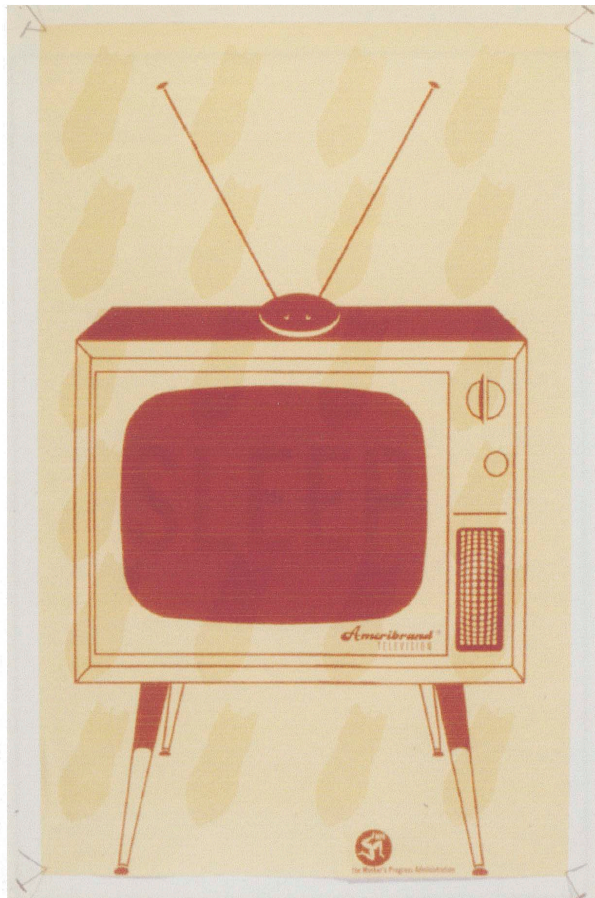
War is Peace, Silkscreen,
March 2003, 17.75" x 16.625".



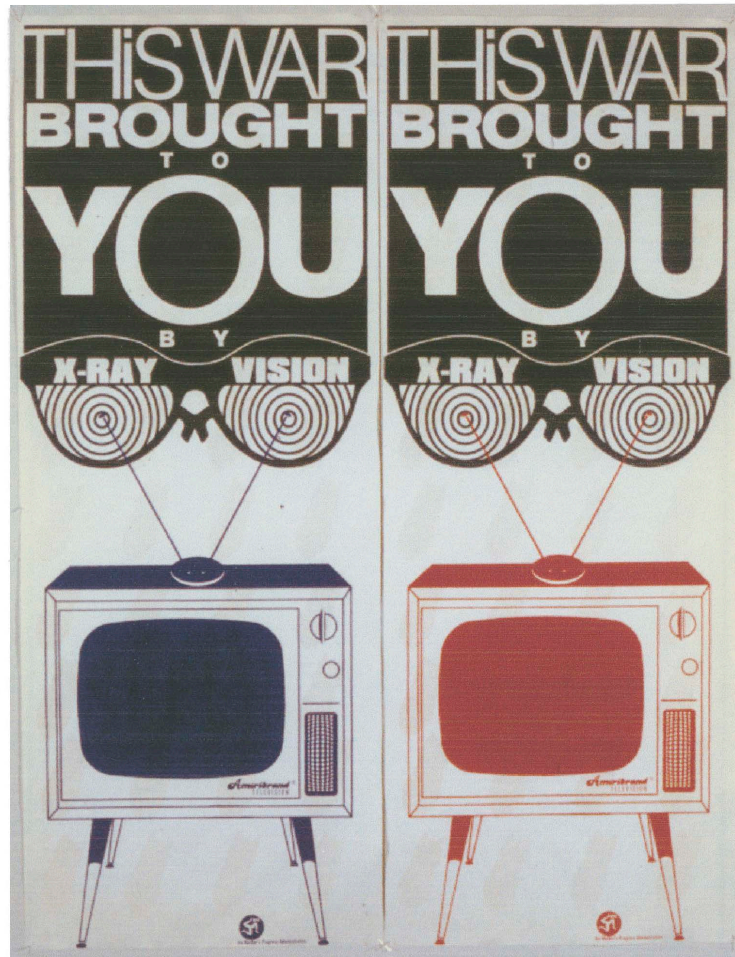
*Explore Exotic Iraq, Silkscreen,
April 2003, 17.5" x 23".*



Weapons of Mass Destruction, Silkscreen,
April 2003, 12.5" x 25".



Sleep, Silkscreen,
May 2003, 18.5" x 29.5".



X-ray Vision, Silkscreen,
May 2003, 37" x 48".



Empire, Digital Proof,
May 2003, 21.16" x 34.24".

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- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Hyper-realism of Simulation in Art in Theory* ed. by Charles Harrison & Paul Wood. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1992.
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