Design the Future: advertising's mission?

Reviewed by Simon Belt June 2011

Through a clever advertising move, Manchester's anonymous yet celebrity poster and flyer campaigner, employed the effective talents of Manchester's blogger Fat Roland to help him get a big audience for his Poster Exhibition - 2 June for 3 days only.

Micah Purnell

used this exhibition to come clean about who was behind a series of intriguing posters and flyers around the city, focussed on the now trendy Northern Quarter, well sort of come clean anyway.

Fat Roland invited his wide network of friends and fellow bloggers with some clever copy like 'For three years, an anonymous poster designer plastered Manchester with 67,000 fly posters and flyers, including the well known Peter Saville spoofs that turned the head of the media', informing his audience that there was a phenomena they were being invited to take part in. It's interesting that one of Manchester's most prolific and celebrated bloggers was selected to promote a primarily image based craft and exhibition - a theme I find most revealing.

Having walked around Manchester's Northern Quarter looking for suitable venues to host some of Manchester Salon's public discussions , I'd noticed some of the posters on show at the exhibition and wondered what was behind the campaign, but by the time I checked out the next venue the moment had passed. The exhibition displayed the posters from the recent campaign which formally subverts the idea of advertising, in truth more an edgy style than subversive in content, with options to buy limited edition copies at reduced rates, if purchased on the night of the private and pre-public viewing. However, when looking at the posters again in preparation for this exhibition, and particularly Micah's pamphlet '
Hot Air Balloons
', I started to make the connections and understand the motivation and rationale behind the campaign.

So Micah is reportedly uncomfortable with publicity and much of his work formally gives the

finger to the idea of advertising, yet his campaigns have been supported by big names in Manchester like the Cornerhouse and helped him carry on this advertising campaign so what's behind it all? As you can read from **Hot Air Balloons** , just before he remembers from design school to 'know your market', Micah along with many in the elite world of *The Creatives* , fingers advertising as having helped make us passive victims of the ' ***strength, audacity and angle of the consumer machine that surrounds us*** ', because it ' ***has more of a hold on society than I think society would like to give it credit for*** '. Thank God that Micah is here to raise our awareness of this? His elusive presence at the exhibition reflects the anonymity of his campaign that structurally avoids dialogue.

Well I was rather hoping for some revelations that could help me withstand the bombardment from the 3000 ads we are supposedly exposed to each day. In the section on **How to Analyse an Advert** , I began to wonder exactly how influenced by advertising images I really was and think that I'm perhaps less influenced by images and more by words and discussion. Using the example Micah draws on of Vodafone's advertising campaign in the summer of 2009, which promoted their abolishing mobile fone roaming charges; he tries to explain the importance of images alongside words in triggering a conversation in the viewer's mind. This section was really quite interesting in its appreciation of context and how immediate conversations relate to broader social and historical ideas

WHAT IS SEEN
IS TEMPORARY,
BUT
WHAT IS UNSEEN
IS ETERNAL.

If you don't design the future
someone else will.

[redacted]