



# ADBUSTERS MAGAZINE

## Reclaiming Urban Space



Nia S. Garner  
April 13, 2004



# Adbusters Media Foundation

- A global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age.
- Mission - to topple existing power structures and forge a major shift in the way we will live in the 21st century.
- Adbusters Media Foundation publishes Adbusters magazine, operates this website and offers its creative services through PowerShift (Adbusters' advocacy advertising agency).

# Adbusters Magazine

- Ecological magazine - dedicated to examining the relationship between human beings and their physical and mental environment.
- Based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada,
- A not-for-profit, reader-supported, 120,000-circulation magazine concerned about the erosion of our physical and cultural environments by commercial forces.
- Two-thirds of Adbusters' readers reside in the United States
- Subscribers in 60 other countries
- Readers are professors and students; activists and politicians; environmentalists and media professionals; corporate watchdogs and industry insiders; kids who love our slick ad parodies and parents who worry about their children logging too many hours a day in the electronic environment.

# Campaign: Reclaiming Urban Space

- Molly O'Meara of the Worldwatch Institute: To survive urban systems need to evolve so that they function "more like the metabolism of nature."
- Most cities need major changes in six areas: water, waste, food, energy, transportation and land use.
- The one we can start fixing immediately – is transportation.
- Public enemy number one is the car.
- The personal automobile accounts for fully half of the ecological footprint of city-dwellers.



# Spontaneous Gestures



- Little gestures can be just as effective.
- “Yard sale?” “Nope. Traffic calming.”
- Creating Third Space – where people and community prevail

# Public Art

- Functions: Relieving corporate monolithism downtown; adding a dash of panache to an otherwise empty neighborhood square; snap weary commuters out of their urban trance.
- Public art says: The human spirit is alive here.
- On January 12, a group of graphic agitators tagged the line of trees on the East Vancouver street above. For many days passersby slowed down to rubberneck at the strange sight. On this block of this city, a question mark hung in the air.



# Public Mischief



- If City Hall grinds slowly, get up to a little public mischief that's sure to catch everyone's attention and send the message.
- An anti-car statement: In cities like San Francisco and Portland, critical mass rallies (above) have brought thousands of walkers, cyclists and in-line skaters together for impromptu parades down major arteries that snarl rush-hour traffic for hours.
- Calming traffic: Jammers in public works suit place pylons at the four corners of a downtown intersection, squaring off the curbs and forcing motorists to slow down as they make their turn.

# Paradigm Shift

- **Pranks**, gestures and goofs serve the function of creating cognitive dissonance and interrupting the public routine.
- If they're ongoing and reinforced by the mass media, they begin to take on weight and significance.
- Urban design should maximize the convenience and enjoyment of people not cars.
- Let's contest urban space until planners and engineers at city hall shift.



## RECLAIMING URBAN SPACE

## TOOLBOX

### CAR FREE DAYS

[Poster](#)

[Parking Ticket](#)

[Changing the Climate](#)

[Bumper Sticker](#)

### CONTACTS

[Website Links](#)

### ARCHIVE

[Public Space in Stockholm](#)

[Placejamming Tour](#)

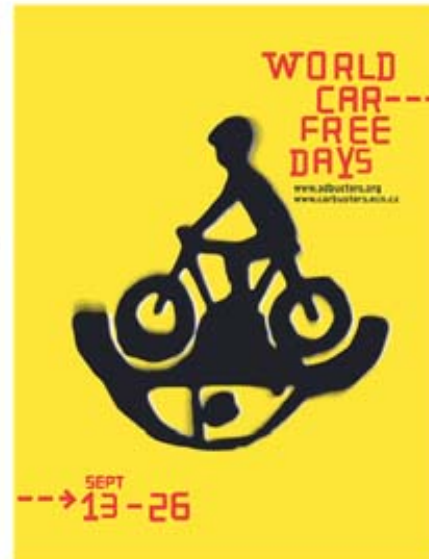
[Action Ideas](#)

## CAR FREE DAYS POSTER

Take this image. It's yours. Use it in your posters, pamphlets, stickers and t-shirts.

1. Click on the image to download a [high-resolution pdf](#) version of the poster (you'll need Adobe Acrobat 4.0, downloadable for Mac or Windows [here](#))

2. To use the black and white bicycle/car icon in your own material, download a [hi-res .gif](#) here.



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Print all entries • Use desktop pen • Press hard

DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES  
ES 00367930 4

### VIOLETION NOTICE

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**VEHICLE INFRACTION**

This form of transport incurs economic costs on the city which have not been included in the retail price. Your operation of this vehicle makes you personally liable for the following:

Climate change	Coarse depletion
Depletion of non-renewable resources	Environmental clean up costs
Time wasted in gridlock	Interfering bicycle and pedestrian activities
Noise pollution	Smog-related health problems

THE FOLLOWING WAS USED TO CALCULATE YOUR FINE:

Average cost of an automobile to society with social and environmental costs added	\$43,000*
Average cost of an automobile to consumer	\$26,000
Your fine	\$17,000

THIS CAN BE PAID IN THE FOLLOWING FORM:

A) By switching to another mode of transport such as public transit or bicycle, you stop draining the municipality of much needed public funds. In this case, your fine will be waived.

B) By financially supporting organizations which attempt to reduce the economic damages your form of transport incurs, in this case, your fine will be waived.

**NOTE: FAILURE TO CHANGE OUR TRANSPORTATION HABITS MAY SUBJECT US ALL TO A SIMILAR FUTURE**

1. Click on the image to download a high-resolution pdf version of this ticket (you'll need Adobe Acrobat, downloadable for Mac or Windows [here](#))

2. Print the ticket in black-and-white or color at home, or bring it to your local print shop to have it reproduced in bulk.

3. Cut out the image, fold it in half (glue it if you have the time) and ticket at will!

# Changing the Climate



- [www.changingthecclimate.com](http://www.changingthecclimate.com)
- Big Game SUV Hunting
- Bumper Sticker: "I'm changing the climate. Ask me how."
- Purchase three for \$1.00 or print your own
- Media Coverage: **Print Coverage:** [LA Times Magazine](#), [Wall Street Journal Article](#), [Associated Press Interview](#), [New York Times Magazine](#) **Radio Interviews:** [NPR Weekend Edition](#), [Living On Earth](#) **Net Coverage:** [CNN.COM](#), [ABC News](#) **Television Coverage:** [Internet Tonight](#), [Warner Bros](#), [Channel 40](#)

# Rules of Engagement

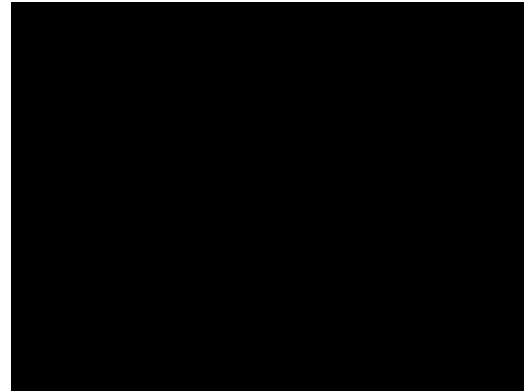
- 1. Only tag the big ones.
- 2. Do not tag small SUV's
- 3. Don't tag commercial vehicles, contractors, or any business affiliated vehicles.
- 4. Don't retag vehicles that you recognize as already tagged
- 5. Only tag late model vehicles, not some beat up old Suburban some poor soul has inherited.
- 6. Don't tag just because it's a four-wheel drive vehicle.
  
- SPREAD THE WORD AND CHANGE THE WORLD!

## TAGGERS OF THE WEEK!



### International Tagging!

Our man in Florence Italy, CTC co-founder Thomas Plaine In The Aok, supplies a fine tagging to see gaudy SUV's in Europe. Big Game SUV's have migrated from their north American homeland to the Old World. I find hunting here to be a bit more subtle but basically the same... stalk, peek... sniff, a quick thumbs up and on to locate the transponder which I hear resides in this region.



## **RECLAIMING URBAN SPACE**

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[Poster](#)

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[Action Ideas](#)

## **STICKER**

1. Click on the image to download a high-resolution pdf version of the stickers (you'll need Adobe Acrobat, downloadable for Mac or Windows [here](#))

2. Print the stickers on label paper at home, or bring the file to your local print shop to have it reproduced in bulk.

3. Cut out the stickers, and sticker the nearest STOP sign!



**THE ECOCIDE**

**RECLAIMING  
URBAN SPACE****TOOLBOX****CAR FREE DAYS**

[Poster](#)  
[Parking Ticket](#)  
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[Bumper Sticker](#)

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**WEBSITE LINKS****RECLAIM THE STREETS**

Car Busters: [www.carbusters.ecn.cz](http://www.carbusters.ecn.cz)  
Citystreets: [www.citystreets.org](http://www.citystreets.org)  
Critical Mass Hub: [criticalmasshub.com](http://criticalmasshub.com)  
Car Free Cities guide: [www.carfree.com](http://www.carfree.com)  
Transportation Alternatives: [www.transalt.org](http://www.transalt.org)  
Bicycle Civil Liberties Union: [www.bclu.org](http://www.bclu.org)  
Italian Car Free Advocates: [digilander.iol.it/partizan](http://digilander.iol.it/partizan)  
Alliance for a Paving Moratorium: [www.lesscars.org](http://www.lesscars.org)  
Spanish Language: [www.laneta.apc.org/bicitekas](http://www.laneta.apc.org/bicitekas)  
Body Cartography: [www.bodycartography.org](http://www.bodycartography.org)

**RESOURCES FOR URBAN BEAUTIFICATION**

Community Trees Project: [www.communitytrees.org](http://www.communitytrees.org)  
The Billboard Liberation Front: [www.billboardliberation.com](http://www.billboardliberation.com)  
Project for Public Spaces: [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)  
NYC Garden Activists: [www.treebranch.com/savegardens](http://www.treebranch.com/savegardens)  
Land Reclamation: [counterproductiveindustries.com](http://counterproductiveindustries.com)

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If you have a link that belongs in this section, email  
[brant@adbusters.org](mailto:brant@adbusters.org)

# Advantages/Positives

- Free online and accessible information
- For everyone
- Simple instructions
- Message presented in multiple formats
- Global creative resistance: Ireland: Clair Green Party. 4 April 2003. <http://greenparty.ennis.ie/press/tiger/14sep00.html>; UK: Transport Action Coalition. 31 March 2004. <http://www.mp.wa.gov.au/jscott/trac/tracmain.html>
- Campaigns translated into multiple languages: NOTAS TRAI DORAS. <http://betatest.ubp.edu.ar/especial/4.htm>
- Required reading for Duke University House course on Experiential Education

# Criticism/Disadvantages

- “... books like No Logo, magazines like Adbusters and movies like American Beauty do not undermine consumerism; they reinforce it. This isn't because the authors, editors or directors are hypocrites. It's because they've failed to understand the true nature of consumer society.”  
Tom Frank, The Baffler Magazine
- Risk: crazy violent people out there and if you cross one who happens to own the SUV you are tagging things could get ugly.
- Some of the creative resistance presented is illegal.
- People do not get some of the creative resistance
- Magazine is expensive
- The signage risks branding Adbusters
- Pranks may not be taken seriously

# Resources

- ADBUSTERS MAGAZINE. 6 April 2004.  
<http://www.adbusters.org>
- Changing the Climate. 6 April 2004.  
<http://changingtheclimate.com>
- Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes.  
<http://www.anticlockwise.com/~murashka/politics.html>