

FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS TOGETHER WE CAN DEFEAT CAPITALISM SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART AUGUST 1997

What is the purpose of the FAQ?

- This document has been prepared in response to the large number of questions asked about our project and about the defeat of capitalism.
- An on-line version of this FAQ will soon be available at: <http://www.sirius.com/~andycox/defeat.htm>.

Who performed this project?

- There are no individual statements only statement-producing machinic assemblages. Each one of us is really several.

What are the major elements of the project?

The project was performed during August 1997, and comprised the following major activities:

- At the beginning of August a propaganda postcard was sent to one hundred establishments and individuals.
- In the middle of August propaganda stickers were sent to the same addresses with a call to participate by "sticking up for art".
- From the middle to the end of August a large quantity of stickers were stuck up near SFMOMA and at other locations throughout San Francisco. Piles of free stickers were left in the SFMOMA store and placed in the postcard racks.
- At the end of August the propaganda was reproduced as a 3 feet by 5 feet poster and pasted to construction fencing immediately adjacent to SFMOMA.
- During August we participated in the mega art exhibition Documenta X in Kassel, Germany. We placed stickers in the underground train station, one of the exhibition sites. We called this intervention Documenta X½.



Project Propaganda



SFMOMA, August 1997



What has been the response to this project?

There are three known public responses:

- An article in San Francisco Weekly, August 20-26, 1997, page 12.
- Most of the stickers were removed within a couple of days. In San Francisco, several stickers were stuck up by those invited to participate in the project.
- The posters outside SFMOMA were painted over within two days of placement and a painted sign appeared ordering "Post No Bills".

Are there other related projects?

- Yes, a previous project was carried out during the release of the Batman and Robin Movie in June 1997.
- This sticker project aimed to counter the false history of Batman and Robin offered by Hollywood. Rather than protectors of the capitalist world, the caped crusaders are in fact socialist revolutionaries.

**TOGETHER
WE CAN DEFEAT
CAPITALISM**

**THE REVOLUTIONARY
BAT GOVERNMENT IN EXILE**

- Another related project is the Citybank [sic] Project, May to the present. Large full-color print advertisements commenting on Citibank's popular "In Your Dreams" campaign were created and installed around San Francisco. Citibank does not like this project very much. You can read about it and view all the images on the San Francisco Bay Guardian web site at <http://www.sfbg.com/News/31/31/Features/citybank.htm>

We know the effort is worth it: Customers buy the brand as much as the product

Citibank 10k Report, 1996

What other projects are planned?

- In October 1967 the Argentinean revolutionary, political theorist and guerrilla fighter Ernesto "Che" Guevara was assassinated by the Bolivian government with the complicity of the CIA.
- To commemorate the 30th anniversary of his death we are planning a guerrilla art project. The project will have something to do with the defeat of capitalism.
- Other projects will be devised to continue our campaign

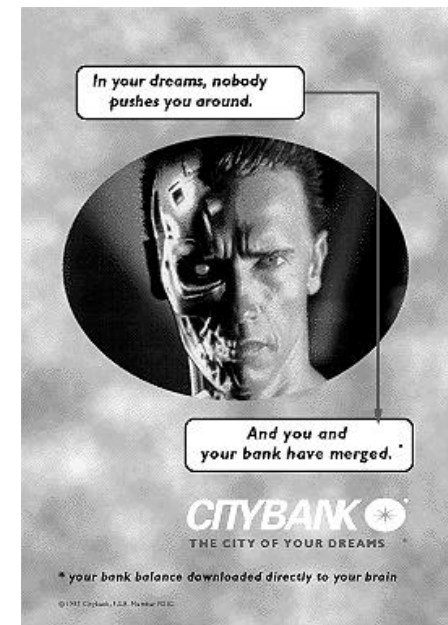
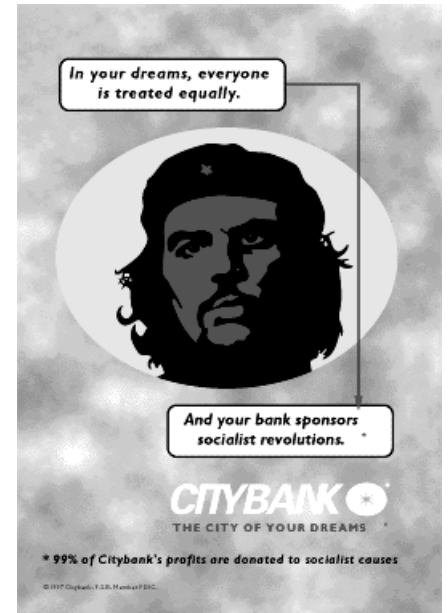
Why should anyone want to "defeat capitalism"?

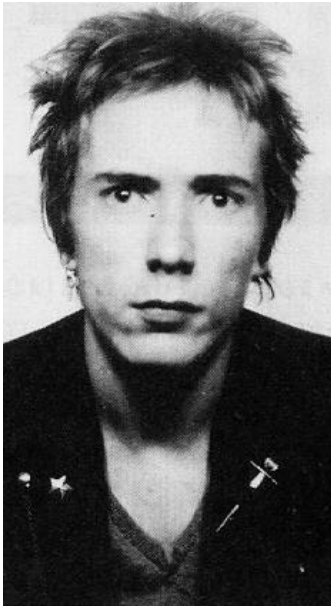
There's no reason why anyone should want to defeat capitalism, unless they don't like it. Perhaps it is the ultimate achievement of humanity, and what we all really want. Here's some of the things put forward in defense of capitalism™ :

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| • just doing it | • snap crackle pop | • kills bugs dead |
| • being all you can be | • because you're worth it | • finger-lickin' good |
| • got milk | • vorprung durch technik | • solutions for a small planet |
| • in your dreams, you're the king of the road... | • ...and everywhere you go ATMs are free of charge | • the closer he gets, the better you look |
| • we try harder | • have it your way | • look, Mom, no cavities |
| • 9 out of 10 owners prefer it | • mmmmmm mmmmmm good | • you've come a long way, baby |
| • just being right | • still going | • because you can |
| • camel cash | • 57 varieties | • quality is job 1 |
| • its the real thing | • uh huh | • what's next is now |
| • bringing good things to life | • smells like teen spirit | • for every life there is a plan |

And here's a list of some of our objections to capitalism:

- to save space, we will avoid repeating the above list





Johnny Rotten

Isn't this project a waste of time? Hasn't capitalism triumphed?

- Yes, probably.
- The global spread of so-called "liberal democracy" and "free-market capitalism" is humanity's ultimate achievement and we have therefore reached the "end of history".
- But, even the collapse of the Soviet Union, everywhere hailed as a victory for human freedom, has not yet been fully assessed as the defeat it has been for human aspirations.
- However, the way lies ahead, in taking the inventive potential released by capitalism so far that we become so other as to no longer act in the perceived 'private' interests of a separate Self that we have in any case already ceased to be (if we ever were it).

Isn't there a hint of anarchy in this project?

- Yes. For more information check out:
<http://www.princeton.edu/~bdcaplan/anarfaq.htm>

Isn't this project graffiti?

- Yes
- Commercial advertising is corporate graffiti.
- We believe that free speech is only free for those with sufficient capital to control the media. We believe this is unfair.
- Graffiti is a means for those with limited capital to contribute to a cultural dialog, and as such it should be positively encouraged and taught in schools.

Anyhow, what is capitalism and how does it work?

- Capitalism is an ideology. An ideology is a set of consensual ideas that set limits on the real and the possible. We do not accept the limits imposed by capitalism.
- The basic tenet of capitalist ideology is that if you have more money you deserve to have more power, or conversely, if you have more power you deserve to have more money.

The spectacle is capital accumulated until it becomes an image

Guy Debord



Donna Karan

- Central to capitalism is the idea that if we can just keep producing and buying things everything will be all right in the end.
- To encourage us to buy things advertising has become the primary meaning-making medium of the late 20th century.
- We buy the images of products. By buying products we can become the image represented by the product through advertising. Thereby we can obtain an (illusory) sense of power over our destinies, while a small number of people wield the real power and make a lot of money. This is what Guy Debord called the "spectacle economy".



Guy Debord

What does SFMOMA have to do with capitalism? I thought it just showed art.

Transcript of email message to Jim Goldberg, regarding his recent exhibition "Raised by Wolves" at SFMOMA about homeless teenage runaways.

Reply-To: <andycox@sirius.com>

From: <andycox@sirius.com>
 To: "Jim Goldberg" <rbwolf@sirius.com>
 Subject: Re: New Issue
 Date: Fri, 26 Sep 1997 16:46:49 -0700
 X-MSMail-Priority: Normal
 X-Priority: 3
 X-Mailer: Microsoft Internet Mail 4.70.1161
 MIME-Version: 1.0
 Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1
 Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7bit

Jim,

Thanks for your message.

- Perhaps the show gave some people an insight into some issues surrounding teenage runaways, but the format of the images - some of them reminded me of Calvin Klein advertisements - gave me the impression that now, even the homeless have found a (virtual) home in the image-spectacle economy. I admit however, that this type of imagery might, in certain contexts, be an effective way to get an idea across, because this is the type of imagery that people are used to seeing on billboards, in magazines and in TV commercials. You have to embrace the aesthetics of the time or no-one will pay any attention to you.

NO FUTURE
 NO FUTURE
 NO FUTURE FOR YOU
 NO FUTURE
 NO FUTURE
 NO FUTURE FOR ME

Johnny Rotten



Jim Goldberg

- Also, for work to enter the Museum, I suppose it helps if it is "museum-quality". Do you think that the museum would have been as interested in showing the results of your collaboration if the same photos had been printed at Walgreens and the same text pieces were simply photocopied scraps of street-soiled paper? I suspect the answer to this is no. Why? Because one of the functions of the art museum is to define what constitutes artistic "quality". You give the museum what they want or you don't get in.
- SFMOMA receives a large amount of funding from corporations and wealthy individuals (their noble names are strewn throughout the hallowed halls), and I admit that I view it as a bastion of privilege that we would be better off without. It is very difficult for me to see a show there and not associate the work with the interests of the museum's "benefactors". Given the source of the wealth that built and supports the place, I find SFMOMA's idea of a show about homelessness to be somewhat hypocritical. Still, art is created for an audience and that is something that the museum can guarantee. Where else is there a large audience for art? The streets?
- I fully accept that your motives for showing the work at SFMOMA were sincere and that you had no intention of exploiting anyone - in fact quite the opposite -you wanted to bring attention to the plight of runaways. However, it was difficult for me to discern this from your work as presented given its form and its context (both physical and historical).
- The show certainly has made me think about the function of art and the contexts in which it is shown. I thank you for that. I hope these notes help explain my earlier comments and express some of my confusion about what it means to do art in the "art world".

Do you really care about the defeat of capitalism, or are you just trying to do controversial projects to enter into the capitalist system?

- We feel pushed and pulled by various influences - our mind is a battlefield of desires: the desire to be appreciated, the desire for a place we can fit in, the desire to become nothing, to be nowhere.

How can I find out more?

- Andy Cox: (415)643-4845, or email: andycox@sirius.com

Yet as the Museum continues to collect design objects of the twentieth century, additional relationships will inevitably be created between SFMOMA and corporations.

Questioning Icons, Aaron Betsky, SFMOMA curator of architecture and design



All sing:

*We are not men we are schizoid.
We are products of our culture.
We want to be people, machines
We are punks and we listen to Abba.
We are desiring machines.
We just want to be famous?
We live in a world of dreams*

*Together We Can, New Model Vulva
available on Yogurt Records*

Thank you: Amy, Pat, Gilles, Guy, Felix, Michel, Brian, Francis, Che, Robert, Jim, Johnny, Greil, Carolyn, all at Yogurt Records, our families, Donna, Diana, Sarah, Terminator, Timothy, Andy, Kurt, Courtney, Walter, Karl, Adam, Elise, Bill, Geomatrix, and all at SFMOMA. God bless America!