

Creating a
Ruckus

Champions of BND Subversion

by jon elmer

How do you hush a frenzied, holiday crowd of eager Christmas shoppers in a trendy American mall? How about unfurling a 600 square foot sign with an apocalyptic phrase reading 'SHOP TIL WE DROP?'

Setting the bar for BND subversion, California-based activists the Ruckus Society set last year's BND festivities aglow with their stunt at the *Mall of America* in Minneapolis, Minnesota - stringing up the massive banner in such a difficult place, it hung for the entire day before it could be removed.

A project of this grandeur is not unleashed on a whim, it was the culmination of weeks of designing and planning by the Ruckus Society, whose raison d'être is to provide 'technical training in nonviolent forms of civil disobedience to groups promoting social justice.' The project began with video surveillance of the mall, in order to monitor mall security practices and establish the logistics of the banner's placement - with the goal of maximum viewability. While the finer details were arranged by a team of Ruckus agitators, a group of around a dozen artists and designers were hard at work on the billboard-sized signage

that featured the slogan 'Shop Til We Drop?' and accompanied by a decal of the earth tearing through a shopping bag.

As important as logistics and planning are to the success of this action, nothing would be possible without climbers Marin Goldstein and Han Shan, who traveled from opposite sides of the country to Minneapolis to execute the culture-jam of culture-jams. Visiting the Mall of America in the days before BND, the team further observed the security and layout of the mall, just to be certain.

Finally, Buy Nothing Day arrived and the team descended on the mecca of modern consumerism, the shopping mall. With the aid of local activists, the Ruckus team 'ground crew' began to divert the attention of mall goers, staff and security alike with BND awareness activity, all low key but effective. As the 'ground crew' monitored the scene from below, Goldstein and Shan deftly maneuvered across the rafters of the mall and into the target position. As the climbers unfurled the 600 square foot banner a lull fell over the stunned shoppers, soon giving way to incredulous chatter - could people actually be pondering their consumption rates?

Consuming 5 times as much as a Mexican, 10 times as much as Chinese person, and 30 times as

much as an Indian, it seemed the mall was the best place to start getting North Americans to check their heads before jeopardizing our earth in the name of excess and luxury.

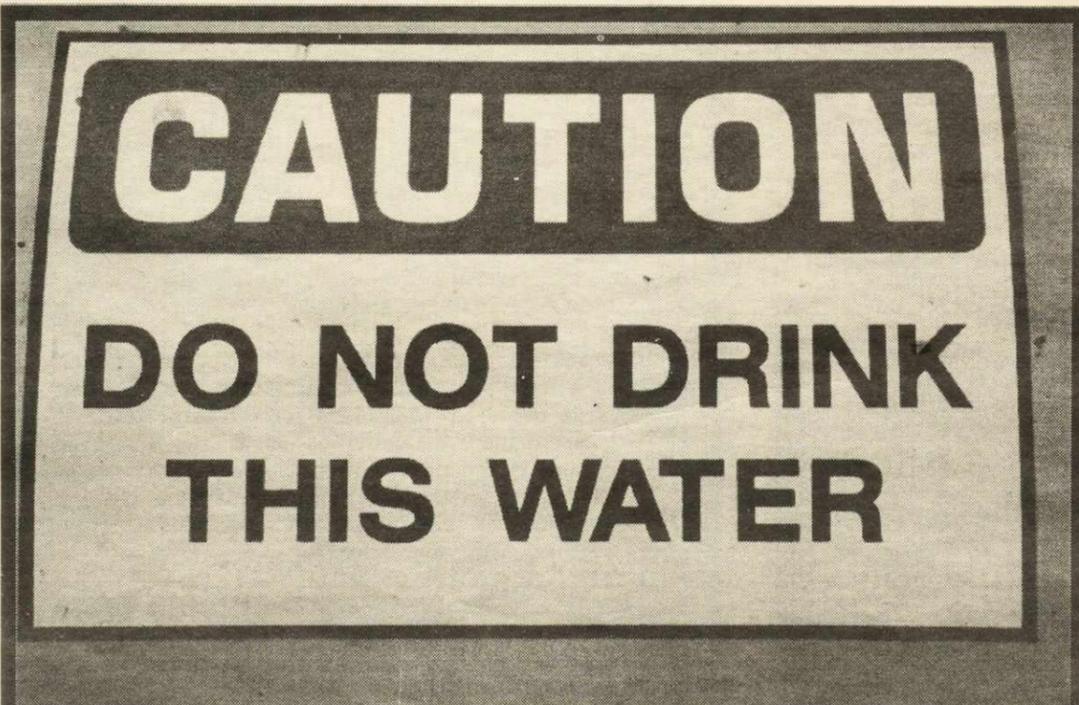
"There couldn't be a more appropriate location to challenge our society's runaway consumerism," Goldstein said after the Mall of America stunt.

Impeccably researched, the placement of the banner was so daring that it hung in its place for all of BND. What of the climbers? Shan and Goldstein hung suspended above the mall for more than an hour, reveling in their achievement, before repelling casually into the waiting arms of the Bloomington Police officers.

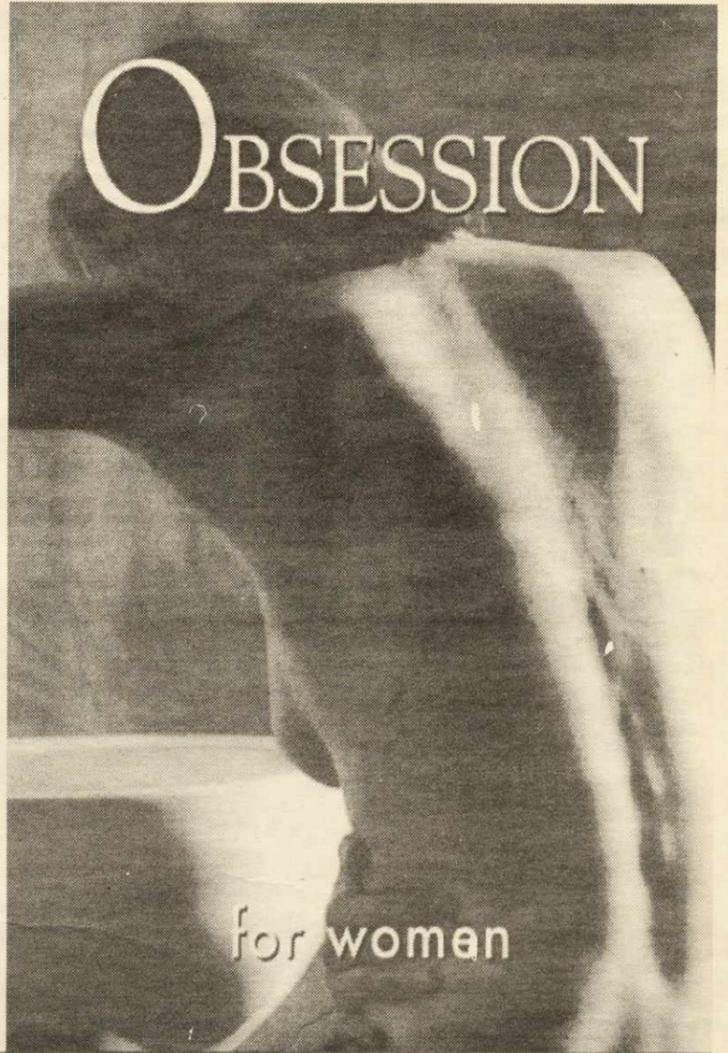
With some impressive legal aid, the climbers were able to beat the three misdemeanor charges, and slip away as champions of BND subversion for a measly \$150 dollars apiece - scarcely as much as Tommy Hilfiger pullover sweater.

So, was the action a success? Well, it's been reported that while pondering the banner, one family was overheard to be leaving the mall, to observe the 'true spirit of the holidays.'

Remember kids, while successful, social revolution may be gradual, it has to start somewhere.



Since 1988, there has been a 1000% increase in Canadian garbage washing ashore in Scotland.



for women

* It would only take four months for Toronto to fill the SkyDome with garbage. *