t.c.o.c.

The Commodity of Creativity:

fast fashion
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1. Problem Statement
2. Thesis Statement
3. Solution Statement
Who helps hide the pollution? Who helps hide the suicides? Who helps hide the abuse of children? Who helps hide these horrors and make commodities look so appealing and consumable?

Commercial artists, marketing teams, and advertisers.

Children forced into labor, pollution killing our planet, workers at the hands of violence - all modern atrocities committed to funnel consumerism and produce our commodities. Often done to produce goods we don’t need or desire. Globalization has allowed American jobs to be exported to countries where labor laws are non-existent and citizens are forced into low-wage jobs (if they’re even paid), all to create a cheap shirt or another needless product. There is a long chain from the horrors of production to the item on the shelf - with many complicit in the whitewashing of these atrocities along the way, but who’s at the end of this chain? Who helps hide the pollution, who hides the suicides, who hides the abuse of children - with all these terrible things how do commodities end up looking so appealing and consumable? Commercial artists, marketing teams, and advertisers. They hide it behind a trendy Instagram ad, or a pastel colored package - any way they can to make a needless commodity marketable, in the process whitewashing the truth and realities of these goods. Fast fashion is at fault for many of these atrocities and often utilizes the trendiest and most creative branding to hide them and sell them.
“You can now get away with wage suppression and union-busting, so long as you adopt the right corporate messaging.”

Brandon Jetter, The Aggie

When trendy aesthetics or hip branding isn’t enough, brands have had to find new ways to connect with consumers. In part, this is due to the fact that younger audiences are becoming increasingly disillusioned with traditional advertising and even capitalism - in order to survive large brands and corporations have found it critical to continue encouraging consumption in this age group. One success that brands have found is to adopt socially progressive or “woke” advertising and marketing, which can be seen through the appropriation of general social issues like diversity or even directly connecting the brand’s product with serious current events such as Black Lives Matter protests and others. This can be seen in Pepsi’s ill-fated Kendall Jenner ad, which signified the consumption of Pepsi as being able to heal the divide between protesters and police at what can be assumed a Black Lives Matter protest. Aside from the disingenuous nature of these ads, they can be severely hypocritical and harmful; as Brandon Jetter puts it “By co-opting social justice movements, major corporations have been able to largely absolve themselves of the responsibilities they owe their workers while simultaneously adopting a type of broadcasting with increased appeal to Millennials. You can now get away with wage suppression and union-busting, so long as you adopt the right corporate messaging.”. Fast fashion brands like Nike do exactly this, their Colin Kaepernick ad seemingly took a stand with POC and BLM, however behind the scenes they are exploiting some of these same groups through child labor just to make their cheap shoes. After the Kaepernick ad, Nike’s sales went up 31% and they saw an increased earning of over 6 Billion Dollars, all while (at the time) doing nothing for the communities they were claiming to champion. Meanwhile, socially progressive and liberal shoppers who would often care about issues like child labor and worker exploitation were now consuming more Nike - the commercial artists and marketing teams were successful: they had absolved Nike of their sins, in doing so lies the problem of modern advertising’s involvement in the realities and horrors of Late-Stage Capitalist Production.
I feel a moral responsibility to address the relationships between the commercial artist and the whitewashing of the horrors of modern manufacturing and production.

A satire of a fashion magazine will be created that ties the ways commercial art is used in advertising to sell these harmful goods with the actual problems these commodities create.

Graphic design and photography in their commercial forms serve as the often overlooked vocal propagandists complicit in hiding the origins and harms of commodities behind the beautiful design and photography of glamorous ads, pretty packaging, beautiful models, and hip branding. As a photographer and a designer, I feel a moral responsibility to address the relationships between the commercial artist and the whitewashing of issues such as pollution, child labor, suicide, and so on. In order to bring awareness to both the harms of fast fashion and commercial artists’ and advertisers’ role in hiding these harms, I will create a satirical fashion magazine. The magazine will appropriate the same tools Commercial Artist’s use to sell these harmful commodities such as aesthetic imagery, trendy design, and clever copy - doing so as a way of deconstructing the way these horrors are glamorized and commodified in corporations endless pursuit of making as much profit as possible, a pursuit which leaves the environment and the worker abused and exploited.
C. Solution Statement

I will create a satire of a fashion magazine combining graphic design and photography with the goal of starting a conversation about the societal impacts of the commercial artist’s role in the selling of commodities and the actual harms these products cause when produced; specifically focusing on the harms of fast fashion. The magazine will be made up of a combination of fake ads and articles, the satirical humor within the ads will range from over-the-top satire, to subtle call outs of different brands and advertisements. Humor in the more over-the-top ads will function through exaggerations of the deceptive ways advertising and Capitalism make things like exploitation or environmental harm seem positive or commodifiable. The more subtle ads and articles will function in a similar way, except that they pass at first glance as a real ad or article, the difference being that the ad copy used traditionally to sell a dress will be replaced with copy that tells the real story behind how the commodity was created. The magazine will include my own fashion photography - the fact these beautiful fashion images are used alongside the satirical copy draws a connection between my own personal interests and aesthetics in commercial art and my own moral dilemma knowing that these same works are used to sell harmful commodities. The intent of the photographs, for the most part, will not be satirical - allowing the viewer to at first be drawn in with a beautiful fashion image, taking it at face value, much like when mindlessly purchasing these commodities. However, once they are drawn in, they are confronted with the content contained in the ad copy or within the articles that tells the real story, through fact or satire, about the fast fashion clothing being advertised. The facts will discuss the waste caused to the environment, information on the mistreatment of workers, the amount of enslaved children used to produce the item, and the various other societal impacts that these goods produce; impacts that are whitewashed by beautiful artwork, deceptive advertising, or psychologically manipulative marketing. The final magazine could theoretically be placed around malls or other public spaces as a subversive way of reaching a wider audience of those who could be potentially shopping at these harmful brands.

Once the viewer is drawn in from the beautiful fashion photographs they will be confronted with the satirical content contained in the ad copy or within the articles that tells the real story, through fact or satire, about the fast fashion clothing being advertised.
2. Audience

a. Stakeholders
b. Primary Viewer
c. Intentions
Stakeholders

1. viewer/consumer (Primary)
2. designers (Secondary)
3. conscience (Tertiary)
b. Primary Viewer

a. Although anyone can learn something from the final product, the primary viewers being targeted are those in the age range of 16-34.

b. This demographic is key as it’s the age range that is currently being heavily targeted with deceptive marketing by large corporations. These corporations know that younger audiences are finding disillusionment within consumerism and Capitalism, therefore brands are doing all they can to appeal and “win back” this key group. This age range is also the target audience for many fast fashion brands and this age range consumes the most from these brands.
**viewer/consumer**

The intention of this magazine is to provide consumers with awareness on looking past marketing buzzwords in advertisements, gain awareness into the effects of what fast fashion consumption actually does, and encourage more ethical consumption and purchasing habits.

My intention is not to claim the responsibility is all on the consumer for the destruction consumerism causes: some people have no choice but to buy from fast fashion brands, etc. Corporations and governments are the ones who can make the real change, but consumer awareness is needed to hold them accountable; awareness of what’s behind the marketing and advertising.
Research

3. research

a. Labor
b. Environment
c. Child Exploitation
40.3 million people are in a form of modern slavery.

Fashion falls second behind tech, for highest grossing industries most at risk for slave labor.
non-stop work

Workers are often forced to work:

14-16 hour days, 7 days a week, while barely paid.

In order to meet these unrealistic production goals, some workers report being forcefully injected with drugs, specifically amphetamines.
failing factories

Due to the lack of labor and building regulations,

1000s of deaths & injuries have occurred in the factories.

Toxic chemicals are also often breathed in on a daily basis due to lack of PPE to offset the deadly fumes of clothing production.
Workers find themselves at the hands of sexual & physical abuse, & in some cases murder.

Often as ways to control dissent or show power and authority over employees. Women are common targets - some pregnant women report being forced into abortions.
b.

Environment

An Endless Need
Water Waste
Pollution

“'The fashion industry produces 10% of all humanity’s carbon emissions, is the 2nd largest polluter of the world’s water supply, and pollutes the ocean with microplastics’” Morgan McFall Johnson
b.

Environment

An Endless Need
Water Waste
Pollution

In a 14 year time span

60% more clothes are being consumed,

but the time clothes are being kept is half of what it was. 84% of our clothing ends up in landfills and only 15% is recycled. More production, more consumption & more waste!
Cotton production consumes insanely large amounts of water.

2,000 gallons of water to make one pair of jeans;

in India the amount of water they use for cotton would satisfy the 100 million who need water. Large areas of water like the Aral Sea have been desertified due to this type of water waste.
The pollution caused by fast fashion makes up 10% of carbon emissions & 20% of water pollution. This water pollution contaminates needed water supplies and poisons food sources. 5% of all landfill waste is also made up of clothes which don’t breakdown.
Child Exploitation

A Wide Spread Problem
Abuse
Their Future

“The ILO estimates that 170 million are engaged in child labor, with many making textiles and garments to satisfy the demands of consumers in Europe, the U.S., & beyond.”

Owen Smith

Josephine Moulds
a wide spread problem

Due to how obedient and subservient they are, an age range of 5 to 11 years old are the common ages of children who are being exploited for labor; girls being the most unreported & at risk. Nearly every stage of the fashion supply chain is at risk for child labor.
These horrors happen under brands who market themselves as “socially conscious” & ethical. Some children are even sold into bonded labor as a form of paying off debts.

Children face many adult horrors,

rape & molestations occur due to their voicelessness.

These horrors happen under brands who market themselves as “socially conscious” & ethical. Some children are even sold into bonded labor as a form of paying off debts.
Due to the cyclical nature of this type of work, many children never can escape the poverty & abuse of fast fashion’s production. Children will often suffer long term side effects, such as growth problems, malnourishment, and premature aging.
* how does this relate to commercial art?

It’s as simple as the fact that when packaging is designed for a pair of shoes for Nike, or a photograph is taken to advertise a dress on Instagram for Urban Outfitters, the history of the worker, the history of the environment, the history of the exploited child is erased.

Erased into an aesthetic, packaged into something beautiful - sweeping the horrors away with a beautiful piece of art, art that helps you forget, art that helps you continue to consume.
4. ads & marketing

a. Woke Capitalism
b. Hustle Culture
c. Other Considerations
Woke Capitalism

Includes: Greenwashing, Green Capitalism, etc.

a. Some of the following advertisements either inspired the satire within my fashion magazine or are examples to showcase the types of marketing, advertising, and commercial art that I am holding accountable for being hypocritical or tone deaf.

b. Woke Capitalism represents the commodification of social justice, an act which cheapens legitimate social issues into being nothing more than another tactic to sell a product. Many of these social issues are also directly worsened because of the ways these corporations operate.
Woke Capitalism

Kendall Jenner Pepsi Ad & Colin Kaepernick Nike Ad

Both ads deal with social justice issues; one ad was mocked and the other celebrated.

a. The Kendall Jenner Pepsi ad was called out for appropriating protest imagery and corresponding the consumption of Pepsi as what would "heal the divide". The end of the ad reads "Be Bold". Which apparently in the eyes of a corporation like Pepsi is to consume their products and share them with the police force you’re protesting against.

b. The Colin Kaepernick ad used Kaepernick’s image to connect Nike’s “values” with those of Kaepernick. However, they have done nothing to prove their commitment to these issues except using them to increase their sales by 6 Billion Dollars. This ad encouraged a lot of liberal shoppers who would traditionally avoid Nike for their use of child labor to shop there.
H&M’s latest ad starring Maisie Williams is a bizarre form of greenwashing.

The first screen shows the hypocritical messaging encouraging consumers to “evolve”, basically saying that it is up to consumers to change the world - hypocritical as H&M themselves are the ones with the power to do this, as their clothes are the commodities causing harm to the environment, as well as their business model.

The second screen is humorous as it shows H&M is really not committing to much of anything to change their practices. They aren’t even claiming they will be “sustainable” within 10 years - they might be “more sustainable” but not fully sustainable. It’s important to remember buzzwords like “sustainable” don’t have a set or binding definition.
Hustle Culture

b. Another popular form of advertising and its own cultural phenomenon, hustle culture turns the failings of modern Capitalism, such as labor exploitation, into something glamorous and idealized rather than the reality it is. This helps white-wash these failings and direct the attention away from what’s causing them (Capitalism and large Corporations).

b. Although not often seen within fashion advertising, these failings that are whitewashed are failings that effect the environment and the worker.
YOU EAT A COFFEE FOR LUNCH.
YOU FOLLOW THROUGH ON
YOUR FOLLOW THROUGH. SLEEP
DEPRIVATION IS YOUR DRUG OF
CHOICE. YOU MIGHT BE A DOER.

IN DOERS WE TRUST
b.

Hustle Culture

UNION DUES COST AROUND $700 A YEAR.
A NEW VIDEO GAME SYSTEM WITH THE LATEST HITS SOUNDS LIKE FUN.
PUT YOUR MONEY TOWARDS THAT INSTEAD OF PAYING DUES TO THE UNION.
b.

**Hustle Culture**

I'VE GOT A DREAM WORTH MORE THAN MY SLEEP

Owen Smith
C.
Other Considerations

Many may disagree on the validity of whether or not these ads are problematic. It’s also important to not discredit if an ad makes a particular group feel recognized or seen within mainstream media. It also goes without saying that the obvious point of corporations are to make a profit - so it’s not a surprise that advertisements would appropriate anything they can to do this. But a line must be drawn somewhere. For myself, I find it unethical and immoral for brand’s to use this sort of advertising, whether it be greenwashing or social justice, when they are committing these same sins. They’re making billions of dollars off of real issues, doing nothing to help these issues, all while enabling these issues to still exist.
5. Components

a.
b.
c.

Previous Work
Photography
Other Considerations
**previous work**

My original concept for this project which I presented at mid-year, was a gallery show with images of fast fashion clothing, on the top of the frames was text sandblasted onto it which told facts about the reality of the waste the piece of clothing in the image caused. The new idea functions in a similar way, however the magazine is more conceptually connected to the issues I am talking about, as it appropriates the same tools that are used to sell these harmful goods. It also reaches the target audience more directly, rather than an exclusive gallery show.
Previous Work

Prototypes from Mid-Year
Photographs

b. Photographs

Most of the photography I shot for the fashion magazine reflect my own aesthetic interests in commercial art. The intent of the images are to reflect these interests and to act in place of the aesthetic and beautiful imagery used to sell fashion, drawing the viewer in until they are confronted with the text in the ads/articles that is the antithesis of this side of my fantasies and shows my moral and conscience reactions to this type of commercial art.
b. Photographs

I ended up using two models for the photographs within the magazine. Done in part for the satire and for my own concerns with Covid. The satire comes from the fact fashion brands will often claim to be using “diversity” but often they don’t follow through with this or just do it for one campaign and after they’ve been celebrated for it, they move on - my models are both skinny white girls, pointing out this type of lack of diversity.

c. The few images that aren’t mine are stock images, they are an additional tool of commercial artist’s that I am appropriating. Given how staged and fake stock images are, it’s another example of what helps build the forged, unrealistic, and whitewashed world created in advertisements.
Photographs

A few of the fashion photos I shot for the final magazine. So many were shot for this project that many weren’t included in the final magazine.
b.

Photographs
b.

Photographs
6. final work

a. Existence

b. Mock-Ups

c. Link to Magazine
Existence

a. The magazine was designed to exist in both a digital and printed form. The mock-up for the magazine was produced through Blurb - due to quality control issues I am still exploring other competitors to best accomplish my vision for the printed version. Again this could ideally be placed around malls or clothing stores as a way of reaching the target audience.

b. The digital version exists on Issuu and can be digitally shared through its link or can be embedded on a website in the future. Conceptually this can be shared through a link in the comments of fast fashion advertisements on social media, etc.
mock-ups

b.

Mock-Ups

Owen Smith
Mock-Ups

On a sizzling summer day in July...

Rabab’s journey begins. She had one aunt and her parents were separated. Her aunt and her father were both very dominating. They made her feel very small. Her aunt was always trying to get ahead in a crop. Her mother was always working in the surrounding land, which had been inherited from her ancestors. Her mother was often away from home, which made Rabab feel isolated. She decided to try her hand at acting and writing plays. Her mother was supportive of her decision.

During one of her acting classes, when Rabab was around 10, she met a troupe that invited her to join them. They directed her to play the role of a young woman who was the only daughter of a wealthy family. She was not allowed to accept offers or to look for work. When she was 12, she decided to take up acting professionally. She joined a troupe and started performing in plays.

When Rabab started acting in the troupe, the woman was impressed. The troupe started producing plays that were focused on social issues. They performed in front of packed audiences and received positive feedback. Rabab continued to work hard and eventually became a prominent actress.

Later, Rabab joined a new troupe that was making a documentary on gender equality. She was initially hesitant, but then she realized that this was an opportunity to make a difference. She started working on the documentary and became involved in the process.

In one of the scenes, Rabab is seen speaking about her experience with gender equality. She says, "I learned of words and phrases like theglass ceiling and the glass ladder."

"Feminism is not just about equal rights and equal pay. It’s about challenging the status quo."

Owen Smith
b. Mock-Ups

Mock-Ups

Owen Smith
mock-ups

WHAT & WHY CURRENTLY DOING
TO GAIN SUSTAINABILITY THROUGHOUT THEIR COLLECTIONS?

WHAT ARE SOME VISIBLE CHANGES THE NEW "ZARA LUXE" LINE HAS ON THIS SEASON:
MENTAL AND THE WARDROBE?

b.

Mock-Ups
b.

Mock-Ups
b.

Mock-Ups

Alternatives to Fast Fashion:
Beyond You

H.R. 1155 / S. 65
Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act
link to final:

Works Cited

Effects of Fast Fashion Research


Works Cited

Advertising & Marketing Research:


