

## Jonathan Barnbrook

### Introduction:

*“Adbusters is about a return to humanity.”* **Jonathan Barnbrook**

Adbusters is a bi-monthly magazine edited by Kalle Lasn based in Canada. It is an anti-advertising publication, which also has web-based content. Their aim is to expose the harm that advertising and large corporations do to us and the world around us. They often subvert the meaning of adverts to challenge the consumer world and present the true nature of the products appearing in the adverts. They attempt to present a counter argument to what we are told by the commercial world.

Jonathan Barnbrook is a British graphic designer, film maker and typographer. He has worked extensively with Adbusters, creating covers and page layouts. He aims to only work with clients who he feels have a positive ethical stance.

I will look at Barnbrooks work, how Adbusters has remained sustainable and how they promote their ethical message. I will consider how they have managed to change peoples attitudes and the importance of the design world presenting a counter argument to the commercial world.

### Conclusion:

*“Graphic design is not just about marketing, it is not just an industry, it is a powerful tool of mass-communication, giving you the potential to communicate what you believe in to an huge amount of people.”* **Jonathan Barnbrook**

After comparing issues of Adbusters magazine and reading the articles they include, I truly believe that not only can publications such as this be a positive force in terms of informing and changing political opinion, but also that it is absolutely vital that there is a discussion point and alternative point of view being presented in today’s consumer society.

Jonathan Barnbrook says, *“I have said many times that I don’t believe your work is separate from your life, it’s part of it, so I regard what I do in design as an extension of my philosophy in the way I live my life rather than the other way around. So in short, although I am not perfect I do try to practice what I preach.”*

I believe that this is incredibly important in the design world. If a designer can truly have integrity their work should be an extension of their own ethics and morals. Jonathan Barnbrook has produced a visually exciting body of work during his career, whilst sticking closely to his ethics and beliefs. This is an incredibly tricky balance to achieve and it is inspiring that he has managed to do so.

Political designers are always facing an uphill battle when they attempt to challenge the mass budgets of consumer society, but they are a vital part of counter culture. Whilst their progress will always be difficult, we can look at the success of projects instigated by Adbusters such as ‘Occupy’ and ‘Buy Nothing Day’, which give us hope of an alternative way of thinking.

Whilst they may ultimately lose the battle, it is important that they are there to present the arguments and at least try to instigate change.

## **Guerrilla Girls**

### **Introduction:**

*“We are a group of women artists and art professionals who fight discrimination. We’re the conscience of the art world, counterparts to the mostly male traditions of anonymous do-gooders like Robin Hood, Batman, and the Lone Ranger. We have produced over 80 posters, printed projects, and actions that expose sexism and racism in the art world and culture at large... We use humor to prove that feminists can be funny... We could be anyone; we are everywhere.”*

Guerrilla Girls are a collective of anonymous female artists who formed in 1985 to challenge prejudice in the supposedly forward thinking art world.

The Museum Of Modern Art held an exhibition titled ‘An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture’ in 1984. It was intended to be an important exhibition of the worlds most exciting contemporary art in the newly renovated museum.

In total, the show featured works by 169 artists, of whom only 13 were female. The Guerrilla Girls formed in response to this exhibition to challenge what they perceived as enormous gender inequality in the art world.

I will visit The Tate Modern to see the work of these inspirational artists and discuss how they challenge prejudice in the art world and how important this is.

### **Conclusion:**

After researching the work of Guerrilla Girls and seeing their work in a gallery environment I am inspired by what they have achieved and disappointed by how much sexism is still prevalent in society. I feel that the art world should be forward thinking when it comes to challenging prejudice and should present a positive message about equality to the wider world.

The work that Guerrilla Girls make is humorous, but it also presents a really serious message. The bold typography against flat, brightly colored backgrounds gives the work impact and connects to the advertising world - an area in which gender inequality is still particularly prevalent.

Working collectively and anonymously is really important to what they have done. The impact of many like-minded artists collaborating sent a serious statement to the art world as a whole. The decision to use gorilla masks adds to the tongue-in-cheek delivery of the work, but makes the statement even stronger, removing individual personalities from the message, but also adding to the protest element of the work.

I would like to believe that their work has made a positive impact on the art world and that it is more viable for women artists to become established and to widely exhibit at our major galleries. But there is still work to be done. Society still has many problems with prejudice and it is important that the likes of Guerrilla Girls and the artists they inspire to make work, continue to ensure that art is at the forefront when it comes to challenging all forms of prejudice and discrimination.

