

Advertising, media and consumerism: Bread and Games = New Slavery

Bread and Games became the solution in Rome between 200 BC and 300 AD when it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep the people happy, happy meaning keeping them from starting the revolution against the system, against their repression and against their exploitation.

Once there was a whiskey commercial on TV. Man on porch in single freestanding house in endless yellow grass fields, Manhattan-like city skyline in the backdrop. He rocks his chair carelessly and sips his drink. Dark voiceover saying: Nothing changes...really...

And nothing changes really. The powerful still provide Bread and Games to keep the un-powerful subdued, confused and wanting stuff they cannot have. Or, when they finally get it, wanting the next thing. Why? Because Bread and Games is a near-perfect training program. From the cradle to the grave we are hyper-effectively programmed to be mass consumers, working very hard, confusing our identities along the way, pushing a financial divide that increasingly ends up being unequally bridged by a smaller and smaller group of people owning an ever-growing percentage of our wealth.

The reason this percentage is growing is because of the training program, the Bread and Games program, which is becoming more and more effective. TV, entertainment media, Hollywood and consumer products keep us puzzled over who to be, what to want and who to adore in the most effective repression and exploitation method in the history of mankind. The Cherry on the Cake? Anti-depressants to take away the sharp edges of your slavery-induced despair.

Solutions? Easy!

- 1) Stop watching TV. Except for Discovery and Natural Geographic Channels.
- 2) Watch a lot of movies that are on subjects you are really interested in.
- 3) Do not follow the 'news'. There is no news, only negative distraction keeping you scared and worried about how to protect yourself from the dangerous world out there.
- 4) Do not read magazines, except the ones specialized in the subjects you are really interested in.
- 5) Never ever think about, discuss or gather information about politics (it will actually take away a chance on having an opinion at all).
- 6) Do not copy someone's opinion or take things for a fact unless you research the subject matter yourself.
- 7) Do not buy stuff you do not really need. Do not replace items that are not worn down, instead try to use them as long as they last and they will even become trendy again. Do not buy stuff that will refine your ever-changing identity, instead derive your identity from something you believe in as values instead of the way you look like.

OK. Done that for a while? Then you will now enter the scariest period of your life! You will have loads of time to think about what you want really do, and want you have done so far and where to go and with whom to go there. You will be able to think about your job in an objective manner and you will have loads of time to think it over, again and again. And you will have lots of money you did not spend on useless stuff.

Now begins the time to think not about how to protect yourself and your loved ones, build the strongest wall around that core and fight off the foes but now begins the time to think how you can use your talents to help others, how to advance society, and for everyone, including yourself.

I will give you an example of one of the projects I did as a visual artist to help spread the word about all of this. Advertisement as one of the cornerstones of the Bread and Games program is a nice one to work with because you can point it at itself. Use power to defeat power so to say. In a project called *I command you/ Ik beveel je/ Te ordeno/ Ti ordino/ Ich befehle dir/ ...* I devised a way to create a relationship between the medium and the message that is supposed to make you think one step further.

The project is a communication campaign that exists in any kind of media. TV, billboard, magazines and radio and in any possible culture or country, addressing the viewer with one very simple message in their own language. Effectively it functions as a worldwide auto-reflective advertisement campaign on demand.

The idea is to have anybody who wants to order an outing when they want, where they want and in the communication medium they want. So, if someone in Japan wants a TV ad next month saying *I command you* in Japanese it will be executed like that. This could be followed by a newspaper advertisement in Korean in Seoul or a Finnish billboard, a Colombian radio ad or any variation on the above.

What happens when you encounter these media events? Will you think it is a guerilla marketing campaign of which you will never be able to discover the product behind it? Or will you stop and think of the meaning of it all? Are we still able to reflect on the subversive or is the Bread and Games program campaign too strong and have we been trained too well not to be able to distinguish any more? Has the Bread already been devoured and is the Game already over or do we still have a chance to stop, reset and set out a new direction on the sea of individual development and personal consciousness?

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About the Artist Allard van Hoorn

Allard van Hoorn creates a language made of signs, symbols and demarcations that indicate alternative routes in contemporary society. It is a visual code he co-develops with people he works with in all parts of the world and, specifically, in local communities. His complete body of work is aimed at assisting mankind in obtaining another way of looking and seeing, discovering alternative solutions for the (cultural) development of humanity. His projects investigate territory as a space of conflict and transition, homemade architecture as a tool for social analysis and energy-based relationships as opportunities for formulating new connections and solutions for evolution.

His work has appeared in publications like the book *On Barcelona*, in the public space and in exhibition venues like The Moore Space with Arts Connection in Miami in August 2007, the Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai in March 2007, the Stedelijk Museum CS in Amsterdam in November 2005 and CCCB in Barcelona in 2003. He has intervened with special projects during the biennales of Venice in 2003 and 2005 and has taken part in activities like the Design Science Summer Lab 2005 organized by the Buckminster Fuller Institute and the United Nations and has given lectures and organized workshops, like the one on temporary and mobile architecture and exhibition spaces, executed with kind support of Hans Ulrich Obrist for UIC / ESARQ in May 2005.

He recently lectured on art at Sheffield Hallam University and Instituto Superior de Arte in la Havana, Cuba. He writes articles on art for publications like Urban China, Glowlab and HTV News.

He is the founder of the Platform for Urban Investigation, the nomadic, cross-disciplinary research facility investigating urban environments crossbreeding architecture, choreography, dance, music and visual arts which after Amsterdam and twice in Shanghai is currently residing in Mexico DF with upcoming versions in Cuba and Salvador de Bahia.

Allard van Hoorn has temporarily studied Mining Engineering at the Technical University of Delft and Business Economics at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam before working in sales, marketing and general management for different IT companies. He started working as an artist in 2002.

For more information on projects by Allard van Hoorn please visit:

<http://www.allardvanhoorn.com/projects.asp>
