

THE HORNSLETH BRAND IDEA

London 2012

Hornsleth's manic relationship with branding is a central theme of all his work. There seems to be two main purposes of the Hornsleth Logo/brand. Firstly it represents a form of commentary on the oppressive nature of branding within our culture.

“These companies don't ask my permission to show me an advert, they just throw their brand down my throat, it makes me sick, yet I also love it”.

Secondly it challenges the unspoken culture of branding within the art world.

“The power of branding is omnipresent. It pervades every level of our culture, even high art. This is why people say I own a Warhol, a Picasso. They do not buy the work, they buy the brand”.

Hornsleth originally stamped his name in the centre of his work as commentary of this culture, until buyers and dealers began offering larger sums of money, for him to remove the logo.

“I was proved right. By making commentary on branding I created a brand of myself. This also gained the attention of the art world. The irony was the brand had allowed me to make more lucrative sums, but only if I refrained from flaunting the brand. I loved the idea of ignoring this fact and continuing it even further. I began to think of it as an anti-brand, a brand that tells the truth, yet devalues the work. As opposed to what brands really do, lie to sell more.”

Hornsleth began to devise ways in which he could embrace the world of branding while further devaluing his work. He began a movement called “Fuck You Art Lovers”. His intention was to push the branding still further, by openly attacking the codes of the art world, in an attempt create ironic commentary on the power of branding.

“I love this idea of self sabotage/ commentary and the ironic results it yields. The more success I have, the more I push the brand to discredit the work”.

Hornsleth soon consciously tried to emulate the most successful brands by challenging himself to make his logo recognizable to every person in Denmark. He began the process by signing deals with car, motor bike, beer, furniture, kitchen and jewellery companies, in which he branded their products with his logo.

“My goal was to bulldoze my way into every home in Denmark, just like Coca-Cola”. Within two years he had achieved his goal by signing a deal with Aida, whom sent brochures with Hornsleth on the front cover, to every home in Denmark. “I love it; my aim is to oppress as many pairs of eyes as Ronald McDonald”.

Critics have accused Hornsleth of cashing in by endorsing products and creating a brand of himself. But he argues:

“I have made very little money from these endorsements, the money I made from them I blew in Uganda and the rest I’m going to dump at the bottom of the ocean with the deep sea storage project. It’s not about the money; the message is far more valuable”.

In 2011 he took it one step further by signing a deal with NETTO, allowing them to print outlines of Hornsleth works for the public to paint their own Hornsleth:

“It is the death of Hornsleth, I don’t know where we go from here, but I love doing these crazy projects, they infuriate the art world, while pushing my ideas of branding further. Critics say I’m not an artist, and I agree I have become an art piece myself by becoming a brand”.

Hornsleth Studio London 2012