

# SPEND WISER

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Y1 CO-LAB 2: Stories Make Worlds

Interaction Design

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## Synopsis

Within my Co-Lab 2 group, we have used the outlet of exhibitions to put forward the concept of a global exhibition/movement as a call to action to tackle the consumeristic nature of humans, overconsumption and the machine of capitalism that the brands of the world wield to continue this cycle of manufacturing and consumption.

Our global concept is initially inspired by the success of such activism movements as Black Lives Matter (BLM) as well as the gap of no viral movement to tackle the Anthropocene and the effect the overconsumption of current human culture has on the planet. Another point of inspiration was how the brands we will focus on use social media, marketing and sales techniques to keep people in the consumption system.

We have the puzzle pieces of the exhibition concept. However, as our exhibition's goals are aspirational within our constraints, we will present the pieces we have as if the exhibition has been and gone and we have found pieces of a global movement.

As well as the added experience of working within a group and the pros and cons that come from it, the main points of knowledge I have gained from this project are that there are so many points of our life that are made to seem natural or accidental but are thought out, planned and decided on by groups of employees to sway our perceptions and judgments. To buy more and question less.

## Introduction

This is the documentation and reflective essay on my process and experience of working within a group using the medium of an exhibition to answer a specific part of the Anthropocene that was identified as a common theme throughout the group, consumerism and the harmful effects our capitalist society is having on the planet. Through our discussions as a group, my research into popular anti-establishment movements of recent history, successful modern marketing strategies and successful social activism, we devised that using the same tactics as these successful companies would be an effective solution.

## Context

The first step was to sit down and talk as a group about what direction we wanted to go in. I was again inspired initially by Crafword's writing in *Atlas of AI*, but now focusing on the inhumane conditions of workers and how these corporations do not respect their staff, customers or environment. With consumerism, it became apparent through initial discussion that we wanted to take the exhibition out of the traditional space as much as possible. So the idea of a 'travelling' exhibition was decided on, with the concept in our mind of using gorilla marketing tactics, putting anti-consumerism art in shops like Primark so that we would reach the correct audience.

I began to study exhibitions that were happening in Glasgow; *Articles of Home* by Asuf Ishaq, held in the Reid Gallery; *SLOW DAN* by Elizabeth Price, held in the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) were both eye-opening experiences for me as even though I have been to similar events, I did not think of it as a curator and that each choice on how to display the art was thought out and planned accordingly considering user experience and how they would perceive or interact with the art. Both of these exhibitions also left me wanting an interactive aspect in my exhibition and how I, as a viewer, engaged more with interactive or reactive pieces.

As well as exhibitions, I looked into anti-establishment art and art that focuses on highlighting a problem and its life cycle concerning consumerism to inspire any work the group or I do, and I found myself particularly interested in the work and constant tug-of-war some artists have, like Banksy and his very anti-establishment, anti-consumerism art, but the mainstream popularity and the pre-

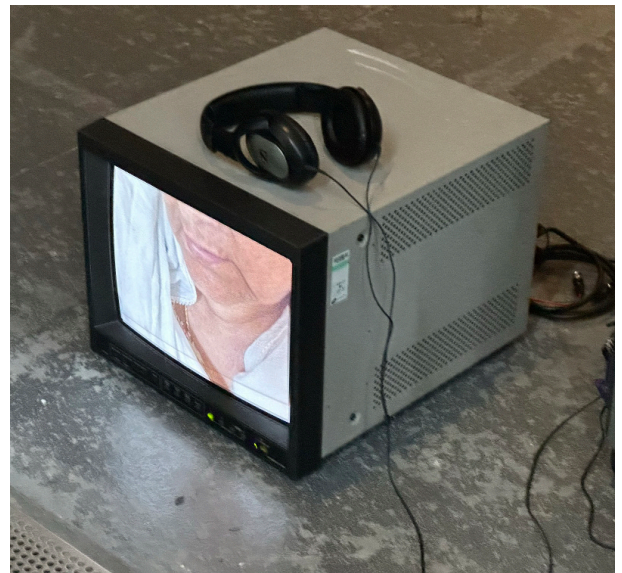


Fig. 1 Asuf Ishaq, *Articles of Home*, 2023



Fig. 2 Banksy, *Slave Labour*, Spray Paint, 2012

sumingly unwanted resale and commoditisation of his artwork. Alternatively, the once-illegal work of Keith Haring in New York City is now in the front window of Primark. So even though this was not the exhibition's main focus, it became an essential part of the

morals and thought process behind the exhibition, as not to let it become a commodity, something against consumerism.

Another point put towards the group for consideration was that of the exhibition remaining current. It has been seen in instances concerning the Anthropocene that by the time the art has made it to the exhibition stage, the issue might have changed, developed or worsened that different stages and actions need to be taken. The problem of overconsumption and consumerism is a constantly shifting and adapting issue, carried along at the same rapid pace at which modern companies, marketing and consumers operate. The solutions for the effect of the Anthropocene have to move at the same rate as its problems, if not faster, or we will constantly play catch up.

## Reflective

After the first meeting with Michael Pell, the project started to take shape with the knowledge and ideas of an anti-consumerist, anti-establishment movement with its primary focus on not becoming or getting dragged into the same capitalist machine that it aims to steal from and poking fun at. Furthermore, after creating the Instagram page, it became apparent through a group discussion that an amalgamation of our initial ideas and our current line of thinking made perfect sense that instead of having an exclusive white room to change people's minds, the whole world would be the exhibition. The exhibition would be a viral media movement that uses the same tactics of capitalist media marketing to spread the message of the Anthropocene and incite change, using the gentle hand and smile of marketing instead of the accusing finger.



Fig. 3 Nicholas McLaughlin. Spend Wiser Instagram QR Code, Vista Print, 2023



Fig. 4 & 5 Nicholas McLaughlin, Molly Montagu, Spend Wiser Logo Primary & Secondary. Adobe Illustrator, 2023

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Fig. 6 Nicholas McLaughlin. Spend Wiser Branding Initial Ideas 1, Adobe Illustrator, 2023



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Fig. 7 Nicholas McLaughlin. Spend Wiser Branding Initial Ideas 2, Adobe Illustrator, 2023





Fig. 8 & 9 Nicholas McLaughlin, Spend Wiser Receipt, Letter Stamps, Ink, H&M receipt, 2023



Fig. 10 & 11 Nicholas McLaughlin Spend Wiser Bag, Primark Paper bag, Permanent marker, 2023





Fig. 12 Nicholas McLaughlin Spend Wiser Bag, H&M Paper bag, Permanent marker, 2023



With the creation of the movement name 'Spend Wiser,' the group dynamic shifted at this point as others put forward ideas without group discussion, and others lost momentum. As a result, the project lost a small amount of steam and might have lost a small quantity of its potential, which I believe it has. However, after further group discussion, we had a clear plan and message; at this point, I decided that to go against giant corporations potentially, our logo would have to be on par and easily recognisable, which gave us the primary and secondary logos for Spend Wiser, at first I was not keen on the name put forward but decided that to raise the issue would slow the already rapidly approaching deadline. Still, on reflection, the simplistic nature of the logo and accessible font choice conveys the message that this is not for sale and is easy for anyone to do, a happy accident.



Fig. 13 - 17 Nicholas McLaughlin, Spend Wiser Apparel Concept, Vista Print, 2023

Armed with our logo, our mission statement and possible poster outcomes for our virtual exhibition, we set out to make possible pieces for the exhibition with the minimum of a poster to call attention to the consumeristic values of the Anthropocene and bring the attention of the public to it. For my outcome, I wanted it to be a template that anyone can use, change, adapt and rip apart to create something that can fall under the Spend Wiser banner and become part of the exhibition.

With a simple format of A4, white border, logo and compelling imagery behind it, any piece can be put behind it without the message being lost on people new to art. With an instantly simple, recognisable structure and frame, the art and the movement will become synonymous with an anti-consumerism message. Moreover, it was to go further. In that case, even the iconography of the logo alone can carry the message of anti-consumerism on its own and the exhibition/movement, making it easier to share and use by others. The further the branding of Spend Wiser goes, the further the message goes.



Fig. 18 Nicholas McLaughlin, Spend Wiser Gorilla Marketing Concept Sign, Adobe Illustrator, 2023



Fig. 19 Nicholas McLaughlin, Spend Wiser Gorilla Marketing Concept Projector, Adobe Illustrator, 2023





Fig. 20 Nicholas McLaughlin, Spend Wiser Worker, Adobe Illustrator, 2023



Fig. 21 Nicholas McLaughlin, Spend Wiser Package, Adobe Illustrator, 2023

## Conclusion

Although the experience of working within a group was outside of my comfort zone, I believe that the outcome of our anti-consumerism global exhibition concept would not have been possible by one person alone, and even the pieces I produced would have been different without the input of my group. Using marketing and movements we have seen in our lives, we have taken very tangible steps by creating a concept that could do what we set out to do and show a kink in the seemingly impenetrable armour of our consumerism system. If Spend Wiser were to change one person's thought process when shopping and make them think twice or consider the consequences, it would be a success.

## Bibliography

Kate Crawford, *Atlas Of AI* ( New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2021).