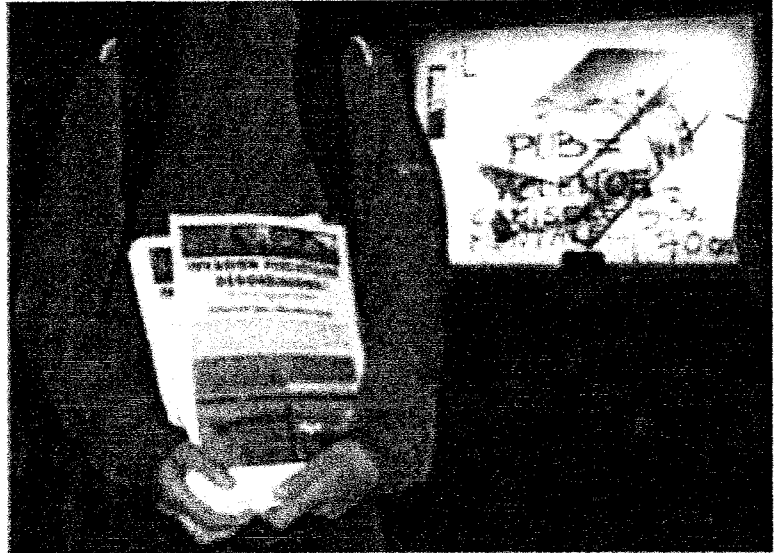


Fight the big, ugly power

Formed in Paris nearly a year ago, the Dismantlers are one of several anti-advertising groups — part of a larger crusade to draw attention to what they believe is a cultural malaise of consumerism and aggressive advertising.



Advertising the anti-ad manifesto (Photo copyright: H. Leglise-Bataille)

Comprised of old veterans of the anti-advertising movement, as well as young radicals, group members like Laure, Jean-Claude, Marine and Yvan have collectively engaged in a war against "harassing advertising" in the form of giant display ads that "we can't get away from."

As part of their philosophy of non-violence, the Dismantlers cooperate with authorities and flash their identification cards as soon as police arrive. The group hopes that such a conspicuous approach to their cause will result in a dialogue with officials and transform the issue of display advertising into a social debate.

The group's objective, said Sterboul, is a law limiting the number of display advertisements in proportion to the number of inhabitants of a city.

The size of a 'human-sized' ad

The law would also limit the size of ads, bringing them back to a more "human" scale of 50 cm by 70 cm (19.7 inches by 27.6 inches); the same limits imposed on political advertising (excluding election campaigns).

"Advertising is only legitimate if we have the choice not to be subjected to it," Sterboul said.

During a trial of a couple of Dismantlers last June in the southern French city of Montpellier, Paul Aries, a French writer and researcher who specializes in mental manipulation, appeared as a witness in support of the group.

"Advertising is a form of manipulation for it fosters the illusion that happiness lies in consumption and that consuming brand-name products can compensate for a loss of values," he told AFP.

"The Dismantlers' movement is interesting because it involves disobedience to the justice system, in the way anti-abortion organizations or conscientious objectors reconfigure the issue on political grounds."

The two Dismantlers in question were given probation and ordered to pay a EUR 200 euro fine; a lenient sentence that certain advertisers called "scandalous." For Sterboul, however, it was "an acknowledgement of the legitimacy" of his groups' scribbling.

The Dismantlers have already spread to large cities outside Paris where they continue to gain followers.

Noted Aries: "If the movement grows in scale, the powers that be will be compelled to listen."

The Paris-based Dismantler troops will rally next on October 27. There also are active groups in Gard, Le Mans, Lille, Lyon, Montpellier and Rouens. To find out more about the group, its beliefs, and its planned anti-ad action, [check the website](#)

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