

# STEVE LAMBERT

*EVERYTHING YOU WANT, RIGHT NOW!*





STEVE LAMBERT | *EVERYTHING YOU WANT, RIGHT NOW!*

April 25 - July 11, 2009  
Opening Reception April 25, 2009 6-9 pm

Charlie James Gallery  
975 Chung King Road, Los Angeles, CA 90012

## ***Visual Subversion***

By Patrick Frank

Steve Lambert has been a provocateur for over ten years now, and he continues to shock, inspire, and spur us to action. Steve's art works are in reality visual provocations, time bombs for the eye. I'm an art historian, so when I approach the work of a creator such as this, I naturally think of antecedents in the past. A few things come to mind, and they are all at the edge of art, on the boundary line between art and visual activism, or the line between art and what Zimbabwean graphic designer Chaz Maviyane-Davies called Creative Disobedience.

In this essay I am going to highlight two important characteristics of Steve's work. One of these is probably obvious: He disrupts the stream of corporate-driven communication that showers down on us 24/7. More important and maybe less obvious, Steve's work empowers regular people. He does not just encourage people to Think Different, in the manner of those old, vacuous Apple computer ads; he actually forces it, causes it to happen, enacts it in people's brains. And you don't have to be part of the art world's In Crowd to get it. This is indeed a rare and valuable thing.

For an example of Steve jamming the corporate communication system, we need look no further than his newest series of prints. He bought a large arrow sign on a stand (You know the kind that I mean: those things that are always telling us where to park, or what's on sale, or encouraging us to stop in for a free Whackadoodle). He took this sign to various locations around LA and put up non-corporate but obvious and even rather personal messages on them: *You Are Still Alive* pointing at a cemetery, for example. I drew in my breath: I'm still alive, yeah, and I could be dead; think of the possibilities. No company will ever tell me that, but someone who knows me might.

You could call this Culture Jamming, but that term seems tired and overused. Some culture jamming elicits only a cynical laugh, like *Billionaires for Bush*; other versions lead to exactly nothing, like Shepard Fairey's *Obey Giant* series. The *Wikipedia* entry lists 67 examples of jammers, not all of them active or interesting. Culture Jamming is

now part of the curriculum at many universities. The house organ of Culture Jamming, *Adbusters* magazine, has itself gone somewhat corporate, selling a Culture Jammer's Toolbox, calendars, posters, and even a Buy Nothing Day Promotional Kit.

Steve's brand of subversion is more empowering. His 2007 project *PeopleProducts123* are free PDFs that you can download (from [peopleproducts123.com](http://peopleproducts123.com)) and attach to common products in stores. One of these will turn a Coke can into an information module about the struggle to educate the sugar workers who supply the sweet stuff to that huge multi-national beverage company. Another empowering project is his free application *Add-Art*, which allows you to take control of your web browsing experience by changing all the ads into small jpegs of art works. So far, 65,000 people have downloaded it; now that you know about it, you can download it too from [add-art.org](http://add-art.org).

Taking this type of visual activism into an art gallery is a risky step; by selling things, you enter the cycle of consumption. But Steve brought it off with panache in April 2009 at Charlie James Gallery. Using the techniques of commercial signage, he made light-box marquees that take commercial speech to its logical conclusion: *Park & Spend; Ca\$h Rewards; Everything You Want, Right Now!* Steve's signs tell baldly, as if it were the truth, the lies that hide behind commercial signage: endless abundance, endless choice, consumption with joy. The theory being that if you are going to buy a piece of visual subversion, you might as well get the most outlandish kind.

That type of truth-telling reminded me of another piece of visual provocation, created in Argentina in 1965: In this case, León Ferrari attached a life-size crucifix atop a six-foot model of an American-made fighter jet and called the assemblage *Western and Christian Civilization*. Combining the most visible "sign" or logo of Roman Catholicism with the West's latest killing device, the piece was too much for the director of the National Museum where the artist had

been invited to exhibit. The work was forbidden, but perhaps that piece of censorship proved prescient: The work's title was the slogan of the right-wing military faction that toppled the elected government the following year. The Argentine artist created a kind of truth-telling that has its latest manifestation in Steve.

The largest sign that Steve made took a different tack: It pronounced in letters four feet high, festooned with flashing lights, what we all want to do when we see billboards: *LOOK AWAY*. Of course, you can't look away from anything that garish when it's bigger than you, hung high on the wall, and flashes away incessantly in the gallery. Have you ever tried to look away from a billboard? From an LED-screen ad sign? It's difficult; but after seeing Steve's piece I have found it easier. He urged and encouraged me, in the same tone as the ads themselves, to ignore them.

The urging message of that piece reminded me of an art show that the Situationist International staged years ago: In June 1963, visitors to Gallery Exi in Odense, Denmark came across a room with poster-sized photographs of world leaders (Khrushchev, Kennedy, de Gaulle, and others) along with several loaded rifles; visitors were invited to use the guns to shoot holes in the pictures.

Trying to actually shoot world leaders is probably about as futile as trying to look away from billboards; world leaders and billboards will still be there tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. The temporary mental reversals that those pieces promote is helpful, but it's better to take more concrete action, and Steve has done this too. In collaboration with the Yes Men, one week after the November 2008 elections, he created his most radical and well-known provocation: *The New York Times Special Edition*.

"IRAQ WAR ENDS" said the lead headline; "Troops to return immediately." Other stories told of the indictment of George W. Bush on treason charges, the repeal of the Patriot Act, the abolition of all university tuition, and the creation of a new nationwide network of bike paths. Readers of the *Special Edition* could well have concluded that Utopia had arrived overnight, but a closer look showed that the fake issue was dated 6 months in the future. Lambert

and the Yes Men distributed 85,000 copies of the 12-page paper (though they told the media they had made 1.2 million). The papers copied exactly the look and feel of an actual *New York Times*, and they got thousands of people imagining a better future. The piece still exists on-line at [nytimes-se.com](http://nytimes-se.com)

Daring to visualize a radical change for the better is not just a program of John Lennon's *Imagine*. My mind goes back, again, to that Situationist International show that invited us to shoot our leaders. In an adjoining room, Michele Bernstein exhibited large collages that included paint, news clippings, and toy soldiers stuck into surfaces thick with impasto. The works bore titles that suggested dramatic reversals of crucial historical events: *The Victory of the Paris Commune*; *The Victory of the Spanish Republicans*; and *The Victory of the Great Jacquerie of 1358*. These works, like *New York Times Special Edition*, enact the Situationists' strategy of *détournement*, or diversion, in which cultural materials (collages, newspapers) are borrowed and re-purposed for political subversion. Better-known examples of *détournement* include Situationist comics, in which superheroes' speech bubbles were erased and refilled with revolutionary rhetoric, so that what was once static and anodyne entertainment became provocative and liberating.

Steve's vision for such re-purposing is very wide, encompassing arrow signs, consumer goods, internet ads, light boxes, newspapers, web browsers, and many other cultural forms. He has planted his visual time bombs in a wide variety of information streams, and they bear fruit every time someone encounters one with an open mind.

"Liberating" is not a word that you hear much in connection with art works these days. This is because most art works function primarily to give intellectual pleasure to the cultural elites. Steve's work, like that of the earlier creators I have mentioned, has more important goals in mind. In order to realize them, you have to move to the edge of the artistic table, where art slides into activism, agitation, and awakening. That's where some of the most searching and important works of the moment are born.

Patrick Frank is author of *Artforms: An Introduction to the Visual Arts*, now in its 9<sup>th</sup> edition.

*WINDOW PAINTINGS*

Steve Lambert & Kimberly Edwards

Tempera on glass.

Site installation at Charlie James Gallery

2009

**ORIGINAL  
ART WORKS**  
for Home

**come in!**  
Free entry

**UNBEATABLE  
VALUE!**



**We must  
CLEAR OUR  
INVENTORY**

**no  
obligation  
to buy!**

**TIME**  
**- THIS ART -  
WON'T LAST!**

**We must  
CLEAR OUR  
INVENTORY**  
Next show opens  
June 13<sup>th</sup>  
CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY  
214 COMMERCE STREET, SUITE 200, DALLAS, TX 75201 | WWW.CHARLIEJAMESGALLERY.COM | 214.687.4344



*CASH 2 TRASH*

Edition of 5, plus 1 AP

Pine, Enamel, Laser Cut Acrylic, Sign Bulbs, Wiring

18 x 62 inches

2009

# CASH 2 TRASH

ENDLESS SELECTION • AMAZING PRICES

*MONEY LAUNDERED*

Edition of 5, plus 1 AP

Pine, Enamel, Laser Cut Acrylic, Sign Bulbs, Wiring

26 x 42 inches

2009



**★ MONEY ★**  
**LAUNDERED**

*OUR MESSAGE HERE*

Mixed Media

40 x 96 inches

2009



**OUR MESSAGE HERE**  
**24 HOURS 7 DAYS**

*LOOK AWAY*

Edition of 3, plus 2 APs

Birch Plywood, Casein and Tempera, Sign Bulbs, Wiring, 4-Channel Flasher

84 x 121 x 5 inches

2009



LOOK  
AWAY



LOOK

AWAY

A photograph of an interior space, possibly a gallery or a stage, featuring a large, illuminated marquee sign. The sign consists of two lines of text: "LOOK" on the top line and "AWAY" on the bottom line. The letters are white with a red outline and are filled with numerous small, glowing lights. The sign is mounted on a plain, light-colored wall. Above the sign, a string of colorful triangular bunting flags in shades of blue, red, yellow, and green hangs across the room. The floor is dark, and the overall lighting is dim, with the primary light source being the sign itself. On the left wall, there is a small, dark rectangular object, possibly a monitor or a piece of equipment, with a thin wire extending from it.

LOOK  
AWAY

*EYES FOR CASH*

Edition of 5, plus 1 AP

Pine, Enamel, Laser Cut Acrylic, Sign Bulbs, Wiring

18 x 42 inches

2009



**EYES 4 CASH**

*PRIVATE PROPERTY*

Edition of 3, plus 1 AP

Birch, Casein, Enamel, Sign Bulbs, Wiring, 4-Channel Flasher

45 x 110 x 12 inches

2009

PRIVATE

PROPERTY

*PARK AND SPEND*

Edition of 5, plus 1 AP

Pine, Enamel, Laser Cut Acrylic, Sign Bulbs, Wiring

30 x 41 inches

2009



**PARK**  
**&**  
**SPEND**



*CASH REWARDS*

Edition of 5, plus 1 AP

Pine, Enamel, Laser Cut Acrylic, Sign Bulbs, Wiring

18 x 66 inches

2009

A rectangular sign with a white border and a dark green background. The sign features the text "CASH REWARDS" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The sign is surrounded by a string of lights, with green lights positioned above and below the sign, and white lights positioned to the left and right of the sign.

**CASH REWARDS**

*A TREE*

Edition of 5, plus 1 AP

Laser Cut Acrylic

11 x 21 inches

2009



A Tree

*IT'S ABOUT POWER*

Edition of 5

Mixed Media

36 x 36 inches (Double-sided)

2009



**IT'S**

**ABOUT**

**POWER**

*INVISIBLE*

Edition of 3

Mixed Media

22 x 77 x 5 inches

2010

*UNSTOPPABLE*

Edition of 7

Mixed Media

6 x 29 x 6 inches

2010

*DO IT*

Edition of 10

Mixed Media

6 x 10 x 5 inches

2010

INVISIBLE

**UNSTOPPABLE**

**DO IT**



*EVERYTHING YOU WANT, RIGHT NOW!*

Edition of 5, plus 1 AP

Pine, Enamel, Laser Cut Acrylic, Sign Bulbs, Wiring

30 x 42 inches

2009



**EVERYTHING  
YOU WANT**

*Right Now!*

*5050*

Edition of 1

Mixed Media

Each *50* is 27 x 47 x 6 inches

2011



*TRUST ME*

Edition of 1

Mixed media

*TRUST* is 44 x 12 3/4 x 5 inches

*ME* is 20 x 12 1/2 x 5 inches

2011

TRULST

ME

*SAND OCEAN SKY*  
Edition of 25, plus 2 APs  
Archival Pigment Print  
20 x 30 inches  
2009

A wide-angle photograph of a sandy beach under a vast, blue sky filled with soft, white clouds. In the lower-left foreground, a white sign with a red border and arrow-shaped ends stands on two black posts. The sign contains text in black and red. The horizon line is visible in the distance, separating the sand from the ocean.

**SAND OCEAN SKY  
AVAILABLE 7 DAYS  
FREE OF CHARGE**



*YOU ARE STILL ALIVE*

Edition of 25, plus 2 APs

Archival Pigment Print

20 x 30 inches

2009

A photograph of a cemetery. In the foreground, a sign with a white center and red arrow-shaped ends is mounted on two black posts. The sign reads "YOU ARE STILL ALIVE" in bold, black, sans-serif capital letters. Behind the sign is a black metal fence with vertical bars. In the background, a green lawn is filled with rows of white headstones under a clear sky. Large trees are visible on the left and right sides of the frame.

**YOU ARE  
STILL ALIVE**

*NO TRESPASSING*  
Edition of 25, plus 2 APs  
Archival Pigment Print  
20 x 30 inches  
2009



**NO TRESPASSING**

**P**  
**PARKING**  
Guests Only

*OUT OF CARS*

Edition of 25, plus 2 APs

Archival Pigment Print

20 x 30 inches

2009



OUT OF CARS

# **STEVE LAMBERT**

Brooklyn, NY

## **Education**

**2006** University of California at Davis | MFA, Studio Art

**2001** San Francisco Art Institute | BFA, Interdisciplinary

## **Grants, Awards, & Residencies**

### **2010**

- Headlands Center for the Arts | 2010 Bridge Residency

### **2009**

- Prix Ars Electronica | Award of Distinction in Hybrid Arts | The New York Times Special Edition
- Lower East Side Printshop | Special Editions Residency

### **2008**

- San Francisco Weekly | Best Public Art of 2008
- Turbulence Commission | for ABSML with Jeff Crouse

### **2007**

- Rhizome Commission for AddArt | Member Selection

### **2004**

- Creative Work Fund | Visual Art Award | for The Anti-Advertising Agency
- Belle Foundation Grant for Cultural Development | Individual Grant

### **2003**

- Annual Adbusters TV contest | 1st Prize

### **2002**

- California Arts Council Residency Grant | Artist In Residence

## **Solo Exhibitions**

### **2009**

- Charles James Gallery, Los Angeles CA | "Everything You Want Right Now!"

### **2008**

- Glowlab, Brooklyn NY | "Drawings by Steve Lambert"

### **2006**

- Gallery Anno Domini, San Jose CA | Simmer Down Sprinter | for ZeroOne SJ Arts & Technology Festival

### **2005**

- Bayenalle | 21 Grand, Oakland CA | Lawrence Livermore Conversion Plans
- McBean Project Space at the San Francisco Art Institute, SF CA | Offices of the Anti-Advertising Agency

## **Selected Group Exhibitions**

### **2010**

- Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, CA | HollywoodMerchmART! curated by Emma Gray
- Park Life, SF CA | "this is the book I have written for you" U.Turn Art Space, Cincinnati OH | Palling Around with Socialists
- Eyebeam Art and Technology Center | Re:Group: Beyond Models of Consensus
- Barbara Seiler Galerie, Zurich | Drawings curated by Marcel van Eeden
- Lower East Side Printshop | EDITIONS '10
- San Francisco Fine Art Fair
- NEXT Exhibition, Chicago
- PULSE Art Fair, NYC

### **2009**

- Piemonte Share Festival, Torino Italy
- The Arts Guild of Rahway, NJ | Moolah: An Exhibit About Money
- Bedford Gallery, Walnut Creek | SF Arts Commission Art on

#### Market Street Project

- Schroeder Romero Gallery, NYC | Play It Forward
- Gallery Alfero, NJ | Camera Chimera
- OK Centre, Linz, Austria | Ars Electronica Award Exhibition
- Jen Bekman Gallery, NY | Summer Reading
- Weatherspoon Art Museum | Our Subject Is You
- San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art | It's Not Us, It's You
- FACT, Liverpool | Climate for Change

#### 2008

- Charlie James Gallery, LA | The Western Front | with Packard Jennings
- The Vera List Center at Parsons The New School for Design | Ours: Democracy in the Age of Branding
- Park Avenue Armory/Creative Time | Democracy In America: The National Campaign
- The Hunterdon Museum of Art, Clinton, NJ | The House That Sprawl Built
- Article – Viva Art Action Montreal | Black Market Type & Print Shop
- International Guerilla Video Festival, Milan
- Whitney Museum of American Art | Whitney Biennial – collaboration with Neighborhood Public Radio
- Catharine Clark Gallery | “Wish You Were Here: Postcards from our Awesome Future” prints

#### 2007

- 20th Dallas Video Festival | “Tech-Art Activism: A Video Art Collection curated by Carolyn Sortor”
- Eyebeam, NY NY | “Source Code: 10th Anniversary Show”
- YBCA, SF CA | Collective Foundation
- Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona | “OFFF Festival” | w/ Graffiti Research Lab

- Federation Square Big Screen, Melbourne Australia | “Caught on Tape”
- The Lab, SF CA | “Corporate Identity”

#### 2006

- The Lab, SF CA | “Some Assembly Required”
- Catharine Clark Gallery, SF CA | with Packard Jennings as Anti-Advertising Agency
- The New Gallery, Calgary Alberta CANADA | Shopdropping

#### 2005

- POND Gallery, SF CA | Shopdropping
- Haley Martin Gallery, SF CA | Sprawl

#### 2004

- The Luggage Store | “A Spoonful of Sugar”
- Mission 17, SF CA | “Budget Gallery Allstars”

#### 2003

- stART at Judson Church, NY NY | “Breaking News”
- Freyberger Gallery, Reading PA | “Ground Zero”

#### Curatorial Projects

#### 2008

- Add-Art | Browser plugin that replaces online advertising with art

#### 2006

- WhyTheyHate.US | Online

#### 2003

- Learning to Love You More with Aragon High School | Assignment #5 | San Mateo City Hall

#### 2001

- San Francisco Art Institute, SF CA | “Prime Time” Lecture Series for SFAI Artists Committee



## Selected Bibliography

### 2009

- Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (editors), "Institutional Critique", MIT Press
- Annice Jacoby (editor) "Street Art San Francisco: Mission Muralismo!" Abrams Press
- Christopher Knight "Review: Steve Lambert at Charlie James Gallery" Los Angeles Times, May 15, 2009
- Geoff Manaugh, The BLDG BLOG Book, Chronicle Books
- Phillip Magazine "Best Case Scenario" Winter 2009
- Harper's Magazine "The Times, They Are A-Changin'" January 2009
- Paddy Johnson "Best of the Web 2008" artfagcity.com, January 12, 2008
- Jenna Wortham "Firefox Add-Ons Double as Art, Pranks and Fun" The New York Times Bits Blog, February 12, 2009

### 2008

- Carl Lavin, "Iraq War Ends (On Paper); Why real newspapers should take a lesson from a fake one." Forbes.com
- Nato Thompson (editor), "A Guide to Democracy in America" Creative Time Books
- Geoff Manaugh, "Q&A" Dwell Magazine, October 2008, page 64
- Andrew Adam Newman, "Profile: Steve Lambert." AdWeek Magazine, June 30, 2008
- Bryant Park Project "Dialog Over Public Advertising Gets Sticky" National Public Radio, April 2008
- Lamar Clarkson "WikiBusiness" ArtNews, April 2008

- "Art [on] Market Street: Wish You Were Here: Postcards from Our Awesome Future!" SPUR Urbanist Magazine, Mar. 2008
- "Ya no solo se roba, también se dejan sorpresas en las estanterías" La Voz de Galicia (Spain), January 31, 2008
- Roberta Fallon "Come Play With Me" Philadelphia Weekly, January 23rd, 2008
- Eliran Levy Ma'ariv Weekend (Israel), p10,11 Jan 4, 2008

### 2007

- Keri Smith "The Guerilla Art Kit," Princeton Architectural Press
- Michael Leaverton "World of Tomorrow" SF Weekly, Arts and Entertainment, November 14, 2007
- Elizabeth Haines "Windows and Wallpapering: Questions about Art, Technology and Poetic Interference" ModArt Magazine, October 2007
- Merit Karise "Interview with Steve Lambert" Estonian Ekspress (Estonia), August 30, 2007
- Stefano Caldana "Llega el plugin art para Firefox El País, CiberPaís9, July 9, 2007
- CBC News "Banner ads spur positive responses, study finds" CBC News Online, May 15, 2007
- Andrew Adam Newman "Web Fight: Blocking Ads and Adding Art" New York Times, C8, May 14, 2007
- Sophie-Helene LeBeuf "Cachez cette publicité que je ne saurais voir" Radio-Canada.ca, May 15, 2007
- Florencia Werchowsky "La protesta contra la polución publicitaria Clarín (Argentina), Mar 18, 2007
- Hamilton Nolan "AAA challenges 'normalized' advertising" PR WEEK, Mar 5, 2007

- David E. Williams, “Boston stunt creates PR buzz saw instead of buzz” CNN.com, Feb 2, 2007

## 2006

- Cory Doctorow, “Biofeedback Game Where You Compete to Relax” BoingBoing.net, July 21, 2006
- Ivan Fulco, “Simmer Down Sprinters: Videogiocare con lo stress” La Stampa (Italy), Aug 24, 2006
- Rachel Gregg, “A Parallel Universe” Sacramento News & Review, Page 15-17, Jan 12, 2006, Vol 17 Issue 42
- Jennifer McVeigh “Shop Till you Drop: The Art of Shopping Takes on New Meaning” Calgary Herald June 2006
- Joseph Del Pesco “Beware of Subversion in Your Supermarket” Fast Forward, Calgary, June 8th 2006

## 2005

- Scott Indrisek, “Budget Gallery” BlackBook Magazine: State of the Arts Issue, Page 58, Fall 2005, n40

## 2004

- Elise Soukup, “Advertising: Counterprogramming” Newsweek Magazine, Pg13, October 11, 2004, vCXLIV, n15
- Wooster Collective Website “Profile: Steve Lambert”, August 2, 2004
- Josh MacPhee, “Stencil Pirates” Soft Skull Press

## 2003

- Emily Landes, “Talking Back Public Space One Art Show at a Time” The Wave Magazine, Pg35, Jun 4, 2003, v3 i11
- Jesse Hamlin, “The Scene: Art by the People for the

- People” San Francisco Chronicle, PgD2, May 9, 2003
- Aurelia d’Andrea, “Vigilante: A Veteran Street Artist Leaves his Mark for Political Change” (with SF Print Collective), [X] Press Magazine, Pg10, April 2003

## 2001

- Manny Hyde, “Puppet Street Project” Punk Planet Magazine, Pg 58-60, May/June 2001, i43
- Bay Area and National TV News I Coverage for Puppet Street Project

## Affiliations

### 2009

- Ploneers I Amsterdam

### 2006-2009

- Senior Fellow I Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology

### 2004

- Founder/”CEO” I the Anti-Advertising Agency

### 1999

- Founder/Co-Director I The Budget Gallery

## Documentaries

- Graffiti Research Lab - The Complete First Season
- The Yes Men Save The World

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