

STREET AD TAKEOVER MANUAL

What you need and how to do it

BRANDSM[®]



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1

INTRO

#YeahWeGotKeysForThat

Hello world.

This guide is an introduction and a practical 'how to' manual for all those who are interested in reclaiming ad spaces in their city/neighbourhood.



You may be a graffiti writer or street artist that hides in the shadows, and wants to take over some corporate high visibility spaces. You may be a member of the public who just wants to open corporate ad spaces in the city, and remove the offending advertisements. Or you may be an activist that wants to raise awareness to your struggle by using the advertising space as a way of reaching the public. Whatever your reason, one thing is clear, a city with less ads, more public art and a mixture of stories and voices in public space is a healthier and more representative city.

The right to author, change, create and recreate the public spaces in which we inhabit, share and live in is a fundamental right for all people that coexist in communities, no matter what size. The multinational corporations that own these spaces didn't ask you or any member of the public for consent before they took over every city in the world with adverts. You have the right not to be constantly advertised at, especially in public space. So don't ask their permission, it's your right to take their spaces back. Plus climate change is happening, so maybe it isn't the best idea to keep constantly telling people to buy shit all the time, everywhere. Just sayin'.

Within this manual is a selection of the research and practices that have been created by artists in several countries around the world who have worked hard to learn about these spaces, find the keys, test the processes and find easy,

risk free ways to take over these ad spaces. Essentially we have done the hard work so you don't have to.

Thanks to globalisation, you can now spend around £12, and get access to over 100,000 ad spaces across the world, instantly. Over the last few years Brandalism, PublicAdCampaign, Special Patrol Group and other friends around the world have installed thousands of artworks in ad spaces in various countries. We've also never been caught ;).

We have written this guide because we want to encourage you to take these spaces back and use them to share your creative, social and political ideas or artworks with the public. If you are a street artist, graffiti writer or tagger, you couldn't get your artwork in a more public spot.

All we ask is - just don't be a dick, and put anything racist, sexist or detrimental to anyone other culture, gender, race or religion in the spaces that you reclaim, adverts already do this all the time. We're better than that.

Have fun.

Bill Posters (Bandalism)

Shout out to:

Special Patrol Group //

Public Ad Campaign //

Vermibus //

Subvertisers international //

2

BUS STOP AD SPACES

Types of '6 Sheets'

The world's 4 major outdoor advertising companies are JCDecaux, Clear Channel, Primesight and Exterior Media. Within the UK, most of Europe and across the world there are 2 main types of '6 Sheet' ad spaces that take over public space in cities. These ad spaces are sometimes the same kind, depending on how new the bus stop is or which outdoor advertising company operates the space. However some may have an older type of ad space that requires a different key. Some have a new 'Lollipop' style ad space incorporated.

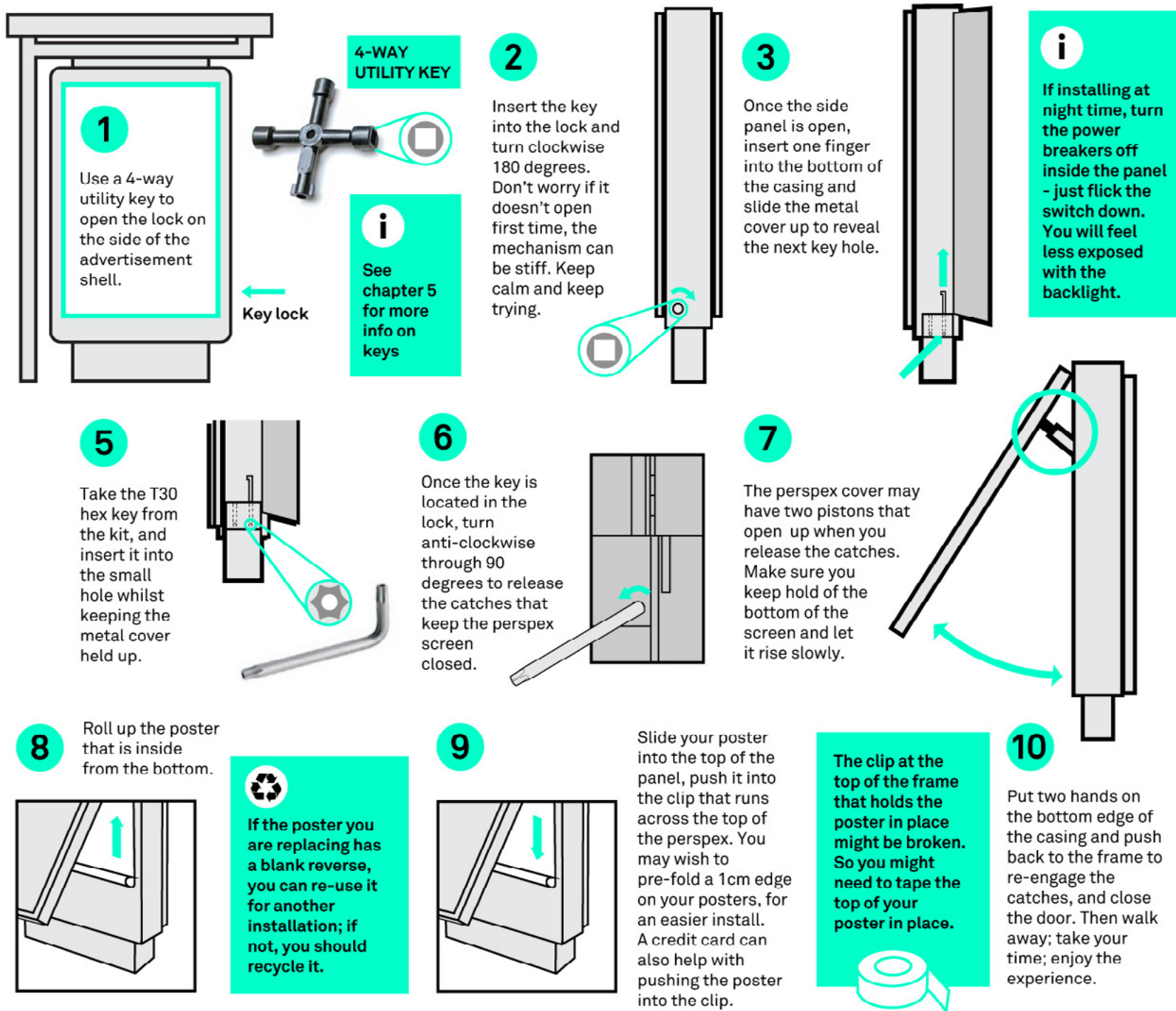


Some of the largest outdoor advertising companies in the world have contracts with local councils or municipal regions for the installation and management of public transport infrastructure. Now these contracts are essentially monopolies that can last 30 years or more, and in exchange for allowing the large multi-national corporations to build and maintain this infrastructure, they get to install advertising spaces all across the city whilst local councils save money from their non-existent budgets as a result of the financial crisis and neoliberal free market economic policies. Sounds like a fair deal right? Wrong.

BUS STOP ONE

It is important to note here, that some of the older bus stops in the UK and abroad have a dual lock system to gain access. These bus stops are easy to open when you know how. The best thing to do is to put a high vis jacket on, and just test the keys in daylight, nobody gives a shit, and that way you can learn how they open and be more efficient when you return with your artwork to install. After a while you will realise that some of the older bus stops have pretty shit locks, they can get worn down as they are opened every 2 - 4wks over many years. Don't worry though, if the lock is shit, just move on to the next one, there are thousands to play with.





THE 'LOLLIPOP' ONE

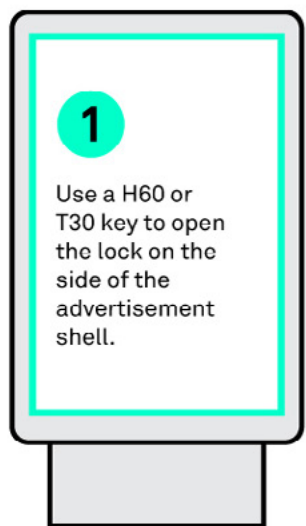
These ad spaces are always present within large towns and cities across the UK, Europe, and many other cities around the world.

These ad spaces are taller than the Bus Stop ad spaces, around 210cm to 240cm high. As a result, they sometimes require a small set of steps to reach the top of the advert when you open the cabinet. If you don't have a small set of steps, don't worry, you can slide a metal bar down that the poster slots into by pulling the small metal tabs at the side of the cabinet. This makes access to install the poster easier as you don't have to reach up.

Do your research and check if you need to bring some steps, or a crate to stand on. The last thing you want is to start sweating when you realise that you can't reach the top and you will have to bail on the installation! Not cool.



THE LOLLIPOP ONE



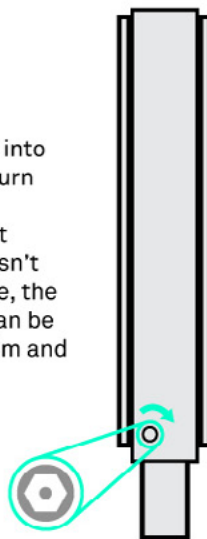
1
Use a H60 or T30 key to open the lock on the side of the advertisement shell.



Key lock

i See chapter 5 for more info on keys

2
Insert the key into the lock and turn clockwise 90 degrees. Don't worry if it doesn't open first time, the mechanism can be stiff. Keep calm and keep trying.

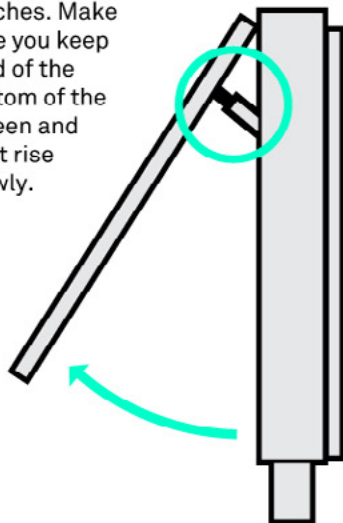


3
Gently push on the frame to unlock the catch and allow the cover to open.

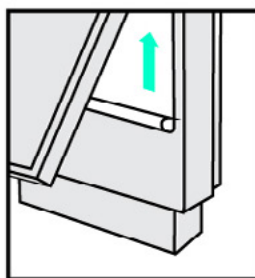
Push

i
If installing at night time, turn the power breakers off inside the panel - just flick the switch down. You will feel less exposed with the backlight.

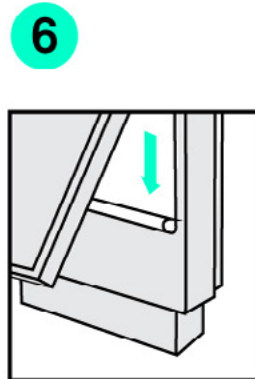
4
The perspex cover may have two pistons that open up when you release the catches. Make sure you keep hold of the bottom of the screen and let it rise slowly.



5
Roll up the poster that is inside from the bottom.



If the poster you are replacing has a blank reverse, you can re-use it for another installation; if not, you should recycle it.

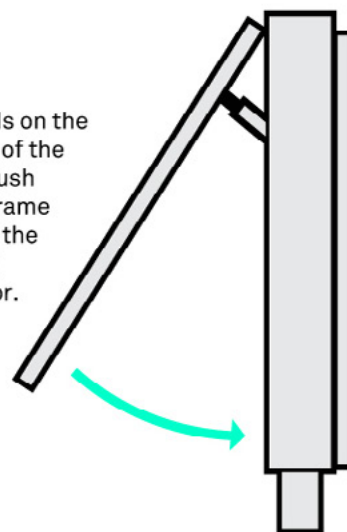


Slide your poster into the top of the panel, push it into the clip that runs across the top of the perspex. You may wish to pre-fold a 1cm edge on your posters, for an easier install. A credit card can also help with pushing the poster into the clip.

i
The clip at the top of the frame that holds the poster in place might be broken. So you might need to tape the top of your poster in place.



7
Put two hands on the bottom edge of the casing and push back to the frame to re-engage the catches, and close the door. Then walk away; take your time; enjoy the experience.



3

OPERATING IN PUBLIC SPACE

Hiding In Plain Sight

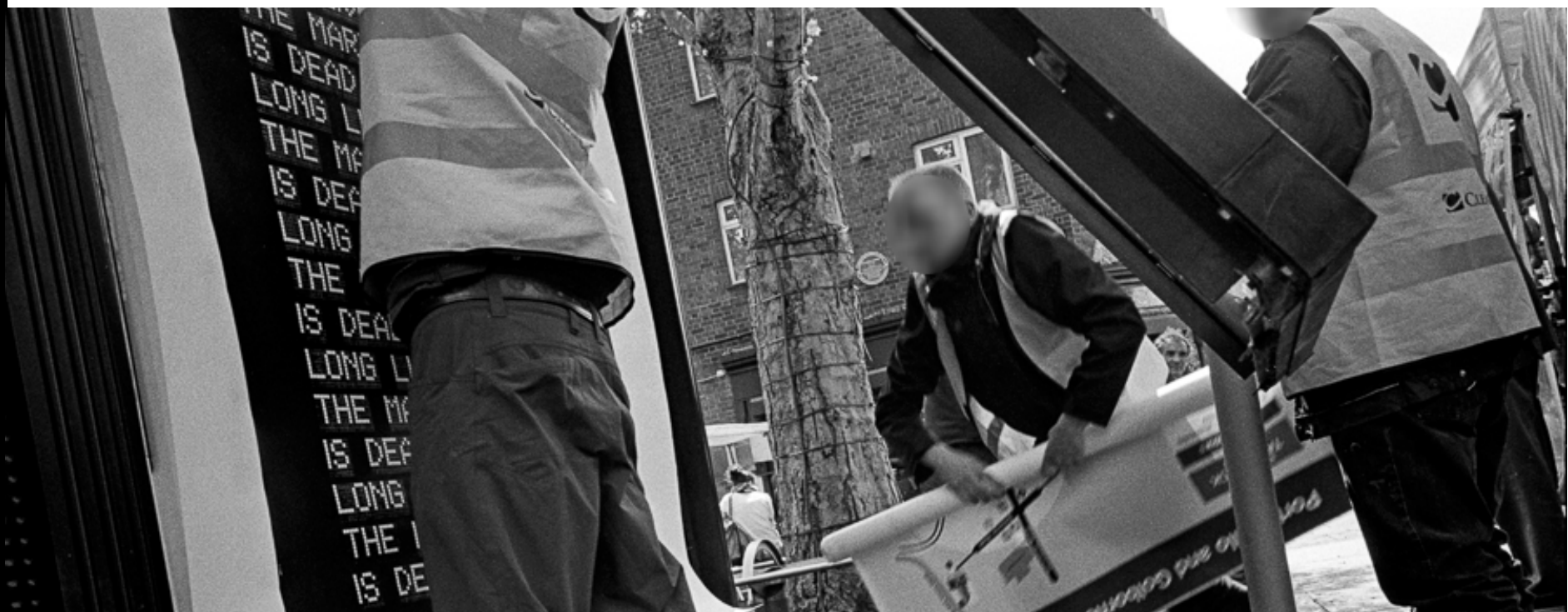


Now you've identified your type of target, you will want to feel confident and relaxed when you go out to install your creativity in public space.

When i first started looking into taking over ad spaces in the city i would approach it the same way as i approached graffiti. Hood up, late at night, trying to see how to get into these spaces. How to get them opened, and what i might need to make it happen. I remember finally popping one open, and then shattering the glass as i forced it closed after photographing the locks. As i was legging it away, i thought there must be an easier way to do it than this shit.

There is. Over time it became clear that if you want to get away with taking over ad spaces in the city, you need to simulate the behaviour of the workers that install the ads in the first place. This is because If people expect to see something happening in a certain space, and at a certain time in the city they will automatically ignore it. It forms part of the backdrop to the rhythm of the city, the metabolism of urban space.

Listed below are some notes on suggested practice and processes for installing art work in ad spaces in the city. These reflections were learnt over many years of trial and error, and we hope that they will save you loads of stress and frustration when you start reclaiming ad spaces...



TIME OF DAY

Save yourself loads of stress and hassle from the cops, and from other members of the public (late night dog walkers especially, pure trouble) and go out in the daytime. Don't go out (like i started doing) at 2am in the morning, looking shady, trying to figure shit out.

Use your head and go out in the day time. At first it will feel exposed, and you will be nervous, but after the first opening of a cabinet or the first installation of an art work, alongside a rush of adrenalin, you will realise that:

1. Nobody gives a shit. If you look like you SHOULD be there, and your BEHAVIOUR is what people (including the cops) EXPECT to see at that time around that ad space, then you will be fine. This is why a hi vis is so important, as it gives you legitimacy. Use it. We would also recommend taking a look around when you have opened the space, look at the public, see how little they care. Relax into it and have fun.
2. It is easy. These spaces are designed so that a worker, who probably isn't paid enough, can change over hundreds of these adverts in one morning! They are designed to be opened and installed quickly and efficiently. After a few you will get the hang of it. If the lock is shit, move on and try another!
3. If you have a hi vis / uniform on, bus drivers won't bother you! This is important. We have installed some bait artworks in the past, and we were sure that a bus driver would notice and challenge us. However this never happened, as we looked and acted like we were supposed to be there. Although you will feel exposed and a little vulnerable when you are installing for the first time, just remember that everyone around you is more concerned about where they are going, who said what to who last night, Donald Trump, climate change, those new adidas sneakers, or a million other concerns. So hold your space, and stay cool.

CHOOSING A SPACE

Location, Location, Location.

High Visibility

Now most advertising spaces on the street are installed in places that reach a high volume of footfall from the public. Perfect! Now lots of people in the city will see your artworks, the hard work has been done for you. No more perching on ledges on abandoned buildings trying to get that graffiti piece up before the cops see you. You can just roll up in the day time and stick your artwork in a place that is designed to reach the maximum amount of people. They are also illuminated as well so they look great at night.

Site Specific

Perhaps your artwork is about a certain issue, or you like the architecture of a certain street in the city and your artwork is designed to interact with the space around it. Perhaps your artwork is targeting a certain corporation's disastrous environmental record, or maybe you just want to share a message by a famous landmark. If so a site specific installation could be a good shout, from our experience photos of site specific installations really make a huge impact.

WHEN TO INSTALL YOUR ARTWORK

Advertisements in public space rotate every 2 or 4 weeks depending on how long a corporation has bought the advertising space for.

It is amazing what information is available online and it just so happens that the major outdoor advertising companies have calendars on their websites that tell everyone when they change over the adverts in public space. Handy.

Now the change over dates vary from company to company but they are essentially in 2 or 4 wk blocks.

It is really important to know about the changeover dates for two main reasons. The first is down to the fact that the only person on the street who may be remotely interested in what you are doing with an ad spaces is a worker for the company that manages the ad space you are installing your art work in. So the best way to avoid this situation is by going out a day or two after the company has changed over adverts in the city. That way you not only massively reduce the risk of any interaction with a worker, but you also get the most days of exposure for your art work. Double win. Now if you do interact with an employee of the outdoor advertising company, it doesn't necessarily mean it has to be a negative thing. In Paris we had a team of women who were stopped by a JCDecaux worker who asked if they should be doing that. They said 'yes of course' and he proceeded to not only show them a more efficient way of installing the posters, but also gave them a tool from his van. For more info on what to do in the event you get spotted by an employee of the ad company or the cops see **chapter 8**.

UNIFORM - WHAT TO WEAR

Here is a list of suggestions for do's and don'ts when you are thinking about what uniform / fancy dress to wear when you go out for a healthy bit of subvertising:

Do:

1. Look like an employee of an outdoor ad company. They typically wear dark coloured practical trousers (dark blue or black) with a dark coloured jacket or fleece.
2. Wear some sturdy shoes / boots, not your fly trainers you just bought.
3. Wear a hat or beanie. This helps you feel more protected in a weird way.
4. Wear a hi vis jacket. Ideally with a company logo printed on the back (you can download the logos of the major global outdoor advertising companies for printing on a hi vis from our Take Action section of the website:

HERE

5. Wear gloves if you can. Some thin black builders gloves are a good idea. Don't wear mittens.
6. Put your hi vis on when you approach an ad spaces until you feel really comfortable keeping it on all the time.

Don't:

1. Leave your dreadlocks dangling about on show.
2. Wear clothing that you would not associate with the practice / job of an outdoor advertising worker. Sorry that means no spandex. Although maybe they do wear it underneath.

ATTITUDE

Now when you do your first installation your heart will be working harder than Donald Trump's solicitors. Whilst this is unnerving it is perfectly natural and you will get a lot out of the experience as a result of stretching your comfort zone. Brains do their best learning when pushed to the edge of your panic zone, so own it and enjoy.

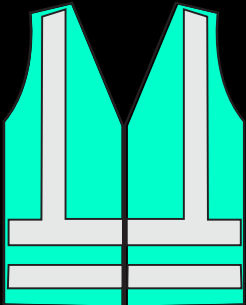
Don't forget that employees of outdoor advertising companies work long hours for not enough money and they have to do the same 30 second process 100s of times a day.

As you can imagine this would become boring so act like it. Be relaxed or maybe a bit bored or a bit pissed off. Maybe you are working overtime AGAIN, on a Sunday! And your partner is stressing at you for not being at that yoga retreat together. Or whatever. Basically act like this is your job. You do it day in day out, thousands of times. Be confident in the process. Plus a little bit of role play always spices things up.

4

UNIFORM

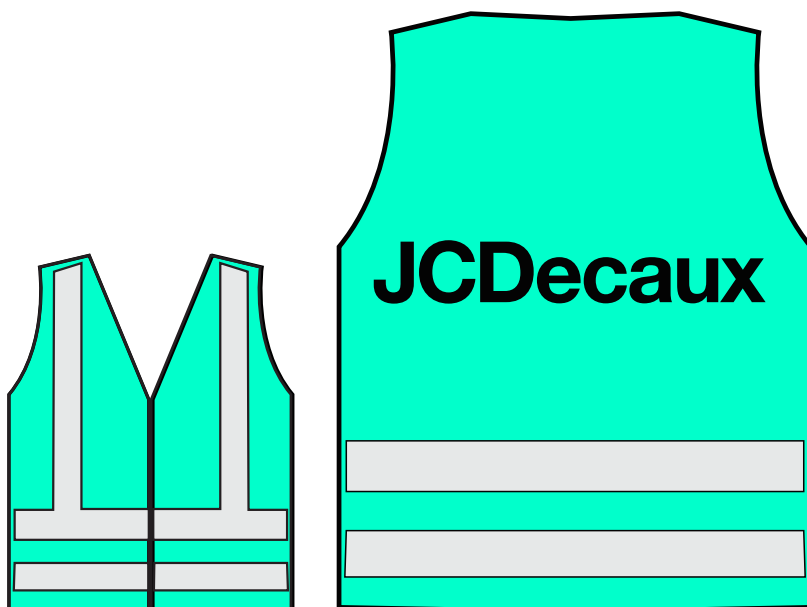
Creating your own hi-vis



Below are several methods that can be used to create a branded hi vis uniform to help you with your installations. This list is not exhaustive but a selection of 3 different processes from the simple to the more technically complex. Some are easier and more accessible methods that rely on less equipment and don't require knowledge of specialist processes.

The easiest and most direct processes are listed first, with more complex ones following. You could always get them commercially printed via a shop or online service but where's the creativity and skill in that?

The equipment needed for each option is included in each section.



JCDecaux

primesight



Clear Channel



ExterionMedia

Logos for the Big 3:

We have created downloadable pdf versions for the logos of the big 3 outdoor advertising companies. There are 2 versions available for each one:

1. **Stencil templates**
2. **Printable files for iron on transfer or screen printing processes**

You can find all logo and template files online on our website:

[HERE](#)

OPTION 1: IRON ON TRANSFERS

Good - cheap, accessible, quick, easy to do.

Bad - lower quality, looks unprofessional, isn't long lasting

This option is the quickest and most accessible, however the final results are not of the highest quality. If you wanted to do a quick install, and wanted a hi vis that you would then never use again this could be the option for you.

Most large supermarkets and art shops have A4 printable sheets that are iron on transfers. You can get a pack of 10 for £1 - £3.

Equipment you will need:

- **A4 iron on transfer paper**
- **inkjet printer and computer**
- **iron.**

Time taken to produce 1 hi vis = 10 to 15 minutes

OPTION 2 STENCIL LOGOS

Good - Cheap, easy for those that know how, can look good

Bad - quality of finish can be poor, need to hand finish, time consuming

Stencilling the logos can be a cost effective way of creating branded hi vis for your installs. However you need to be careful to keep the quality of the finish high. We recommend using spray mount glue to temporarily fix the bottom of the stencil onto the hi vis jacket prior to spraying as it ensures the edges look tidy and there is no bleed through from the paint.

* note - when stencilling onto hi vis jackets, build up the layers of paint slowly as the synthetic fabric doesn't give a solid fill colour to start with. Take your time.

Equipment you will need:

- **Black spray paint (we recommend '94 or Belton paint)**
- **Thick card Stencil card**
- **scalpel (very sharp)**
- **Spray mount glue.**

Time taken to produce 1 hi vis = 1hr

OPTION 3 SCREEN PRINTING

Good - good process, look very high quality, can produce volume when setup

Bad - process is technical, takes a while to setup

This is by far the best process for high quality results, especially if you want to produce a lot of uniforms. The process varies depending on the type of setup but there are many cool people that have screen printing gear that could be up for helping you. It is a technical process that needs experience to get it right.

* note - if you go to a commercial screen printer for the printing that you don't know, say the hi vis are for a theatre production or something similar to avoid suspicion.

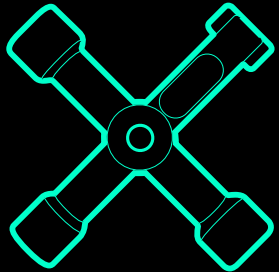
Equipment you will need:

- **Access to silk screen printing equipment**
- **printed acetate with the logo on**
- **black screen printing ink.**

Time taken to produce 1 hi vis = 0.5 to 1 hr

5

KEYS



As we have seen in section 1 there are several types of '6 sheet' (Bus stop) ad cabinets that require a key to open. Most of these keys are available to buy from any hardware retailer online or a decent sized hardware shop.

Thanks to our good friend globalisation you can purchase two or three keys for €15 and gain access to most of the 6 sheet advertising spaces in western Europe, approx 100,000. Not a bad investment.

Some of the most frequently used keys, and the process for opening the ad spaces is covered in the illustrated guides that are included in this manual.

Our good friends at Public Ad Campaign in the US have created this incredibly useful world map which illustrates the types of key needed in over 22 countries across the world. You can also order hand made keys directly via paypal from their site:

HERE



These are the 2 most widely used and easily accessible keys:

You also make use of these four:

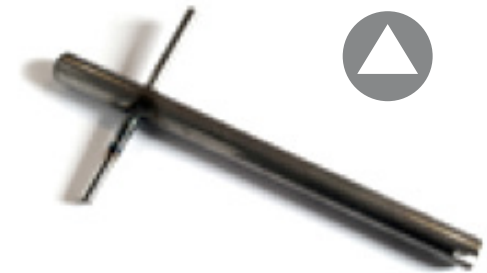
H60



CEMUSAPIN



CEMUSAPIN



T30



JCDGEAR



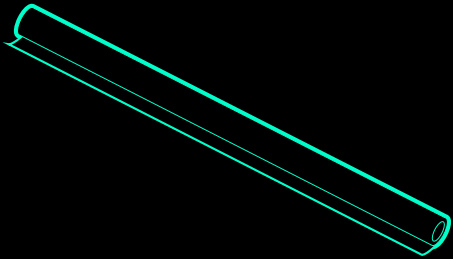
WALL1132



For more info and advice on keys, contact your local adhackers.

6

ARTWORK



Now that you have sussed your spot, got your uniform printed and opened some of the spaces to test your keys, it is time to get some bad ass artwork created for installation in public space.

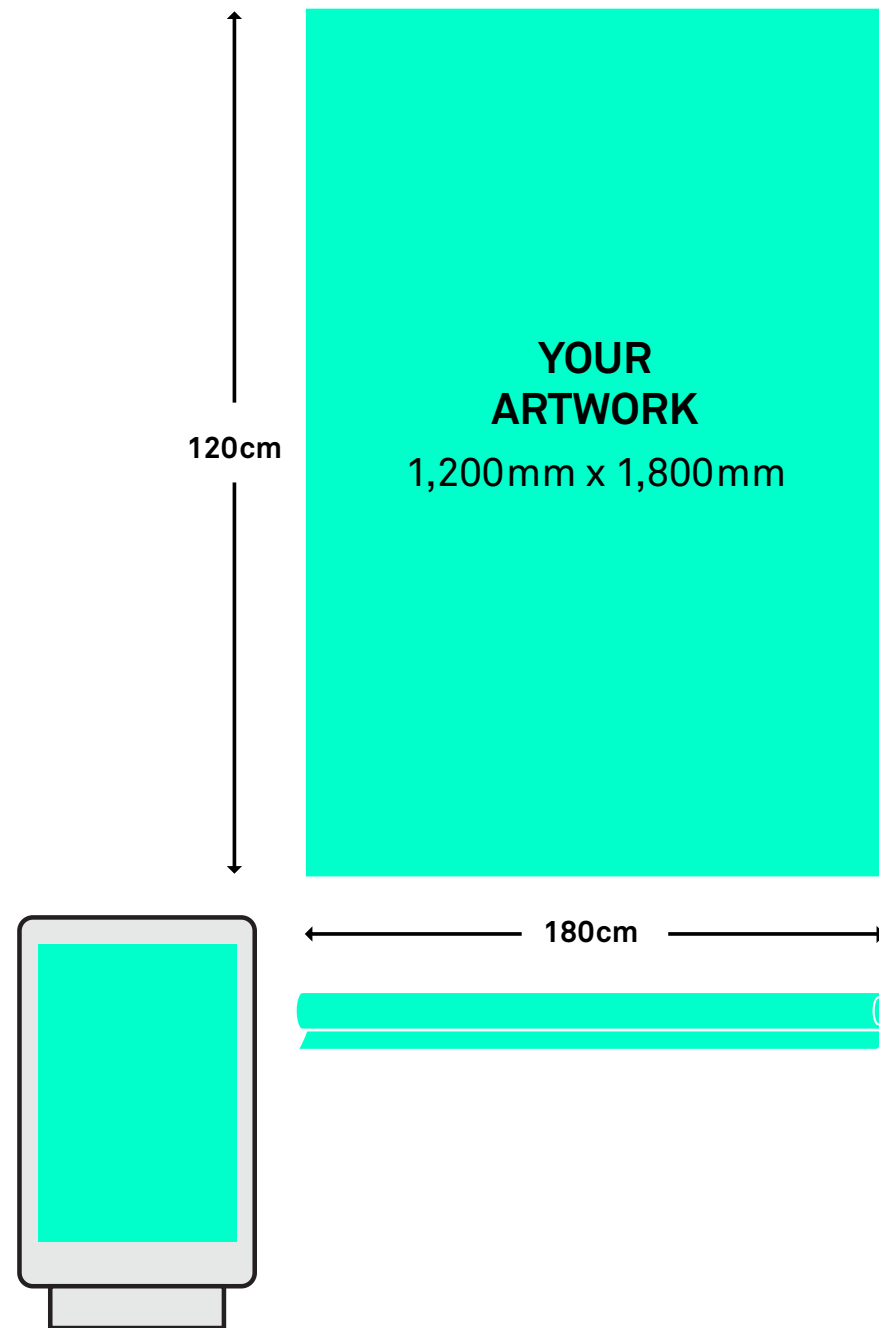
Below are some examples of how you can create your artwork ranging from low cost to higher cost options.

These are by no means exhaustive and the only options, you are creative so have fun and play with the space.

Maybe you just want to remove adverts and leave the space blank like we do with

NO AD DAY

Graffiti writers - How sick would your tag or throw up look if it was illuminated at night in one of these spaces... Just sayin'.



OPTION 1 HAND DRAWN/PAINTED

Tag it up - light box, open close done.

Take the posters out and rework them at home / paint on the reverse



OPTION 2 DIGITALLY PRINTED

guide line prices, don't list suppliers as they could be approached by the ad companies

ways to make it cheaper (buy own paper, get it cut down by the manufacturer etc)

b & w printing



OPTION 3 SCREEN PRINTED

need some help from skilled printers. Access to a print studio

very hard to print full size

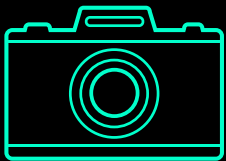
info on how this process went down in 2014.

could print smaller images in the centre of a poster



7

DOCUMENTING THE INSTALL



So when you are ready to install your artwork, it is important to remember that we live in the age of digital networks and social media is where the most people will see your installs.

So good quality photographs are crucial and can be taken on most smart phones.

Here are some tips for photographing your installations:

1. **Hi resolution images are perfect. Preferably in colour. The framing of the poster inside the advertising space is important.**
2. **You should work when you will take the photographs (e.g will you do the installs and go back later to photograph without your gear).**
3. **If your artwork has small text, get a close up shot so that it is possible to read any words and text in the poster.**
4. **If possible, it is good to take photographs of members of the public interacting with the artwork.**
5. **If the poster installation is 'site-specific' please capture the background site.**
6. **'Action shots' of installations are always good. Try not to capture faces if possible - or blur the faces before sending them to us.**
7. **Security: Please be aware that if you are carrying photographs of people installing the posters, these could (potentially) be seized and used as evidence by the police. We suggest you carry multiple SD cards and store the SD cards in a safe place.**
8. **If you have time, take daytime photographs and night time photographs of all the posters. They look sick at night!**

8

UK LEGAL ADVICE

What are the risks?



You are highly unlikely to be stopped whilst doing this type of work. But if you are, it's likely to be by people who work in the industry rather than the police.

Have a story in your head before hand so that you remain calm if approached. You could say you're a Sub Contractor for a rogue outdoor media firm. Or art students doing a temporary install, and that you just need to get a photo and then will put the original poster back.

Again - you're very unlikely to get stopped, but if you do, it's re-assuring for yourselves to have a story prepared.

If it all gets a bit hairy - just calmly walk away. Don't give your name or details to any industry worker. You're only obliged to give your details to the police, and only if you are being arrested.

In the very, very, very unlikely event that the police get involved, here is some legal advice from Green and Black Cross. The basic rule of thumb is "No Comment":

In the worst case scenario, a charge is likely to be that 'criminal damage' which holds minor penalties. We really stress that this is very unlikely to happen - and has not happened for any of our previous street interventions since 2012: <https://greenandblackcross.org/guides/laws/6-criminal-damage-theft/>

SOME OTHER BASIC TIPS

Photos: Please advise your photographers that they should be wary of what photos they take, and carry on them, and not to include people's faces. Photos should be deleted or stored securely afterwards.

Text messages: Be wary of what you communicate by SMS text message and not to include anything incriminating. "E.g I changed this bus stop ad on the High Street."

Emails: Similarly, be wary of what you write in emails to each other before or afterwards.

Read a useful legal briefing for brandowners and how they might respond to a brandalism campaign:

HERE

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WWW.BRANDALISM.CH