

HUNGRY? EAT POPCORN & DRINK COCA COLA

BananaRAM GOES SUBLIMINAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

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The 2004 edition of BananaRAM Art Festival is dedicated to **Mind Control**. The Festival's flag is represented by "**Popcorn**", an artwork by Gianluca D'Agostino that reproduces the legendary experiment conducted by James Vicary, the American Marketing expert who invented subliminal advertising.

Vicary had conducted a variety of unusual studies of female shopping habits, discovering for example that women's eye-blink rates dropped significantly in supermarkets. Vicary's studies were largely forgettable, save for one experiment he conducted at a Ft. Lee, New Jersey movie theater during the summer of 1957. Vicary placed a **tachistoscope** in the theater's projection booth, and all throughout the playing of the film *Picnic*, he flashed a couple of different messages on the screen every five seconds. The messages each displayed for only **1/3000th of a second at a time**, far below the viewers' threshold of conscious perceptibility. The result of displaying these imperceptible suggestions -- "**Drink Coca-Cola**" and "**Hungry? Eat Popcorn**" -- was an amazing 18.1% increase in Coca-Cola sales, and a whopping 57.8% jump in popcorn purchases.

Gianluca D'Agostino says: "True or not, Popcorn wants just to be a glance into this exciting marketing experiment that has always represented in the collective imagery the myth of subliminal power. My reproduction is just symbolic, as the messages I have placed into the movie are of 1/16 of a second length, that is a very long time for subliminal, but I wanted to make it just to give the people an idea of how the thing could have been look like, because it's something I was always curious of and beyond that, I did it because of the wonderful aesthetics of the symbols involved: the popcorn, the coca cola, the mystery and the beauty of Kim Novak.

The term *subliminal message* coined by Vicary was then popularized in a 1957 book entitled *The Hidden Persuaders* by Vance Packard. In 1973 the book *Subliminal Seduction* claimed that subliminal techniques were in wide use in advertising. The book contributed to a general climate of fear with regard to Orwellian dangers (of subliminal messaging). Public concern was enough to lead the **Federal Communications Commission** to hold hearings and to declare subliminal advertising "contrary to the public interest" because it involved "intentional deception" of the public. Popcorn is made with the dancing sequence of Kim Novak in *Picnic* (1955) by Director Joshua Logan produced by Columbia Pictures

Links:

<http://spm.phy.bris.ac.uk/people/JamesVicary/>

www.encyclopedia4u.com/j/james-vicary.html

www.snopes.com/business/hidden/popcorn.asp

http://www.ciadvertising.org/student_account/spring_01/adv391k/hjy/adv382j/1st/application.html<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/online/research/speci>
[b/ASC/findaids/Vicary/collectiondesc.htm](http://ASC/findaids/Vicary/collectiondesc.htm)