

## **Burn the brands !**

Neil Boorman torched his designer wardrobe and possessions and tried to live a brand-free life for a year. He published a book about it in September 2007.

“Exactly one year ago this week, I held a public bonfire in central London, where I burnt all of my branded possessions. I suffered from a condition known as obsessive branding disorder – a combination of compulsive shopping and confidence in status symbol brands. I began to realize the more money I spent, the more miserable I became. With mounting debts and plummeting self-esteem, I attempted to live a year of my life brand-free.

The first months of my brand-free life were hell. My local High Streets were populated entirely by mass-market brands and I was forced to search the back streets for alternative spaces to shop. The . The weekly shop for essentials - previously an hour’s dash from Sainsbury’s – now occupied a whole day of my weekend. With most markets opening for one day a week, I was also forced to plan ahead. I had to discover my local fishmongers and butchers and cleaning products from service company suppliers.

Shopping for clothes became less glamorous and more functional, and I only went when I absolutely needed new stuff and non-branded suppliers on the net. I even had some clothes made by the tailor at my local dry cleaners.

Shopping for locally produced, small-scale produce remains a constant struggle in Britain, but the superficial brilliance of the High-street has been replaced by something infinitely more satisfying. I know my local shopkeepers by name.

I have lost almost a stone in weight simply from eating all natural produce. Spending less money overall, my bank balance is back in the black. And the status anxiety that destroyed my social life has disappeared. Why on earth did I spend so much money about the brands on my feet?

Some of my colleagues and friends might find me less exciting but as my mother used to tell me, the people who care about your clothes don’t really care about you.”

Adapted from <http://news.bbc.co.uk> , 4 september 2007