

Chain non-smoker taken from Marlboro country



Pictures by GARY McLEAN

Mr Rick Balzon, a member of the BUGA-UP protest group, chained himself to an Alfa Romeo racing car inside the NSW Art Gallery in protest against a cigarette company using the car and its sponsorship of an exhibition at the gallery as an advertisement. Police used bolt-cutters to remove him.

By JENNA PRICE

Police used bolt-cutters to remove an anti-smoking protester from the Art Gallery of NSW yesterday after he chained himself to a racing car advertising Marlboro cigarettes.

Mr Rick Balzon, 32, of Darlinghurst, was one of about 20

BUGA-UP (Billboard Utilizing Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions) demonstrators protesting against the sponsorship of art by tobacco companies.

The 12 millimetre-thick chain which Mr Balzon used to fasten himself to the car had been hidden under his coat when he entered the gallery. He wore white overalls with anti-smoking stickers.

While Mr Balzon stood chained to the car, other BUGA-UP demonstrators chanted "Ashes to ashes, butts to butts" and emptied sacks of cigarette butts, some damp matches and cigarette packets on and around the car.

The racing car is part of an art and technology display at the gallery sponsored by Phillip Morris, makers of Marlboro and Alpine.

The company is also sponsoring

the Edward Hopper exhibition at the gallery.

Smoking is allowed at the gallery only in the designated recreation areas.

Mr Balzon read an open letter to the trustees of the gallery.

He said: "The art gallery is a public, cultural institution, visited by thousands of people each week, many of them children. It is a sad state of affairs when such an in-

stitution is vandalised by advertising, particularly for the promotion of tobacco products."

There was applause from the crowd when a BUGA-UP member called out: "Three cheers for BUGA-UP ... three boos for Phillip Morris."

One visitor to the gallery, Mrs Joan O'Brien, of Matraville, said she and her husband were non-smokers: "I don't like to see smok-

ing advertised in the gallery, it should not be allowed.

Others objected strongly to the protest, including the gallery's director, Mr Edmund Capon. He described the demonstration as the "epitome of banality."

"I might draw the line at the PLO sponsoring art but not tobacco companies," he said.

Police later charged a man with causing serious alarm and affront.