



Art, Business, National, News

THE BRANDING OF ART

The Art of Branding

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September 12, 2016, 6:00 am

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Ever since the Catholic Church commissioned its 16th century masterpiece—Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel—to market and position itself, brands have been working with artists and using art as a marketing and positioning pivot.

Corporate art now makes up a significant portion of the \$64 billion art market. Walk into the lobby of the largest, global brands and you’re likely to see significantly large collections of expensive art. Why? Because art impresses; art communicates; art has impact.

Just as artists have investigated and even exploited the mechanisms of branding, commerce increasingly looks to art for ways to reinforce brand identities. The relationship is not a new one, but seemed to gather momentum in the mid-1980s, a period when contemporary art was enjoying renewed attention and ‘lifestyle’ advertising was also achieving new levels of sophistication.

Clothing labels such as Calvin Klein initiated major campaigns featuring the kind of visual imagery and art photography previously reserved for fashion magazines. Sporting a logo but otherwise devoid of text, these advertisements aligned brand with imagery alone.

In 1985, Absolut Vodka initiated collaborations with contemporary artists. Beginning with Andy Warhol, the campaign went on to showcase the work of dozens of artists; a perfect example of how art can amplify and add value to a brand. The fact that Warhol was chosen to inaugurate the Absolut series makes perfect sense. The man who had given new meaning to soup cans was an obvious candidate for his perspective on a vodka bottle. As Warhol often stated, *“Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art.”*

“Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art.” -Andy Warhol

SmART Psychology

Art makes sense from a psychological perspective too. Art harnesses what Nobel prize-winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman calls our “*System 1*” mind, our instinctive, intuitive and emotional mind that works by association rather than reason. We see art, and we ‘feel’ it and are moved by it. Art works by emotional association, so it stands to reason that brand-sponsored art that makes us feel good, makes us feel good about the brand as well. This *System 1* marketing bypasses our logical but lazy “*System 2*” mind that we only haul into action when we have to deliberately consider brands, prices and benefits. By connecting with us intuitively and emotionally rather than using persuasion and reason, art represents a marketing ‘direct hit’ to the heart. And as market research continues to confirm, it is this kind of artful *System 1* marketing that evokes emotional rather than rational responses and is particularly effective.

The Way We Experience Art Is Changing

Where is art’s place in the future? This is not only an important question for artists, but for brands and marketers as well.

The division between art and technology has dissolved to where concepts from each discipline inform new innovations. As instrumental as art has been for technology influencers, the same can be said in reverse. Technology has triggered change, disruption and evolution across the arts, transforming how we experience everything from fashion, film, music, brands and advertising.

New Forms Of Storytelling

Tapping into cultural conversations is at the heart of the arts: What makes you think? What makes you feel? The core principles of the arts haven’t changed, nor will they in the future. What’s in flux is not just how art is experienced, but also how it’s expressed.

“The best way to stand out as a brand today is to build your story or idea around an existing public issue or tension. It’s about building ideas that support and/or benefit from cultural conversations. Art helps us do this more efficiently and effectively” -David Paleschuck

“Burton and Eve” for Burton Snowboards by Billi Kid

The Value Of A Brand

The art market teaches us how valuable a brand can be. And in the world of marketing, the value of brands and branding, continue to rise. Why is that so? Because as more and more products and services hit the market, consumers have less and less time to evaluate the merits of individual products. So they just go with the market leader, under the assumption the leading brand is the better product.

Today, consumers think brands instead of products. Heinz[®] instead of ketchup; Hellmann’s[®] instead of mayonnaise; Tropicana[®] instead of orange juice; Campbell’s[®] instead of canned soup.

That’s exactly what is happening in the art market. Buyers buy brands, not art. The name on the lower right-hand corner of the picture is what’s important. Not the picture itself. Observing brands in contemporary art can be instructive, especially for firms selling services or products with functional benefits that are hard to objectively value.

Other brands, particularly brands that have the potential to deliver social and self-expressive benefits, can learn from the art world. These brands need to find ways to provide reassurance to buyers that they made the right decision—because consumer confidence and loyalty is quite fragile.

Canna-Brands Leveraging The Arts

A prime example of a canna-brand co-mingling and leveraging art is Seattle's The Goodship. Founded in 2014 by Jody Hall, owner of Seattle's most celebrated cupcake bakery and café, Cupcake Royale. Considered a 'collective' of sorts, The Goodship considers itself a pioneer in the wild west of legalized cannabis—believing life is beautiful and full of wonder.

Working with influencers (most likely under the influence), The Goodship wants to take heady conversations out of the garage and into a shared community experience. That's what inspired The Goodship Academy of Higher Education to present intimate conversations with some of our generations most brilliant minds, covering topics from space travel to re-animation to modernist cuisine. The goal is to present innovative and revolutionary ideas happening in art, technology, science and philosophy.

The Goodship Artwork by Kyler Martz & Brad Klausen – Photos by Ben Lindbloom & Megumi Shauna Arai

The Goodship's support and participation in the visual art community abounds with commissions to local artists including Kyler Martz; Brad Klausen; Joey Veltkamp; Rosie Edholm; Jed Dunkerley and Megumi Shauna Arai for merchandise artwork; signage artwork; iterations on the company's logo; as well as poster series featuring lifestyle scenes/sets of stylized photography showing "Life On The Goodship." *"We see The Goodship's combined media platform more as a collective of sorts. We work with local artists to reiterate and reinterpret our brand in an authentic, reflective way,"* shared Eileen Namanny, Marketing Manager at The Goodship.

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Back To The Future

So could art become the new standard in brand marketing? Could brand marketers become new patrons of art—commissioning, sponsoring, curating, showcasing artists and using their work as

marketing collateral—just as the church did?

It is a much more competitive, complex and global market than in Michelangelo's time. Still, the concept of building a brand by leveraging art and artists is wholly relevant today. Just as "street art" used to be called "graffiti" and cannabis is now legal, corporations (and more importantly, consumers) are more accepting and keener than ever to access the promotional power of artists and their art.

The future of branding is art. The future of art is branding.

