

The thousand lights of advertising!

Already used for a few years now to decorate the facades of monuments being renovated, image projections are a modern and very fascinating alternative to the classic communication channels - specifically, to external advertising posted on normal billboards - or to video art installations usually enclosed within museum halls. An extremely "bright", dynamic and captivating form of communication!!!

Paola Pellegrini

In 2007, projections were the object of the first Italian "media facade": a 487-square meter LED screen installed on the facade of the Palazzo dell'Arengario, in the center of Milan. The purpose was to create a direct communication channel dedicated to the city and its citizens, taking advantage of the renovation work being done on the 1930s building and adding something special to the construction works site that was to transform it into the new headquarters of the Museo del Novecento Italiano, inaugurated just a short time ago.

During the Christmas period, often the walls of the main buildings of cities are illuminated with twinkling, strongly emotional images recalling the festive season. The facades dress up as a virtual and modern ensemble of lights: bright, star-studded skies, sacred images and colorful decorations... A spectacle to be discovered and admired by walking "with one's nose in the air"!

It is clear that the world of "advertising" could not exempt itself from using this instrument, too, and indeed, it easily took possession of the technique and turned it into a thousand evolutions appropriate for the attainment of its objectives. Recently born in an undefined lieu, projected advertising was the prota-gonist in many lively European cities such as Frankfurt, Amsterdam, London, and even in the States, where we can find some examples already in 2005 in trendy metropolises like New York and Los Angeles. This type of activity constitutes a very simple way to reach consumers while they are away from home, maybe out for a stroll, or during a relaxing moment, like for example in the evening hours or at night.

PROJECTING ADVERTS ON THE WALLS OF THE CITY'S buildings hence becomes an external communication formula having a strong emotional power. Static or moving images can be used and the dynamic aspect is given by the fact that the creative and vibrant passion behind it easily succeeds in catching the eye of its casual spectators.

Projection hence becomes one of the advert media of the third millennium characterized by a strong appeal and wide and heterogeneous generalized target, since it is capable of capturing the attention of anyone walking by the streets of the city center or driving along its outskirts, or because it can be accompanied by events, concerts, festivals, etc. of any type, becoming a veritable mass lure.

This particular figurative language grabs the consumer's attention, unleashing in him or her a stronger and longer-lasting reaction that can exceed the efforts of conventional advertising. Its power of attraction, still strong of the novelty and surprise factors, is much stronger than the normal "6 meter x 3" billboards that have often been accused of marring and spoiling urban scenery. Projectors can be placed anywhere: they are not invasive and can often be camouflaged. With a minimal effort, they yield a fabulous result on the walls of buildings, without having to structurally intervene on them! A perfect mix of modernity and bio-eco-urbanism capable of launching strong and highly emotional messages, using non-invasive supports and without leaving any traces.

Fascinating the masses with projections on buildings seems to be the preferred activity of many media agencies that have been specializing in this particular type of communication for years now - a communication that, like many others, is part of the wider concept of guerrilla marketing. For creatives in general, and in particular for communication and media agencies, it is normal to exceed the limits of one's own "means" and hence also the limits of out-of-home advertising. Trying to do what no one has done before is often the basic rule for going beyond and succeeding in proposing something "never seen before". 3D projections on buildings represent the new frontier of external publicity associated with every activity - more or less surprising ones, typical of street marketing - where traditional advertising goes hand-in-hand with the innovative and creative instruments of modern technology, with the inten-

tion of “upsetting” - generating stupor - something that is common and normal and hence risks becoming banal, not very incisive and for this reason, not very visible.

A NEW BRAND EXPERIENCE that is born on walls and diffused in viral form thanks to social media and to the world of print (that is forced to speak about it!), appropriate for every type of product or brand, capable of communicating and promoting anything, even grave themes such as social ones. Since it is still little used, it arouses surprise and, just like other guerilla activities, can stimulate word-of-mouth in real and virtual communities, generating a veritable event capable of strengthening the very action of communicating, “prolonging its life”. Differently from the evanescence of messages contained in standard means that exclude direct interaction with their public, this type of publicity generates a stir in passers-by, who make videos, take pictures and become protagonists of an event that unfolds initially on the street, and then later on the net, on Facebook, Twitter and Flickr®, and maybe on the pages of magazines (we're actually doing that right now!) giving rise to a timeless campaign that is clicked, viewed millions of times and told by an infinite number of people! Indeed, consumers are positively struck by this type of communication, not only for the way the message is channeled, but also by the interactive aspect that characterizes it – a very important element today – that allows them to become protagonists and to continue to share the experience through the most disparate means of communication.

FROM A TECHNICAL POINT OF VIEW, PRODUCING SUCH A CAMPAIGN IS NOT A BANAL FEAT. The planning work behind it and the preparation of the definitive project may require even 3/4 months' work. The choice of the location and hence the detection of the proper building are the concrete aspects that mingle with the strictly technological ones, such as the type of projections and the computer graphics capable of generating the most appropriate subject (2D or 3D video) for a specific building that can fully exploit its characteristics such as windows, columns, etc. (for example, for 3D images, it is not recommended to use glass surfaces as they interfere with a proper visualization), giving life to a unique spectacle which millions of people can witness not only in person but also by reading about it in the pages of the web and not only!

A high degree of interaction and vanguard technologies, together with the quest for novelties and the need to amaze in order to more easily attain certain objectives, are the key aspects of a type of communication that takes us beyond the limits of classic advertising, offering us the chance to turn any reality into a game of lights and shadows, shapes and colors projected on walls, giving birth to a message at everyone's disposal... Even those who aren't actually there in that moment! •

THE WALL ADV IN PRACTICE. RALPH LAUREN: A 4D AD TO CELEBRATE OURSELVES AND 10 YEARS OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY!

In November 2010, thousands of incredulous, fascinated and completely spellbound spectators assisted at a 10-minute show filmed by Ralph Lauren that totally changed forever the way the “fashion and communication” concept is interpreted. This global event took place at n.1 New Bond Street in London and simultaneously also across the ocean, at n. 888 Madison Avenue on the facade of the buildings of the two most representative flagship stores of this international brand.

A veritable show that allowed Ralph Lauren to arouse marvel and to celebrate, together with his audience, the success of his “digital” activity that began 10 years ago with the opening of the American web store. “On the occasion of the celebrations for the 10 years of RalphLauren.com in the United States and the launch of the new web store in the United Kingdom, we explored modern narrative ways to tell the story of our brand,” states David Lauren, Senior Vice President Advertising, Marketing and Corporate Communications. “A spectacle of lights that confirms the love that society has for the new technologies and the unexplored pathways of digital space with the exciting and unique concepts they transmit.”

Through this show, the brand created a very special event: a mix of fashion, art, music and technology in a multi-sensorial as well as a three-dimensional space! Indeed, it was defined as the first 4D experience in the world: with respect to 3D - an example of which are some films playing at cinemas - the 4D sees the addition of special physical effects that extend the already strong visual experience to all five senses.

Rumors speak of an investment of almost 1.5 million pounds just for the production aspect; this may well seem an exaggerated sum to promote an on-line activity that is often undertaken for the minimal investments that characterize it. But that shouldn't surprise anyone! Because, differently from some brands that have renounced technology and are currently closing stores and cutting budgets, the RL luxury brand manifestly celebrates its choice and the extraordinary success of e-commerce in the USA (whose web store alone has a turnover of almost 125 million pounds a year!) and promotes the launch of its web store for the UK.

“We wanted to make sure that everyone acknowledged us in the vanguard when it comes to technology and style”, continued David Lauren. The video was reproduced on the official web site in a special version for latest-generation mobile phones and published on YouTube in different versions besides the official one. Society focused on the surprise factor, on the novelty and on the “viral” aspect that an event such as this one inevitably generates! The message is surely a harbinger for the new web store in the UK, a winning promotional result for a brand and its history, confirmed not only by the over 120 thousand visualizations of the official video and the even greater number of visits to the different YouTube videos made by the spectators themselves, but also by the great many Internet pages (blogs, forums, etc.) that tell about the event with great enthusiasm.

A complex marketing project, but certainly a winner that can be defined with a neologism: merchadvertising - a mix of merchandising and advertising where the ensemble of activities and actions having the scope of promoting sales of a given line generally at the sales point (or on its walls!) together with that form of diffused exchanges through traditional and non-traditional means of communication (like for example the walls of buildings!) for the intentional and systematic purpose of influencing the behaviors and choices of individuals in relation to the consumption of goods and the use of services.

Final judgment: great work and congratulations to Ralph Lauren!