

The Street Store - supporting the homeless with dignity

Kayli Levitan and Max Pazak of M&C Saatchi Abel have created 'The Street Store', described as the world's first rent-free, premise-free and free 'pop-up store' for the homeless.

The pop-up stores is created by hanging up specially designed posters in a busy street where people can donate clothing and the homeless can then browse through them and choose what they need. It gives the homeless a genuine shopping experience with dignity.



"What struck us about this idea and why we rallied behind it, was because the concept gives opportunity to the giver and dignity to the receiver. When sharing this initiative with our chairman, Thandi Chaane, it also resonated with her. She pointed out that it was a great example of living up to Madiba's legacy of restoring human dignity and taking ownership of the country's challenges," says Mike Abel, chief executive partner of M&C Saatchi Abel.

He adds that very often people will just drop a big black bag of old clothes off somewhere and they do not really know what will happen to it. For homeless people, they often have to just take what they can get, regardless of whether or not it fits, whether or not they like the colour, or whether or not the shoe fits... it makes no difference.

Global, local media coverage

To date two successful Street Stores have taken place in Cape Town with extensive local media and global media, such as Huffington Post and Bono's One Foundation, covering it. Jason Harrison, M&C Saatchi Abel's MD, Cape Town, points out that the media will play an important role in creating traction for the idea as it is a completely open-source concept that can be owned by individuals world-wide. He further comments that the ready-to-use poster artwork can be downloaded online to assist individuals in merchandising the donated clothes.

"Over and above many requests to host Street Stores in South Africa, numerous requests have come from all over the world including Africa, US, UK and India. It shows that identifying ideas that connect people and tap into a key insight galvanises positive reactions and engagement. In this instance, it was connecting and bridging the gap between those that have and those that don't, while still recognising that it is more powerful when it is done in a way that gives dignity to both the giver and the receiver," says Gordon Ray, M&C Saatchi Abel's executive creative director, Cape Town.

"The idea was also so powerful because it bridged two realities using a simple, easy-to-implement and cost effective medium. It brought two worlds together on a simple poster. This was influenced by the fact that company and its offices around the world are founded on the principle of 'brutal simplicity'. 'Brutal Simplicity of Thought' is more than a philosophy; it lies at the centre of everything we do."

Posters in other languages

The company is taking this so seriously that it has started translating the posters into other languages so that people from different spheres of the world are able to take the idea and make it their own.

For more information, go to <http://thestreetstore.org>, www.facebook.com/thestreetstoreorg or <https://twitter.com/TheStreetStore>.

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