

EVENTS/CAUSES

Omega eyes the end of vision problems with nonprofit partnership

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Orbis International patient

By JEN KING

Swiss watch manufacturer Omega is taking to the sky to further a humanitarian partnership with Orbis International as the nonprofit combats visionary disorders in undeveloped countries.

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Omega has supported Orbis International and its Flying Eye Hospital since 2012 and stands behind its mission to bring quality eye health to the world through training, research and advocacy. To spur additional awareness for Orbis International's cause, the watchmaker has teamed with longtime brand ambassador Cindy Crawford for a documentary titled "The Hospital in the Sky."

"Omega's brand benefits in being seen as a philanthropic leader within their space," said Samira Qassim, associate strategist at global strategic branding firm **Siegel+Gale**, London. "They have aligned themselves with a unique humanitarian organization that not only empowers people, it is technically sophisticated.

"There is something very pioneering and special about a flying eye hospital serving those in need," she said. "This meshes well with Omega's brand that promotes both beauty and

high performance. Giving is beautiful.

"Omega's participation stands out in how they brought this story to life. They have brought in top talent with Crawford and Craig and send them on the journey so the viewer is immersed in the cause."

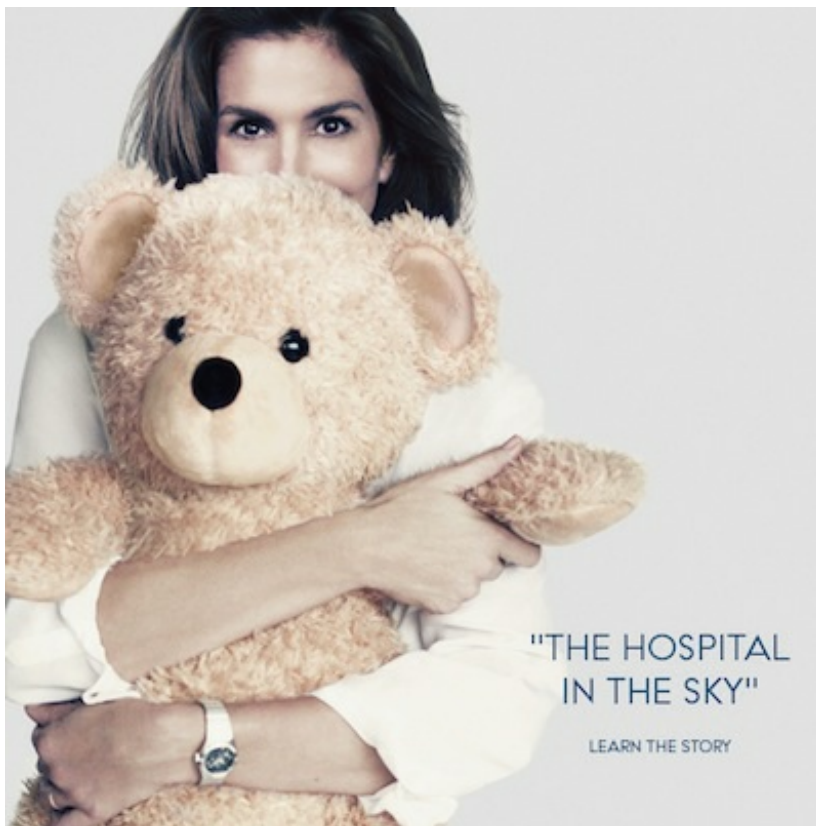
Ms. Qassim is not affiliated with Omega, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Omega was unable to comment before press deadline.

Eye in the sky

Through an email newsletter sent to subscribers on Feb. 5, Omega reintroduced its support of Orbis International and to debut the documentary with Ms. Crawford. In the email's blurb, formatted as if it were a traditional mailed letter for a personal feel, the watchmaker gives a glimpse into Ms. Crawford's participation and details a new campaign to raise awareness.

Below the signature of Stephen Urquhart, the president of Omega, the watchmaker included an image of Ms. Crawford holding a large teddy bear. Text on the image reads "The Hospital in the Sky," the title of the documentary, and prompts consumers to "learn the story."



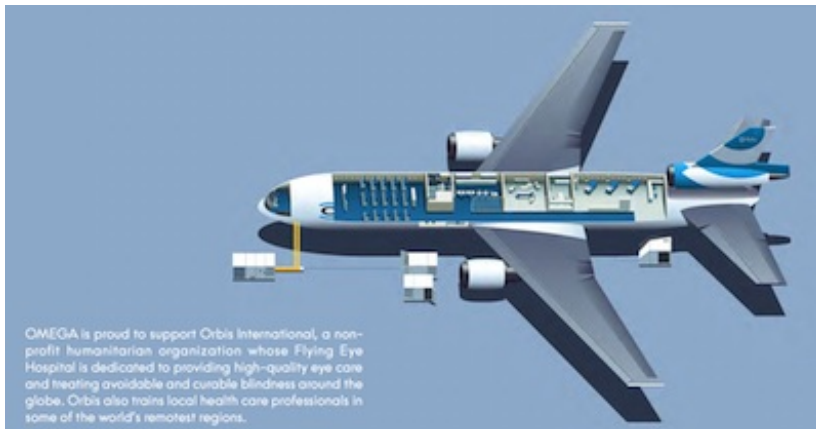
Email image of Cindy Crawford for Omega and Orbis International

A click-through brings the consumer to Omega's Web site where the brand has established a page dedicated to its work with Orbis International.

The first section gives a brief overview of Orbis International's programs, exclaiming that "our vision" is "their vision." An image below this text shows Orbis International's Fly Eye Hospital, which is described as "on the outside, [the] plane is like most other aircraft.

Inside, it's like no other – it hosts a ophthalmic hospital and teaching facility right on board.”

This image is accompanied by an infographic showing that Orbis International has visited 92 countries since 1982, has trained 22,000 medical professionals and treated 5.7 million medical and optical needs in 2013 alone.



Redeining of inside the Fly Eye Hospital

Following this section, Omega explains that this is the second time it has worked on a documentary to promote the mission of Orbis International. By sticking with the same non-profit organization, a brand's intentions are shown as being much more true than if a new cause is selected often.

For the documentary, Ms. Crawford, joined by her 13-year-old daughter Kaia, travel to Trujillo, Peru, aboard the Flying Eye Hospital. The video, found on Omega's Web site and shared socially, is a minute and a half trailer that includes an overview of the nonprofit's mission and how working with Orbis International has affected Ms. Crawford and the lives of the people in Northern Peru.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/l3nm1Q6WShM>

The Hospital in the Sky (trailer), an Omega film about Orbis, starring Cindy Crawford

A full version of the documentary will available on YouTube later in 2015.

On Omega's Web page, a section delves into why Peru was the location of the documentary. According to the Web page, increased levels of UV light in the Andes contributes to an usually high rate of blindness in Peru. The section also notes that 80 percent of visual impairment is avoidable or curable.

To build additional awareness, Omega is encouraging consumers to stop by its United States boutiques to take a selfie with the Omega Orbis teddy bear held by Ms. Crawford in promotional images. Participants who take a photo and use the hashtag #OmegaOrbisTeddy will have the opportunity to win a visit to Orbis' Flying Eye Hospital during an upcoming program.

During on-board care on the Flying Eye Hospital, doctors provide children with teddy bears to serve as a source of comfort as well as a visual aid to explain what will happen

during a procedure. When an operation is complete, the teddy bear will be wearing an eye patch to match the young patient.



Omega Orbis teddy bear with the Constellation Star and De Ville Hour Vision watches

Also, Omega will donate a portion of the proceeds of the Constellation Star or De Ville Hour Vision timepieces to Orbis International. The final section of Omega's Web page offers consumers a chance to donate to Orbis International directly through a donations page.

Similarly, Italian fashion label Missoni is helping children in the fight against pediatric cancers through the sale of a capsule collection available at Italy's La Rinascente department store. Sisters Margherita and Teresa Maccapani Missoni are participating in the Fondazione Veronesi's Gold for Kids project which aims to fund clinical studies for childhood cancers and educate children about the diseases and their treatments ([see story](#)).

"You can only feel good about helping children, who naturally embody future hope," Ms. Qassim said. "The documentaries are exquisitely shot and the content is pure, there is a simple joy to Cindy holding a teddy bear with her Omega on. It's understated, elegant, happy.

"So the integrity of Omega's storytelling stands out," she said. "The real focus is on the work that Orbis does.

"Yes they have on-boarded the best filmmakers, models and actors to share their story, yet the fundamentally positive takeaway is down to the nature of the work that Orbis does, this is the crux of the content and what Omega is championing."

Giving back

Omega is involved with a variety of charitable initiatives that reflect the watchmaker's ethics and DNA.

For example, Omega is lending support to ocean sustainability through its ongoing partnership with the GoodPlanet Foundation.

Following the partnership's beginning in 2011, the watchmaker produced a documentary film, "Planet Ocean," the following year that examines the issues facing the world's oceans. Currently, the partners are working together on two three-year projects in Indonesia that focus on restoring marine biodiversity and teaching local communities how they can make a difference ([see story](#)).

Also, automaker Aston Martin and Omega were among the brands included in Christie's online auction celebrating the 50th anniversary of James Bond's "Goldfinger."

This auction celebrated the 1964 film starring Sean Connery and benefited the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The inclusion of Omega and Aston Martin likely attracted interest beyond James Bond fans and sparked awareness of the work of the NSPCC ([see story](#)).

Sharing a documentary about a cause on YouTube extends the film's potential at building out awareness apart from fans of Omega.

"Omega's star power will build awareness for Orbis in circles beyond those they naturally belong to like other NGOs, health and aid professionals," Ms. Qassim said. "Visibility among Omega's customers increases the chances of potential donations to the organization beyond proceeds they will get from the limited edition watches.

"For Omega, their brand gets the benefit of esteem and respect. Customers can feel better purchasing from a brand that acts responsibly towards broader societal issues," she said. "Their choice in partnering with Orbis lends a credence of credibility. There is an obvious parallel between values at play in the two organizations, sophisticated technical expertise and beauty in the end result.

"A philanthropic engagement that comes from genuine respect and shared passion is a pleasure to behold. Authenticity is the key to this kind of campaign being successful. This comes across which will benefit both parties in terms of awareness."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/64QQRkosidw>