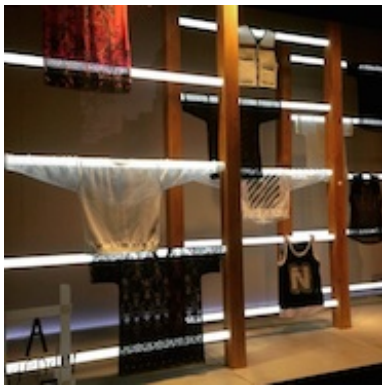


MULTICHANNEL

Selfridges tackles gender stereotypes with conceptual campaign

March 13, 2015



Window display at Selfridges for Agender

By SARAH JONES

British department store chain Selfridges is breaking down the societal and sartorial barriers between the sexes with a multichannel campaign centered on genderless fashion.

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Luxury Daily

For “Agender,” three floors of the retailer’s Oxford Street flagship have been transformed into “gender-neutral” shopping areas, and consumers can also shop the selection online, as well as interact with special digital content. To further communicate the concept and conversation, Selfridges is working with a number of creatives throughout March and April for in-store and online features crossing design, music and film.

“Agender is part of a far bigger movement and a cultural shift that affects us all,” said Linda Hewson, creative director at [Selfridges](#), London.

“We’ve seen the lines between womenswear and menswear blurring for some time now, both in terms of product accessibility and in the way fashion is being presented,” she said. “The way women and men are shopping all divisions is increasingly significant to the way we buy and the way we retail product.”

"We want to make the shopping experience an easy, fun experience, but we also want to inspire and challenge our customers. For some, Agender will be the shopping concept they have been looking for, for others it will offer a different perspective, but might not suit their needs."

Department-less fashion

Selfridges tapped designer Faye Toogood for its gender-neutral conceptual shopping space at its flagship. Here, consumers can select apparel based on color and fit. This retail environment includes no mannequins, and clothing online is shown on both male and female models.



Selfridges' Agender concept

This edit is also available at Selfridges' Manchester and Birmingham stores.

Agender sees the launch of five unisex labels new to Selfridges, as well as an edit of 40 brands that can be worn by either gender. These collections range from streetwear, with the exclusive United Kingdom launch of Nicopanda, to made-to-order haute couture from Rad Hourani.

Window displays tackle activities typically chosen based on gender, for instance sports played and careers. Others showcase apparel on forms that are ambiguous, such as hangers.



Selfridges Agender window display

To celebrate the launch of Agender, Selfridges commissioned a song by Devonté Hynes and Neneh Cherry. This track, ‘He, She, Me,’ was then used as the base for a short film.

The three-minute video, created by Selfridges resident director Kathryn Ferguson, begins by following a person from behind, who appears to be female, dressed in heels and short shorts. Eventually, after encountering dancers on the way up the stairs, the figure stops to look in the mirror, revealing to the audience a man, and challenging their assumptions of gender.

From there, the film continues to follow the protagonist as he walks through a dark nondescript location, decorated similarly to Selfridges’ stores, meeting more characters that are often gender ambiguous. All of the models and dancers featured wear apparel from the Agender edit.

Embedded Video: https://www.youtube.com/embed/_9rPiexwJJA

Devonté Hynes and Neneh Cherry - He She Me

Selfridges’ Web site includes other content, including its list of the top 10 agender moments, including David Bowie and Commes des Garçons’ dressing male and female models the same for its runway shows.

This campaign also continues with in-store conversations and a social contest.

On March 13, Selfridges will be hosting an event with street style blogger Scott Schuman of The Sartorialist at the Old Selfridges Hotel on Orchard Street. The photographer will join a panel to find and cast the five best Agender style stars.

The day following the casting call, those chosen will be photographed by Mr. Schuman in London, and three winners will have their photo shared on the retailer’s Web site and social media accounts.

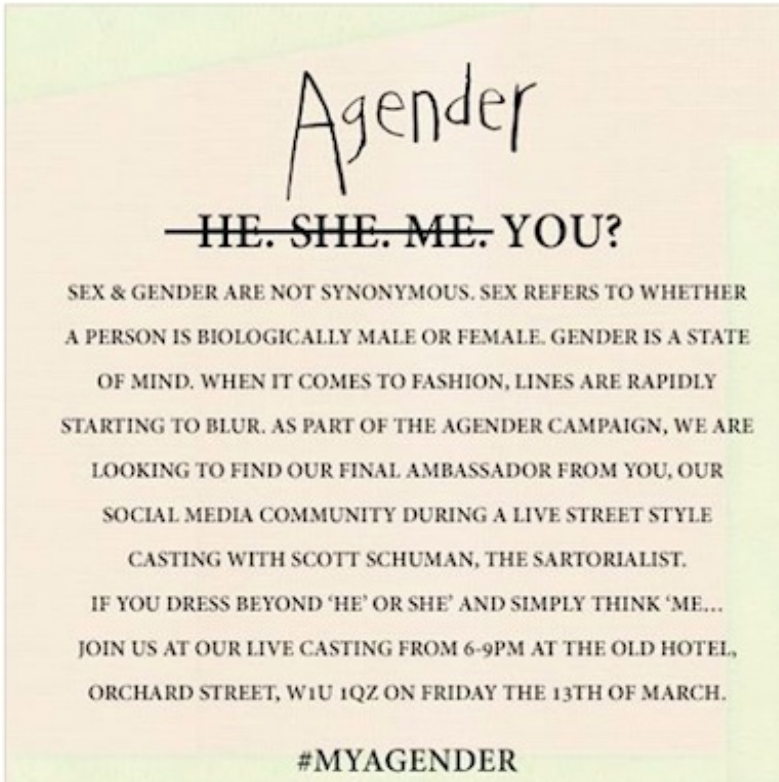


Selfridges

March 10 at 1:44pm · Edited · @

If you dress beyond 'he' or 'she' and simply think 'me', join us at our live casting from 6-9pm at the Old Hotel, Orchard Street, W1U 1QZ on Friday the 13th of March.

#MyAgender



Facebook post from Selfridges

"I think that it's going to be interesting to see how customers actually shop the brands," said Nicole Larrauri, managing partner at **EGC Group**, Melville, NY. "Is a woman who has a traditional female design sensitivity mind going to consider them? The male, same thing, are they going to think to shop there? Are they losing that segment because they are going straight to the middle, and not everyone dresses that way?"

"Only time will tell if that will be a business success for them," she said. "It certainly is a media and social media success."

"The one thing that we noticed was that the social media discussions that have happened in the last 24 hours—we do a lot of measurements of what's positive and what's negative—and it's 100 percent positive. There's not one negative sentiment in all the listening that we've done. So that's really unusual, so it actually speaks well to the idea and the concept."

"People are open, and accepting and not only just accepting, but they are interested."

Pushing boundaries

Other retailers have broken out of the mold for campaigns, showing consumers the many facets of the human experience.

For instance, department store chain Barneys New York aligned itself with the fight for

transgender equality with an ad campaign and outreach.

Barneys' "Brothers, Sisters, Sons and Daughters" campaign featured 17 transgender individuals with diverse backgrounds and stories that will be told through a series of short films. With this campaign, Barneys showed a more personal, human side to its brand that allows it to connect on a deeper level with consumers ([see story](#)).

Selfridges has previously turned its own campaign concepts on their heads, giving consumers a new topic of conversation.

The retailer wove a different tale this January with a spin on its usual "Bright Young Things" campaign by removing the age limit and welcoming talents of an older generation.

Bright Old Things celebrated a new age range of designers, those who might not be typically considered as up-and-coming. The participating artists reach ages in their mid-eighties and represent those with mid-to-late-life career changes as well as the more mature consumer of the department store looking for age-relevant campaigns and collections ([see story](#)).

These types of campaigns can be a testing ground for retailers, pushing consumers and themselves.

"With each of our creative projects, our aim is to be brave," Selfridges' Ms. Hewson said.

"We want to see how our shoppers react to and engage with the space and the idea.

"What we learn from this project could really impact the way our stores looks in the future."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/P1bYiALA1LY>

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