

TELEVISION

Bonhams turns to television for narrative storytelling campaign reach

October 2, 2015

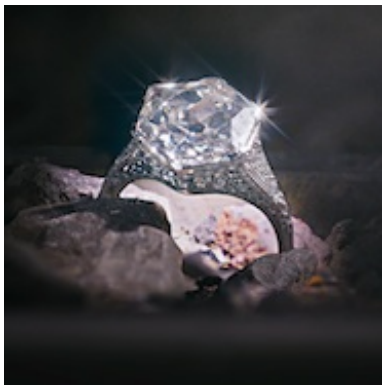


Image from Bonham's "Be Part of the Story" campaign

By SARAH JONES

Auction house Bonhams is celebrating the stories that antiques carry with them through an integrated advertising campaign centered on its first television placement.

Sign up now

Luxury Daily

"Be Part of the Story," conceived by advertising agency Contagious London, provides a call-to-action to would-be collectors to place themselves into a particular relic's tale, even if only for a chapter of its lengthy lifespan. With the history and legacy behind a particular collector's piece often as important as its speculations to a potential buyer, focusing on these biographical traits will likely appeal to consumers.

"The brief was how can we position Bonhams—they're obviously a major player in the auction arena, and the idea was that again they've been around since 1793," said Paul Weiland OBE, creative director at [Contagious London](#).

"And the fact is basically we're all guardians of beautiful things, and we are caretakers in a way, so we have something that's gorgeous and valuable, and if it is gorgeous and valuable, then it has a life after the original owner's purchase," he said. "And so we just thought that gorgeous things have stories, and you could be part of that story. And the idea

was that we took the car, and it could be anything—it could be contemporary art, it could be porcelain, jewelry, weapons, armour.

"Auction houses have always done it in their brochures. When something is important, there's always a story that comes along with why it's so important—a bit about its history and its life. And we just thought it was a really nice way to talk to the assigners and the buyers."

Sharing stories

Bonhams says this is the first time an international auction house has advertised on television. The campaign launched in the United Kingdom on Sept. 24.

At release, two ads are running. One tells the tale of a Ferrari 250 GT, while the other focuses on a diamond ring. Since auction house inventory is consistently coming and going, the ads have elements of fact and fiction based on the types of pieces sold by Bonhams in the past.

Narrated by award-winning British actor Michael Gambon, the videos tell the autobiography the lot would tell if it could speak.

The Ferrari is shown in a garage, with the voiceover explaining that it would tell how it "survived steep mountain passes" and divulge its owners' romances with Hollywood sirens. As the narrative swells, so does a fire, until the story reveals that the car remained intact following a fire in 1987.

At the end of the film, the car's headlights suddenly glow, giving it a personified feel. A tagline shows Bonhams' brand name and tells of its origins dating to 1793.

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

Bonhams: Auctioneers since 1793. #BePartOfTheStory

Consumers are also directed to a microsite where they can view the campaign digitally.

The 10-carat diamond ring featured in the other spot is pictured glinting on the ground. The narration explains that it was bought in Paris in 1920, but the fiancée lost it in a game of cards played with a duke.

The duke then lost the ring at a party he hosted and thought it had been stolen. Decades later, his great-granddaughter uncovered its hiding spot beneath the floorboards as she was searching for her pet hamster.

Bonhams' campaign microsite is streamlined, keeping the two videos the main focus. In an introduction, the brand explains, "From the treasures of fallen emperors, to the jewels of Hollywood starlets and cars of motor racing legends, we are caretakers of beautiful and culturally important artifacts as they pass through time. Don't just collect, become part of the story."



Screenshot of Bonhams' Be Part of the Story microsite

Below the videos are links to buy or sell, encouraging active participation in the auction process. The idea is to inspire potential sellers to think of that piece of jewelry sitting in a drawer or the unused car in the garage that might have value.

"What we wanted for Bonhams was that they own the story," Mr. Weiland said. "We wanted to be there obviously before Sotheby's and Christie's and so actually to be the first people to actually make some content, and make something that was creative, because in the end that's what they're selling—things that are creative, so why couldn't they be the creators of something as well?"

Future tales featured in the campaign will involve fine art, Chinese art and other collectibles.

Bonhams is playing its ads through Sky Adsmart, a new media buying offer for Sky channels that enables different ads to be served to different households who are watching the same program. This makes television buys on national channels more scalable for niche businesses and those with a specific target audience.

"It's pretty experimental, and it's not been done by an auction house before," Mr. Weiland said. "The fact that they're incredible brands, but they've never really done a corporate campaign about themselves.

"Basically, what we're trying to do is a campaign that actually pinpoints people who potentially would either have an assignment or someone who might want to buy something," he said. "So it's not a wide campaign, it's a campaign called Sky Adsmart where through their setbox technology, they can actually go into people's homes that would be likely to be a Bonhams or an auction house customer, so it's actually quite clever."

Billboard and taxi display ads, as well as social media integration, round out the effort.

Television debut

Recently, a number of luxury sectors typically averse to television have rolled out their first broadcast campaigns.

U.S. footwear and accessories label Stuart Weitzman highlighted its connection to pop

music with its first television commercial that aired Aug. 30 during MTV's Video Music Awards.

The 30-second spot featured frequent brand face Gisele Bündchen performing the Electric Slide accompanied by a specially created track and a troop of male dancers. With a history of dressing the feet of famous singers for the stage, this advertisement may have inspired viewers at home to invest in the same brand their favorite artists count on ([see story](#)).

Italian automaker Maserati reinforced its dedication to the North American market during the Super Bowl with its first television commercial.

The commercial promoted the Ghibli model, the brand's first under \$100,000 vehicle, evincing a movement toward inclusivity. Also, the commercial's cinematic nature featuring actress Quvenzhane Wallis aligned with the brand's image during an occasion that often has less to do with reputation building than with conversation shaping ([see story](#)).

Being a first mover has its benefits, as doing something different from competitors can get a brand noticed.

"You need to be brave to do something like this, and I think [Bonhams] will benefit," Mr. Weiland said. "Whether they see an uplift in their sales immediately, I don't know, but it's one of those things, they'll do a few more, and a few more, and they'll get known for it.

"It just makes it more emotional, it's more involving."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/iDz-CgaI6Lw>

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.