

ADVERTISING

Kenzo crafts time-bending narrative using iPhone

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Abbey Lee for Kenzo's Snowbird, spring/summer 2016

By JEN KING

Parisian fashion label Kenzo is sharing homemade cake among the residents of California's Slab City for its spring/summer 2016 collection film.

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Directed by Sean Baker, "Snowbird" was filmed entirely with an iPhone and traces the journey of Theo, played by model Abbey Lee, as she traverses through the "debris-scattered [Sonoran] desert community" of Slab City, CA, known for its eccentricity and off-the-grid living. While other fashion houses are moving toward more abstract campaign films, Kenzo's Snowbird focuses on the narrative and "eschews the glitz and glamour of fashion."

"A golden rule for video advertising is for the video to be kept under one minute, to stay within a viewer's attention span, and that is usually the case, except for Kenzo's new ad," said Sebastian Jespersen, founder/CEO of Vertic, New York.

"However, Sean Baker tells a slightly different, beautiful and unusual story of a young girl who bakes a cake that she hand-delivers to each of her neighbors in this unique place she lives in," he said. "The story relies heavily on strong visuals and is perfectly aligned with the core values of its brand: integrating the elements of beauty, fashion, modernism and communicated to its target audience in an engaging and visually compelling way."

Kenzo was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Life among the snowbirds of Slab City

The fashion label describes the film as being "equal parts daydream elegiac wanderlust and subtle comedy." The nearly 12-minute film begins with Theo baking a cake in an RV and then walking across the desert landscape to her Slab City neighbors' trailers.

To maintain authenticity, Kenzo cast true Slab City residents to interact with Theo as she stops by to share slices of cake. The conversations are natural and appear to show the everyday interactions of those who live in Slab City, an abandoned WWII military base that has become a squatter village full of eclectic retirees and artists.



Kenzo's Snowbird advertising still, women's spring/summer 2016

In a following scene, Theo stops by a man's trailer, who discusses getting propane from a nearby town where Slab City residents stock up on supplies, as the camp community has no running water and no electricity.

Each stop on Theo's journey offers philosophical Slab City insights, including the proclamation that time does not exist there. Other conversations are more candid, speaking to the sweetness of the cake and why Theo decided to bake the cake in the first place, with one resident saying that "sometimes it's good to have cake for no reason."

Following scenes show Theo battling the windy conditions that kick up sand in Slab City before coming to the door of another resident, Bob. When Theo offers Bob a slice of cake, he declines and shuts the door, but she tries again and is let in the home.

As the duo sit at the kitchen table eating the cake, the conversation is low and tense, but becomes more comfortable as Bob breaks out his last three candles, one of which was used for a prior celebration. Bob lights the candles and as Theo blows them out, she becomes an older version of herself with Bob transitioning to a younger man.



Kenzo's Snowbird advertising still, men's spring/summer 2016

For Snowbird, Kenzo created its own take on the Internet Movie Database Web site, using the film directory's format to promote the campaign and the collection worn by Ms. Lee throughout.

The site includes the same touchpoints found on IMDb, including a cast roster, plot synopsis, reviews, which serve as a statement from Kenzo creative directors Carol Lim and Humberto Leon, stills and other relevant information that may be of interest to viewers.

In the statement, Ms. Lim and Mr. Leon jointly say, "When Sean mentioned Slab City, we were like, 'Wait! That image has been on our board from the beginning of this collection.' I think that's why we both felt like this was the right thing and us working together would be the perfect project. We always have a story that we tell as we're building the collection and Sean took the story to the next level."

Kenzo's Snowbird, a movie by Sean Baker

"The campaign is a solid example of how a brand can entangle its customers by producing high-quality and relevant content that sheds light on the brand's shared values with their customers, delivered in a channel and execution that appeals to their demographic and while remaining authentic to their brand," Mr. Jespersen said.

Lights, iPhone, action

Increasingly, brand marketers are filming campaign videos and capturing stills with an iPhone camera rather than professional-grade camera equipment as a reflection of today's society. Many consumers rely solely on their smartphone camera to capture moments of their lives, thus creating a more authentic perspective.

For instance, British automaker Bentley Motors showcased the thought process behind its technological advances with a film shot with an iPhone 5s in 2014.

At the time, the brand had recently integrated iPad tables into its flagship Mulsanne model and the film followed the people who spearheaded the design. Although the film's merits likely attracted brand loyalists, the unusual method pulled in those interested in the iPhone's capabilities ([see story](#)).

Similarly, British fashion label Burberry celebrated the opening of its new Beverly Hills store with the first Los Angeles-based feature for its Art of the Trench social media campaign.

Burberry had photographers capture both emerging and established talent in Los Angeles wearing its iconic trench coat using iPhones. These photos can be viewed across Burberry's social media accounts, spreading word of the store opening indirectly through the portraits ([see story](#)).

"Kenzo's campaign is a dedication to the purpose of film itself. Kenzo reaffirmed that film should not just be consumable as a short term / one-time experience, but rather an experience to be enjoyed for its inspiration and use of beauty similar to the attributes of Kenzo's products," Mr. Jespersen said. "Kenzo brought the value of film in advertising to life through this short movie, which was uploaded to IMDB, and integrated into the brand's own website as a cross-channel initiative featuring compelling rich media content to reach their consumers where they already are.

"Likewise, another compelling element to this film is the focal length of each shot - the 29mm of an iPhone," he said. "This is the exact kind of 'language' that the respective target audience of Kenzo understands; everyday people share more than 1.8 billion photos on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Flickr and WhatsApp - especially around fashion and lifestyle.

"Through this campaign and social media channels, the Kenzo brand communicated its vision, its brand DNA, and smoothly brought the viewers back to the company's Web site. This consistent omni-channel strategy ensures that visitors pass through all the touchpoints of a consumer decision journey."