

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Tamara Mellon gets political in Women's March offering

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Tamara Mellon is taking a stand with a new Women's March shirt. Image credit: Tamara Mellon

By DANNY PARISI

U.S. fashion brand Tamara Mellon is leveraging its platform for political purposes with a new offer tied to the upcoming Women's March planned for Saturday, Jan. 21.

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The 2017 Women's March was the largest single-day protest in U.S. history, with a historic amount of people coming out around the country to demonstrate against President Donald Trump's anti-women policies. Tamara Mellon is offering free shirts in exchange for customers snapping a photo of themselves at the 2018 Women's March, making a bold political statement that explicitly involves the brand.

"All brands are political by definition even if their political views are not openly expressed," said **Thomai Serdari**, a professor of luxury business marketing at New York University, New York. "Why political by definition? Because a brand is an entity that exists in culture and offers products or services that respond to her clients' needs within that specific culture.

"Brands that choose to fight for their, a.k.a. their founder's or leadership's, political views abandon subtlety for assertiveness and deliberate presence," she said. "This may turn customers off, but the truth is that most of the causes we have seen supported by brands are issues of heightened social responsibility rather than matters of economic policy.

"Considering that younger consumers have shown interest in citizenship and political engagement while many more issues that warrant debate have come to light, it seems that many more brands will openly embrace politics and confidently express their political views," she said. "In the end, this is preferable to making mistakes, which is what happens when brands avoid to clearly articulate what they stand for."

Ms. Serdari is not affiliated with Tamara Mellon, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Tamara Mellon** was reached for comment.

Political statements

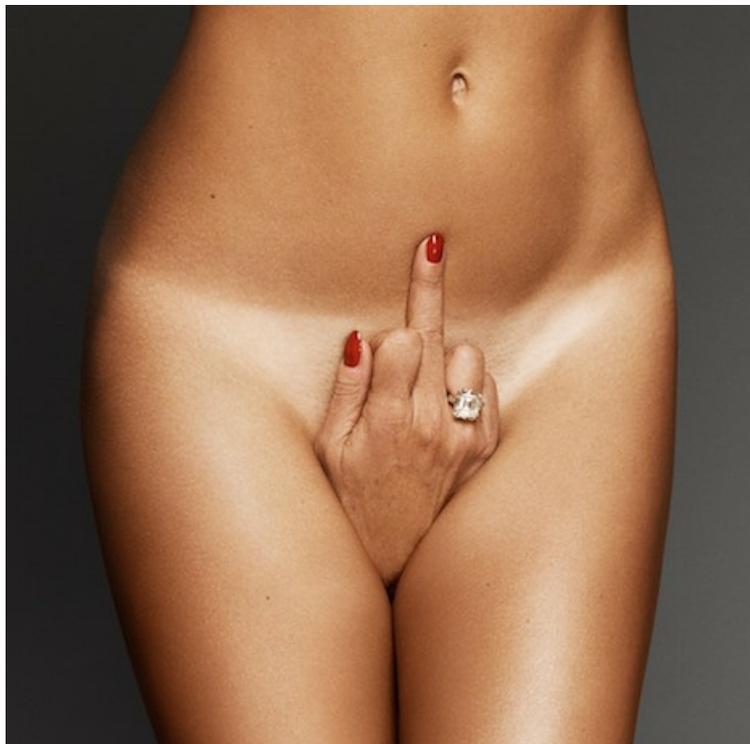
After Donald Trump's inauguration last year in January, the country saw a wave of protests, with the biggest

occurring in Washington, D.C.

Since then, opposition to President Trump has only grown more vehement. This year, the Women's March is gearing up again, hoping to draw in just as many people.

Fashion designer Tamara Mellon is doing her part to ensure people show up to protest by offering free T-shirts to anyone who attends the march and submits a photo of themselves there.

For those that do, they will receive a provocative T-shirt with a design featuring a naked woman with a hand giving the middle finger gesture through her legs.



The provocative design of Tamara Mellon's Women's March shirt. Image credit: Tamara Mellon

Customers who want one of the T-shirts will have to snap a photo of themselves at the march and then post it online with the hashtag #MarchWithTM.

Any time a brand inserts itself into a political discussion, there is always a risk of the move backfiring and alienating customers rather than drawing them in.

For any political move, a brand needs to weigh whether the potential benefits will outweigh the potential backlash.

Given the massive popular support for the Women's March last year, Tamara Mellon is making a safe bet that it will not lose too many customers, if any, because of Ms. Mellon's overt support for the cause.

Risky moves

Political statements were in fashion last year as brands showed their support for those participating in the global Women's March.

Whether labels were personally involved in the rally or mere sideline viewers, a number of those in the fashion community publicly aligned themselves with the Jan. 21 event that gathered millions to persuade the new U.S. administration to protect women's rights. Brands such as Gucci, Barneys, Stella McCartney, Marc Jacobs and Moschino all weighed in on the event with shows of support in one way or another ([see story](#)).

Other brands have issued political statements in the months since. For example, jeweler Tiffany & Co. called on President Trump to keep the United States in the Paris Climate Agreement.



Tiffany strongly supports keeping the U.S. in the #ParisAgreement. #ClimateChange #ActOnClimate #TiffanyCSR

A post shared by Tiffany & Co. (@tiffanyandco) on May 9, 2017 at 5:00am PDT

The Paris Climate Agreement, or the Accord de Paris in French, is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to deal with greenhouse gas emissions through mitigation, adaptation and financial policy starting in 2020. Unfortunately, President Trump pulled the U.S. out of the agreement last year ([see story](#)).

With an increasingly divisive political climate, designers and the greater fashion community are using their public platforms to advocate their views.

During recent fashion weeks, there has been political messaging both subtle and direct, from runway looks that referenced the presidential campaign to statements targeting specific policies ([see story](#)).

Tamara Mellon is embracing this trend and unapologetically showing its support for a political cause.

"Brands often choose political discourses that are close to their founder's (or leadership's) heart," Ms. Serdari said. "When the political discussion directly relates to important societal issues that define our humanity it is a good idea to become involved and positively engaged in a constructive campaign.

"It would be bad to see brands focusing on political semantics or petty alignments just for the sake of being 'in the now,'" she said. "When the root cause of a political issue is identified and deemed important on a human rights level, brands may choose to be more than simple bystanders."

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