

AUTOMOTIVE

Lexus translates customer appreciation into art

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Lexus' 3D "Letters" installation. Image courtesy of Lexus

By SARAH JONES

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is putting the focus on its people through a campaign that celebrates the impact its employees had on customers.

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The automaker's "Letters" project centers on a visual installation by artist Michael Murphy, which turned clients' letters of gratitude into origami. In a corresponding advertising effort, Lexus is looking to make a comparison between the handcraft behind the art piece and its hands-on attention to detail in service.

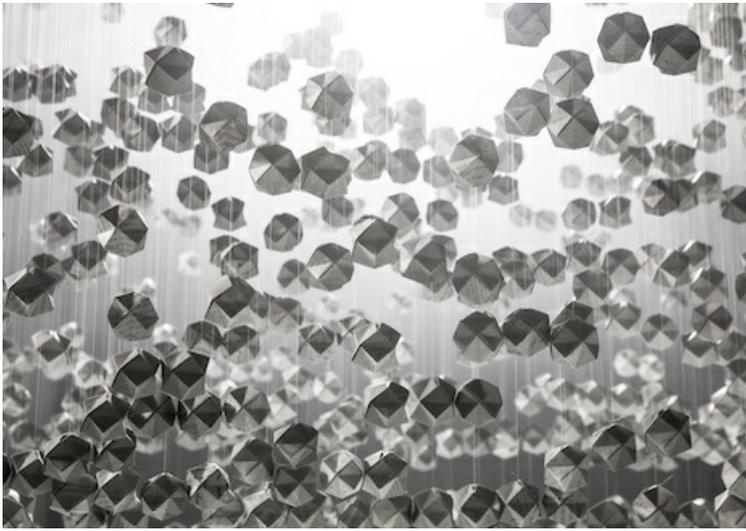
"For nearly 30 years the Lexus brand has aspired to live up to our covenant by treating each customer like a guest in our home," said Cooper Ericksen, vice president of marketing at [Lexus](#).

"The Lexus dealer network has responded to this challenge and our guests often write us letters that recognize these efforts," he said. "In an age of increasing digital shopping we felt it was important to provide these shoppers with some indication of what they should expect by joining the Lexus family."

Love letters

Letters is constructed of 2,000 handwritten notes received by Lexus dealers. Mr. Murphy folded these papers and turned them into an art installation that measures 16 feet long by 8 feet wide, a precise process that took hundreds of hours.

Hung from a six ceiling panels affixed to a steel frame, the origami is arranged to form the shape of a Lexus LS model. When viewed from the side, the pieces of paper create the shape of Lexus' logo.



Lexus' Letters installation is comprised of origami. Image courtesy of Lexus

The installation was designed to be portable, allowing it to travel to corporate and dealer events. It will be showcased next at the Taste Washington food and wine festival in Seattle later this month, for which Lexus is a sponsor.

Along with the physical art, Lexus created a 60-second spot around Letters. Portions of letters are read aloud, providing a hint at employees who have gone above and beyond.

Consumers share gratitude for staff members' knowledge, care and personal service. One parent writes of their 3 year old, who noticed that the employee cared about them being safe.

Throughout the course of the film, a craftsman can be seen constructing Letters, carefully folding the customers' notes and stringing them into a formation.

After a chorus of voices say, "Thank you," a voiceover states, "Crafting every experience for our guests with the same level of care we craft our vehicles. That's what makes Lexus Lexus."

Lexus "Letters"

The video is running on streaming services Hulu and Pandora, as well as online and on social media through partnerships with Google, Bing, Facebook and YouTube.

Letters was inspired by the Lexus Covenant, a promise that was created before the carmaker was founded in 1989. This includes the line "Lexus will treat each customer as we would a guest in our home."

In a 2017 J.D. Power report, Lexus was the top performing luxury auto brand in terms of customer satisfaction with a score of 874 on a 1,000-point scale ([see story](#)).

"The Lexus Covenant is what drives dealers and associates to treat customers as they would treat guests in their own home," Lexus' Mr. Ericksen said. "By using the words of our customers via written letters and emails to create an installation, it illustrates how all these experiences come together to shape the Lexus brand."

Reciprocal relationship

Customer appreciation efforts allow brands to give back to loyal clients.

For two years running, department store chain Nordstrom's holiday campaign has turned the camera on its customers.

Building on last year's celebration of the relationship between store and shopper ([see story](#)), the 2017 effort highlighted its customers' real relationships, capturing its clients with their friends and families. Lately, Nordstrom has been opting for non-models for its campaigns, leading with real stories rather than imagined scenarios ([see story](#)).

"The Letters' installation is another example of how Lexus is committed to crafting experiences that amaze with the same level of care it crafts its vehicles," Mr. Ericksen said. "These experiences are the very DNA of what makes Lexus, Lexus."

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