

EVENTS / CAUSES

Macallan taps Annie Leibovitz for limited-edition bottle designs

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By TRICIA CARR

High-end whisky brand The Macallan is marketing a set of bottles that feature labels with photography by Annie Leibovitz through a world tour that includes stops in Hong Kong, Moscow, London and New York.

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Luxury Daily

The brand commissioned Ms. Leibovitz to take four photographs of Scottish actor Kevin McKidd around New York to be featured on special-edition bottles of whisky as part of its Masters of Photography initiative. In addition to 1,000 limited-edition bottles available for \$2,750 each, the brand is targeting high-net-worth consumers by offering four \$25,000 bottles of Macallan 1949 that mark Ms. Leibovitz's birth year.

"Macallan is selling the art, not the bottle," said Chris Ramey, president of Affluent Insights, Miami. "The No. 1 habit of ultra-high-net-worth individuals is collecting art, so transcending art makes perfect sense.

"An integral part of luxury is rarity," he said. "By creating buzz with an experience, including a product that we know is high quality and adding rarity to it, the brand increases the value of what it is selling."

Macallan was not available for comment before press deadline.

In the spirit of photography

Annie Leibovitz is the first color photographer to be commissioned by Macallan to design limited-edition bottles.

The four photographs she took of "Grey's Anatomy" actor Mr. McKidd are featured on the labels of the limited-edition bottles of which 1,000 total are available for purchase.



Image of Mr. McKidd

The four different bottles each contain a specific single malt whisky that is being offered to consumers for the first time. Each bottle comes with a signed Annie Leibovitz print that is the same as the image featured on the label.

Each spirit was made by whisky maker Bob Dalgarno to correspond with each of the images.

Each bottle and art print come in a photo-archival box.



Image of Mr. McKidd

Additionally, Macallan is offering four bottles of Macallan 1949 from its Fine and Rare Collection for \$25,000. Buyers will receive a signed one-of-a-kind gallery-sized print.

Macallan is marketing the special-edition bottles to affluent consumers through a global tour which is stopping in the United States next week. The brand will hold an event in New York with Ms. Leibovitz and Mr. McKidd.

Bottoms up

Other high-end spirits brands are using event marketing to raise awareness for bottles that appeal to high-net-worth consumers.

For instance, spirits brand G.H.Mumm is tapping affluent consumers' preference for experiential marketing with a new event tactic that will show guests the rituals of Champagne tasting.

The first G.H.Mumm Ball was held earlier this month in Paris. The brand's execution of the new events centers on its Champagne Protocoles de G.H.Mumm guide to sabering, selecting, serving and storing the spirit ([see story](#)).

In addition, Scottish brand John Walker & Sons is inviting select guests in Asia-Pacific on board a branded yacht to partake in activities that will explore the history of the brand and showcase the new triple malt John Walker & Sons Odyssey.

The path of the John Walker & Sons Voyager yacht follows the original trade routes taken by ships that first distributed its whiskeys around the world. John Walker & Sons' strategy combines one-on-one interactions with brand centric-entertainment with a goal of reaching the surge of millionaires under the age of 45 in Asia-Pacific ([see story](#)).

Previously, John Walker & Sons produced a limited number of Diamond Jubilee aged whisky bottles to commemorate the British Queen's 60th year on the throne that it marketed via an international tour to broaden visibility.

The tour most likely strengthened John Walker & Sons' status as a luxury brand since the special-edition whisky was priced at \$162,380 per bottle ([see story](#)).

Events allow luxury marketers to immerse the most affluent consumers into the brand world and make them feel like they are getting something exclusive.

For a spirits marketer, these efforts could help consumers associate the brand with the high-status events in their lives and trigger spontaneous purchases.

"In each market the brand can identify best prospects and create buzz," Mr. Ramey said. "Affluents have everything they needs, so it is experiences that are attractive."

Final Take

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