

MULTICHANNEL

Barneys champions transgender individuals in spring ad campaign

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By SARAH JONES

Department store chain Barneys New York is aligning itself with the fight for transgender equality with an ad campaign and outreach.

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Barneys' "Brothers, Sisters, Sons and Daughters" campaign features 17 transgender individuals with diverse backgrounds and stories that will be told through a series of short films. With this campaign, Barneys shows a more personal, human side to its brand that allows it to connect on a deeper level with consumers.

"Barneys understands that to cut through the clutter, it has to connect with consumers, people," said Jason B. Cohen, executive vice president of creative at [The O Group](#), New York.

"Like many other savvy brands, Barneys is leveraging the power of storytelling to help make that connection emotional and compelling," he said.

Mr. Cohen is not affiliated with Barneys, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Barneys New York](#) did not respond by press deadline.

Personal approach

Photographer Bruce Weber shot the campaign that shows the 17 subjects, most surrounded by their loved ones. Mr. Weber said he tried to convey his respect for them in his photos.

The photos were taken in New York, the retailer's hometown.



Barneys campaign image featuring Valentijn de Hingh and Ryley Pogensky with his grandparents

Included is Jack Doroshow, an artist and activist whose fight for gay rights lead to 77 arrests spanning the 1950s and '60s. Other transgendered individuals featured include the first transgender student to graduate from her Oklahoma high school and an aspiring fashion journalist who was the subject of a nine-year documentary.

To record these stories Barneys enlisted writer Patricia Bosworth, a long-time contributor to *Vanity Fair*, to interview each subject one-on-one. Mr. Weber filmed the interviews and created a series of short films.

On Feb. 10 Barneys will host a private event to screen Mr. Weber's 15-minute video and commemorate the project. The following day, Barneys and *Vanity Fair* will host an additional screening of the film and a discussion with Mr. Weber.

Consumers will be able to see the film online on Barneys' content Web site The Window on Feb. 11. The video will also play in the retailer's Madison Avenue flagship store windows through March 16.

Barneys also introduced its campaign to consumers with a post on The Window that featured Katie Hill and Arin Andrews, showing their story through text and Mr. Weber's video. The retailer will continue to post more stories in the coming weeks on the Web site to keep consumers coming back for more content.

Embedded Video: //player.vimeo.com/video/85408525?

[title=0&byline=0&portrait=0&color=ffffff](#)

Brothers, Sisters, Sons & Daughters: A Preview of the Spring 2014 Campaign Film by Bruce Weber

Barneys' ad campaign will be distributed through the mail as a portfolio of individual prints of all the photographs that will include the personal stories of all of the people featured in the campaign.

For this campaign, Barneys partnered with both National Center for Transgender Equality and the LGBT Community Center, both of whom speak out about trans issues. To aid their efforts, Barneys is donating 10 percent of the sales from all of its stores and its ecommerce on Feb. 11 to the two organizations, giving each 5 percent.

As part of the outreach, Barneys is creating an education program for its employees that will focus on helping them understand issues facing the transgender community.

Forging ahead

Barneys has previously partnered with other charity organizations to show its care for the community.

For instance, Swiss watchmaker Hublot, together with Shawn "Jay Z" Carter, unveiled two wristwatches that made up the rapper's larger collaborative effort with Barneys to further align the watch brand with the iconic figure and the retailer.

The watches were part of Jay Z's "A New York Holiday" capsule collection that was exclusively available Nov. 20 through Jan. 3 at select Barneys' locations. Jay Z's A New York Holiday collaboration featured multiple brands to create a total affluent lifestyle that will appeal to consumers beyond timepiece enthusiasts.

In the spirit of giving, 25 percent of the proceeds from A New York Holiday were donated to Jay Z's The Shawn Carter Foundation. Celebrating its tenth anniversary, the charity, organized by the rapper, awards higher education scholarships to children facing socio-economic difficulties ([see story](#)).

The retailer is also on a forward path, with plans to open a new store in Manhattan.

Specialty retailer Barneys New York has unveiled plans to open a flagship store location in New York's Chelsea neighborhood to become the go-to shopping destination in downtown Manhattan.

The new flagship is set to open in 2017, and will be located on Seventh Avenue between 17th and 16th Streets, almost exactly where the original Barneys store was. This store

opening will allow Barneys to fill in the its retail gaps within Manhattan, granting it an advantage over competitors that have isolated stores ([see story](#)).

This campaign makes sense as a strategy for the retailer to move past the controversy surrounding its racial discrimination lawsuit, since it focuses on stomping out another kind of prejudice.

"Barney's may be executing this very humanistic campaign in part to help move past some bad PR it's recently experienced," Mr. Cohen said. "More importantly, though, the brand is taking this opportunity to present itself as high-minded, forward-thinking and artistic.

"Some people will love this campaign and applaud Barneys, while others will protest. It's undoubtedly controversial and that's kind of the point.

"By bringing the stories of these individuals to the world, Barneys New York hopes to be perceived as a brand that's helping to break down negative stereotypes."

Final Take

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