

Super Bowl ads aim to comfort and connect

BY MAE ANDERSON
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NEW YORK (AP) — Super Bowl ads each year offer a snapshot of the American psyche. And this year, it's a doozy.

After a year of pandemic fear and isolation, a tumultuous election capped by a riot at the Capitol and periodic uncertainty as to whether there would even be a Super Bowl, marketers have to tread carefully.

The ideal: promote their brands to a weary audience looking for comfort and escapism without crossing any lines that might trigger viewers.

So Will Ferrell is teaming with GM — and Awkwafina and Kenan Thompson — on a madcap cross country dash to promote electric vehicles. Amazon toys with sexual innuendo when a woman is distracted by her new Alexa assistant that looks like the actor Michael B. Jordan. And Anheuser-Busch offers a hopeful look toward a time when we can say “let's get a beer” to friends and coworkers again.

“Comfort is key,” said Villanova University marketing professor Charles Taylor. “Being edgy is going to get attention, but it risks getting out of the comfort zone at a time people have been cooped up in their homes and economic times are tough for many.”

The prize for those who get the balance right? The chance to break into the psyche and (virtual) watercooler talk of an estimated 100 million viewers who will be watching the CBS broadcast of Super Bowl LV on Sunday.

NEW WORLD ORDER

With big names such as Coke, Hyundai and Kia sitting it out this year, newcomers are rushing in. This year's Super Bowl will showcase more than 20 first-time advertisers — more than double the eight from last year if you exclude campaign ads, according to a tally by research firm iSpot.

Many are flush with cash thanks to changing consumer habits during the pandemic.

It's a bellwether when a brand can afford the estimated \$5.5 million cost-of-entry for a 30-second spot during the Super Bowl. This year's class includes the companies that brought us our food, let us shop online and helped us work from home. Among them are delivery services DoorDash and Uber Eats, the job site Indeed, the car site Vroom, the recently headline-grabbing investing app Robinhood, and the computer accessories company Logitech.

Most are taking tried-and-true ad approaches. DoorDash enlists Sesame Street characters for a dose of nostalgia. Logitech goes the celebrity route with an endorsement from hip hop artist Little Nas X intended to underscore that its products like keyboards and mice help artists and makers “defy logic.”

And in what is surely a first in Super Bowl history, an ad for Inspiration4, a SpaceX supported all-civilian space launch, touts a chance for viewers to join the mission.

Courtesy of payment processor Shift4 Payments, whose CEO, Jared Isaacman, will command that mission.

GUEST COLUMN |



COURTESY PHOTO | THE BRINTON MUSEUM

“Chief Dickens” illustration by Father Giuliani, a featured illustrator at The Brinton Museum in February.

Much fun for all ages available at The Brinton

What's more fun than elementary school children's art, storybook illustrations, dogs, wizards and a full moon?

The Brinton Museum will again present the “All-Schools 5th Grade Student Art Show” and also the “16th Illustrator Show,” opening to the public in February.



BARBARA MCNAB

The student art shows have been a tradition since 2002 when the museum hosted an exhibit of elementary art from the Big Horn Elementary School. When The Brinton moved into the state-of-the-art Forrest E. Mars, Jr. Building in 2015, the decision was made to broaden the scope of the student show the following year to include a greater number of schools in the area, but limiting submission to fifth-grade students. In this way, all schools could participate while keeping the event to a controllable size.

The first year's fifth-grade show reception was attended by more than 280 students, teachers and parents. Each year sees a growth in this community-wide program with the art projects becoming more creative and sophisticated. From renditions of cave drawings on crumpled brown paper, to bright color balloons made of paper maché, to complex wall mosaics, to self-portraits and stories by Crow students from Wyola School in Montana, enthusiasm and creativity abound.

Ongoing COVID-19 restrictions will keep a reception from happening this year. However, in lieu of a reception, the art teachers will be part of an online video program sharing the inspirations behind each class' art project. This show continues through March 1 during regular museum hours.

For 2021, the museum's “16th Illustrator Show” takes a look back on 15 years of exhibits. The Illustrator Show — successful in bringing art to the schools and school tours to The Brinton — has included an exceptionally talented roster of artists since the first exhibit in 2002. That show featured Gerald L. Holmes (1940-2019), artist and illustrator of John R. Erickson's charming “Hank the Cowdog” children's book series.

Holmes was so popular The Brinton had him back five years later. The list of illustrators is indubitably impressive. In 2006, Paul Goble (1933-2017), award-winning author and illustrator who studied at the Central School of Art in London, exhibited original illustrations, on loan from the

South Dakota Art Museum and the artist, from 20 of his 34 books.

The featured artist in 2007 was James Warhola, author and illustrator of “Uncle Andy's: A Faabbbulose Visit with Andy Warhol, “Uncle Andy's Cats” and numerous other books. If the name sounds familiar, and it does, Warhola's artistic inspiration was influenced in part by his iconic, famous uncle, pop artist Andy Warhol.

Subsequent shows featured art by award-winning members of the prestigious Society of Illustrators as well as Randolph Caldecott Medal recipients. The coveted Caldecott award recognizes the most distinguished American picture books for children.

Wonderful storybook illustrations from such timeless classics as “Jack and the Beanstalk,” “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” have been on exhibit in The Brinton

Museum galleries, along with art illustrations from recently published popular children's books, including “Eleanor Roosevelt Throws a Picnic,” illustrated by Victor Juhasz from Averill Park, New York; “My Radio Flyer Flew,” written and illustrated by Zachary Pullen from Casper; and “No, David!” by author and artist David Shannon from Los Angeles, California, as a few examples.

A highlight of this year's show is original artwork from The Brinton's own “The Dickens of the Bradford Brinton Memorial & Museum,” which was the featured exhibit in 2012 together with “Dogs, Dinosaurs and Daydreams,” a show by artist Mark Teague, the author and illustrator of the comical canine character Ike LaRue series and illustrator of numerous other

popular children's picture books. Art aside, perhaps the most rewarding benefit of the Illustrator Show has always been the school tours. What is more magical than that look of wonderment in a child's eyes as an artist talks about the antics of “Finn McCool and the Great Fish,” or about Carl, an inquisitive chipmunk and his animal friends as they learn all about art at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson?

Art. It's the heart and soul of learning. Combine this with children and the recipe for education is almost complete. School tours for this year's Illustrator Show are encouraged and can be scheduled by calling Lacasa Michelen at The Brinton Museum at 307-687-5972. Children aside, the Illustrator Show is also for adults who have never lost a love of children's stories. And, heavens, why would we?

BARBARA MCNAB is curator of exhibitions at The Brinton Museum.

New museum traces history of Black music across genres

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A new museum two decades in the making is telling the interconnected story of Black musical genres through the lens of American history.

The National Museum of African American Music, which opened with a virtual ribbon-cutting on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, is seated in the heart of Nashville's musical tourism district, alongside honky-tonks and the famed Ryman Auditorium and blocks from the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

Even as Nashville has long celebrated its role in the history of music, the new museum fills a gap by telling an important and often overlooked story about the roots of American popular music, including gospel, blues, jazz, R&B and hip-hop.

“When we think of the history of African American music and the important part it has played in our country, it was long overdue to honor it in this type of way,” said gospel great CeCe Winans, who serves as a national chair for the museum.

The idea for the museum came from two Nashville business and civic leaders, Francis Guess and T.B. Boyd, back in 1998, who wanted a museum dedicated to Black arts and culture. And while there are museums around the country that focus on certain aspects of Black music, this museum bills itself as the first of its kind to be all encompassing.

“Most music museums deal with a label, a genre or an artist,” said H. Beecher Hicks III, the museum's president and CEO. “So it's one thing to say that I'm a hip hop fan or I'm a blues fan, but why? What was going on in our country and our lived experience and our political environment that made that music so moving, so inspirational, so the soundtrack for that part of our lives?”

The museum tells a chronological story of Black music starting in the 1600s through present day and framed around major cultural movements including the music and instruments brought by African slaves, the emergence of blues through the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance and the civil rights movement.

When Winans recently took a tour of the museum, she saw her own family of gospel singers, The Winans, represented in the museum's exhibit on spiritual music alongside the artists that influenced her own musical career.

“You never start out doing what you're doing to be a part of history or even be a part of a museum,” said the 12-time Grammy-winning singer.

She noted that the museum put gospel music in context with how it inspired social change, especially during the civil rights era.

“When you look at all the different movements that have happened down through the years, and Martin Luther King Jr., it was always with the church behind them,” said Winans. “It was the gospel music that inspired us to love one another, to build bridges.”

The museum has 1,600 artifacts in their collection, including clothes and a Grammy Award belonging to Ella Fitzgerald, a guitar owned by B.B. King and a trumpet played by Louis Armstrong. To make the best use out of the space, the exhibits are layered with interactive features, including 25 stations that allow visitors to virtually explore the music.