

Case study

‘Unseen’ photography fair

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Introduction

Vandejong, a creative agency based in Amsterdam, created the branding strategy and campaign for the international photography fair Unseen. It is the first fair of its kind in the Netherlands, providing a platform of discovery for both the upcoming talent and the previously undiscovered work of established photographers.

Unseen is a new cultural brand positioned by Vandejong as a 'photo fair with a festival flair'. The first edition of Unseen took place in September 2012 at the Culture Park Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam. One of the special aspects of this project is that together with Foam (photography museum) and Platform A (office for cultural business development), Vandejong is both one of the fairs founders and its communications agency – an example of Vandejong's entrepreneurial spirit in the agency world.

Objectives

- Build a new cultural brand and position this on an international level.
- Provide a platform for new photography and emerging photography talent.
- Create a photo fair with a festival flair.
- Attract and connect an international community of photography professionals and enthusiasts.
- Interest both established collectors and first-time-buyers.

Target audience

- Photography professionals: photographers, gallery owners, curators, critics, publishers, journalists.
- Photography enthusiasts: established collectors, first-time-buyers, general public

Process

To reach out to an international audience, Vandejong developed a multichannel communications strategy, with a strong focus on content marketing and online campaigning.

For the online campaign Vandejong developed a website with a community function and an extensive news section filled with features, interviews and videos, as well as an iPhone App. This online campaign, in combination with a powerful offline campaign and proactive PR strategy, ensured that the first edition of Unseen was a great success.

The campaign was rich in content and inventive communicative tools including:

Online marketing

- Website with a special community function
- iPhone App
- Active news section on the website
- Social media (Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Self-produced videos on YouTube and Vimeo
- A digital newsletter

Print campaign

- An outdoor city campaign (posters, flyers, large billboards, banners) in Amsterdam.
- Billboard campaign in the Netherlands.

Press and PR

- Programme insert in the international design magazine *Wallpaper**
- Programme insert in the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*
- PR (press releases, press conferences)
- Cultivation events in London, Paris and Amsterdam
- Rave reviews in international publications like *Time*, *Le Figaro* and *Vogue*
- Television special on photography as part of the Dutch TV programme *AVRO Kunstuur*

Specials

- Unseen Book featuring work of participating galleries and photographers
- Unpublished Dummy Award (a prize for a yet published photography book)
- The Unseen Collection (a collection of works for sale for less than 1,000 euros)
- BankGiro Lottery vouchers worth 1,000 euros each

Extra

- Merchandise (books, buttons, clothing)
- Signage on the fair and festival grounds

Outcomes

- Participating galleries: 50
- Participating photographers: 365
- Website: 131,000+ visits (between 1 May and 1 October 2012)
- Total number of fair visitors: 22,000
- Tumblr: 275,000+ followers
- Facebook: 11.000+ fans

- Twitter: 2,500+ followers
- iPhone App: 2,200+ downloads
- Community on the website: 1,300+ registrations
- Gold SpinAward (prestigious Dutch award for digital creativity) for the online communication campaign for Unseen in the category 'Content'.

Key point for effective practice

Vandejong positioned Unseen as a 'photo fair with a festival flair', and devised a cross-media, content-driven communication strategy across a sophisticated mix of owned, earned and paid media. In order to spark an interest in the brand within the target group, the editorial team started creating content five months before the fair, publishing articles, interviews and videos three times a week according to one of three defined themes ('Young Talent', 'New Photography' and 'Buying and Collecting'). During the fair itself, reviews and reports were added daily. This extended presentation and reportage on photographers, galleries and collectors during the run up has proven to be both rare in the world of art fairs, as well as an enriching and innovative strategy. Not only did it ensure that Unseen was firmly established as a brand prior to its debut, but also that the established brand would remain engaging independent of the fair.

Conclusion and recommendations

Positioning Unseen as Vandejong did had its challenges. As in other countries, arts and culture budgets in the Netherlands are under severe downward pressure due to government cuts. Launching a quality-driven, international cultural enterprise can, at the best of times, be challenging. Launching one from scratch in this environment required the agency to closely define its ambitions, outline its every move and be creative in pushing boundaries. The success of the first edition in 2012 proved that such an approach could be rewarding. With the second edition approaching, the most important conclusion is that long term success depends on hard work and the will to continuously innovate, experiment, and improve one's concept.

Additional information

www.unseenamsterdam.com

www.vandejong.com