

The Pinnacle of Achievement is Beauty:

bareMinerals Print Ad

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Historically women have tried to fit their society's standards of beauty. From the Greeks and Romans using white lead to intensify their pallor, to Europeans with their corsets and sixteen inch waists, to the Chinese cutting and binding the feet to make them smaller and to produce an attractive wobbling walk. Looking back, many are shocked by the extremes those women went to be considered beautiful long ago. Honestly though, current society is no better off. The modern woman rushes to the cosmetics counter, goes under the knife, gets injected with poisons, straightens her hair with toxic chemicals, and rips the hair from her body. Today's women are still slaves to the painful process of beauty and subject themselves to it willingly. The greatest difference in beauty today is the empowerment portrayed in the ads Americans are bombarded with. The all-natural makeup brand, bareMinerals, would like women to believe that being considered beautiful is the pinnacle of achievement. Their most recent advertising campaign implies that beauty is both power and perfection, and it is the only requirement for success.

The two-page spread in *Glamour* magazine is a deceptively simple bareMinerals advertisement. On the right page is an open container of bareMinerals powder foundation with the container's cover partially covering the makeup (bareMinerals, 2011, p. 64). On the foundation's cover, the brand name is prominently displayed and written below in hot pink block letters is the phrase "Be a force of beauty" (p. 65). The background of the entire spread is a flat black, lending an uncomplicated elegance to the ad. On the left page is written, "Pretty is not enough" in large hot pink text, followed by, in smaller, white text,

Pretty is nice. It's fine. Pretty can turn heads, but beauty? Beauty can change the whole world. Pretty is what you are, but beauty is what you do with it. Pretty can lift spirits.

Beauty makes them soar. So smile. Be bold. Show your beauty. (pg. 64)

Finally, in medium-sized white print, the text ends with "When you put pretty into action, there's no limit to what you can do." Every word of the text is capitalized, lending the words a feeling of emphasis and authority (p. 64).

At first glance, this ad has an elegance and class not normally seen in beauty ads today. There is no gorgeous half-naked model, no airbrushing, no flashy colors. This ad relies on the emotional impact of its words. As Kilbourne (2006) says in her essay, "Jesus is a Brand of Jeans," "The problem with advertising isn't that it creates artificial needs, but that it exploits our very real and human desires." This is indeed what this bareMinerals ad tries to do. There is not a woman out there who hasn't, at some moment in time, wanted to be considered beautiful. A woman's desire to be beautiful is what drives the beauty industry. With thousands of choices on the market, the ad companies are always trying to bring more business to their clients. BareMinerals, in this ad campaign, is pulling on heartstrings, trying to stoke vanities, and make women believe that beauty is achievable, but only with their product.

Reading the text more than once, however, may change the feelings that are supposed to be conveyed. The text can be considered over-the-top and borderline offensive. The line "Beauty can change the world" could even be construed as extremely distasteful (pg. 64).

BareMinerals is putting an emphasis on beauty as if it is the ultimate source of a woman's power. This is a gross over-simplification of the process of professional growth in a woman. Women all over the world strive to reach their personal goals and work hard to be taken seriously. When a company basically says that without beauty a woman will fail in life, society needs to take

another look at the standards being set. This quote, taken in this context, reveals an implication that beauty is power, which is at once both sad and disturbing.

At the end of the text, once again is a thoughtless quote: “When you put pretty into action, there’s no limit to what you can do” (bareMinerals, 2011, p. 64). In a society where women vote and hold public office, are CEOs and proud members of the military, this statement is simply belittling. This company is reducing the worth and ability of any given woman down to how she looks. This emphasis on beauty is ridiculous. There is no consideration of personality, education, or talents. Beauty is not an equalizer. It doesn’t elevate a person to a higher level than lesser mortals. Society has become so enamored with the possibility of being beautiful that the well-known saying “beauty is skin deep” has been all but forgotten. A person can be the most ethereal looking goddess ever to grace the earth and be stupid, shallow, and arrogant in personality. On the other hand, someone can be physically unattractive and be the brightest, sweetest, and most likeable person ever known. The sum total of a woman is not her appearance, but the combination of her intelligence, wit, strength, and experience. Women have worked too hard for equality to be simplified to such a ridiculous standard.

In truth, a woman’s fight to be beautiful is best described as a biological instinct. Biologically, humans are driven to be attractive in order to catch the attention of a mate. Fowles (1998) says, “The desire to exhibit ourselves in such a way as to make others look at us is a primitive, insuppressible instinct” (The Need for Attention section). While this may be true, women are more than a biological drive. In this so-called civilized world, beauty should not be a priority. Women have more to worry about in their day-to-day lives than to be driven by beauty alone. This bareMinerals ad is an example of how shallow society’s consumerist culture has become. For the advertising company to have thought this up and for the bareMinerals’

corporation, Bare Escentuals, to agree that such an insipid ad campaign was a great idea, the true issue isn't that the company is wrong but that society is. Society relies too much on the power of attraction and beauty, granting those ideas a power they should not have. Americans sadly believe that if a person is beautiful, all doors will be opened and life will be more worth living. Worst of all, society falls into the trap that these beauty companies have constructed; they hope perhaps that with products like these dreams will come true.

References

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