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## Creative Spaces: 10 Brands With Street Cred

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Much like indie bands, it's sometimes easier for a small new unique label than a well-established brand to develop a niche following and an element of cool. So how does a big company reinvent its image to pique the interest of the [Creative Class](#), who make up 40 million workers, 30% of the workforce in the US? The Creative Class earns more than \$2.1 trillion dollars -- 50 percent of all wages and salaries controlling nearly 70 percent -- almost \$500 billion -- of the country's discretionary income (buying power). Advertisers realize engaging this highly intelligent, diverse and economically powerful audience is key. Their main goal is to get consumers to change their behavior to ultimately buy their product or service. Appealing to their emotions is the easiest way to make that happen but that's a major challenge with so much clutter in the market place. How can big corporate brands earn street cred or a cool factor to get the early adopters on board? Here are 10 key tips:

1. **Authenticity.** Don't try to be something you're not. Consumers are younger, faster and smarter than ever before; you can't fool them. False claims will quickly turn off an audience.
2. **Creativity.** Take a look around. What was once exceptional is now the norm. Colors, sizes, shapes, scents and packaging are more vibrant than ever before. Consumers expect products to constantly reinvent themselves.
3. **Customization.** You want it your way. Starbucks has more 19,000 ways to serve a coffee. Nike lets you design your own shoes, from choosing the color of the laces to imprinting your initials on the tongue. Consumers want to have it their way.
4. **Diversity.** Old, young, straight, gay, black, white -- all races, genders and ethnicities are potential consumers and they expect to see that reflected in your ads and marketing. MAC Cosmetics was the first brand to use a gay spokesperson back in the '80s; Apple painted Microsoft uncool in its PC Guy campaigns by associating it with a stuffy middle aged white man.
5. **Urban.** For the first time in human history [more than](#) 50% of us are now living in cities. From a smart car navigating dense streets to Nike's images of basketball courts in urban neighborhoods, cities are the place to be.
6. **Art/Design.** Whether the look is graffiti art, street art, or gallery art, the art direction of your campaign is as key -- if not more so -- than the music you license or commission for it. A number of brands collaborate with designers or architects on the launch of a specific line, giving the product a unique stamp and evincing a dedication to craftsmanship and design overall.

7. **Brand alignment.** Who you want to keep company with? The identity of your spokesperson instantly brands your product, whether it is a subject matter expert, a politician, a sports star, or a celebrity. Think of Leslie Feist, whose song, voice, and appearance put an indelible stamp on the Apple Nano.

8. **Intelligence.** Consumers like to be the first to discover something. They are highly engaged and consuming information at high speeds. Talking animals and big cars might sell down-market beer or snack foods but they won't launch a revolutionary new product.

9. **Social Responsibility.** Whether it is going green with environmentally friendly, sustainable and recyclable packaging or feeding the hungry or helping children, cause related marketing is a must.

10. **Global.** A product or service that acts local but thinks global is integral. Consumers are attached to their neighborhoods but see themselves as citizens of the world.

## Nike



Whether it's the Air Jordan shoe or its über-famous tagline "Just Do It," Nike excels at convincing teenage kids to drop \$200 plus for a pair of kicks by projecting images of diversity and strength. Photographer Annie Leibovitz takes this to another level with her portraits of Nike Women.

Photo credit: Campaign by Annie Liebovitz and NikeBlog

# Nike



Photo credit: Campaign by Annie Liebovitz and NikeBlog

# Target



Target made history when it used Michael Graves to kick off its creative designs, raising their profile to the stratosphere. Its most recent act of brand revitalization is its “City” line, in which it’s opening smaller stores in downtown neighborhoods, “the key,” writes Bloomberg Businessweek, “to unlocking the full value of Target’s cheap-chic playbook.”

Photo credit: Target Fashion Blog

# Target



Photo credit: Target Fashion Blog

# Apple



The Think Different campaign summarizes it nicely: Apple breaks every mold when it comes to creative branding. Whether it was using U2's Vertigo to launch the iPod, Jet's "Jerk it Out" for the iPod Shuffle, or Feists famed 1,2, 3, 4 for the iPod Nano, Apple designed its products to complement its consumers' playlists.

Photo credit: [www.chiao.typepad.com](http://www.chiao.typepad.com)

# Apple



Photo credit: [www.i.ytimg.com](http://www.i.ytimg.com)

# Converse



Rock n roll and vintage chic are the mark of the ever cool Converse brand. While the famous basketball player Chuck Taylor was the first to brand the All Star line, several other creative collaborators have helped establish Converse as the hipster brand of choice, including the designer John Varvatos and supermodel Sarah Ruba. These images were shot in a downtown artists' loft, lending a modern graphic look and feel to the campaign.

Photo credit: [www.nextmodelmen.typepad.com](http://www.nextmodelmen.typepad.com)

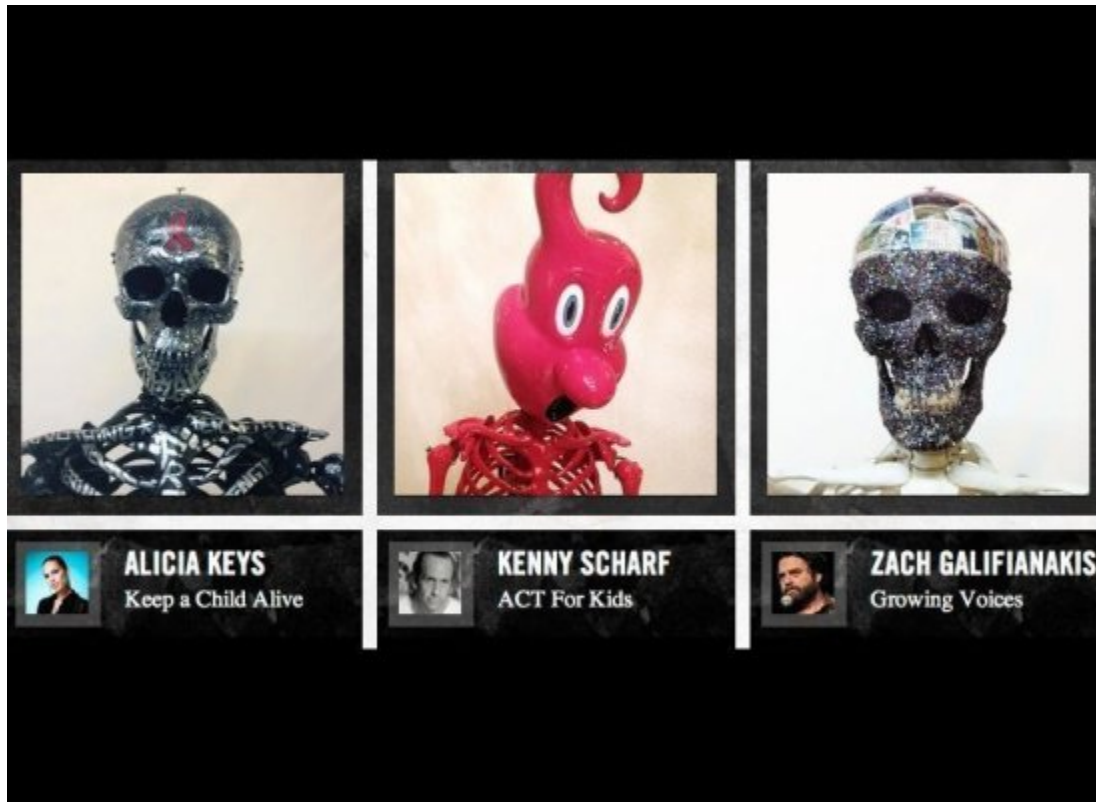


# Converse



Photo credit: [www.nextmodelmen.typepad.com](http://www.nextmodelmen.typepad.com)

# Kiehl's

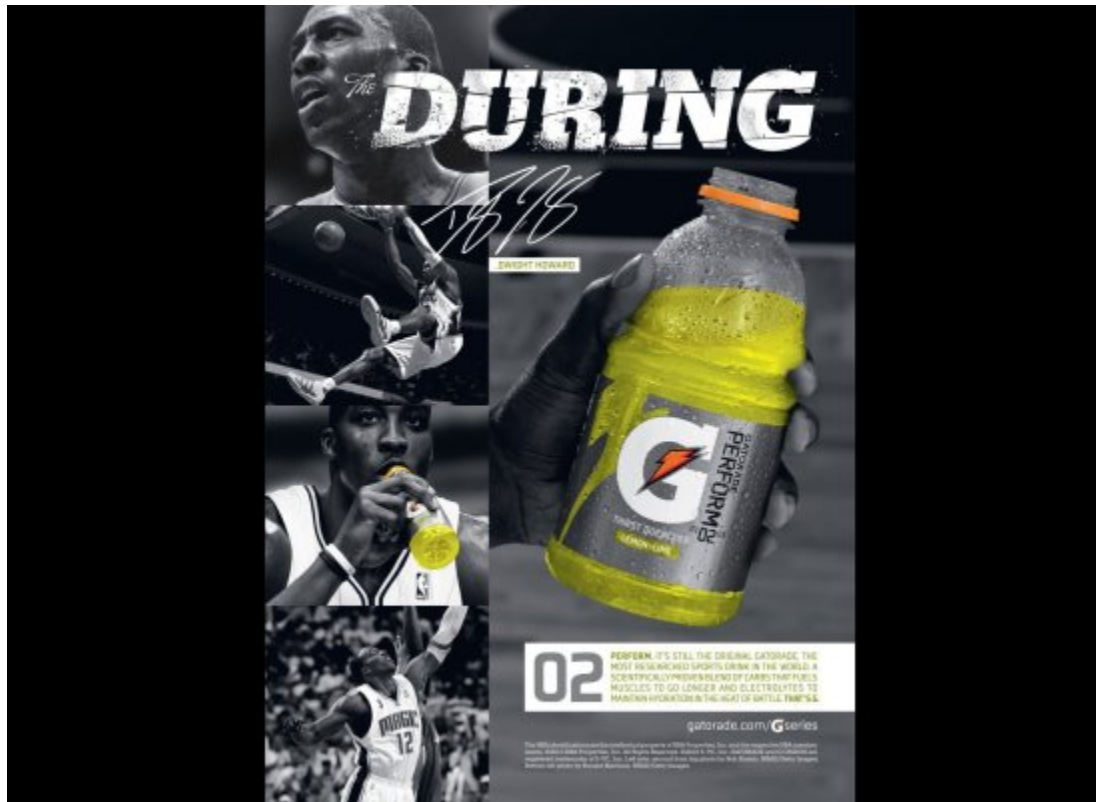


It began as a neighborhood apothecary in New York's East Village in 1851 and it's kept its authentic look and feel to this day. Mr. Bones, the store's signature life size skeleton, once educated customers; now it evokes the chain's heritage. This summer, Kiehl's has enlisted an A-list of creative partners to design and build their own Mr. Bones's, which will be on display at several stores. Among the 13 celebrity designers are Alicia Keys, Zach Galifianakis, Costello Tagliapietra, David Chang with Steve Keene, Desi Santiago, Frank Kozik, and Kenny Scharf.

Photo credit: [www.facebook.com/KiehlsSince1851](http://www.facebook.com/KiehlsSince1851)



# Gatorade



Seeing a diverse collection of powerful athletes doing what they do makes even the worst couch potato want to get up and sweat. Gatorade's G series just sounds great, with three lines, the "G," "G Pro," and "G Natural," and an ad campaign with missionG.com. Another campaign shows the importance of drinking Gatorade before, during, and while recovering from an athletic endeavor.

Photo credit: [www.1adt.com](http://www.1adt.com)

# Gatorade



Photo credit: [www.1adt.com](http://www.1adt.com)

# Beats By Dr. Dre Headphones



Who wouldn't want a cool pair of professional caliber headphones, designed by a musician and manufactured by the high-end audio company Monster Cable? Dr. Dre's line of headphones have professional names like Pro, Mixr, and Studio. Heartbeats were designed by Lady Gaga herself.

Photo credit: [www.adpr1400.blogspot.com](http://www.adpr1400.blogspot.com)

# Beats By Dr. Dre Headphones



Photo credit: [www.adpr1400.blogspot.com](http://www.adpr1400.blogspot.com)

# Smart Car



Smart car's ad campaigns position their product as the quintessential urban vehicle. Billboards show how the small car can fit anywhere in a congested city; another shows how its fuel efficiency reduces pollution. A campaign in Japan pictures the car in a vending machine, accessible to anyone.

Photo credit: [www.1dak.com](http://www.1dak.com)



# Smart Car

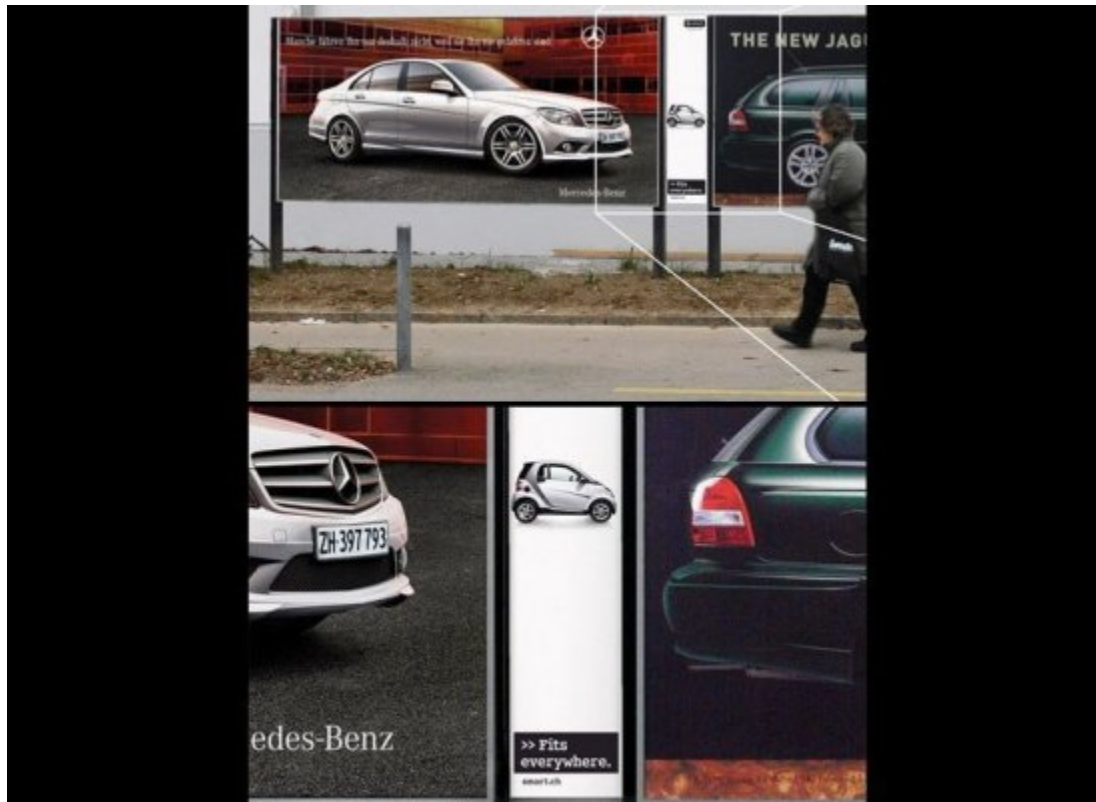


Photo credit: [www.1dak.com](http://www.1dak.com)

# MAC Cosmetics



MAC Make-up Art Cosmetics, better known as M·A·C or MAC Cosmetics, was founded by my good friend Frank Toskan, who has been a pioneer in pushing creative boundaries. Supporting AIDS, children, recycling and cruelty free animal treatment, MAC was one of the first brands to use an openly gay spokesperson, RuPaul, in its ad campaigns.

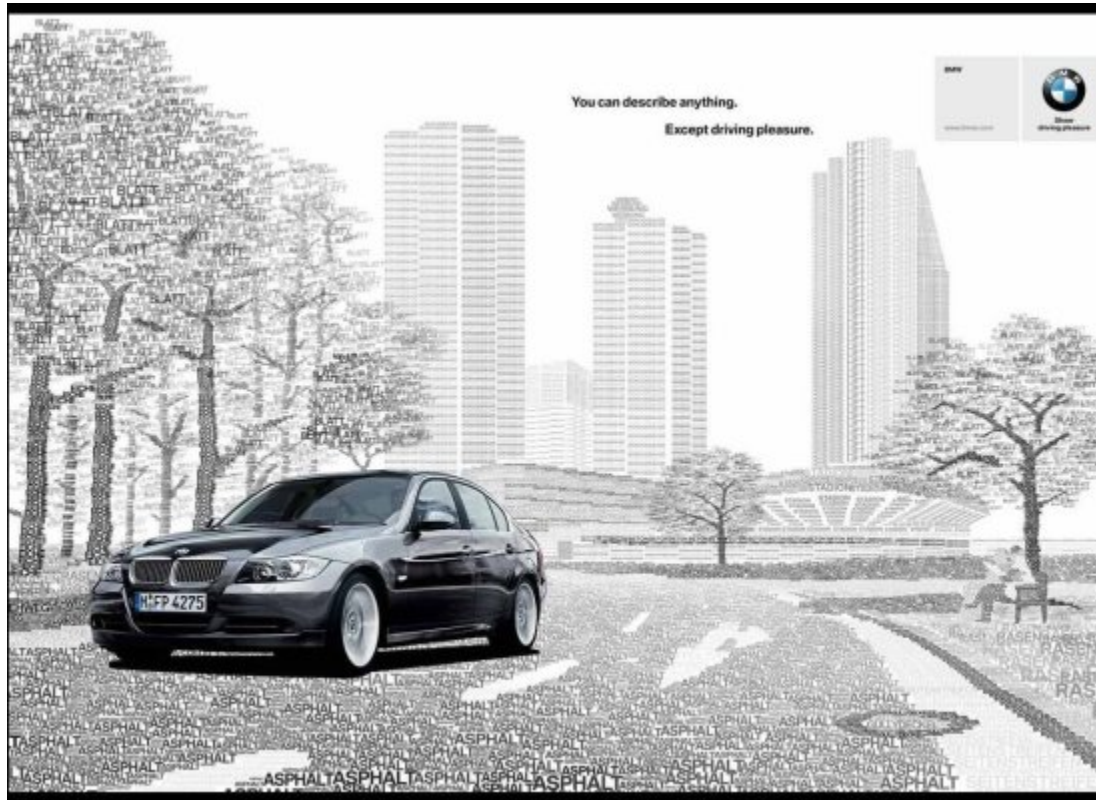
Photo credit: [www.claresauntie.typepad.com](http://www.claresauntie.typepad.com)

# MAC Cosmetics



Photo credit: [www.tenzer57.deviantart.com](http://www.tenzer57.deviantart.com)

# BMW



My own firm worked with BMW to come up with the Ideas Class ad campaign, inspired by Richard Florida's theory of the creative class. But even before that, BMW had branded itself as a creative engine by hiring the renowned architect Zaha Hadid to design its Central Building in Leipzig, a radical transformation of the traditional office.

Photo credit: [www.ibelieveinadv.com](http://www.ibelieveinadv.com)

# BMW



Photo credit: [www.awesomearchitecture.wordpress.com](http://www.awesomearchitecture.wordpress.com)