



In this Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2016, file photo, model Kendall Jenner has makeup applied backstage before the Michael Kors Spring 2017 collection is modeled during Fashion Week, in New York. — AP

Pepsi pulls widely mocked ad featuring Kendall Jenner

Pepsi on Wednesday pulled an ad after it was widely mocked and criticized for appearing to trivialize protests for social justice causes. "Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace and understanding," the company said. "Clearly we missed the mark, and we apologize." It said it was "removing the content and halting any further rollout."

The ad shows Kendall Jenner, a member of the "Keeping Up With the Kardashians" reality TV family, stepping away from a modeling shoot to join a crowd of smiling, young protesters. The protesters cheer after Jenner hands a can of Pepsi to a police officer, who takes a sip. PepsiCo Inc. had previously said the ad was created by its in-house team and that it would "be seen globally across TV and digital" platforms.

It initially described the spot as featuring "multiple lives, stories and emotional connections that show passion, joy, unbound and uninhibited moments. No matter the occasion, big or small, these are the moments that make us feel alive." That description was also derided on social media. The Purchase, New York, company had stood by the ad late Tuesday. By Wednesday, it was apologizing to Jenner for putting her "in this position."

Critics say the image of Jenner handing the officer a Pepsi evoked a photo of Black Lives Matter protester Ieshia Evans approaching an officer at a demonstration in Baton Rouge last year. Others criticized the protesters' signs for being comically innocuous, with messages like "Join the Conversation" and heart and peace signs. The website Gothamist expressed a common sentiment online in calling the ad "gloriously tone-deaf."

Among those mocking the ad was Bernice King, who tweeted a photo of her father, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., being confronted by a police officer at a protest march. "If only Daddy would have known about the power of #Pepsi," the tweet said. Larry Chiagouris, a professor of marketing at Pace University, said that the backlash was in part because Pepsi was a couple years "late to the party" with its message about unity, making its ad seem exploitive.

Still, he also noted that the fallout wouldn't necessarily be that damaging, since a lot of the negative sentiment expressed on social media is "easily washed away overnight." It isn't the first time PepsiCo has backpedaled and apologized for an ad. In 2013, it pulled a Mountain Dew ad that was criticized for portraying racial stereotypes and appearing to make light of violence toward women. It pulled that ad from online channels, and said it was never intended to run on TV. — AP



This picture taken on April 3, 2017 shows the facade of The Haus (The House), an old bank building housing an urban art project in Berlin. — AFP

In Berlin, a street art gallery designed to be destroyed

It may seem an unlikely venue for an art gallery—an old bank building in the centre of a busy shopping district and about to be torn down. But in Berlin, arguably Europe's urban art capital, some 165 like-minded street artists have filled the five-storey space with their work. And the result is a burst of color and myriad of styles, with murals and installations covering 10,000 square meters, all on public view at no charge—but only until the demolition crew moves in.

"We're open here for two months, then everything will disappear for all eternity," said Joern Reiners of Die Dixons (The Dixons), the group behind the project called The Haus (The House). It approached property developers Pandion for temporary use of the block before it makes way for luxury condominiums, and got the keys last October. "There was so little time, we didn't have any big plans, we just got our telephones out and rang everyone we know," said Timo von Rekowski, another Dixons member. Artists from 17 countries joined the project, with Berlin-based ones making up the majority. Each was assigned a space—be it an office, the corridor, stairwell or even the toilet.

'Make it an experience'

The gallery that sprung up includes a room covered from floor to ceiling with personal ads usually seen pasted on Berlin lampposts or walls, another room with a huge pair of clay legs like a giant just landed through the ceiling, and a darkened room with wall murals that are only revealed with the help of a torch. Some artists may not be household names, but others are well-established in Berlin's urban art scene, like El Bocho, whose cartoon-like "Little Lucy" series and "Citizens" portraits are part of the German capital's landscape, or Emess, whose works often involve political figures.

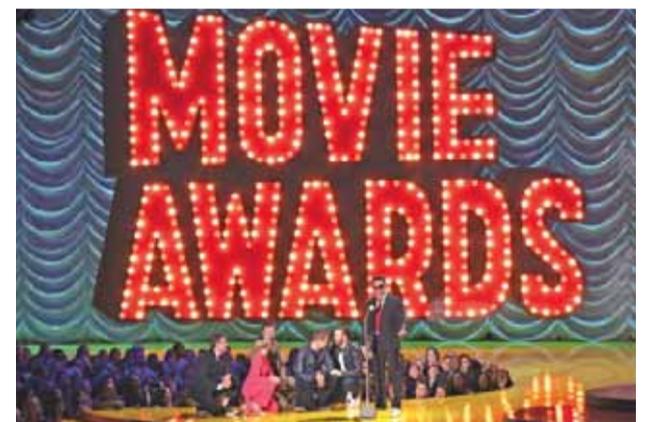
"What we have here is the space to realise their vision... while not having to think about the business of it all like entrance fees, but really just concentrating on the art-to experiencing it and to making it an experience," said Reiners. "And that's the essence of what makes us different from other projects." If there is one regret, it is "that we will not be able to show to visitors the energy that was generated here while the house was being set up," von Rekowski said. To ensure that visitors etch the images in their heads, no photography is allowed. The group also keeps a tight leash on the images circulating of the works, with media outlets only allowed to photograph details and not wide shots.

'Now or never'

The transient nature of the show helped attract a crowd on its opening weekend of April 1-2, with a queue snaking down the street. One visitor, Juliana Lang, who queued for more than half an hour with her partner, said: "It was well worth it, there was more variety than I expected. And it'll all be gone soon, so it's now or never." Artist Anne Bengard, who painted a tortured-looking man with a contraption stretching over his teeth as fake banknotes spewed from his mouth, said she appreciated the photography

ban. Too many people today just view art on the internet, without really experiencing it in person, she said.

"I think it's great that this is done in this manner so everyone who wants to see it has to come personally to view it," she added. Despite the effort that went into getting her work right, Bengard is not bothered that her art will soon be reduced to rubble. "This is my first wall painting in a bank and I find it rather cool also that this first work will soon no longer exist, that no one can buy it and it's really something for this moment in time." — AFP



In this April 12, 2015 file photo, Mark Ruffalo, from left, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Hemsworth, Jeremy Renner, and Chris Evans present Robert Downey Jr. with the generation award at the MTV Movie Awards in Los Angeles. — AP

MTV awards dumps gender-specific categories

MTV has scrapped gender specific categories for its upcoming Movie & TV Awards. In place of the Best Actress and Best Actor categories, this year's awards will honor a non-gendered Best Actor in a Movie and Best Actor in a Show. The move follows the Grammy Awards' decision in 2011 to dump gender distinctions between male and female singers, collaborations and groups. MTV's May ceremony will also include a nod to social activism by renaming its Best Fight category to Best Fight the System. This the first year the MTV Movie Awards has been redubbed the Movie & TV Awards. They'll be hosted by actor and comedian Adam DeVine in Los Angeles on May 7. — AP