

TRONIC meets TARGET: The Future of Art and Branding

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NEW YORK, NY March 23– Advertising is being redefined through the melding of art and branding. Forward thinking brands such as Target are embracing art as a way to communicate their message by emotionally connecting with people. Creative collective Tronic Studio’s collaboration with Target for their “Art for All” campaign is a perfect example of this new approach. Tronic has crafted seven minutes of animated and live-action branded content for the Victory Media Network®, the world’s first large-scale, outdoor digital arts gallery, in Dallas, Texas. The content, part of Target’s “Art for All” initiative, plays three times a day, as a countdown to noon, 6:00 pm and midnight, on eight huge, LED screens in Victory Park, a new downtown Dallas development linked to the American Airlines Center.

Victory Park, which opened March 23, offers visitors an interactive mix of advertising, education, entertainment and art while providing brand advertisers an opportunity to create immersive environments and captivating experiences for the 17 million visitors annually expected at Victory Park.

For the Victory Media Network Tronic created “Marbles,” three all CG spots that utilize Target’s signature red-and-white palette to devise a surreal landscape of animated mazes formed from abstracted Target logos. A longer video, “Revolution,” combines live-action with animation to create public art. A third long piece, “Condensation,” which explores digital sculptures, is still in production.

In addition to playing at Victory Park, the three “Marbles” animations were remixed for 5.1 surround sound while “Revolution” was cut-down and remixed to be screened at the opening of the AFI Dallas International Film Festival (March 22 to April 1st).

Cofounders Jesse Seppi and Vivian Rosenthal have positioned Tronic as a source of innovative conceptual work and technological executions embracing all new media. “We believe Tronic is a great resource for brands that wish to explore forward-thinking venues,” says Seppi. “Thanks to our background in architecture we bring distinctive insights to the future of marketing. We’re pleased that artwork can be shown to be a

viable form of advertising that can get people excited about a product or brand through unconventional, non-literal means.”

Victory Park is one of the largest high-definition outdoor media installations in the world. Barco has provided over 46,000 Olite 510 outdoor LED modules for the Victory Media Network, which will include two fixed 20x20-foot tower displays, a digital portal, and eight movable 15x26-foot LED walls installed in two four-panel groups facing each other across the 60-foot wide Victory Plaza. The movable media displays are mounted on rails, and stacked two-on-two. The panels can be choreographed individually with discrete video and surround-sound feeds, or locked together to form one 30x50-foot, 16:9 HD screen.

Rosenthal says Tronic created three different “upbeat, engaging and high-energy” versions of “Marbles:” two 30-second spots and one 45-second spot. The red CG marbles, whose dynamics are endowed with a certain degree of intelligence, move through all-white scenarios in the spots. “We took Target’s 2D, red-and-white branding into a 3D world that’s photoreal, glossy and polished,” says Rosenthal. “It elevates the look of the logo, making it more visually sophisticated.”

Two of the “Marbles” spots are playful mousetrap-style games. The third follows a group of marbles through a Versailles-like hedge maze made of Target logos stitched together in sinuous curves and extruded for height. Thousands of marbles converge to form the Target logo at the close of each piece.

Tronic was asked to not only devise the marble games but to choreograph them on multiple, moving LED screens. “For the Marbles we played a big role in designing how the screens move, their rate of acceleration and their configurations over time as they interact with the video content,” Seppi explains. “We found interesting ways to have the actual marbles play against the physical borders of the moving screens. Sometimes the screens play identical footage, at other times they go into the ‘full mode’ where what happens on the east and west screens is different but is narratively connected.”

Tronic set up specialized templates with unusual aspect ratios to test the required syncopation in 3D. Rather than use proprietary simulation software created for the big

screens Seppi felt it was “quicker and more artistic to use After Effects to make our own version of the screens and run our own simulations,” he says.

Tronic tapped Autodesk’s 3ds Max as the primary tool for modeling, animating and rendering “Marbles.” “We used hard-body dynamics with gravity and wind for the marbles but controlled the way they bounced off each other, their friction paths, in a realistic way,” Seppi explains.

New York’s Statique Sound crafted “Marbles” sound design with input from Tronic. Statique Sound crafted actual marble games with chutes and tubes to create an extremely accurate Foley. “There’s an extra layer of believability to the animations because the sounds are real,” Rosenthal emphasizes.

Revolution, Making Art

In the two-and-a-half-minute piece “Revolution,” cameras capture the process of making art as they revolve around two large white cubes being painted by a pair of well-known graffiti artists, the UK’s Mr. Jago and LA’s Kofie One. A third artist, namely Tronic, enters the process by bringing their art to life and making it leap off the cubes to form a digital bridge where the graffiti fuses to become an entirely new style.

“‘Revolution’ was our concept. Target told us they wanted something featuring graffiti,” Rosenthal recalls. “We wanted to create a magic feeling. You come across big floating white cubes; we set them on casters five or six inches above the ground, which cast shadows and set the mood at sunset. So many spots show the expected graffiti on buildings, but with Target’s ‘Art for All’ concept we decided to look at graffiti as more sculptural. “Contemporary graffiti is highly sophisticated. Mr. Jago and Kofie One are the future of graffiti and the cubes are unconventional surfaces,” adds Seppi.

Seppi asked that each artist work in his native style: Kofie One’s being structured, industrial geometry, Mr. Jago’s more organic. Each artist was asked to loosely incorporate the Target logo into their designs.

Seppi and Rosenthal directed the live-action shoot with the graffiti artists, shot with two Panasonic VariCam HD cameras, at Brooklyn’s Floyd Bennett Field where the painting

began at sunset and continued late into the night. The A camera captured the big-picture narrative while the B camera recorded close-ups of the artists and their brushes and the corner angles of the cubes.

“Mr. Jago and Kofie One had 12 hours to paint their cubes” with designs that had been preconceived, Seppi explains. “They only had to paint one side of each cube. In 3ds Max we created a virtual set that mimicked the location, and we rebuilt the cubes digitally and texture mapped the other surfaces of the cubes art that Tronic generated to seamlessly match each of their styles. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to generate that much painting in the time we had.”

Seppi developed a full set of storyboards for the shoot and crafted a lengthy shot list featuring all camera positions and lenses to be replicated in CG. The HD camera tracked 360 degrees around each cube so Tronic could stitch together a series of 180-degree turns in post giving the impression that every time the camera turned a corner there was a jump in time and the graffiti artist had painted a larger portion of the cube.

Seppi and Rosenthal also had Mr. Jago and Kofie One pantomime painting with their brushes in the air. Tronic then recreated their distinctive graffiti styles and tracked the new art to their pantomime moves creating a POV from inside the cube looking out, akin to looking at the artists paint on panes of glass.

Tool Kit -

Back at Tronic, “Revolution” was cut together in Apple’s Final Cut Pro and the real and digital art were color treated to match one another using After Effects. Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator generated additional art for the sides of the cubes, and Boujou was used for camera tracking. When live-action camera tracking wasn’t perfect Seppi opted to replace the real cubes with their CG versions composited with After Effects.

For the conclusion, where the 3D hybrid graffiti is born, Seppi found the solution was to “totally cover the original cubes and backplate with CG so we could extrude the art on the cubes and move it perfectly.” The CG art, created in 3ds Max, springs off the adjacent cubes, touches and intertwines. “It mingles in a way that respects the autonomy of the artists but is also complementary,” he says. “The new graffiti gradually

bridges the cubes, but there's a moment when it accelerates and snaps together which coincides with the countdown moment for Victory Park."

As with "Marbles," Tronic also had to choreograph "Revolution" for the moving LED screens. "Because 'Marbles' is 100 percent CG we had more freedom to treat the screen boundary as a physical boundary to jump off of," Seppi notes. "With 'Revolution' in editorial we took advantage of how the screens move. When we made the shot list we initially planned how the screens would come apart and come together. Once the testing phase started there was a lot of tweaking of the screen movement that happened."

Tronic's pieces for Victory Park have generated an extremely positive response from Target. "Our work is stylish and innovative like their broadcast spots but at the same time the work at Victory Park marks a departure for Target," says Rosenthal. "Target recognizes it's making an emotional connection with the viewer at Victory Park and building a positive relationship with the brand in an innovative way."

"We're fortunate to have worked with such a forward thinking brand as Target, who has embraced art as a viable means of advertising," says Seppi. Tronic's fifth Target spot, "Condensation," will debut shortly.

Tronic is a NYC based multi-media studio founded in 2001 by Columbia Architecture graduates Jesse Seppi and Vivian Rosenthal. Their work moves between film, animation, architecture and experiential design. They've directed and animated spots for Nike, Adidas, Microsoft and LG, conceived and executed projects for Diesel, GE, Sharp and Wired (in store) and Nike, Smirnoff and Visionaire (online) and in general, have worked to eliminate lines delineating one form of creative media output from another. These visual futurists are boldly combining architecture, graphic design, film and animation through new uses of technology to create striking and conceptually based work.

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