3.2 Communication Category: Design

**Eight Decades of Sir Peter Blake & The Macallan**

**Synopsis**

To reinforce its reputation as an iconic luxury spirit and to broaden its appeal to connoisseurs of art, The Macallan collaborated with Sir Peter Blake, Godfather of British Pop Art, and five other artists, to create a box of treasures, celebrating eight decades in the life of Sir Peter Blake and The Macallan. 250 boxes were produced, generating revenue of £1.25m, a PR value in excess of £250,000 to date, and interest from Macallan and art lovers alike.


Background

Competition amongst single malts the world over is becoming ever more fierce. The malt sector last year produced over 8 million cases versus 5.6 million cases ten years ago. In this period The Macallan has developed from a traditional Scotch malt whisky of 150,000 cases into a global luxury brand now selling more than five times the amount, primarily in overseas markets. The strategy behind this success is fuelled by innovation and creativity, giving consumers access to limited edition whiskies that not only give joy to the palate, but which in their design are true works of art that, over the years, become desirable collectables. Maintaining this high standard, and indeed topping it with every new product launch year after year, is no mean feat, but one The Macallan, often described as ‘the Rolls Royce of Malts’, keeps succeeding in, due to successful collaborations with some of the best talent in design and the arts. And let’s not forget the commercial aspect. The Macallan is consistently priced at a substantial premium to its competitors. Indeed, only a year ago The Macallan entered the Guinness Book of World Records as the most expensive whisky ever sold at auction at US $460,000; all proceeds went to charity. The combination of unique whiskies – arguably the best money can buy, beautiful design and great craftsmanship has enabled The Macallan to carve a niche as not only the most precious whisky, but as a true luxury and lifestyle brand.

With this in mind The Macallan embarked on what may be described by some as a ‘whacky’ project or by others as the pursuit of the ultimate combination of two masteries – the making of whisky and art in its purist form. Back in the 80’s The Macallan collaborated with Sir Peter Blake, the Godfather of British Pop Art, famous for designing the cover for The Beatles’ Sergeant Pepper Lonely Hearts Club album.

Objectives

The objectives for this project, aside from commercial sales, were about underpinning The Macallan’s positioning as the most collectable and highly sought after of all whiskies further validating its super premium price positioning.

1. Via PR further manifest the high value and uniqueness of The Macallan by creating a limited edition collectors’ piece.
2. Generate sales of £1.25m.

Sir Peter created a label for a limited edition of only twelve bottles of The Macallan 1926, a 60 year old single malt presented in a display case styled as a spirit safe and today a very rare collectors’ item.

Born in 1932, 2012 marked Sir Peter’s 80th birthday, a milestone worthy of celebration – a celebration both of eight decades of Sir Peter Blake and eight decades of The Macallan. A project in the making....
Plan

In creating this project three elements were paramount – authenticity, quality and unique design. It hinged on working with the right people to achieve the right level of design and creative success. For the right people we went back to the original Creative Director and designer of the earliest Macallan advertising campaign in the 1980’s, David Holmes, who also established the first collaboration between Peter Blake and The Macallan in 1986.

David Holmes’ idea went back to the very basics: to put the ancient classic elements of earth, water, air and fire at the centre of the creative concept. All elements are required in the creation of whisky. We would then create a ‘box of treasures’, divided into eight sections, each celebrating a decade from the thirties to the noughties and holding a miniature of The Macallan distilled in that respective decade bearing a label designed by Sir Peter Blake. A selection of artefacts would represent each decade, The Macallan, Sir Peter Blake and/or the four elements. 250 of those limited edition boxes would be made available for sale at a price of £5,000 each.

Creative and implementation

To create the box David Holmes recruited the best people in their craft to form an art team:

1. Phil Lardner, an exceptional cabinet maker who created a beautiful box from the highest quality oak to reflect the exceptional oak casks used to mature The Macallan Single Malt. He added brightly coloured backgrounds for the Pop Art design, smooth hinges to reveal each decade bit by bit and a velvet lined section for the book that would tell the whole story.

2. Prof. Phil Cleaver, one of the UK’s best typographers whose work is collected by the V&A (he knows he will always sell at least one book...), designed and created a small book that tells the story of Sir Peter Blake and The Macallan over eight decades using text by writer Hugh Bredin as well as relevant imagery. The book is printed on highest quality stow book wove paper and a logo was especially developed for the cover bound in Japanese handmade paper. It already won first prize at the British Book Awards 2012. The attached pdf shows the details of the book.

3. Art director Stuart Newman, following Sir Peter’s guidance, sourced the artefacts to represent the four elements of earth, water, air and fire - as a direct connection to the whisky making process. He also found and created artefacts to reflect Peter Blake’s work or favourite items in his own collection, e.g. the image of a dancing duck and miniature Tom Thumb boots; The Macallan distillery in Speyside, e.g. a gnome fishing (by the river Spey) and a miniature cask; and the various decades, e.g. a halfpenny for the 50’s and a little mouse for the 00’s.
4. Highly respected copywriter and author Hugh Bredin wrote the story of The Macallan over the past eight decades, covering the history of ownership of The Macallan, the background to the whisky itself and of course the relationship between the malt and Sir Peter Blake.

The team, including Sir Peter Blake, collaborated over a period of 18 months to create this piece of art. Sir Peter himself commenting on the project best sums up their success: "This piece is a reflection of my approach to my work, taking inspiration from the last 80 years, be it from my own art collection or my own actual work. This project has brought together an outstanding team who have truly brought this wonderful idea to life. Working with The Macallan has been great fun and this project allowed me to explore different ideas to create something special, unique and highly creative."

A team of artist

Phix Film was appointed to create a unique artistic film to record the making of a piece of Macallan art. The film was so fabulous it was included on the CD in the box itself and can be viewed [here](#). It brings to life a box that can only be described as a Pandora’s Box that, when you open it, reveals all Sir Peter Blake’s favourite treasures and a very limited edition selection of The Macallan whiskies.

Results

All 250 boxes have been sold representing total sales of £1.25m.

PR exposure for this project was secured across both art and mainstream luxury media titles in the UK, Russia, USA and Taiwan. With two further events scheduled in Hong Kong and Singapore this year, total PR impact and reach is anticipated to increase further to an overall PR value in excess of £250,000.

The combination of Sir Peter Blake’s artistic standing and The Macallan’s reputation captured the imagination of the media, giving them a new angle which further affirmed the brand’s commitment to the arts and working with high calibre partners.

Digital interaction was phenomenal reaching 180,000 views, 1,700 likes and over 200 shares on Facebook. In addition the last box sold as the result of a simple Facebook post informing The Macallan fans that only one Peter Blake box was left for sale – an excellent ROI!

The Macallan is in discussion with the V&A and Tate Modern to add the box to their collections. It would be a fantastic way to give people the opportunity to view a beautiful piece of art.
Appendix

1. **The Whisky Bottle Labels designed by Sir Peter Blake**

![A range of eight The Macallan miniatures with labels designed by Sir Peter Blake]

2. **Examples of PR coverage**

![Examples of PR coverage]

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**POMP STAR**

SIR PETER BLAKE

The artist, who recently celebrated the 60th anniversary of his first exhibition, discussed his work, his inspirations, and his Whisky Macallan. TheMacallan.com

**The Macallan in a glass of Sir Peter Blake**

Sir Peter Blake celebrates his 60th birthday with a dynamic collection featuring his signature style. TheMacallan.com

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**glass**

Peter Blake Celebrates his 60th

Sir Peter Blake celebrated his 60th birthday with a special collection of his work. TheMacallan.com