

GOOD LUXE:

POWER PHILANTHROPY

By Cassidy Hazelbaker

A look at philanthropic initiatives by luxury brands. Cassidy Hazelbaker investigates.



Many people find it ironic to equate the luxury goods world with poverty, hunger and lack of education. Luxury brands have in recent years started to shorten the distance between these two opposing spectrums by launching philanthropic ventures and leveraging their positions as high-profile names in the market to bring attention to people in need. Three such brands are Bulgari, Michael Kors and Montblanc, which have collaborated with Save the Children, United Nations World Food Program and United Nations Children's Fund, respectively. By joining forces with some of the biggest aid organizations in the world these brands are taking a 'power philanthropy' approach to help the disadvantaged.



BULGARI & SAVE THE CHILDREN

“Every child deserves a future filled with hope and opportunity.”

Francesco Trapani, President of Jewelry and Watches Division LVMH



In 2009, Bulgari announced the start of a partnership with Save the Children by creating a silver and black ceramic ring based on the design of the B.zero1 line. The ring is inscribed with the Save the Children logo on the interior – a constant reminder of the positive effects of the ring. About 20 percent of the proceeds from the sale of the ring go to Save the Children. Bulgari has remained dedicated to its partnership with the non-profit for the past four years and recently announced it surpassed its goal of raising US\$20 million. The brand credits strong sales of its charity ring for the overwhelmingly positive results. Bulgari believes that every child deserves the right to an education, including children who face discrimination due to their minority status in a society or children who grow up in conflict zones.

This partnership has benefitted more than 500,000 children while over 18,000 teachers have been trained in 1,000 schools in 20 countries, often located in some of the most remote communities in the world. Bulgari also organizes field trips for celebrity spokespeople and selected Bulgari employees to experience the living conditions of the children assisted by the Bulgari-Save the Children partnership. Celebrity field visits have been documented by renowned photographer Fabrizio Ferri, who has also donated his time and talent to photograph well-known personalities such as singer Sting, actress Jessica Biel and football star Ronaldinho wearing the Bulgari ring.

Left:
Jessica Biel wears the Bulgari-Save the Children ring.
Image courtesy Bulgari.
Above:
Bulgari-Save the Children ring.
Image courtesy Bulgari.

MICHAEL KORS, HALLE BERRY & UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (UNWFP)

“It’s an effort I’m eager to be part of because I’m certain we can make a real and substantial difference in the lives of people in need.”

Halle Berry, Actress and Philanthropist

Michael Kors recently announced his company is tackling hunger on a global scale by collaborating with actress Halle Berry to raise millions of dollars for the United Nations World Food Program (UNWFP) to help eradicate hunger. “The UNWFP gets things done,” states Kors. “They’re the world’s largest humanitarian organization dealing with hunger which made us confident that we’d get results. UNWFP is on the front lines of the fight (against hunger) and I’m proud to be involved.”

The first project for Kors and Berry is called Watch Hunger Stop, for which they launched a pair of specially-designed, best-selling runway watches by Michael Kors. Reimagined as a special edition timepiece with a blue face and an image of the globe, the watch is available in gold and silver-toned stainless steel and in mid-range and oversized faces. “To make a significant impact, you need a great product as well as a great cause. I wanted to design something special and unique that I knew would have huge appeal to our customers,” says Kors. “A watch is a good way to start a conversation, which is something we hope to do.”

For each watch sold, 100 meals will be provided to hungry children through the UNWFP and Michael Kors will additionally donate \$US25 dollars to the UNWFP. The watch is entitled the 100 Series to remind the wearer of the contribution that his or her purchase has made.

Above:
Michael Kors and Halle Berry, who wears the 100 Series watch.
Image courtesy Michael Kors.



MONTBLANC & UNICEF

“Montblanc wishes to take an active role in the international promotion of education and cultural values.”

Maxime Harrar, Regional Director Middle East, Montblanc

Each year before the Academy Awards, Montblanc unveils a charity mission to take place during the ensuing year. “Philanthropy is an integral part of the Montblanc brand philosophy. Montblanc has always supported philanthropic ventures and we genuinely believe the need to extend a helping hand to the less privileged, and to progress education, arts and culture,” says Maxime Harrar, Regional Director of the Middle East for Montblanc. Montblanc’s 2013 initiative is entitled ‘Signature for Good’ and seeks to help support the act of writing – a mission fitting for a brand so renowned for their fine writing instruments. Montblanc is pairing with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and has pledged to raise \$US1.5 million dollars for schools throughout the organization’s Africa, Asia and Latin America programs. The campaign is the fourth joint effort between Montblanc and UNICEF; they first partnered in 2004 for the ‘Sign up for the Right to Write’ campaign and again in 2007 for ‘Power to Write.’ In 2009, they created the first installment of ‘Signature for Good,’ an initiative they continue to pursue. When asked why Montblanc chose to further the company’s collaboration with UNICEF, Harrar says UNICEF’s emphasis on education as a tool for progress is a concept shared by Montblanc. “Education is everything- if you have an education, you have a better opportunity to overcome obstacles,” he says.

These campaigns have grossed US\$5 million. The 2013 ‘Signature for Good’ collection comprises a special edition of writing instruments, jewelry pieces and leather accessories all of which embossed with a unique brick design to symbolize the foundations for education. Each item in the collection features a unique number which can be entered in an online database to track the progress of the initiative. “We believe in the power of the word – the written word – even in the age of digital communication,” says Harrar. “The ability to have proper access to learn how to read and write is the most important gift we can give children. We believe it’s a must to participate in these kinds of initiatives.”

Top:
Students practice reading during a UNICEF Field Visit.
Image courtesy Montblanc.

Above:
Montblanc Signature for Good Writing Instrument.
Image courtesy Montblanc.

Montblanc Signature for Good Bracelet.
Image courtesy Montblanc.

MUST HAVE: VICTORIA BECKHAM TWO-TONED SHOPPER

By Cassidy Hazelbaker

The Victoria Beckham Spring/Summer 13 collection has garnered much praise and this shopping bag is a perfect example of why.



This two-toned tote symbolizes all that is summer; it is at once light, breezy and stylish. The tote is as practical as it is elegant. The textured black leather gusset sides and handle contrast with the woven linen body, adding sharpness to an otherwise casual bag. The bucket interior is also big enough to store all the accessories you need for a busy day. Whether you’re headed to the beach or running out to shop, the linen detailing and sleek lines add polish to casual daytime outfits as well as chic evening ensembles. A bag suitable for all occasions, the two-toned shopper expresses Beckham’s versatile design that never loses its elegance.

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