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January 29<sup>th</sup> 2024

### Why was the FKA Twigs Calvin Klein Ad Banned?

In the early weeks of January, an advertisement from the clothing brand Calvin Klein depicting British musician FKA Twigs was considered too revealing by the Advertising Standards Authority. This received backlash from both fans and the artist herself. Similar Calvin Klein advertisements such as a Kendall Jenner advertisement were never censored (Burga & Cleary). The advertisement is a part of a series entitled, 'Calvins or nothing,' a series of photographs and videos depicting various kinds of celebrities in their underwear and various other products meant to create a certain ethos and pathos to them. These advertisements show that you can also feel perfect in their product just by purchasing it. But why did this advertisement receive so much controversy? FKA Twigs, as a person, is known for her use of sexuality, politics, and challenging gender roles within her art. With these elements in mind, this rhetorical analysis seeks to understand how her artisanal identity affected the public perception of the advertisement, creating an almost kairotic moment, and how it is different from similar ads put out by Calvin Klein before.



Calvin Klein is known for their sensual advertisements and has had a long history of being controversial. The photograph of FKA Twigs itself, conveys the same meaning their advertisements have done previously. However, though it shows a revealing image with her wearing the products of the company, her posture differs from other female advertisements from

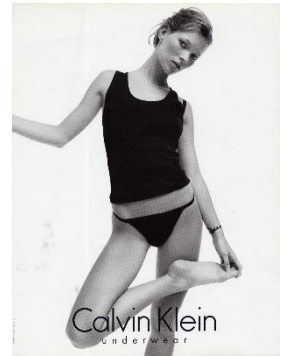
the company. The advertisement itself exudes pathos from the contrast of the lighting to the way her posture is shown. Each individual part of her look is intentional to draw a certain character. In an interview with British Vogue written by Tish Weinstock, she said, “I love creating different characters with my hair.” In the advertisement, her hair is oriented a certain way to draw a certain character to her image. Its visual orientation is meant to evoke us into seeing the uniqueness of her character. While the Advertisement is from Calvin Klein, she can present her own pathos as an artist. These elements can capture her gender ambiguity perfectly setting the tone for a both masculine and feminine look in a sensual tone. This is not new to her as she has gone to describe her music as, “subconsciously political,” specifically when it comes to sexual politics and resisting gender roles” (Myers).

The advertisement was deemed too revealing by the Advertising Standards Authority for being a ‘stereotypical sexual object’. In an article published by CNN, after contacting the Advertising Standards Authority, they said, “Our ruling was solely about the content of the ads and whether they breached our responsibility and offence rules; the identity and race of the models featured in those ads were not relevant and did not form part of our assessment” (Kennedy). Due to the controversy surrounding this decision, it caused numerous different websites online to cover the topic. FKA Twigs would go on to post on Instagram and said, “I do not see the ‘stereotypical sexual object’ that they have labelled me. I see a beautiful strong woman of colour whose incredible body has overcome more pain than you can imagine.” She would further go on to mention double standards alluding to a similar ad featuring actor Jeremy Allen White. The ad was praised for its risqué nature, and was called, “A sex



symbol at a time when his country needed him” in an article in *The New Yorker* by Jennifer Wilson.

The backlash of the banning of the advertisement created an almost kairotic moment for both the company and the singer. Women have always been viewed as sex symbols and sensual figures for Calvin Klein. The corporation had previously inspired the ‘heroin chic’ term with a controversial ad depicting British Model, Kate Moss, in their underwear line titled ‘obsession.’ The differences between the advertisements, however, lie with the fact of FKA Twigs is a BIPOC. She once said in an interview with *The Guardian* that, “People thought I was quite odd-looking, until a white male validated my beauty” (Sawyer). For the company, this moment transcends beyond the original message of the intended advertisement. They become a part of the conversation and get increased exposure to the public. By the banning of the advertisement, not only does it expose a double standard in the industry for how genders are viewed differently, but also an intersectionality of gender and race. FKA Twigs as an artist has always challenged these views and uses them to expose them. She has also been vocal of both within her art, music, and other outlets that she expresses herself in. These elements influence how the advertisement is reacted to the public and show us how rhetoric can work within society.



The banning of FKA Twigs advertisement exposes a blatant response to how women of color is often received in the media. The visual symbolism of the advertisement bends the norms of societal standards and expose a different side of how women could be portrayed. Based on the nature of the advertisement, the masculine elements of it show how FKA Twigs as an artist. Her personal statement and messages as an artist show applications of ethos and pathos within advertising and how the artist can use them to challenge viewers perceptions. This also reflects

the emotions conveyed within the advertisement and exposes how society responds to ideas that might challenge their personal views and bias. These elements combined, goes beyond the rhetors original intentions, and creates a form of advertisement that benefits Calvin Klein marketing campaigns.

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