

The Success and Impact of the Yeezy brand.

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For Design Theory*



Kanye West is a musical artist and clothing designer who'd launched the fashion line Yeezy under the Adidas brand. Specializing in sneakers it also contains socks, jackets, and other articles of clothing. Combined with the fame of Kanye West as an artist and cultural figure, the Yeezy brand was able to gain widespread popularity.

West has said of his brand "It is the 2nd fastest growing company in history... It is a unicorn on its way to becoming a decacorn,"⁴

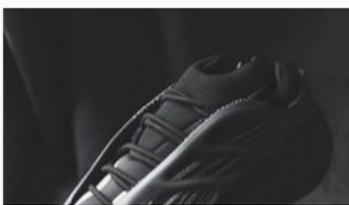
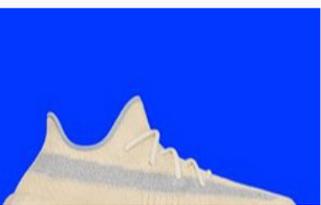
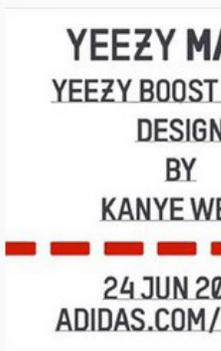


The Yeezy line tends to use more muted colors and generally don't use in any great quantity bright or very saturated colors. Generally it sticks to black, gray, white, red, The plastics are more lightly died so rather than being an opaque tend towards something more translucent though tinted depending on the color.



At the top we see a pink sneaker, the tops curve in a "U" shape with a texture to the outside fabric. It looks to be a soft pastel pink with an orange clip towards the back. Moving forward, the front of the sneaker is sleek, rejecting a larger, maybe more cushioned appearance. Towards the bottom we have a sole which gets thin towards the front and fatter at the back and we can see how the inner of the sneaker fits into the textured plastic. The second, though keeping the shape and form has a grayer top, the textures are more varied in color with some being a light gray and others being a deeper gray or black. Rather than a plastic bottom of the like, it has what seems to be an non-dyed plastic which the third figure shares As we move on to the third there seems to be a pattern of usually only changing the top fabric. Here the plastic is more of a similar color-tone, but the colors are more vibrant, yet blotchy and looking a bit like it was made out of an abstract art piece.





The Instagram has millions of followers and shows the sneakers in a variety of situations some behind solid color backgrounds in uniform lighting, other times in natural situations like the grass. Sometimes with contrasting backgrounds and sometimes not. This shows a varied way of presenting it that probably makes more sense seeing them as photos rather than as ads, one couldn't upload the shoes in the same way every time, some are portraits, some are ads, anything Yeezy related is shown to increase hype and dedication to the brand.

This might, following the logic of "Rhetoric of the Image" mean that the brand's social media presence pushes for it to be seen in both a real-life as well as a more artistic front, any possible angle of representation². As the article points out "in every society various techniques are developed intended to fix the floating chain of signified in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs;" so perhaps in the more wordless display of Instagram, it negates the coded messages of one with another image in a different environment.

In the Manifesto on Futurism¹ it is written that chaos and danger will be indispensable for future design when it states "audacity... will be essential elements of our poetry". West's rejection of a consistent application of his brand along with the unique shape and colors of the sneakers themselves, shows a kind of agreement with this idea.



I hate being
Bi-Polar
it's awesome

In the article “Why black Matters in Design” it’s written “For many attendees, it was their first time attending a design conference with primarily black and brown designers... [Brandon Breaux] shared his recently developed t-shirt line to remind people of the importance of mental health awareness, with half of its proceeds going to NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. This session hit a personal chord with several attendees: designers Audrey Bennett and Dian Holton both admired Breaux’s honesty, as mental illness is not typically discussed by people of color in public,”⁵

Here it’s described that in the design space issues of color and mental illness can go untouched, however, it’s a known thing that West is both Black and one with a mental illness specifically Bipolar Disorder. The success of the Yeezy brand could mean greater representation for these issues even wordlessly providing representation and a voice.



While in most advertisements clarity is key, West seems to rely on confusion in his campaign. Solidifying the artistic bent of the brand, the We Got Love campaign to advertise the release of the Yeezy Boost 350 V2 “Triple White” was popular for its unique photography. The actors were shown in interesting though nondescript backgrounds, wearing clothing that did not draw attention to itself. Meant to promote solidarity among people they showcase the expression of the person, humanism, and though using Yeezy branded materials did not draw attention to themselves.³

This runs against the reading Rhetoric of the image which seems to stress the clarity of advertisements with the combination of various forms of messages, and leans much more on the cultural knowledge. The Yeezy brand, I would contend, knows the photography will outrun the ads in whichever medium they're in, and relies on information already contained about the brand, as well as curiosity and organic growth.

This propensity to gamble on the audience might mean important differences as Black business grows, those who find inspiration in West and the Yeezy brand might be more apt to be inspired by these methods, leading to a slow change in Black cultural expression. This gamble on the audience also shows an involvement with the culture.



In general, throughout Ye's brand we see a acceptance of the feminine, the odd, strange, and a confidence in the audience that is owed to West's desire to be a success artistically and culturally which, as it grows in popularity and cultural impact, will have notable affects on the fashion industry and on Black creatives especially.