

Trying too hard?

Inside today's *Washington Post* not only was there a special "commemorative" inauguration insert, but another insert that is titled "Progress" and has today's date on the bottom. You could be forgiven for thinking it is yet another adulatory piece about Barack Obama, due to the progressive, historic nature of his inauguration today. However, you would be wrong. It is about Audi, the car company. This insert tries to define progress for me—for instance, "Grown men spraying giant bottles of champagne," and "leaving behind yesterday's idea of luxury." These inane headlines are being equated to "progress is a woman dominating a man's sport," and most egregiously, to the idea that our country is finally embracing a person of color as president. Audi wants you to believe that the company is just as progressive as the United States. What exactly makes Audi progressive? That of course, is not answered.

I have seen lots of advertising that takes advantage of momentous events. Many companies advertise during special events in what is generally image advertising or brand-building. And I get that Audi is engaging in the same. However, I wonder what the strategy is. The insert, even though it is on newsprint and not glossy, is expensive. Audi is also running the same campaign online. So is the idea that people will buy today's newspaper as a keepsake so they will also read the Audi ad? Is the idea to equate Audi with Barack Obama? In my opinion, this will fall flat. Like I said before, I don't find evidence in the insert of Audi's "progressive" nature. Also, people who buy the paper today will be totally focused on two things: information about the nuts and bolts of the inaugural and info on Obama. An extra supplement that is irrelevant will get thrown out.

Did you see this insert/campaign? If so, what did you think of it? Please leave comments.

UPDATE: Also, Audi sponsored Inauguration night's NBC and ABC newscasts, so that they could be presented with limited commercial interruption. That's a lot of marketing dollars...and again, is it worth it?