



ILLAMASQUA

WE ARE COLOUR, YOU ARE BEAUTY.

Illamasqua is a British make-up brand founded by Julian Kynaston and launched in November 2008. In 2013 it launched a make-up collection called “I’mPerfection”, making a pun between the word “imperfection” and the expression “I’m perfection”, underlining that “we are all perfectly imperfect”. To understand completely the meaning of this idea, it is useful to analyse the advertisement they realized to promote their products.

It begins with the payoff, formed by the brand name, Illamasqua, the logo and the slogan of the advertising campaign “We are colour, you are beauty.” Very quickly the attention is drawn to the expression “I’mPerfection”, coloured in black and blue to make the pun clear.

The headline is “Who says only perfection is beautiful?”, which is the basic question of the whole advertisement questioning the idea of beauty we are accustomed to.

The background shows the preparation of a photo-set, realized through time-lapse's technique.

Alex Box, Illamasqua's Creative Director, says that, according to her, there is no distinction between imperfection and perfection because imperfection doesn't exist; picking up a quote from Groucho Marx “Blessed are the cracked, for they shall let in the light.” she gets the point of what imperfections are.

While she is talking, the background is still the photo-set but this time we see Alex Box puts make up on a model using a green lip gloss, part of the ImPerfection's collection.

Joseph Corré, the Brand Director, says: “It's the imperfections in people that make them interesting – make them beautiful”. He explains that Illamasqua, as a company, has taken on the challenge to look at every aspects of humanity, including flaws, to discover who we really are. Furthermore, unlike many cosmetics industries, which try to impose their vision of beauty on the society, Illamasqua reverses the situation using the motto “we are colour, you are beauty” showing a great respect for our individuality. Like in the previous part, while he's talking, moments of the photo shooting flow on the screen and a model has her make up done by Alex Box with a black eyeliner all over her eye, her nose, just like a spot; another model has big pearls instead of her eyebrows, around her neck and in her hair. The action so far follows a well-defined framework, that is speech/photo shoot, now the action is overturned, while a model has her make up done with lines of black eyeliner around her eyes, strong blush on her cheekbones and a soft pink shade of lipstick, we hear the concluding words of Julian Kynaston. He states it is the society that, since teenage years, impose us beauty standards and push us towards the research of a standard physical perfection; he makes the typical example of a young boy who, during middle school, gets a crush on a “cool” girl, who achieves the “right” look, the “right” dress, the “right” personality universally recognized as charming and aesthetically appealing, but it is only growing up, becoming wiser and more self-confident, that we notice the “others”, those people who hide themselves in the shadows with their “imperfections” and we realize that “true beauty is something that lies in imperfection”.

In the conclusion reclaims the word “I’mPerfection, again as in the initial part, but now it shows also the products of the collection, composed of different kinds of nail polishes, blushes, concealers, lipsticks, lip glosses, eyeliners and a particular kind of brush.

This image dissolves to be replaced by the last image characterized by the signature line, the payoff and the standing details, website and instagram's hashtag (#I’mPerfection).

The target audience should be the so called “common people” and in particular everyone who does not feel self-confident because of “imperfections”.

The language is direct and all the responses are written in the present tense. There is the initial question “who says only perfection is beautiful?” and, while Alex Box, Joseph Corré and Julian Kynaston explain their idea of beauty, all their speeches aim at clarifying the main idea they want to communicate, which is also the answer to the question. Their answers are all characterized by linking words, such as beauty, beautiful and imperfection, pertinent to the topic and aim of the ad. The language is carefully chosen to be clear, simple, without playfulness, symbolism nor rhetorical devices as they are unnecessary. Indeed, they speak quite an informal language, for example, there are some expressions like: “I think that's kind of”, “that's beauty, that's sexy”, “I guess they want to try”, “what like...what their vision is”, “the ones we were told to like, who they hang out with, how to dress, what music to listen to...” which are all pretty colloquial.

The whole ad is centred on an effective and clear combination of images and copy to capture the attention of the audience and to generate some kind of emotional response, and to achieve that the language imitates spoken English to be closer to the audience.

Regarding the people in the advertisement, on one side there are the three leading figures of the firm, the Creative Director (Alex Box), the Brand Director (Joseph Corré) and the Founder of the company (Julian Kynaston), on the other side there are the four models. The three leading figures are all filmed in medium close-up, to speak with spontaneity, as in an interview, their facial expression, too, are quite relaxed, they seem normal, “common”; these are advertising techniques to better approach the audience. This idea of perfection as imperfection also reflects on the models, each one has her make up done with something outside the rule, something that is generally covered up or that has standard rules. So the first model has shiny skin on her cheekbones and on her forehead, her freckles are highlighted and she wears a green lipgloss; the second one has the eyeliner blurred and undefined; the third one has pearls instead of her eyebrows and the last one has too much blush and again the eyeliner is not well-defined. All of this is unconventional, outside the box.

Body language and gestures, as facial expressions, are rather absent, there are only a few head movements while they are speaking, which is quite normal. This absence of gestures suggests self-confidence and detaches the attention from the leading figures to the words and to the message itself. Indeed the use of voice, in this case, is fundamental because they are explaining a concept, an ideal, as if they are telling a story. The voices have a relaxed and quiet pitch, a balanced cadence. Background is realistic, it is a photo shooting, and in particular, the one of the “I'mPerfection” collection. In the first 15 seconds there is the fulfilment of a photo-set in time-lapse, after that there are instants of the photo shooting during which the models have their make up done and are photographed.

As for the originality of this advertisement, other companies have dealt with this delicate issue, like Dove, which has made many advertisements about “real beauty”. Besides there have been a lot of photographic/graphic projects like the one called “Original Ideal” by Scott Chasserot, which combines portrait photography and neuroscience to isolate the subjects' ideal self image, or it is even more realistic and impressive the example of Lizzie Velasquez, the so-called “the ugliest woman in the world”, who has actually a syndrome that prevents her to put on weight, she's a motivational speaker who helps people to accept and to appreciate themselves. So the subject of the advertisement itself is not extremely original. What is original, instead, is that Illamasqua is the first make up brand to deal with this imperfection as beauty.

Definitely this advertisement is effective only for certain aspects: for example for what concerns the message, the matter of beauty as imperfection and consequently the brand policy; instead, it is ineffective to promote the collection products, which are kept in the background. I define this advertisement both non commercial and commercial.

The ad has a double purpose, on one hand they promote their new make up collection, but on the other hand, as their slogan “we are colour, you are beauty” suggests, Illamasqua differentiates from the other companies because it does not try to impose beauty standards, on the contrary it

encourages to accept our individuality, who we really are, with our imperfections and to highlight them because they make us unique.

Within Illamasqua's website they write: "The world isn't perfect. But who wants to be perfect anyway? Imperfection is an open invitation to stand up and show the world what makes you perfectly imperfect. We want you to highlight the features other brands encourage you to cover up and celebrate your imperfections like badges of honour. So show off your freckles. Make beauty spots more beautiful.

Shine a light on your birthmarks. And be proud of your scars. Because life isn't about finding yourself, life is about celebrating who you really are."