

Cokelore: The History of Red and The Polar Bear



It was still considered a “new innovation” to drink soda from the can when Coca-Cola’s now iconic can burst onto the market in 1960. Prior to that, crisp clear contour glass Coca-Cola bottles filled ice boxes nationwide. People had come to know and trust the refreshing drink in its bottled form—truth be told, the can wasn’t very popular at first. Many people were uncertain they were getting the same classic drink in the new can. It wasn’t until the Company placed a picture of the distinctive contour bottle on the can that it finally caught on. Today, millions of cans are sold each month in the U.S. alone.

A decade later, Coca-Cola made another change; this time redefining the way people around the world would look at the brand. In the 1970s, red became the official color of Coke, and it’s been incorporated into all aspects of the business ever since. Everything from the carrying crates to the trucks was redesigned to have the bold, festive color that so many now associate with the brand.

Over the years, the Coca-Cola red can has seen several updates and face-lifts, including refreshed logos and new images. But, one thing remained constant...its classic red color.



Today, that all changes.

For the first time in history, Coca-Cola’s iconic can will shed the red for a new white design. It’s all part of the “Arctic Home” campaign to raise awareness and funding to protect the polar bear’s Arctic habitat. The bears need our help to ensure they always have a place to call home.

Polar bears have been a part of the Coca-Cola tradition since 1922, when they first appeared in a Coca-Cola print advertisement in France. For the next 70 years, these fun-loving bears appeared sporadically in advertising campaigns and made appearances on Coke cans in countries around the globe, including Spain, Italy and Hong Kong. And in 1993, they became forever connected to Coca-Cola with the animated television commercial “Northern Lights.” The memorable commercial, based on a concept by Ken Stewart, depicted a group of polar bears enjoying their favorite soft drink while watching the sky light up. Since then, the bears have appeared in 10 more commercials, including multiple spots celebrating the holiday season and two ads for the 1994 Olympic Winter Games in Lillehammer.

The polar bear has come to represent family togetherness, refreshment, good times and the start of the holiday season. For years, people around the world have watched as these lovable polar bears have: skated across frozen ponds, gone for *their* gold at the Olympics, welcomed twin cubs, tested their swimming skills, celebrated the millennium, gone sledding as a family, and most recently shared a dance with neighboring penguins! There’s no question the polar bear has become an icon, and as such, was recently awarded a permanent position on the Madison Avenue Advertising Walk of Fame. This prestigious award is the ad industry’s version of the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

The “Arctic Home” campaign will help to ensure our friends can continue to enjoy their Arctic habitat for years to come.