

Technology crushing human creativity? Apple's new iPad ad has struck a nerve online

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Online Desk: A newly released ad promoting Apple's new iPad Pro has struck quite a nerve online.

The ad, which was released by the tech giant Tuesday, shows a hydraulic press crushing just about every creative instrument artists and consumers have used over the years — from a piano and record player, to piles of paint, books, cameras and relics of arcade games. Resulting from the destruction? A pristine new iPad Pro.

“The most powerful iPad ever is also the thinnest,” a narrator says at the end of the commercial.

Apple's intention seems straightforward: Look at all the things this new product can do. But critics have called it tone-deaf — with several marketing experts noting the campaign's execution didn't land.

“I had a really disturbing reaction to the ad,” said Americus Reed II, professor of marketing at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. “I understood conceptually what they were trying to do, but ... I think the way it came across is, here is technology crushing the life of that nostalgic sort of joy (from former times).”

The ad also arrives during a time many feel uncertain or fearful about seeing their work or everyday routines “replaced” by technological advances — particularly amid the rapid commercialization of generative artificial intelligence. And watching beloved items get smashed into oblivion doesn't help curb those fears, Reed and others note.

Several celebrities were also among the voices critical of Apple's “Crush!” commercial on social media this week.

“The destruction of the human experience. Courtesy of Silicon Valley,” actor Hugh Grant wrote on the social media platform X, in a repost of Apple CEO Tim Cook's sharing of the ad.

Some found the ad to be a telling metaphor of the industry today — particularly concerns about big tech negatively impacting creatives. Filmmaker Justine Bateman wrote on X that the commercial “crushes the arts.”

Experts added that the commercial marked a notable difference to marketing seen from Apple in the past — which has often taken more positive or uplifting approaches.

“My initial thought was that Apple has become exactly what it never wanted to be,” Vann Graves, executive director of the Virginia Commonwealth University's Brandcenter, said.

Graves pointed to Apple's famous 1984 ad introducing the Macintosh computer, which he said focused more on uplifting creativity and thinking outside of the box as a unique individual. In contrast, Graves added, “this (new iPad) commercial says, ‘No, we're going to take all the creativity in the world and use a hydraulic press to push it down into one device that everyone uses.’”

In a statement shared with Ad Age on Thursday, Apple apologized for the ad. The outlet also reported that Apple no longer plans to run the spot on TV.

“Creativity is in our DNA at Apple, and it's incredibly important to us to design products that empower creatives all over the world,” Tor Myhren, the company's vice president of marketing communications, told

Ad Age. “Our goal is to always celebrate the myriad of ways users express themselves and bring their ideas to life through iPad. We missed the mark with this video, and we’re sorry.”

Cupertino, California-based Apple unveiled its latest generation of iPad Pros and Airs earlier this week in a showcase that lauded new features for both lines. The Pro sports a new thinner design, a new M4 processor for added processing power, slightly upgraded storage and incorporates dual OLED panels for a brighter, crisper display.

Apple is trying to juice demand for iPads after its sales of the tablets plunged 17% from last year during the January-March period. After its 2010 debut helped redefine the tablet market, the iPad has become a minor contributor to Apple’s success. It currently accounts for just 6% of the company’s sales.