

Imagery Reveals Face From Space!



GeoEye satellite image taken of Rachel, NV (37° 38.801' N, 115° 44.760' W)
Image courtesy of KFC

When it came to "rebranding" Kentucky Fried Chicken this fall, the company's PR agency, Weber Shandwick, came up with a big, big idea.

In conjunction with unveiling the new logo, they wanted to build a physical logo that would be the world's largest, so large it would be visible from space.

Dubbed the "Face From Space" by the Weber Shandwick project team, the new KFC logo (which adds a red apron to the Colonel's familiar double-breasted white suit) would be seen by more than astronauts and aliens. As part of the launch it would be photographed from an earth-orbiting satellite and processed so it would be viewable on the Internet. Applications could be built to make it seem the viewer was zooming in from space and to even search the logo for hidden messages.

The idea won over KFC, so the agency researched current record holders through Guinness World Records and determined they would need to build an 87,500-square-foot logo to lay claim to the record.

Building the Face

Weber Shandwick put together a dedicated project team that included designers, architects, engineers and even astrophysicists. Over three months, they spent 3,000 hours creating the face design, which would be rendered on 65,000 1' x 1' interlocking tiles.

Originally, the tiles were to be installed in Utah, on the flatlands near the site of the first KFC restaurant. However, when a severe rainstorm damaged that site, things got even stranger. The project was relocated to the Area 51 desert near Rachel, Nevada, also known as the "UFO Capital of the World."

It took seven days for the team to place the tiles into a grid. During that time, they were covered from prying eyes, human and otherwise. The completed design is made of 6,000 red tiles, 14,000 white, 12,000 eggshell, 12,000 beige, and 28,000 black.

Laying connected on the ground they resemble a big jigsaw puzzle but when viewed from far, far above, the Colonel's familiar face and double-breasted white suit, now with a red apron, becomes quickly recognizable.

With the grid constructed, the IKONOS commercial satellite could be used to capture the image for processing. Leica Geosystems in Switzerland then used its Leica Virtual Explorer 3D visualization product to incorporate the captured IKONOS imagery into a virtual earth, a clear and spatially accurate digital reality. For the KFC project, the virtual earth was used to create a sequence of images to let viewers at Internet sites "zoom" from space to the KFC face.

"Having these images online and engaging the consumer was the most important part of this project," notes Timothy Potter, a senior account executive with Weber Shandwick's London office.

The Leica zoom sequence was incorporated into footage Weber Shandwick provided to media outlets worldwide and, says Potter, the resulting coverage was outstanding.

The Face From Space received international coverage and thousands of blogs by the second day. The video has been viewed over 100,000 times on YouTube and Google, and continues to receive hits.

The movie is still available to view at <http://www.kfc.com/facefromspace/default.asp>.