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Ikea Rejects Pussy-Riot-Themed Photo

By The Moscow Times

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Calling itself apolitical and nonreligious, Ikea removed this photo from a contest for its next catalog cover.

Ikea, known worldwide for its provocative marketing stunts, has decided to draw the line with a picture of masked youths wearing Pussy Riot-style balaclavas and seated on Ikea furniture.

A month into a customer competition to select the cover for its next catalog, Ikea Russia deleted the picture of four youths wearing multicolored masks from its website over the weekend.

In place of the picture, visitors to Ikea Russia's site now see a statement that reads: "Ikea is a commercial organization that operates independently of politics and religion. We cannot allow our advertising project to be used as a means of propaganda."

The photograph, taken by a user called Starovoitova from the Urals city of Yekaterinburg, was the most popular in Ikea's photo gallery at the time it was deleted, and the pictureless page remained in the No. 1 spot Sunday. It has garnered more than 1,400 online votes.

A Moscow court sentenced three members of the punk band Pussy Riot to two-year jail terms in August for an obscene performance criticizing President Vladimir Putin in Moscow's main cathedral. A legal appeal of the three women's sentence on hooliganism charges is due to be heard Oct. 1, when supporters plan to hold a worldwide rally.

Ikea is no stranger to controversy when it comes to promoting its furniture. Last year, it stirred anger in Italy with an ad showing two men holding hands with the headline "We are open to all families."

Ikea ran into trouble when it first entered Russia in 2000 and the Moscow metro rejected two ads for its underground billboards as morally unfit. One ad read: "Every 10th European was made in one of our beds," while the other, which pictured one of the store's catalogs, said, "The most-read publication in the world. After the Bible, thank God."

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