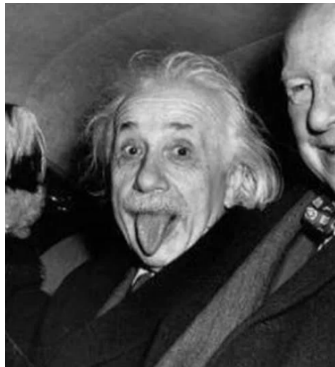


Einstein repurposed

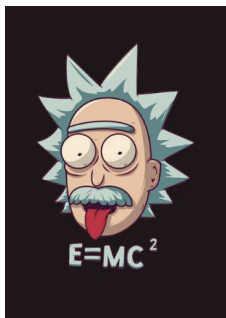


Images of Albert Einstein have long circulated through both digital and physical media. This widespread use is unsurprising, since Einstein is widely regarded as one of the most influential physicists in history and remains one of the most recognizable figures of the twentieth century.

While Einstein's photos have been used mostly in contexts associated with intelligence, IQ, and physics, one particular image tends to be used for completely unrelated purposes. The photo was taken on Einstein's 72nd birthday, immediately after an event in his honor at Princeton on March 14, 1951. As he walked back to the car with the former director of the Institute for Advanced Study and his wife, reporters followed, attempting to take pictures. UPI photographer Arthur Sasse approached the vehicle once the crowd dispersed and told Einstein to smile. Thinking the photographer would be too slow to capture it, Einstein stuck out his tongue.¹

This spontaneous gesture resulted in what would become one of the most reproduced and parodied photographs of Einstein, with the first to do so being none other than himself. He requested UPI to give him nine copies for personal use, which he cropped and sent to his friends as greeting cards, and one, which he signed for a reporter. On June 19, 2009, the original signed photograph was sold at auction for \$74,324.

Since then, there have been countless remakes of the photo, from pop artworks to associations with famous cartoon characters. One example is "Albert Joke" by artist Grégoire Guillemain². The piece shows Einstein with the iconic makeup of the Joker. Similar references are found in drawings of Rick from *Rick and Morty*, posed with his tongue out in imitation of Einstein. Another example is a parody of the Obama "Hope" poster, reimagined with Einstein and accompanied by the caption " $E = mc^2$." The image was also recreated by photographer Sandro Miller as part of his series *Malkovich: Homage to Photographic Masters*, which featured actor John Malkovich posing as history's most famous figures.³



In 2006, in Athens, teachers launched a strike to demand higher wages and funds for the free public education, using a banner with a drawing of the photo.⁴

The photograph's influence extends beyond two-dimensional media, including a large Lego recreation displayed at Berlin's Legoland Discovery Centre.⁵

The image has also become a popular tool in advertising and commercial branding. For instance, it has been used in an ad for the Dyslexia Association of Malaysia, a campaign that features famous dyslexics, where the image was drawn by Vince Low.⁶ Another example is an ad for Sweden's National Museum



of Science and Technology, where a young girl is posing with her tongue out, the caption “Every little genius’ favourite place.”⁷

While many of these examples maintain a clear connection to Einstein's reputation as a genius, there are instances where the relation between the company and the scientist is hard to pinpoint.



One example is the *Louis Vuitton Tambour Einstein Automata*, a luxury watch created for the charity auction Only Watch, with an impression of the photo on it. Einstein's head is grisaille enamel, while his hair and moustache are engraved in 18k white gold.⁸

Moreover, actress Charlize Theron was photographed for Esquire Magazine, wearing a shirt with the particular photo of Einstein.⁹

Another recreation appeared in a campaign by the Brazilian internet provider iG. To promote its women's website, Delas, the company recreated photographs of famous men, including Einstein, with female models.¹⁰

The image was also utilized for Mercedes-Benz “Left Brain/Right Brain” advertisement¹¹, a Microsoft online encyclopedia advertisement, showcasing a child sticking his tongue out with the caption “Give your child a brain,”¹² and a Berocca vitamin/supplement ad with a drawing of the image and the caption “Ingenious results.”¹³

Sony made use of the image too, in a print advertisement for a DVD player titled *Einstein*¹⁴, and a commercial for Sony Cyber-shot Panorama¹⁵.



The video begins with the original shot of Einstein sticking his tongue out, but keeps zooming out, revealing an absurd scene, and cleverly ending with “stories are better panoramic.” The ad “A Famous Tongue” by Tung Brush and Gel features the photo with the accompanying article ending with the quote “next time you stick your tongue out for a picture, be sure you have taken care of it by using The Original TUNG Brush and Gel [...]

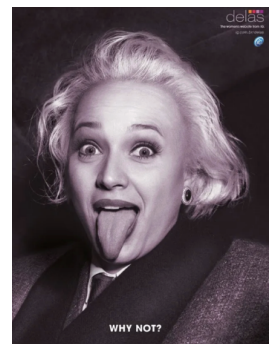
You never know when that photo may become famous!”¹⁶ In extension, an

article written in The Strategist, a product review website by New York Magazine, includes the photo with a tongue scraper edited onto it.¹⁷

Absurd as it may seem, a 2003 advertisement for the Brazilian dog-training company Perdizes Kennel depicts a dog sticking out its tongue alongside the slogan “You'll think your dog is a genius.”¹⁸

Finally, Kit Kat Thailand mocks all the brands that have used Einstein, urging them to “have a break”. It shows a tired man sticking his tongue out just like Einstein, but the caption reads “there's only one who can pull this look off.”¹⁹

Over seven decades after it was taken, Einstein's tongue-out photograph remains one of the most recognizable images in popular culture. It has evolved into a versatile visual symbol that can represent genius, humour, rebellion, and creativity.



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