

ADVERTISING

Dior modernizes brand image with Rihanna-fronted campaign

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Dior Secret Garden campaign image featuring Rihanna

By SARAH JONES

French fashion house Christian Dior is leveraging pop star Rihanna's celebrity and modernity in the latest installment of its Secret Garden advertising campaign.

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Luxury Daily

The singer was the first to release any of the campaign images, posting them to Instagram May 13 ahead of Dior's May 14 publication, creating a media frenzy and gaining the attention of her millions of social media fans. Building interest before the full campaign release May 18 will draw an audience for the big reveal.

"It was huge that Rihanna shared the images of the campaign to her followers first," said Cenon Advincula, creative director at [Walton Isaacson](#), Los Angeles. "This builds on her 'bad girl' persona by rewarding her fans with an unofficial sneak-peak, while stoking interest in the rest of the campaign from the press. Dior can build on this momentum with their official launch."

Mr. Advincula is not affiliated with Dior, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Dior](#) was unable to comment directly.

Soft launch

Dior's fourth Secret Garden campaign, shot by photographer Steven Klein, captures Rihanna wandering the chateau and gardens at Versailles at night wearing items from the brand's Esprit Dior collection shown in Tokyo last December ([see story](#)).

Rihanna, birth name Robyn Rihanna Fenty, began sharing images of the campaign on her Instagram May 13, posting them with a caption that tagged Dior's profile and using the hashtags #SecretGarden4Campaign and #ILoveDior.

One shot is a close-up of her wearing sunglasses and a deep red lip, holding one metallic handbag in each crimson-nailed hand up next to her face.



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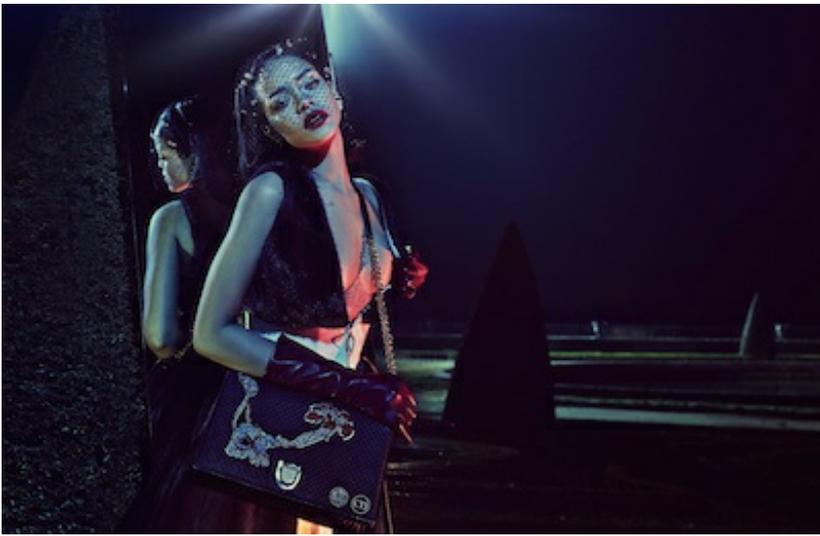
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Instagram post from Rihanna

Another still features the singer leaning against a mirror alongside the gardens, a Diorama handbag slung across her body and a veil covering half her face, adding an aura of mystery.



Dior Secret Garden campaign image

The third campaign image shared captures her in the act of running away down a corridor in a red gown.



Dior Secret Garden campaign image

Each of the teaser images from Rihanna had amassed more than 300,000 likes by press time.

On May 14, Dior also shared the campaign with its online audience, revealing more photos and a teaser to the film.

Other campaign images show Rihanna in a long-sleeve sequin dress looking into a mirror in a regal pose clutching a metallic handbag or standing casually on the lawn in the gardens in a dark overcoat, with a bright light shining through topiary.



Dior Secret Garden campaign image

The teaser for the film shows the singer from behind walking slowly up a staircase, holding a handbag behind her back. It is underscored by classical piano and strings, which switches at the very end to Rihanna's voice singing the words "only if for the night."

The first look at Rihanna's Dior debut. Coming May 18th. Stay tuned.

Posted by [Dior](#) on [Thursday, May 14, 2015](#)

The full film, which will be released on May 18, will feature the track of the same name off Rihanna's next album.

"Dior made an inspired choice on so many fronts by selecting Rihanna to front this campaign," Mr. Advincula said.

"First, it was a bold historic move to use a black woman to be the face of such a storied franchise as Dior," he said. "Women of color, especially black women, continue to be woefully underrepresented in the modeling business and the fashion industry in general. With this move, women and girls of color can look at this campaign and feel that the brand truly 'gets them.'

"Second, Rihanna's a true fashion trendsetter and a big fan of Dior's, so the partnership is seamless and authentic. Thirdly, the choice of Rihanna marks Dior's attempt to appeal to the millennial customer through music, celebrity and social media."

Celebrity status

For the second consecutive year, France's Christian Dior has revived its "Secret Garden" campaign to attract consumers to its pre-fall 2014 collection before competing brands release their efforts.

Dior's Secret Garden, released on May 30, is the third chapter of a series of campaigns filmed at the palace at Versailles. By releasing a themed video, at approximately the same time each year, Dior's enthusiasts likely will come to anticipate the series and recheck the

house's social platforms for updates ([see story](#)).

Other brands have benefited from using the singer in their ad campaigns, creating buzz through social media.

French fashion house Balmain released images of its spring 2014 print ad campaign featuring pop star Rihanna to generate buzz for the label among both brand enthusiasts and fans of the singer.

Balmain posted five campaign shots across its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts, and Rihanna did the same, leveraging her own network of 30 million followers. By teaming up with a celebrity who has a massive fan base, Balmain is able to introduce itself to new potential consumers ([see story](#)).

When partnering with a celebrity, it is important that the collaboration feels genuine. Rihanna has attended the label's autumn/winter 2014 and cruise 2015 shows, and was photographed multiple times carrying a pastel Lady Dior bag last summer and currently can be seen with the house's Diorama bag.

"Dior's new campaign with Rihanna modernizes what's been done in the past by incorporating celebrity, music and more diversity into the mix," Mr. Advincula said. "The fashion house was in danger of seeming too elite, cold and 'old luxury.'"

"With the choice of Rihanna, the campaign is at the center of what's hot and relevant right now — the nexus of music, celebrity and social media."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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