

ADVERTISING

John Lobb returns to roots in fall campaign film

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John Lobb "A Singular Journey"

By SARAH JONES

British footwear label John Lobb is exploring its early brand history in a campaign video for its fall/winter 2015 collection.

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"A Singular Journey" takes the viewer on a walk through terrain that mirrors the trek the brand's eponymous founder made to London in 1851. Going back to its beginnings will focus on a part of John Lobb's story that may have otherwise remained unknown to consumers.

"John Lobb has a rich history in bespoke boot and shoemaking so crafting stories is nothing new," said Marko Muellner, digital vice president and group director at [Edelman](#), Portland.

"While most of the attention tends to be on their craftsmanship, longevity and ultimately their style, the compelling story of their patriarch's journey from rural farm boy to beloved server of aristocrats has remained largely untold," he said. "So why not? Why not cut and shape and stretch the brand's genesis story into rich tale of poetic adventure."

Mr. Muellner is not affiliated with John Lobb, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

John Lobb was unable to respond directly before press deadline.

Walking through history

John Lobb teased the film for two days leading up to its premiere Sept. 10. Social posts show snippets of the video and tell of the full version “coming soon.”

On Sept. 10, the same day of the debut on social media, John Lobb sent an email to consumers promoting the film. Alongside a thumbnail of the video, copy explains that this is a representation of the walk taken by John Lobb at 22, when he left his home in Cornwall and traveled to London on foot, “carried only by his handmade boots.”



Facebook post from John Lobb

Further text explains that this highlights the fall/winter collection available in stores now, but no links are provided to product information, enabling this effort to be more about branding than commerce.

A Singular Journey begins with a close-up shot of an eye, as Cornish poet CP Nield begins to recite the poem he wrote for the brand in voiceover, saying, “I am the stranger, the path is my story.” A man is shown walking in the distance across a field.

The poem is meant to evoke an older Mr. Lobb looking back on his journey.

As the voiceover continues, “I walked the twisted miles toward my dream,” the protagonist is followed traversing a mossy forest.



Promotional image for A Singular Journey

“I walked the grey path of shadow and ice” is paired with footage of the traveler stepping deliberately in a pair of white sneakers, his footstep causing the wet ground to release water.

As the man walks along a beach, tossing rocks in or skipping in the sand, the voiceover remembers, “I drew my steps towards a distant shore.”

Night falls, and the journeyer draws out a light, which reveals a fox. He feels he may walk forever.

Coming full circle, the video ends with the image of an eye with the voiceover, “Born with no future, my future was born.”

Embedded Video: https://www.youtube.com/embed/1QZA_eTxupo

A Singular Journey

This video makes a link from the collection to its inspiration, as many of the towns Mr. Lobb passed through as a young man shaped style designs and names. The first collection designed by new artistic director Paula Gerbase includes Fowey, limited-edition boots named for Mr. Lobb's home, and Levah, a new plimsole style that comes in colors that represent the landscape, including moss, dark iron and russet.

Under new creative direction, John Lobb has plans this year for three new stores in the United States and China, a new retail concept and an updated Web site.

"Luxury marketing film always pushes into art, abstraction and curiosity, even when the roots are non-fiction," Mr. Muellner said. "As the teaser video of the collection's art installation shows, A Singular Journey is not meant to be merely a Facebook or Web site attention grabber - it has many roles in the launch of the new collection.

"Video and storytelling more generally is the fuel of our social media lives and strategies that deploy teasers, short form and visually rich media tend to capture attention," he said. "A modern articulation of a turn of the century genesis story with high-fashion shopping as the payoff, what could be better?"

Back to the beginning

A brand founder's earliest inclination toward a craft is often a subject explored in marketing to lend a personal touch to heritage efforts.

Italian footwear and accessories label Salvatore Ferragamo is telling the story of the brand's eponymous founder through a fantastical short film showing the designer as a child.

“A Ferragamo Fairy Tale: White Shoe” is based on the first shoe that late Mr. Ferragamo created, a white shoe for his sister to wear for her first communion, which he constructed by candlelight. With this 24-minute film, Ferragamo is able to weave a more intricate story and tell its fans a dramatic version of the label's early history ([see story](#)).

Also, London's Barbican Centre, one host of the traveling exhibit on French couturier Jean

Paul Gaultier's career, created a mobile application to accompany the retrospective.

The museum claims the app is the first to chart the designer's work and life, bringing the information contained in the exhibit to a digital space. Since Jean Paul Gaultier's Web site does not delve into its eponymous founder's history, this app will likely act as a standalone to educate loyalists on the heritage of the brand ([see story](#)).

This film enables John Lobb to differentiate itself through its heritage.

"Adventure, discovery and courage are elusive outside of war and sport today," Mr. Muellner said. "Today's titans of business typed on keyboards in their parent's suburban garages, they didn't walk 250 miles to become master bootmakers.

"While much has changed over the years, John Lobb still crafts shoes and boots by hand and drawing the connection to their fearless founder adds depth and authenticity," he said. "The story, while painted in dramatic tones, draws us into the brand and the collection in a fresh and emotional way."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/cwVktlA7VNM>

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