

ADVERTISING

Prada handpicks up-and-coming talent to portray “vulnerable vitality”

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Image from Prada's spring/summer 2016 menswear campaign

By SARAH JONES

Italian apparel and accessories house Prada is examining masculinity's sensitive side by casting some of cinema's newest talents in its spring/summer 2016 menswear campaign.

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Shot in a basement New York club, the campaign is meant to capture the actors as they are naturally, as the camera's flash briefly illuminates their faces in the darkened space. By picking actors who are on the cusp of celebrity, Prada is able to both show its knowledge of the industry and further the public's interest in these talents.

"Prada is continuing its efforts to stay young, hip and relevant by featuring up-and-coming actors in its most recent ad campaigns," Cenon Advincula, creative director at [Walton Isaacson](#), Los Angeles. "The brand used actors Scoot McNairy and Tye Sheridan for its fall 2015 ads.

"By using actors rather than models, Prada can tell a more compelling story through their brand films and can leverage the social media around these actors," he said.

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

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

Candid camera

Prada's campaign stars Matthew Beard, Billy Howle and Logan Lerman, all of whom are in their 20s. The Tony-nominated Mr. Beard has acted on-screen in the critically acclaimed "Imitation Game" and "An Education."

Mr. Howle recently appeared in the television movie "Cider with Rosie," and also has a lead role in the film adaptation of Chekhov's "The Seagull," set for release in 2016. Mr. Lerman's body of work includes "The Perks of Being a Wallflower" and "Fury," and will star in the upcoming "Indignation," based on the Philip Roth novel of the same name.

Prada's still campaign, shot by Craig McDean, shows the actors in various spots in a dimly lit nightclub reminiscent of the clubs captured in 1970s photography. As they lean against leather sofas or stand in front of the wall décor, their body language seems natural rather than posed, as if the camera caught them unaware.



Image from Prada spring/summer 2016 menswear campaign

A short film further builds the atmosphere surrounding the campaign.

At the start, Mr. Beard is shown walking down a New York street at night. When he reaches a door and opens it, the music swells.

Each man is then shown descending a staircase, with murals on either side of the steps illuminated as a bright light appears and disappears.

As the actors move around the space, the light keeps moving, whether a strobe casting

white light on one of their faces or a spotlight moving across the scene.

Prada explains of the campaign, "Together, the synthesis of bare non-conformism and Prada's ongoing obsession with the industrial world produce a new tendency of use. The temperament of today suggests a thinking, vulnerable vitality."

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/5hexUTRSQc8?rel=0>

Prada Spring/Summer 2016 Menswear Advertising Campaign

"Prada is creating an aura of mystery and adventure with this campaign," Mr. Advincula said. "The video shows attractive young men entering and exploring a hidden club, reminiscent of Studio 54 in its heyday. The print is shot in the style of seventies celebrity party photography.

"Prada is presenting itself as a brand for those in-the-know – urban sophisticates that are smart, stylish and confident," he said. "Men who aren't afraid to get into a little trouble."

Acting class

Prada frequently enlists actors for its ad campaigns, but the choice stems more from concept than celebrity.

The label featured a number of the film actors starring in current movies with its spring/summer 2015 men's campaign.

Prada took a psychological approach for the effort, placing inanimate objects such as an orange at the center to have the audience dissect them. Giving the actors everyday props took away some of the glamour typically associated with the actors, allowing their personalities to come through ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Prada-owned Miu Miu let consumers peek behind closed doors for its spring/summer 2015 advertising campaign.

The campaign was brought to life with three campaign films, which built anticipation, showing a cast of three actresses preparing for an event in their own way. Filming these dialogue-free narratives allowed Miu Miu to tell a story and create a sense of excitement that could not be communicated via still imagery ([see story](#)).

"Prada is targeting an affluent male consumer that is young and urban," Mr. Advincula said. "By aligning itself with new Hollywood stars, the brand is signaling to the viewer that their menswear is cutting-edge and cool.

"I think consumers will be intrigued by the campaign," he said. "It doesn't have the star power of a big-name Hollywood actor, but I think that's the point.

"Prada is a brand that has a strong tradition of producing innovative film and advertising, and I think that men who see themselves as creative and fashionable respond positively to that."

Final Take

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