

INTERNET

Inside Chanel video details 130-hour haute couture process

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Chanel Haute Couture video

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French fashion house Chanel is taking consumers inside the house for the thirteenth time to cultivate exclusivity and mystery.

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The latest chapter of the ongoing Inside Chanel series focuses on the creation of the brand's haute couture clothing. While the reveal will satisfy the modern consumer's craving for transparency, the breakneck speed of the video and repeated use of Coco Chanel quotes maintains the brand's more enigmatic aspects.

"This video helps [consumers] see the complications and effort that goes into every single piece of Chanel couture, even something as "simple" as a jacket," Andrea Wilson, Fort Worth, TX-based vice president, strategy director and luxury practice lead at [iProspect](#). "The close-up visuals and monitoring of time and logistics really help the viewer understand the massive effort for one piece item.

"It's very clear the values to communicate like quality, design, precision, detail - were thought out by the brand to ensure the most tangible of benefits are taken with the viewer," she said.

Ms. Wilson is not associated with Chanel, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Chanel could not comment before deadline.

Supreme elegance

The "Haute Couture" video is hosted alongside its predecessors on an Inside Chanel microsite. Included alongside the video is a Chanel haute couture retrospective photo gallery.

Chanel's gallery shows a number of outfits from between 1934 and 2015. Many of the photos are of mademoiselle Chanel herself, while more recent ones were taken by current creative director Karl Lagerfeld.



Still from Inside Chanel Chapter 13

The four-minute film takes the viewer through the design process for Chanel's haute couture in detail but very rapidly, with a quick-talking voiceover and frequent cuts. However, the first part of the film defines an item as "one touch of Mademoiselle's spirit, one stroke of Karl Lagerfeld's genius, 130 hours of craftsmanship," thereby hitting upon heritage, creativity, craftsmanship and attention to detail all at once.

Haute couture begins with a sketch from Mr. Lagerfeld, which must be "decoded," further emphasizing the creative director's genius. After that, "no fewer than 30 measurements" of the client are taken, a testament to the clothing's perfect fitting.

The start of the outfit is built, dismantled and rebuilt until it is perfect, as "the secrets of Chanel haute couture, whispered from generation to generation," including rounded backs and high-cut sleeves, are revealed to the viewer.

After assembly, Mr. Lagerfeld will make adjustments, such as removing buttons and picking the lining, trim and fabric. The manufacturing process, including pinning, measurements and sewing are all detailed, and the need to do them by hand is explained in the statement, "Only the hand is true to the spirit of haute couture."



Image from Inside Chanel chapter 13

Twice the clothing is taken to London, Dubai, New York, Hong Kong or Paris for the first fitting, after which alterations to the front and sleeve fronts are made. The voiceover explains that the trim must be placed to delineate the length of the garment and emphasize the shape.

Mademoiselle Chanel quotes, including "never a button without a buttonhole," serve as guiding design principles, and finishing touches all take place in Paris to stay true to the spirit of haute couture.

At the end, the label is applied "like a masterstroke" with an order number inscribed on it "like an original work of art," both of which cultivate a one-of-a-kind signature verified by a certificate of authenticity. For this reason, Chanel can divulge its secrets in the name of transparency but, as with any great artist, need not worry about imitation products that will always pale in comparison to the real thing.

The end product exudes "a subtle luxury that can be felt but never fully defined."

"Inside Chanel Chapter 13: Haute Couture"

Throughout the video, processes are delineated with a timer, which tells the viewers at which point in the 130-hour process each step occurs.

The combination of these elements highlights the brand's heritage, craftsmanship and personal touch while creating an aura of exclusivity and desirability that define the Chanel brand. At the same time, it addresses the desire consumers have to know exactly how their clothing is made, assuring them that there is no ethical wrongdoing or short-cuts and that the price is justified.

"I believe Chanel purposely kept the pace of the video quite fast and complicated, in order to highlight the extreme

work and required for a one of a kind design of this caliber," Ms. Wilson said. "The point of the video, in my opinion, is to drive awe, and positively overwhelm. It also helps satisfy the pace at which younger digital mavens consume and prefer quick, to-the-point and visual."

Additionally, Chanel's haute couture spring/summer 2016 runway show occurred on Jan. 26, just one day before the brand's CEO stepped down ([see story](#)). Stressing the amount of work and the history of Chanel haute couture will help garner interest for consumers.

Exclusive standout

Although the video does not address questions of sustainability and sourcing, it does explain the process of manufacturing the clothing that helps to define what makes Chanel a luxury brand for curious young consumers.

For young HENRYs, the "luxury" label does not carry the same mystique as it has in the past or that it might for older consumers. Instead, the word connotes over-priced and unaffordable goods even more than it defines craftsmanship or value. For these consumers, the values associated with the brand as well as the relative value in cost-per-use are more important ([see story](#)).

Other storied luxury houses' marketing has taken a turn toward the assertion of transparency over craftsmanship.

France's Christian Dior set out on a "quest for essences" in a Web documentary series exploring the relationship between the land, people and raw materials that contribute to its fragrances.

Dior's perfumer-creator Franois Demachy serves as the series narrator since he is the direct connection between the house's fragrances and the sources of the materials used. Providing consumers with access to the creative process in an intimate way, relying on nature rather than Dior's codes, allows the quality of the brand's fragrances come through ([see story](#)).

For Chanel, refusing to keep up with trends is not necessarily a sign of a brand not sticking with the times. Instead, continuing to tout more traditional signs of luxury and largely abstaining from ecommerce could help keep the brand exclusive in a way that its competitors are abandoning to capitalize on new revenue channels.

"Chanel is still quite mysterious as their craftsmanship and design is a true form of art that few can replicate (if any)," Ms. Wilson said. "By showcasing the secrets of design and execution, the brand is certainly not giving the audience the skills required to create to the couture level.

"Instead, it impresses the viewer and helps them to realize the talent, skill and thoughtfulness to create Chanel Haute Couture is a rare mix of highly skilled artisans best that uniquely come together," she said. "This rare mix is something the viewer would not be able to achieve, even if armed with the secrets of the brand's craftsmanship."