

COMMERCE

Tales of tweed afford Chanel a platform for rediscovery each season

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Tweed pieces, Chanel fall 2014

By JEN KING

SEOUL, South Korea French atelier Chanel goes on a different journey with each collection and its iconic tweed scripts the narrative surrounding a specific theme, explained a brand executive at the Conde Nast International Luxury Conference on April 20.

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Today Chanel puts on eight collections per year, broken down to six ready-to-wear lines and two haute couture presentations, choosing a location and theme to contextualize the apparel and accessories seen on the runway. For nearly two decades, the modern-day interpretations of Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel's signature tweed has been in the hands of Chanel's head of fabrics research and her team, repurposing and reinventing the woven textile again and again.

"Starting again is the excitement of the work," said Kim Young-Seong, head of fabrics research at **Chanel**. "You need to be inspired and also be curious and open minded."

Tweed trends

In her role as head of fabrics research at Chanel it is Ms. Young-Seong's responsibility to take creative director Karl Lagerfeld's vision and turn the concept into a textile. Recently, this has included a supermarket, an airport terminal and an exploration of her home country of South Korea.

Jokingly, Ms. Young-Seong shared that since Mr. Lagerfeld has not seen the inside of a supermarket in years and that she brought elements of a French grocer to him in the form of tweed. Ms. Young-Seong went as far as to create a tweed pattern based on Camembert cheese and baguette loaves.



Chanel fall/winter 2014-15 runway

Furthering the fall/winter 2014-15 ready-to-wear concept, tweeds were designed to evoke pasta, fruits and vegetables and even the frozen food section of the supermarket. The supermarket theme was brought to life by the tweed incorporated into the pieces worn on the runway ([see story](#)).

Likewise, for the airport terminal staging for spring/summer 2016 ready-to-wear, the tweeds created featured small plane icons within the threads, textiles that drew inspiration from nighttime flights and airport architecture.



Chanel spring/summer 2016 runway

In May 2015, Chanel took its cruise 2016 presentation to Seoul, South Korea, showing at the Dongdaemun Design Plaza ([see story](#)), but the fabrics team had a difficult time expressing what the city and culture looked like. As the department head, Ms. Young-Seong set out to help her team understand South Korean culture through fabric.

The resulting tweed patterns for the collection drew inspiration from the Korean dish bimimbap, a type of rice bowl served with vibrant vegetables, and traditional South Korean garb. Other tweeds were developed based off the colorful and playfulness of K-pop singers and South Korean artists.



Chanel cruise 2016

Additionally, Ms. Young-Seong and her team developed Chanel tweeds with the South Korean cloud motif,

traditional patchwork and even Chanel written in South Korean characters, as if it were a secret code for the consumers in the market.

Tales of repurposing

Chanel's tweed is cornerstone of its runway presentations, but the brand's signature textile has also been repurposed into other product categories, giving all consumers access to an iconic aspect of the house.

For example, Chanel explored aspects of its fashion designs through eyeshadow palettes inspired by its iconic use of tweed fabric to appeal to both established and aspirational consumers.

Connecting the Les 4 Ombres eyeshadow palettes to Chanel's use of tweed fabric in its apparel allows aspirational consumers to access a code of the brand at an entry-level price point. Fashion houses often examine the history of their designs and incorporate these pillars into all facets of the brand ([see story](#)).

While traditional tweed can be seen as boring, Chanel has found a knack for making the textile exceptional.

"Tweed is now a part of my life," Ms. Young-Seong said. "Because tweed is the face of Chanel, I have to create a new tweed every season.

"Everyone thinks, What can tweed be next?" she said. "Sometimes it's so stressful and challengeable.

"Sometimes I'm a masochist. I have to be, because sometimes it's so difficult."

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