

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Prada refuses conventional logic in silent cinema poem

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Allison Williams in Prada's *Past Forward*, directed by David O. Russell

By JEN KING

Italian fashion house Prada is asking viewers to decode what is experience, what is memory and what is dream in a silent short film collaboration with writer/director David O. Russell.

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After a series of teaser images shared to Instagram, Prada used the photo sharing application's newest feature, Stories, to broadcast snippets of the "Past Forward" premiere in cities such as London, New York and Tokyo. Prada scripted *Past Forward* as a silent film, and Instagram's image-based platform ensures that the feature can be enjoyed by its global audience.

"Instagram has become one of the most looked to platforms for luxury brands and the fashion industry," said Sebastian Jespersen, founder/CEO of **Vertic**, New York. "But what is unique about Prada resorting to this platform for this campaign is the audience it is seeking.

"As the world progresses into the digital age, so is the Prada woman, and the brand is demonstrating that it is keeping up with its loyal customers," he said. "The Prada woman today is using visually driven platforms such as Instagram for fashion consultation, but more importantly she is looking at features such as Instagram Stories to experience live the stories of other women.

"Though Prada took a great step in the direction of moving in the digital realm, and reaching its audiences in an innovative way, the next step is to keep the momentum, and live up to the standard they have set for themselves now. As they are moving away from **nonvertising** methods, where its one experience on one platform for everyone, the step for Prada is personalized experiences."

Mr. Jespersen is not affiliated with **Prada**, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Prada** was reached for comment.

Dreamscape realities

Prada's *Past Forward* is a cinematic collaboration between Miuccia Prada and Mr. Russell, the director behind acclaimed films such as "American Hustle," "The Fighter" and "Silver Linings Playbook."

The resulting black-and-white film is described as a "cinema poem" set in a "futuristic silent dreamscape." For the project, Prada recruited an all-star cast of Hollywood talent with actors such as Allison Williams, Freida Pinto and Kuoth Wiel taking the lead female parts.

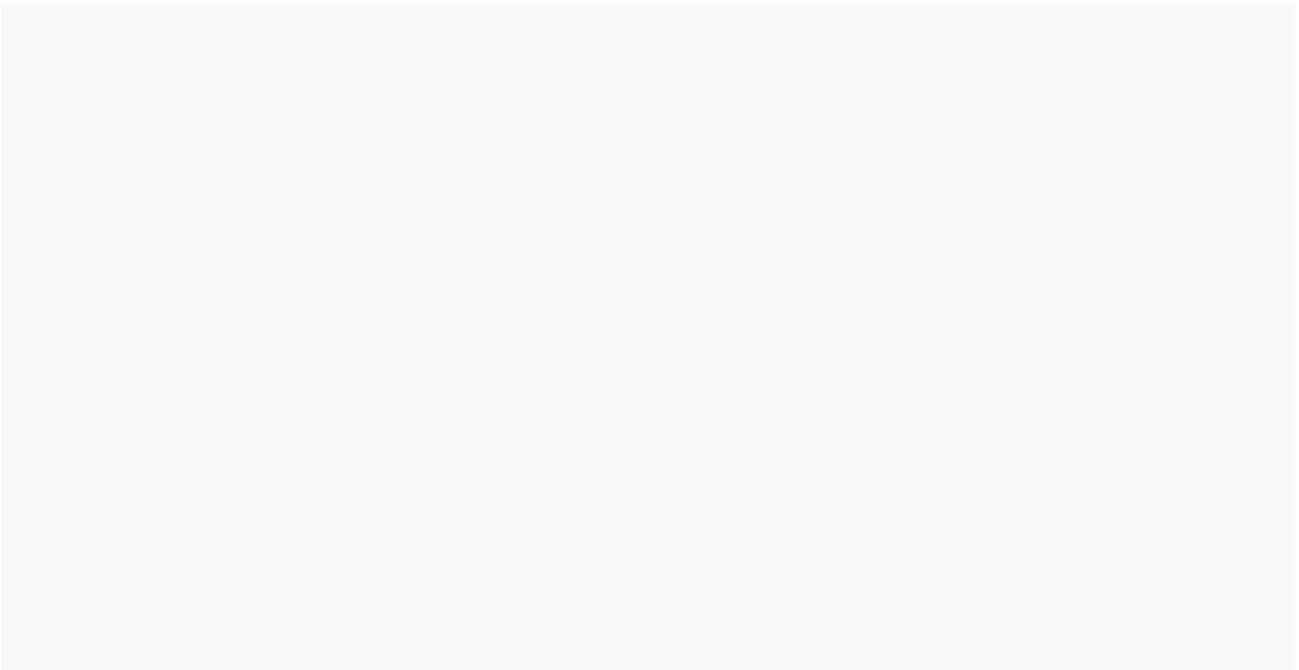


Kuoth Wiel, Frida Pinto and Allison Williams star in Prada's Past Forward

Prada's leading female protagonists, their male love interests and other supporting characters seemingly play the same role. The 12 and half minute-film continuously shifts combinations of actors and scenes, resulting in an unreliable narrative.

For example, Ms. Williams, Ms. Pinto and Ms. Wiel are shown all wearing the same outfit: black patent pumps, a khaki-colored trench, white blouse and black pencil skirt and hold a leather handbag and a hard shell briefcase.

As the narrative plays out, the character changes with almost every perspective shot and scene change. The futuristic film follows the protagonist to her apartment where she watches a video that shows her character, albeit played one of the other two actors, thus creating a feeling of uncertainty within the viewer.



#PastForward is a parallax view wherein scenarios, characters, costumes, genres, and endings repeat and morph. Watch @Prada #InstagramStories for the worldwide premiere.

A video posted by Prada (@prada) on Nov 14, 2016 at 6:00am PST

The scene played out on the apartment's screen is then showed as if it were a dream, not a televised drama. Past Forward's scene shows the protagonist racing toward security while two other women, Connie Britton and Paula Patton, follow her.

As the dreamscape continues the woman ditches her briefcase and heels to hide from the women attempting to apprehend her. Eventually security is summoned and chases the woman through the terminal, and as she runs she encounters her love interest who looks back at her in awe and confusion.

Following scenes show the three male protagonists, played by John Krasinski, Jack Huston and Sinqua Walls, chasing after the woman before finding her injured on the floor. The couples then venture to find medical help, but are shocked to find the doctor, played by Sacha Baron Cohen, does not have a mouth.

The surreal narrative continues with Ms. Britton appearing from behind a wall to choke Mr. Baron Cohen, allowing the couple to escape harm.

Once out of harm's way, the couples take shelter in a room, while the woman reflects on past relationships. After sharing a passionate embrace, the couples are seen joyfully dancing together before collapsing in feigned exhaustion, only to land on a sandy coastline.

As the waves crash over the lovers in the sand, the women wake from their dream. The final scene shows each couple, including Ms. Britton and Ms. Patton, walking together outside the building where the film begins.

Prada presents Past Forward by David O. Russell

Prada's Past Forward "complex collage" leaves the viewer "left to decode what is experience, what is memory, what is dream and discern the overlap and differences between them."

On Prada's Web site, viewers can read a statement on the film from Mr. Russell or explore a behind-the-scenes gallery.

Filmed features

In other video efforts, Prada has blurred the line between fiction and reality, much like Past Forward.

For instance, Prada took a surreal look at its spring/summer 2016 collection, peeling back the curtain on the conceptual references made in the designs.

"Real Fantasies" is an ongoing series for the label which interprets its collections through artistic film. In this manner, Prada elevates the look book beyond a flat compilation of imagery, turning it into something that simultaneously serves as entertainment and promotion ([see story](#)).

Also, Prada-owned Miu Miu commonly uses film to explore codes of femininity and causes important to the brand.

For example, Miu Miu put an emphasis on empowerment for young women and female support circles with its latest film.

The twelfth installment of the fashion label's Women's Tales series centers around an all-girl skate crew who embrace a lonely novice. The film ushered in documentary director Crystal Moselle's scripted debut and featured real-life skate-crew The Skate Kitchen whose fashion in the video embodies a coolness factor ([see story](#)).

Social media has propelled the creation of video content as it is easily digested by users.

"The three strategic challenges in making movies is financing, promotion and distribution. Social media simply alleviates drastically the latter two struggles," Vertic's Mr. Jespersen said. "All social media platforms, and specifically the visually driven ones such as Instagram, YouTube etc. it is being both promoted to billions of people, as well as distributed to audiences that can have access to it.

"As the world moves into the digital age, it is only a matter of time before the film industry does the same. Whether a film/movie is displayed through multichannels such as Past Forward, social media is and will remain the driver of traffic to other touch points," he said.

"Social media, and specifically Instagram have a larger share of a user's life (at Vertic we call it '[Share of Life](#)'). If you compare how much time you spent on Instagram for example compared to how much time you spent at a gallery, or at a movie theater, you would realize that a big chunk of your information needs is satisfied through social media.

"The immediacy demanded by today's young generation is more of a reason to resort to social media distribution," he said. "Millennials don't want to wait to get a ticket to and spend money and time to get to a movie theatre to see the movie. It's important for all industry in specifically film, to start catering to this generation to survive the digital transformation wave."

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