

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Hugo Boss hints at the unknown in sartorial look ahead

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*Image from Hugo Boss' spring/summer 2017 campaign*

By SARAH JONES

German fashion label Hugo Boss is approaching spring as an open slate with a campaign that plays on the season's opportunity for renewal.

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The brand's Boss spring/summer 2017 campaign films ask consumers, "Who will you be next?" focusing on the multifaceted and ever-changing roles that modern individuals have to adopt. A new season wardrobe is ripe with possibilities to make a style change, a consideration Hugo Boss is tapping into with this campaign.

"The imagery of the new campaign echoes back to a kind of '70s feel of freedom, openness and possibility," said Joanna Young, management director, **Team One**. "It hearkens to the fluidity of life today.

"'Who will you be next?' seems like a question they are asking themselves in their new manifestation as a fine tailoring company that is focused on the modern man today, under the umbrella of their two major brands as much as they are asking their audience," she said. "It feels like an engaging dialogue that they want to start, rather than a one-way communication.

"And it feels fresh while still grounded in a storied past, hopeful and inspiring without being naive the way they see themselves today."

Ms. Young is not affiliated with **Hugo Boss**, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Hugo Boss** was reached for comment.

Work to weekend

Hugo Boss' print advertisements were shot against the open sky. Models Victor Nylander and Frederike Sofie pose in this minimalist environment, with their apparel the centerpiece to photographer Karim Sadli's images.

Adding a nod to warmer weather, the ads incorporate primary colors in geometric overlays. This bright, graphic concept was inspired by David Hockney's pool series while also mirroring the pops of color seen in the mostly

neutral women's and menswear attire modeled.



*Boss spring/summer 2017 menswear campaign*

The brand's campaign films takes this concept to a new setting.

One video opens on a shot of the models through a picture window. As she looks out the glass, Ms. Sofie says, "Something which is very near in place and time but not yet known to me."

Suddenly, the models are in an office setting, hunched over paperwork at a desk or the floor in business attire.

Another shot finds Ms. Sofie riding in the back of a convertible car, with sunglasses and an open-knit white dress. Her hands are in the air as the wind goes through her hair, evoking a carefree feeling.

Finally, the pair are seen looking out over a city as a shade rises to reveal more of a window. Both appear ready for an event.

#### *Boss Spring/Summer 2017: Who will you be next?*

Another film focuses more heavily on the menswear, opening on Mr. Nylander strutting down a hallway in a full suit with a briefcase. He also steps through a sea of papers raining down on him.

#### *Shifting strategy*

Last fall, German fashion label Hugo Boss' CEO told European business newspaper Handelsbladt that he planned to get back to the brand's premium roots following a challenging move upmarket into luxury.

Mark Langer, the former chief financial officer of Hugo Boss who was promoted to CEO in 2016 after 13 years in the company ([see story](#)), said in his first interview since taking the helm of the label that he would be focusing more on its high-end suiting than its luxury positioning. Mr. Langer is looking to turn around profitability at the label, which has seen lower sales in key markets such as China and the United States ([see story](#)).

"I've personally always quite liked Hugo Boss, the brand, the feel of their suits, the lines of their distinctive tailoring," Ms. Young said. "I once bought my husband a vintage orange Hugo Boss tie from the '70s that I found in Berlin, which I still love.

"But in recent years, I began to notice that they lost their way a bit," she said. "Too many spin-off sub-lines in the pursuit that every company had a decade and a half ago to be a 'lifestyle' brand, which started to water down a lot of things.

"So I was pleased last year to learn that their new management was trying to prune and refocus their energy, getting rid of some of their sub-brands and actually putting less focus on women's wear as well. This seemed to be perfectly timed, at a moment when menswear was gaining renewed enthusiasm and momentum in general.

"And who else but Hugo Boss could help shape the world of men's formal wear for tomorrow? They have authentic heritage that is now almost 100 years back, and yet, they've always been a more modern, younger and cutting-edge brand than many of their cohorts."

Recent campaigns for the house have focused on occasion-based dressing, reflecting real-world applications for Hugo Boss' fashions.

Hugo Boss guided consumers through attire for all of their events last holiday season with help from two style-savvy robots.

The brand's #YourTimeToShine campaign stars the Bossbots, a male and female character crafted out of hardware from Hugo Boss attire and accessories. For Hugo Boss, delivering its holiday messaging through these imagined personalities may help to engage and inspire shoppers ([see story](#)).

"I love that [Hugo Boss] said they wanted to be a tailoring company rather than a luxury brand," Ms. Young said. "It resonates strongly with today's modern affluents, who are seeking substance over flash.

"We know that they want understated luxury rather than badge value," she said. "They appreciate craftsmanship and fine designso much so that a majority are willing to pay more for these things.

"And at the end of the day, they want substance and meaning in their purchases. Bling can be copied, but Hugo Boss's heritage, tradition and skill as tailors these are irreplaceable and irreplicable."

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