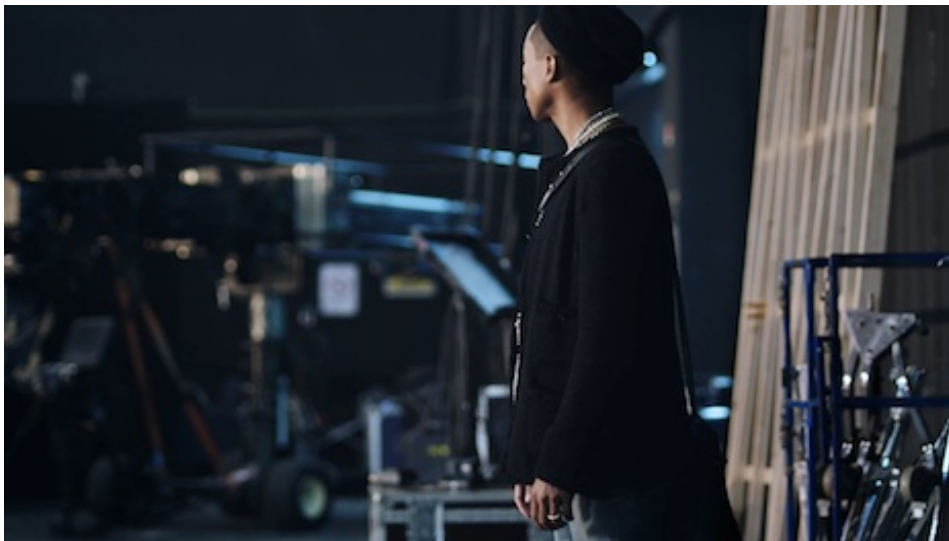


APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Chanel recruits Pharrell for subversive handbag campaign

April 25, 2017



*Chanel's latest video uses a man to market what is traditionally a women's product*

---

By DANNY PARISI

French atelier Chanel's latest campaign takes a rebellious stance on gender norms by selecting music producer Pharrell Williams as the face of the new Gabrielle handbag style.

[Sign up now](#)

**Luxury Daily**

Pharrell has worked with the brand before, but this is the first time Chanel has made him an ambassador for a handbag. In doing so, Chanel is expanding the notions of how luxury brands can market traditionally gendered products such as handbags to consumers outside the expected demographic.

"It's not the first time Chanel is using the image and strong personality of a man in its campaign," said Anna Szubrycht, owner of **CHIC BEING**. "Five years ago Brad Pitt became the face of the most iconic fragrance Chanel N5.

"This French luxury label has signed up four international ambassadors: Kristen Stewart,

Cara Delevingne, Caroline de Maigret & Pharrell Williams to star as muses for the “Gabrielle” bag in specific campaigns, each set in their own universe. This is the sign that Chanel goes way beyond its feminine character to build the next iconic bag.

"This genderless notion is perfect to reach its millennials clientele."

### **Subverting gender norms**

Chanel is promoting its Gabrielle bag with a new video campaign featuring musician Pharrell.

The video shows Pharrell, wearing the new Gabrielle bag across his chest, as he happens upon an empty studio. After making sure no one is there, he begins exploring the space, taking the opportunity to play with the equipment.

First he pushes a rolling cart and rides it across the open floor before climbing up some more crates and doing some acrobatics across a hanging beam.

All this activity is performed to a loud, raucous soundtrack, emphasizing a playful nature and tone. Eventually, Pharrell encounters a mysterious little boy who applauds him and holds up his hand, which has the word “Gabrielle” written on it.



*Image from Chanel's Gabrielle video campaign*

The boy disappears and Pharrell is left along in the empty studio.

Pharrell’s inclusion in this campaign is notable given that Chanel does not make men’s apparel, and yet the brand is using a man as one of the faces of its product.

Handbags, especially the kind produced by Chanel, are almost universally designed for and marketed to women. But there is nothing inherent about them that means they must only be consumed by women.

This idea is at the heart of the brand using Pharrell as one of the faces of its Gabriella campaign. Chanel is hoping to appeal to the changing ideas about gender and norms in society, especially as younger consumers tend to be even more open to the idea of loosening societal restrictions on apparel and accessories.

Gabrielle

The new video featuring Pharrell is just the latest in a series of videos promoting the new bag, named after the house's founder Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel.

Previous videos have included other high-profile celebrities such as Cara Delevigne in an animated video.

Released first in preview form as a trailer, the video was directed by Japanese animation film director Shishi Yamazaki. The film is available to watch on Chanel's Web site, along with still campaign photos of Ms. Delevigne modeling the bag shot by Karl Lagerfeld ([see story](#)).



*Image from Chanel's Gabrielle video campaign*

Other campaigns have employed the likes of Kristen Stewart, who danced in a music video promotion with a similar ethereal atmosphere to Pharrell's.

In recruiting a recognizable Hollywood star as opposed to a more traditional fashion model for this launch, the brand is reaching out to a wider audience who may more easily identify with the messaging ([see story](#)).

These videos, especially the latest featuring Pharrell, seek to go outside the traditional formats of luxury advertising in the spirit of Coco Chanel, emphasizing the brand's trailblazing reputation.

"Pharrell runs wild through the loft space, seeking adventure at every turn, all with the chain of pearls and "Gabrielle" bag worn cross-body," Ms. Szubrycht said. "His childlike playfulness and "Gabrielle" as the new unisex it-bag reinforce the message that Chanel can be worn by anyone: women or men.

"It is the particular mindset that counts and make us feel special."