

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Rochas delves into house heritage in repositioning push

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Image from Rochas' heritage campaign. Image credit: Rochas

By SARAH JONES

French fashion and fragrance label Rochas is tracing its more than nine decades of history through a Web series that focuses on its founder.

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"The Story of Rochas" is an episodic look at the house's heritage, speaking to the attitudes and personalities that have driven it from its origins to today. As the brand looks toward further growth of both its perfume and apparel businesses under new ownership, Rochas' films aim to communicate the house's character to modern consumers.

"It's a complete rebirth of the brand, Interparfums buying the brand two years ago and having great ambitions of development for it," said Victoria Rongier, marketing director for Rochas fashion and fragrances. "The strategy is to reposition the brand at the luxury level it deserves.

"The house has a very rich history. To talk and immerse the customer into the brand, it is essential to understand who created the brand and the personality of Marcel Rochas and how avant garde he was in his creations," she said. "He was in love with women, influenced by the artistic world of that period and the French Riviera."

Fashion founder

Originally founded in 1925 as a couture fashion house by Marcel Rochas, Rochas expanded into perfume in 1950.

After Mr. Rochas died in 1955, the fashion arm of the business shuttered, leaving a fragrance house run by his widow Hlne. In 1990, the label relaunched under its fragrance owner Wella, which was then acquired by Procter & Gamble.

P&G shut down the brand's fashion division again in 2006, and it reopened again a few years later. In 2015, the Rochas brand was acquired by Inter Parfums, which took on both its fashion and fragrance activities.

With its new start and relatively new ownership, Rochas is looking back to its beginnings.

Its first heritage film in The Story of Rochas series, traces the "Birth of a Myth." In a mix of illustration, animation and photography in a collage format, the short tells the story of how the house came to be and its first muse.



Still from Rochas' Birth of a Myth. Image credit: Rochas

Mr. Rochas, who the film says had a passion for women, founded his eponymous house at the age of 23 in Paris. The video goes on to explain his first meeting with his future wife on a metro platform.

After asking the professional ballerina to marry him, he gifts his bride a perfume named Femme, which is still part of the brand's fragrance portfolio today. The pair went on to release fashions and fragrances.

Following Mr. Rochas' death, the male narrator explains that Ms. Rochas took the lead of his brand, then solely a perfume house. At the end, he explains that whether through the fragrance launches of bygone decades or the fashion shows of today, "the love story lives on."

The second episode, "The Audacity of a Style," speaks to the "new audacity" the couturier brought to the women of Paris. Part of his contribution, as explained in the film, is the new silhouette the "Frenchic."

In addition to his designs, Mr. Rochas' impact included his youthful outlook on life, led by the mantra "ever younger."

As with the audacious designs, the house also releases the fragrance Eau de Rochas, designed by Mr. Rochas in 1948 and renamed by his wife in 1970.

The Story of Rochas - The Audacity of a Style

"The digital strategy was to create new modern content, very graphic with great appeal to understand the story of the maison," Ms. Rongier said.

"Twice a year is a rhythm that enables us to alternate content from fashion shows, new collections and fragrances and bring awareness to the brand," she said.

History on film

Other brands have sought out chapter-style content to tell their own founding stories.

French atelier Chanel, for instance, recently continued its multipart celebration of the life of founder Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel with the 21st chapter of its Inside Chanel series, focusing on the philosophy behind the famed designer.

The latest installment of Inside Chanel focuses on Ms. Chanel's design philosophy, boiling it down to three key verbs: seize, dare and create. The video series has been a continued draw for Chanel, providing a clean and engaging way for the brand to explore its own history ([see story](#)).

French couture house Christian Dior was also one of many classic fashion labels bringing its history to light in modern ways with online video.

Dior Stories is an online video series that taps into the history of the fashion house to help solidify an emotional connection to consumers. The first video details the story of how its founding designer Christian Dior transformed fashion after World War II, in a time when women were looking to reclaim their femininity ([see story](#)).

"As all luxury brands, Rochas is reclaiming its history with this new online series," said [Thoma Serdari](#), Ph.D., founder of [PIQLuxury](#), co-editor of [Luxury: History Culture Consumption](#) and adjunct professor of luxury marketing at [New York University](#), New York. "They do that by telling a story that was once well known but has now, two or three generations later, fell into oblivion.

"Young consumers bond strongly with brands that have a story to share to communicate their unique heritage," she said. "It is imperative for any luxury brand that wants to impress younger consumers to tell its story and to tell it well, in a concise and animated form that can keep the attention of today's 'distracted' consumer.

"There are a few ideas that one takes away from this film. Rochas was a luxury house founded by a creative, talented and romantic person. A person who did not hesitate to act on his impulse to speak to this beautiful woman who later became his muse and wife. This shows that the brand itself shares similar traits with its founder: creative, romantic, brave. It also clarifies the idea behind the name Rochas.

"While the house was founded by a male creative it was truly made into a worldwide known brand by its female CEO. This can be very powerful with today's consumers who are more sensitive to feminist issues. Finally, the film recounts the luxury brand's very long and successful tradition with perfume. Rochas' heritage is one of innovation."

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