

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Kenzo celebrates artistic inspirations in musical film

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*Kenzo's Yo! My Saint tells a love story between artist and muses. Image credit: Kenzo*

By SARAH JONES

French fashion house Kenzo is focusing on the relationship between artist and muse in a project that brings together fashion, film and music.

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Centered on its spring/summer 2018 collection, Kenzo's "Yo! My Saint" is an artistic collaboration that includes an original song by Karen O, best known as the lead singer of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. While acting as a marketing effort for this season's designs, Kenzo's project puts entertainment ahead of overt product promotion.

"Kenzo, like many fashion brands, is inspired and influenced by modern-day culture and environments," said Jim Gentleman, chief strategy officer at **SK+G**, Las Vegas. "Through its partnerships with fashion-conscious singer Karen O, Japanese cosmetic brand Shiseido and award-winning director Ana Lily Amirpour, Kenzo positions its self as a forward-thinking, international lifestyle brand through the Yo! My Saint' film."

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

### Love story

For spring/summer 2018, Kenzo's creative directors Carol Lim and Humberto Leon explored the Asian heritage they share with the brand's namesake founder Kenzo Takada. As they were designing the collection, the designers imagined a fictional meeting between late model Sayoko Yamaguchi and musician Ryuichi Sakamoto.

Following a runway show with an entirely Asian cast, the label is now further exploring this theme through a marketing effort that brings together a number of Asian talents.

Building off the designers' imagined story, Karen O, who is half Korean, wrote a song about the relationship between artist and muse. This original track, titled "Yo! My Saint," is available on streaming services such as Spotify, Apple Music and Deezer and will be retailed by Kenzo as a limited-edition vinyl album from Jan. 22.

"Kenzo's partnership with Karen O makes sense on many levels," Mr. Gentleman said.

"She's an independent woman and voice, a respected artist known for her flamboyant fashion tastes and a multi-national born in South Korea who resides in the U.S.," he said. "She appeals to a youthful, progressive and international audience that Kenzo covets."

Yo! My Saint also serves as the sole dialogue in a short film directed by Ana Lily Amirpour that features a cast of Asian descent. In addition to providing the film's soundtrack, Karen O also co-wrote the story with Ms. Amirpour.



Poster for Kenzo's *Yo! My Saint* film. Image courtesy of Kenzo, photos by Mayan Toledano

The narrative centers on a fashion photographer played by Alex Zhang Hungtai. He arrives on set and rolls up his sleeves, getting ready for a photo shoot.

While photographing a model, played by Kiko Mizuhara, he begins to picture her as another woman, played by Jessica Henwick. He then lipsyncs the original song, using Karen O's lyrics to explain his feelings about the mystery woman, who he cannot forget.

The model muse is then seen in hair and makeup on a different shoot, as she similarly tries to put him from her mind, professing her "perfect crime" of loving him through song. She then poses in front of his lens on set.

Later, the photographer is shown walking on a street, in front of a Kenzo billboard and his own fictional work. The meeting of model and photographer is revealed to be an ad for Shiseido, the beauty partner of the Kenzo project.

### *Kenzo Yo! My Saint*

As the photographer heads to karaoke with his friends, he has a final duet with his muse, who appears on the television screen, asking to be "set free." He then moves on as the model continues to sing on screen, calling him her "one and only."

### Fashion on film

Kenzo often takes its marketing efforts beyond clothes, looking to make a larger statement through collaborations with other creative fields.

For instance, the brand explored the experience of living on Earth through the perspective of three nomadic filmmakers.

Kenzo Season Zero took the brand's fall/winter 2017 collection to both real and imagined places, communicating the ecological peril of the planet in the process of storytelling. While tied to the ready-to-wear line, the apparel takes a backseat to the narratives, acting as costume rather than co-star ([see story](#)).

The brand is also focused on inclusivity, making its efforts international initiatives.

Kenzo is translating colors into movement for its spring/summer 2018 footwear collection.

The LVMH-owned fashion label invited held a global casting for dancers who would be selected to bring the colors of Kenzo Move sneakers to life. Led by Carol Lim and Humberto Leon, Kenzo takes a global citizen and colorful approach to its fashions and marketing strategies ([see story](#)).

"Kenzo isn't selling clothes, per se," SK+G's Mr. Gentleman said. "It's selling a complete lifestyle with fashion as a key component.

"This approach helps elevate the brand to an emotional level that consumers aspire to," he said. "By associating with music, film and other forms of art and culture, Kenzo aims to transcend the fashion category."

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