

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Chanel highlights handbag history via contemporary classics

April 5, 2018



Kaia Gerber for Chanel Handbag Stories. Image credit: Chanel

By SARAH JONES

French fashion house Chanel is nodding to its history in a collection and corresponding campaign that reimagine classic designs.

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Fronted by It girl Kaia Gerber, the brand's "Handbag Stories" effort was shot in Coco Chanel's apartment at 31 Rue Cambon. Chanel keeps its brand heritage close, frequently looking to its founder's legacy for marketing efforts and design inspiration.

Chanel was reached for comment.

Signature series

Handbag Stories remixes styles both old and new, including designs by creative director Karl Lagerfeld and his predecessors.

Included in the collection is the iconic Classic Flap Bag 2.55 rendered in tweed or translucent PVC.

Mr. Lagerfeld's Gabrielle style, which debuted in 2017, also received an update, as did the Boy Chanel, Vanity Case and Camera Case.

In Chanel's campaign for the collection, Ms. Gerber is seen lounging on Ms. Chanel's couch looking at the camera. Shot by Mr. Lagerfeld, the intimate black-and-white portraiture puts the handbags front and center, as she holds them or rests them beside her.



Karl Lagerfeld shot the campaign. Image credit: Chanel

Choosing to shoot the campaign in Ms. Chanel's apartment further ties the brand's past and present together. The effort juxtaposes the label's founders personal items with an up-and-coming fashion personality.

While Ms. Gerber is a model of the moment with campaigns and catwalk appearances for brands including Marc Jacobs, Miu Miu and Calvin Klein under her belt, Chanel's choice of her for this campaign drew mixed reactions. Many were fans of the ads, but others criticized the concept.

Some on social media critiqued Chanel for picking a 16-year-old to be the face of the line, as she is not representative of the more mature target Chanel consumer. Others felt that the photo shoot was too risqu for the underage model.

Chanel is not alone in receiving backlash for using a young model. In 2015, Dior was criticized for choosing a 14-year-old model as its face.

In the past few years, there have been pushes to make sure that models who are depicted as adults are at least 16 ([see story](#)).

Storytelling

In addition to the advertising campaign, Handbag Stories also comprises a podcast series.

Episodes feature influencers including Margaret Zhang and Soo Joo Park discussing Chanel's bags with host Amanda Harlech in Ms. Chanel's apartment. For instance, author Anne Berest discusses the love of literature seen in both Ms. Chanel and Mr. Lagerfeld, saying that it shows their inquisitiveness.

Chanel has previously tapped into podcasts to engage its audience.

During its month-long pop-up at Colette, Chanel produced a biweekly podcast hosted by fashion journalist Daphn Hzard. During the podcast, Ms. Hzard invited friends from film, literature, music and dance to participate ([see story](#)).

Storytelling is a central part of luxury brand building today, but some marketers are thinking beyond text or video to share their perspectives.

A number of brands including Chanel and Harvey Nichols have developed podcasts, looking to the medium as a means of connecting with consumers over audio. While still a relatively new concept for marketing, podcasts offer an appealing audience for luxury brands ([see story](#)).