

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Prada explores shifting identities in dreamlike narrative

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Image credit: Prada

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Italian fashion label Prada is introducing its fall/winter 2018 collection with a short film that plays to women's evolving identities.

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"Neon Dream" stars model Amanda Murphy during an evening in Las Vegas, a distinct city known for its brashness. Along the way, she meets actress Sarah Paulson and drag queen Violet Chachki, who help to convey the idea of changing personas.

"Not only does [the film] exude Prada's vibe in every frame, Prada pushes boundaries. They always have," said Lauren Bates, marketing manager and lead storyteller at [Blue Moon Digital](#), Denver, CO. "It is almost like they are focusing on their differences with special attention to what makes them unique."

Ms. Bates is not affiliated with Prada, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [Prada](#) was reached for comment.

Neon city

Prada's short film was shot on location in Las Vegas, but its portrayal of the iconic city resembles a fairytale.

"In Vegas, everything is shiny, distracting and neon," Ms. Bates said. "[It is] a place where you can become anyone you want to be."

Ms. Murphy opens Neon Dream overlooking Las Vegas from a billboard in the desert. She carries a white leather Prada handbag and wears Prada's leather flame sandals.

Prada's "Neon Dream" campaign was filmed on location in Las Vegas

She drives into the city in a convertible, passing several neon signs along the way, including an outline of Prada's triangle logo. A group of Marilyn Monroe impersonators dressed in the actress' iconic white dress walk down the street, led by Ms. Chachki.

When Ms. Murphy arrives at her destination, Ms. Paulson appears as her valet. It is the first of several appearances by Ms. Paulson as different characters in Neon Dream.

Ms. Chachki and the Marilyn Monroe impersonators stroll down the Sunset Strip as the film transitions into its next setting.

Ms. Paulson reappears as an usher as Ms. Murphy enters a theater. Both women are the only ones in the audience.

A burlesque show starring Ms. Chachki begins, with a neon sign of Prada's flame sandals placed in center stage. Ms. Murphy also takes her place onstage as a showgirl, too.

"Arguably, drag queens have a prominent place in fashion's subculture, but this campaign is highlighting them as part of the story, not an outlier," Blue Moon Digital's Ms. Bates said. "Prada is not only bringing drag queens into mainstream fashion culture, but they are deliberately creating a beautiful sense of curiosity when Murphy's character interacts with Violet in the burlesque scene."

In a hallway backstage, Ms. Murphy walks by Ms. Paulson, who this time is dressed as Marilyn Monroe.



Model Ashely Murphy wears a tweed dress in Prada's 2018 fall/winter campaign. Image credit: Prada

The film's final scene is set in a bar, which is only illuminated by more neon signs. Ms. Paulson is a roller skating cocktail waitress who serves Ms. Murphy.

While both Ms. Murphy and Ms. Paulson appear in several scenes together, their interactions are limited. It is ambiguous whether Ms. Paulson is a guardian angel figure to Ms. Murphy, or possibly a nemesis.

The shifting characters Ms. Paulson and Ms. Chachki play reflect the different roles women may play in their everyday lives. Over the course of the film, Ms. Murphy goes from observing her environment to actively participating in it.

"This short makes you want to know how it ends," Ms. Bates said. "It makes you want to know what happens to these characters.

"Even at four minutes it leaves you wanting more, and that is a tough feat with video shorts," she said.

Star power

Prada often turns to Hollywood for talent in its campaigns. Ms. Paulson and Ms. Chachki have each won awards in their respective industries.

For its fall/winter 2017 collection, Prada dressed some of Hollywood's up-and-coming stars by sponsoring a series in Flaunt magazine.

The actors featured included Halston Sage, Bria Vinaite, Lakeith Stanfield, Joe Keery, Sophia Lillis and Ben O'Toole. In the films presented by Prada, these actors recite text while standing in landscapes as diverse as the center of Los Angeles or a desert highway ([see story](#)).

Spanish film director Pedro Almodvar also starred in the label's fall/winter 2017 menswear advertising effort. Mr. Almodvar, known for his erotic and heavily political films, was dressed in pieces from the collection in a variety of eclectic settings ([see story](#)).

Elaborate, cinematic campaigns have become a Prada hallmark.

"The storyline is captivating and since there is no dialogue, you are left with whatever the short makes you feel," Ms. Bates said. "It is in the mystery that the Prada customer can decide who they are, how they can connect with the brand and what it means to them.

"The brand isn't telling them who they are," she said. "They get to decide."

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