

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Prada turns to film noir to profile spring collection

November 4, 2020



Prada model Freja Beha plays a mysterious woman in "A Stranger Calls." Image credit: Prada

By ELLEN KELLEHER

Italian fashion brand **Prada** is casting a film noir light on its spring/summer 2021 collection with the unveiling of a stylish new short film.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

In the tradition of film noir, Prada hired British author Candice Carty-Williams to write "A Stranger Calls," a mysterious whodunnit set in an isolated Italian villa. Serving as Prada's holiday campaign, the art-house footage is accompanied by a beguiling array of black-and-white images shot by Steven Meisel.

"It's a great way for Prada to tell its narrative in a relaxed way," said Kimmie Smith, cofounder of **Athleisure Mag**, Atlanta. "The brand message is that you have entered into a Prada universe and you will be introduced to five characters who are playing a number of roles while wearing the brand."

"I love an immersive experience in the sense that the brand is featured throughout the video without running dominant logos," she said.

A mysterious call

Filmed at the gorgeous Villa Gnutti in Brescia, made famous by a 1981 shoot by Helmut Newton, the cast of models includes Freja Beha, Maty Fall, Mao Xiaoxing, Rudolfs Valbergs and Merlijne Schorren.

Prada describes the film and accompanying photographs as a synthesis of classicism and futurism that harks back to when, earlier in its history, the brand enveloped itself in the aesthetics of cinematic drama. A focal point of Mr. Meisel's images is the Prada Cleo handbag, featured in the spring/summer 2021 womenswear collection, as well as the iconic Prada triangle, chain necklaces, lariats and chandelier earrings.



Photographs were by Steven Meisel, who has been involved in Prada's ad campaigns for many years. Image credit: Prada

The author of the 30-second film is Ms. Carty-Williams. Her debut novel *Queenie*, which explored black female identity, won the 2019 British Book Award for Book of the Year.

"A Stranger Calls" is a classic whodunnit in the spirit of noir where the drama begins as Ms. Fall answers the door of the elegant villa to Ms. Beha, who plays the part of a mysterious stranger armed with nothing more than a Prada Cleo handbag and a mysterious letter.

The location is critical to the plot, as the villa's marble exterior and the light blue skies of Brescia provide perspective that encourages the audience to engage in the action.

Freja Beha, Maty Fall and Mao Xiaoxing are three Prada models who appear in the short

As the footage unfolds, Ms. Beha asks Ms. Fall if she can make a call. When she is invited into the villa, things disappear, with a Prada triangle necklace among the missing items.

"Who is this stranger and what does she want with them?" asks the film's female narrator.

The final scene is a cliffhanger, which leads to the expectation of further episodes. As the footage fades out, Ms. Fall is pictured in a pink coat reclining on a white couch while reading "A Stranger Calls."

Throughout the film, cameo appearances by the five models showcase the elegance of Prada's upcoming men and women's spring 2021 collections. The women carry Cleo handbags and both the male and female models wear gold, tourmaline or silver jewelry.

The campaign has already debuted on Prada.com as well as the brand's social media channels.

Storytelling efforts

As a significant number of consumers remain hesitant to venture into physical stores for retail therapy, brands are faced with the challenge of engaging consumers exclusively through digital channels.

The question remains whether digital storytelling will see exponential growth along with the ecommerce sales in the luxury industry, which have accelerated as a result of the coronavirus pandemic ([see story](#)).

The use of film noir, which is so well portrayed in "A Stranger Calls," is a popular tactic as brands look to engage with customers.

Earlier this year, it was also the premise of Herms' "The Girl with the Black Bag" flick, a thriller that is meant to keep the viewer on tenterhooks in a nocturnal setting where dreams and reality collide.

Under the neon lights of motels, between smokescreens and mirror effects, a simple shove engages the Simone Herms bag in a suspenseful story ([see story](#)).

Prada's new holiday campaign is particularly dynamic and engaging.

"I think that every brand has to look at how they present themselves to those who are still consuming their products, those who may become shoppers and those that may not shop but are consuming the content and could be amplifying the brand to others who will," Athleisure Mag's Ms. Smith said. "Breaking down their campaign into movies and serialized formats allows people to absorb it wherever they are as many of us have been doing a lot more streaming and viewing than we have in previous months or years."

© 2021 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.