

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Burberry shares cinematic campaign for Chinese New Year

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Zhou Dongyu in Burberry's 2021 Chinese New Year campaign. Image credit: Burberry

By SARAH RAMIREZ

British fashion label Burberry is celebrating Chinese New Year with an artistic film that explores the human condition and self-discovery.

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Directed by Derek Tsang, "A New Awakening" follows a young woman's coming of age story through the five senses. While the expansive film features a Chinese cast, including two Burberry ambassadors, to appeal to one of the brand's most valuable markets, the narrative feels universal.

Great awakening

The film, which runs longer than six minutes, opens with the soothing sounds of a babbling brook. The camera pans over to a young girl walking nearby.

She is seen walking through the valley when the sounds of nature trigger a memory. The scene then transports the viewer to the girl's home, where a relative is seen cooking a meal in the kitchen.

The girl goes to an adjacent room and curiously watches some tea steep in a clear glass pitcher.

"What does spring look like in the outside world?" she asks in a voiceover. She speaks in a Chinese language, and the film includes English subtitles.

The camera zooms into the tea pitcher and transitions into a shot of trees on a sunny day. A young woman, portrayed by Zhou Dongyu, is seen walking through a city and appears to answer the girl's question through her another voiceover, offering sisterly or motherly advice.

Burberry's Chinese New Year campaign uses the five senses as a narrative device

"So, what have I seen?" Ms. Zhou says in a voiceover. "I have seen people of all sorts and from all walks of life."

As she explains that most people smile, the scene shifts to a photo shoot with models dressed elegantly in black. Ms. Zhou adds that smiling allows other people to feel at ease, but it is important to learn whether people are smiling with their eyes because those are the people who become part of your life.

A brief montage shows Ms. Zhou working as a makeup artist and spending time with other creative friends. One day as she is jumping rope in her apartment, she is interrupted by a loud knocking at her door.

Ms. Zhou opens the door to reveal Song Weilong, and their two character begin a romance.



Zhou Dongyu and Song Weilong in A New Awakening. Image credit: Burberry

"So, what have I heard? I have heard the ring of immediate enchantment," Ms. Zhou narrates as she is seen watching a sunset with Mr. Song and waking up next to him. "The frequency of unreserved bashfulness."

The relationship is not a fairy tale, however, and the couple is seen arguing. In her dark apartment, Ms. Zhou angrily jump ropes before throwing books and a chair in frustration.

"As it turns out, the most terrifying sound is of deafening silence," Ms. Zhou says sadly, throwing herself into her work to channel her heartbroken energy.

She explains that curiosity is essential, and that sweetness and bitterness have a symbiotic relationship. In a nod to China's agrarian and urban cultures, scenes of her in an art studio are juxtaposed with shots of her hiking with friends.

As the score swells, so does the pace of the imagery. In her narration, she describes other experiences through her senses, such as "the unrivaled scent of family" and the flesh of loved ones at their coldest and warmest.



Exploration, not fashion, is the theme of the Chinese New Year campaign. Image credit: Burberry

Visually, the film alternates between shots of the young girl and her older counterpart, whether they are diving into icy waters, sketching, looking at the mountains or otherwise engaging with the world. Close-up shots show blooming flowers, rushing streams of waters and other peeks of nature.

"Life is a constant repetition of the seasons," Ms. Zhou says. "It matters not what time of the year it is, what matters is that you believe that spring shall come tomorrow."

"Should there ever be a day when you forget what spring looks like, all you have to do is the simplest of all," she concludes as the screen momentarily fades to black and the music quiets. "Close your eyes and forget your senses; let spring soar into your heart again."

The camera flies into the air, showing her all alone in the wilderness. The next scene shows Ms. Zhou in the family home, and she sits to watch the tea steep triggering more flashes of exuberant memories.

Year of the Ox

The film's theme of exploration and renewal echoes the idea of "new beginnings" associated to Chinese New Year, which is also referred to as the Spring Festival. The Year of the Ox begins on Feb. 12.

As China becomes more valuable for the luxury sector, more Western brands are introducing campaigns and capsule collections to celebrate the holiday.

In addition to the emotive film, Burberry featured Liu Wen and Wang Xiangguo in its Chinese New Year 2021 editorial and released a limited-edition Thomas Burberry Monogram Motif inspired by the Ox zodiac sign. Its capsule collection includes a new Olympia bag, trench coats and sports-influenced pieces ([see story](#)).

The Chinese consumer remains a priority for the British fashion label.

Burberry experienced strong sales growth in mainland China during the third quarter of its fiscal year, both in-store and online, as it continued to face challenges amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital full-price sales saw triple-digit jump in mainland China year-over-year ([see story](#)).

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