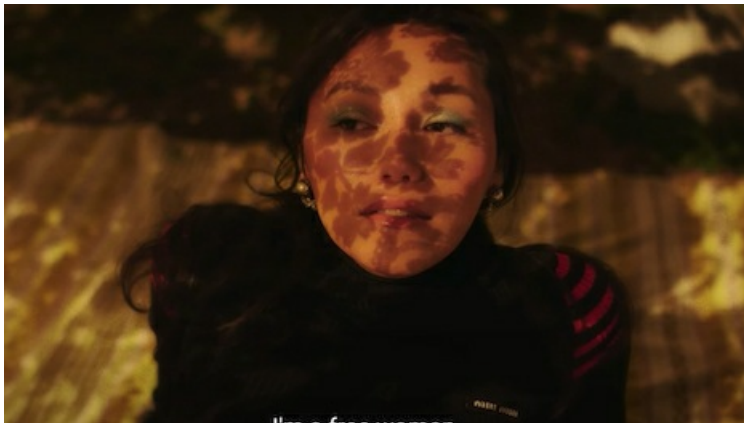


APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Miu Miu celebrates freedom, love in powerful film

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Isabel Sandoval writes, directs and stars in the latest installment of Miu Miu's Women's Tales series. Image courtesy of Miu Miu

By KATIE TAMOLA

Prada-owned Miu Miu is illustrating the triumphs of love amid anti-miscegenation laws, with director Isabel Sandoval starring in the latest installment of its "Women's Tales" series.

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The 21st commissioned film in Miu Miu's ongoing series, "Shangri-La" takes consumers into the past, where Americans are living through the Great Depression and interracial marriage is illegal in California. Since 2011, the series has supported female filmmakers and shared wide-ranging stories reflecting on feminism and other values reflected by the Miu Miu brand.

"Brands talking about social issues allows you to think about the words and the issues of the past and to contextualize them in that time, while also seeing the issues that still exist today and where we need to make changes," said Kimmie Smith, cofounder and creative director of [Athleisure Mag](#), New York. "Telling the story of Asian Americans during the Great Depression in California showcases the depth of the injustices and journey of interracial couples that have taken place in this country.

"The Women's Tales series allows women to talk about the issues that matter to them from their vantage point and how they see themselves within it," she said. "The ability to tell this raw story and to infuse it with Miu Miu in terms of her taking on different visions of a future that is not steeped in the world that she lives in is a transformative one."

A free woman

The film, with a feature-length cinematic feel, illustrates an interracial couple sharing a pure but forbidden love in a time of racist policies. It opens with a note explaining how, from 1850 to 1948, California held an anti-miscegenation statute which banned interracial marriage.

The first shot is of a man lying on the ground, spliced with the shadow of a woman lying over his body. Ms. Sandoval, who wrote, directed and starred in this film then says, "Bless me father for I have sinned."

Shangri-La is a film about freedom and love

Ms. Sandoval plays a Filipino farmhand who is seemingly sharing her sins in a church confessional. She then

begins to explain her sin: admiring and falling in love with a white farmhand.

As she begins describing what the farmhand looked like, viewers realize that her lover is actually on the other side of the confessional. Ms. Sandoval is describing her strong feelings, meticulous details about whom she admires, to the very man she loves.

Ms. Sandoval continues explaining her feelings, with the image of her body once again being placed directly on top of where her lover has laid on the ground, appearing as if they are one.

"I feel so close to you, that I begin to melt into you," Ms. Sandoval said in the video. "I feel at home in your body, my soul overtaking yours, possessing it."

Ms. Sandoval speaks of envisioning being free, in the way that her lover is, because of his body.

"I do it for the thrill of moving under the sun, loose and carefree, as you do, simply because of the color of your skin and your sex," she said. "It's a sensation so alien to me, I'd do anything for the taste of it."

The theme of freedom is woven throughout the short film. It is revealed that Ms. Sandoval and the farmhand have broken into the church, to freely exchange stories and reminisce on shared memories.

The viewers are then taken through a series of flashbacks including the two farmhands holding each other under the fireworks on the fourth of July. The couple discusses eloping, first impressions and their shared love.



Ms. Sandoval imagines parallel lives throughout the film, all centered around the idea of freedom. Image courtesy of Miu Miu

Ms. Sandoval then describes her previous dreams of being different people, having different lives. In each of her dreams, she is wearing Miu Miu pieces.

In her parallel lives, she is always free to be whomever she is, and she is always adorned with Miu Miu.

The film ends with Ms. Sandoval sharing a realization. She tells her lover that she is the moon, the stars and the entire universe.

She has given herself the freedom to be who she is and to love who she loves.

"I will love who I want to, and I'll be loved right back," she said at the end of the film.

The short film's title, "Shangri-La," references an imaginary place that serves as an ultimate utopia. In producing this film, Miu Miu tells the story of immigrants who viewed America as a kind of Shangri-La.

Many immigrants did not find a utopia, but instead a country with deeply embedded racial injustices. Ms. Sandoval produces a film through the lens of a trans woman of color, telling a story about a woman who sought a world where she could be free.

The importance of storytelling

Brands continue to seek meaningful stories to tell, recognizing that consumers are seeking to connect with companies that reflect their values.

Businesses should be looking to understand their customers' digital literacy, as well as identifying which values align most with the target consumer. A report anticipates that the affluent consumer of tomorrow will follow the luxury advocate's suit: these consumers will continue to want to engage with brands on a deeper level through shared values ([see story](#)).

Brands are also listening to the call from consumers to challenge biases that are still present today.

As millennials become a larger part of the workforce, they are more vocally challenging business norms and demanding more corporate accountability. Since the start of the pandemic and widespread anti-racism protests in the summer of 2020, more companies have updated their policies towards inclusion, harassment and environmental issues ([see story](#)).

"Hearing her story humanizes the need that we all have to live our lives in the way that we want to without the intrusion of outside forces delegating our behaviors," Athleisure Mag's Ms. Smith said. "This speaks across race, class, gender or any kind of identity that we have."

"It's definitely a beautiful way to story-tell and allows us to walk in her shoes and see the world through her eyes," she said.

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