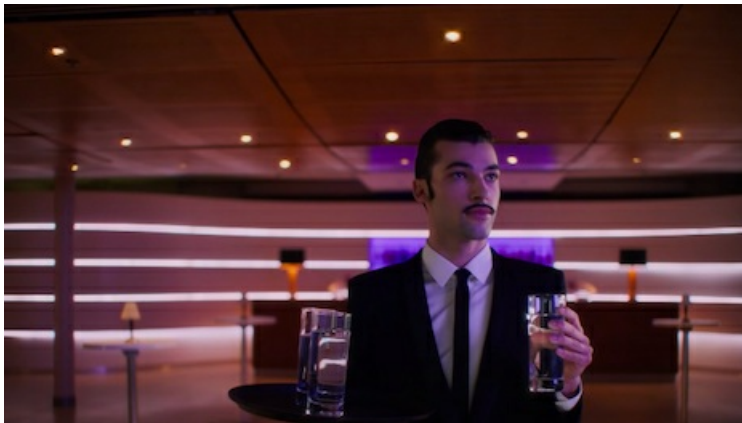


APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Saint Laurent plays with the metaphysical in cinematic effort

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Actor Leo Reilly plays a waiter at the center of the mystical short film. Image credit: Saint Laurent

By KATIE TAMOLA

France's Saint Laurent has fashion lovers reaching for a glass of water after premiering a surreal film for its spring/summer 2021 campaign.

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The nine-minute short film, entitled "French Water," takes viewers into a dreamy, eerie world directed by Jim Jarmusch and featuring designs from creative director Anthony Vaccarello. The star-studded cast navigates a capacious setting, post-dinner-party, while mysteriously reappearing in different products from the latest collection.

"The aesthetic of the film, dark, mysterious, eerie and edgy is very much the signature of American film director Jim Jarmusch, and the storyline is slightly absurd but also very intellectual, artsy and a little punk rock," said Thoma Serdari, director of fashion and luxury MBA and professor at [NYU Stern](#), New York. "In that sense, this short creation is also a nod to the spirit of an era that is long gone but so well ingrained in our cultural memory, especially through the art of those who took part in it and the music that defined it.

"But let's not forget that the film is also intentionally funny, as humor is expressed at various moments, even with the awkward presence of the waiter who is there to offer French Water' to the women," she said. "Needless to say French Water' stands for the aura of Saint Laurent, an essence that all women welcomed as they were desperately trying to find each other."

French Water

The short film opens with an after-dinner scene, accented with discarded black and white cookies, mugs of coffee and half-full champagne flutes. The shot then cuts to a solitary waiter, played by actor Leo Reilly, standing in a black suit, holding a tray with three glasses of water and staring ahead.

From a right side door enters American actresses Julianne Moore and Chlo Sevigny, wearing all-black and all-red ensembles, respectively. They walk past Mr. Reilly as Ms. Moore offers a cursory, skeptical glance towards the waiter.

Saint Laurent - French Water

A mere second after they disappear, the women reappear from a door to the left, now wearing completely different outfits from the collection, with Ms. Moore sporting a black, long sheepskin coat and Ms. Sevigny wearing a tiered romper in beaded floral silk and feathers. The two women appear to be looking around the venue, searching for someone, as music by Noveller permeates in the background.

As they leave out of the door that they originally emerged from on the right, Ms. Sevigny makes eye contact with Mr. Reilly, who seems to be trying to understand what he just witnessed. A new cast member, actor Charlotte Gainsbourg, appears, and is wearing black a vinyl trench coat from the collection.

Ms. Gainsbourg taps the waiter on the shoulder, disappears, then reappears, eating then tossing a black and white cookie. After once again disappearing in the blink of an eye, the actor reappears, this time wearing a white long belted jacket and drinking from a bottle of discarded champagne.

After the actor disappears once more, Mr. Reilly turns back around while still holding his tray of water and quickly shakes his head. Actor Indya Moore then emerges, wearing a black top and wide-leg floral-embroidered satin pants, saying they're looking for two friends.

The waiter tells the actor that he just saw them, then asks if their friends often change their clothes, which leads to the actor offering a mysterious "possibly" as a quick reply. Indya Moore then walks away with a glass of water, which Mr. Reilly says is from France.



Nothing is simple in French Water, a new film from Saint Laurent, featuring Chlo Sevigny and Julianne Moore. Image credit: Saint Laurent

The film ends with Indya Moore, Julianne Moore and Ms. Sevigny finally being reunited then leaving the venue, with the last shot being Mr. Reilly taking a well-deserved sip of French water.

The short film, uniquely presenting the label's new collection, is entirely unconventional.

"The strengths of the short film are the music, the lighting, a reference to a well-known writer and familiar faces," said Rebecca Miller, founder/CEO of [ARTful Communication](#), New York. "The title, staging, script and overall message, however, are disparate making the presentation somewhat uncomfortable."

Always creative

This is hardly the first time a Saint Laurent campaign has been referred to as unique.

The French fashion label often produces efforts that through storytelling, embody the brand's creative, thought-provoking spirit.

In 2019, Saint Laurent wove a narrative about jealousy, portraying the confusion that can often come with love.

The brand tapped author Bret Easton Ellis for a short film project, which focused on an imagined love triangle. Titled "The Arrangement," the short used Saint Laurent apparel to capture a luxurious lifestyle, but it puts storytelling ahead of selling ([see story](#)).

Also in 2019, Saint Laurent produced the music video for producer SebastiAn's track "Sober," heightening its existing partnership with the electronic musician. The music video, which was directed by Nathalie Canguilhem, opens on an aerial shot of a sea of white towers. Transitioning to the ground, the video shows a procession of women dressed in conservative white and black attire, complete with hoods.

The lead character faces a number of challenges, including fighting his double, coming face to face with a tarantula and climbing through a series of doors that gets progressively smaller ([see story](#)).

"How much of these details a viewer retains has to do with much one already knows, and the atmosphere and suggested occasion serve as great backdrops for highlighting Mr. Vaccarello's latest collection for the label," NYU Stern's Ms. Serdari said. "Luxury brands in particular are constantly trying to appeal to a variety of demo- and psychographics and Saint Laurent has done this successfully through the Jim Jarmusch film."

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