

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Gucci titillates with seductive Aria campaign

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The centennial Aria campaign. Image courtesy of Gucci

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Italian fashion label Gucci is exploring human desire in its new film for the Aria collection.

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Creative director Alessandro Michele looked to Gucci's own history as inspiration for the short film, as well as philosophy and pop culture. The campaign also plays with themes of androgyny and erotica, while staying within the context of the brand's heritage.

"The latest Gucci Aria campaign is an immersive experience," said Kimmie Smith, cofounder and creative director of [Athleisure Mag](#), New York.

"It has elements of history, as well as being able to watch a story unfold that happens to have key looks from the collection," she said. "Seeing people explore their lives and interests when no one is watching and exploring how they navigate the world is a really interesting concept."

Erotic encounters

Directed by Mert Alas and Marcus Piggott, the film opens with an "adult content" warning before American model Kristen McMenamy is seen arriving at an hotel inspired by The Savoy Hotel in London.

The ominous opening notes of Madonna's 1995 cover of Marvin Gaye's "I Want You" begin playing. Her music video, which examines desire just as Gucci's new vignette does, was also set in a hotel.

By recalling The Savoy Hotel with the campaign setting, the centennial effort also alludes to Gucci's origins.

"The Savoy Hotel is an iconic property; moreover, Guccio Gucci worked at the hotel when he was younger," Ms. Smith said. "So the idea of bringing this story to this [setting inspired by the Savoy] ties it back to the founder of the house of Gucci as well."

Gucci reveals sensual secrets at a mysterious hotel

Inside the hotel lobby, Ms. McMenamy strolls in wearing a glittering skirt suit adorned with the Gucci and Balenciaga logos, as seen in the Aria presentation this spring. As she walks to the stairs, she captures the attention of the other

hotel guests, including members of the Italian rock band Mneskin.

Upstairs, the story moves in a more provocative direction. Inside room 316 possibly an allusion to the instrumental song "316" of Van Halen's *For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge* Ms. McMenemy is seen having a tryst with several band members.

"I want you the right way," Madonna sings. "I want you, but I want you to want me too."

Throughout the film, models are also seen reading works on philosophy, relationships and desire, including *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility* by Walter Benjamin, *Bodies that Matter* by Judith Butler, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* by Sigmund Freud and *Sexistence* by Jean-Luc Nancy.

As it progresses, the vignette further veers into voyeurism.

One scene is shot through a closet door, with a model undressing in the bathroom. Then she turns knowingly to the door, and the man watching her keeps his gaze on her seemingly with the woman's consent.

Another model drapes a scarf over a table lamp, before turning to the camera and slowly disrobing for the audience.



The campaign looks to Gucci's history and archives for inspiration. Image courtesy of Gucci

There are other dalliances happening in the hotel as well, and the camera lingers as the models kiss and caress each other. Some groups film themselves, while other models peer through peepholes.

"Doing these actions in the brand's clothing and accessories gives each piece life to see how it can be worn when it is together, as well as how it can be incorporated into your own style," Ms. Smith said. "It really highlights how much personal style takes on a life of its own depending on who is wearing it, what you're doing and where you will go after.

"It also ensures that there is an element to style and memory that melds together," she said. "This is something that simply doesn't happen to this degree when a garment is on a hanger or laid flat.

"The video really allows you to see the journey of the garment, how the light hits it and how it accentuates the body as well."

Gucci legacy

The Aria campaign is a followup piece to the runway film released April 15, set at the "Savoy Club" in another tribute to the Savoy Hotel.

In celebration of Gucci's 100th anniversary, Mr. Michele deeply examined the history of the brand for the "Aria" collection and show. The film featured cross-branded pieces such coats, bags and various accessories.

The soundtrack to the runway film featured Gucci-themed songs produced over the years, including Lil Pump's "Gucci Gang," Rick Ross and Future's "Green Gucci Suit," Bhad Bhabie and Lil Yachty's "Gucci Flip Flops" and more ([see story](#)).

Gucci has played with decadence and debauchery in previous campaigns as well.

Its 2020 cruise campaign "Come As You Are_RSVP" starred famous faces including rapper Gucci Mane and actor Sienna Miller. During an elaborate party at an Italian villa, an eclectic group of guests including nuns, senior socialites and younger models mingle and enjoy drinks before jumping into a pool ([see story](#)).

The Aria film, however, is a more elevated and thoughtful approach to Gucci's legacy while echoing the free-spirited

nature of earlier efforts.

"I also like that this campaign is powerful even though it's less than 2 minutes," Ms. Smith said. "It's short enough that when you continue to watch it, you're able to see other gems in the video and the images of the pieces become characters in and of themselves."

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