

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Chanel offers ode to camellia flower, nature in new vignette

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Chanel's open-sky laboratory in Gaujacq houses 70 hectares of fields and 40,000 camellia trees. Image credit: Chanel

By KATIE TAMOLA

French fashion label Chanel is ruminating on the beauty of nature that permeates its open-sky laboratory in Gaujacq.

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In a new vignette, an unseen narrator visits the grounds, dedicated to a single flower the camellia also known as the main ingredient in the Chanel No. 1 skincare line. She explores different areas throughout the laboratory, chatting with the nursery gardener and camellia collector, the camellia crop manager and the material innovation and development director.

"The series offers consumers an unknown and, for most, surprising part of the behind-the-scenes at Chanel," said Thoma Serdari, director of fashion and luxury MBA at NYU Stern and author of *Rethinking Luxury Fashion*, New York. "Peppered with scientific mini-facts about the camellia species, one of Chanel's iconic codes, the video is informative in a vividly engaging way."

The beauty inherent

The opening of the "Beauty Ahead of Time" vignette is personal, offering an intimate, video diary-like feel. It begins on a rainy day with an unseen narrator sticking her hand outside of a car to feel the precipitation, explaining she is on her way to the lab.

Chanel established the open-sky laboratory in 1998.

The red camellia flower is the main ingredient in Chanel's No. 1 skincare line

The footage then cuts to the open-sky laboratory in Gaujacq, which houses 70 hectares of fields and 40,000 camellia trees. The unseen woman travels among the camellia trees as images of other camellia flowers fill the screen in different sizes and hues of pink, fuchsia and red.

The collection of 2,000 camellia species is tended to by Jean Thoby, the nursery gardener and camellia collector. Footage shows him manipulating, tending to and cutting the flowers.

As Mr. Thoby cuts and hands her a flower, the narrator recalls him speaking of the flower's invincible youth and

energy.

The protagonist then travels to the grounds' eco-farm which protects soil, water and climate.

With each transition of footage to a new place, footage and images of the previous destination are included, to show how all the grounds' employees come together to care for the exquisite camellia.

At the eco-farm, she meets Philippe Grandry, the camellia crop manager, who tells her of the importance of agroecology, a sustainable farming method that works for nature. The eco-farm is entirely chemical-free, with fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides to ensure a healthy and abundant supply of camellias.

As footage of him working with the flowers permeates, more random images of the stunning camellia are spliced onto the screen.



The laboratory researches the capabilities of the camellia flower. Image credit: Chanel

Finally, she visits Nicola Fuzzati, the material innovation and development director, where she learns of the flower's resilience. Mr. Fuzzati discusses the camellia's astounding ability to bloom in the winter.

This ability has inspired many years of research, which continues to this day making timeless, resilient beauty an overarching theme in the vignette.

At the end of the vignette, different images of the camellia flower come together to form the silhouette of the Chanel No. 1 serum bottle, as the narrator concludes that years of research have brought Chanel to this day, which is a day of beauty, nature and science.

It is only fitting that Chanel, a brand that has an ethos built on timelessness, would have such a complex and strong flower serve as the main ingredient in Chanel No. 1. The line was introduced earlier this year ([see story](#)).

Appreciating nature

Several luxury brands are going to great artistic and monetary lengths to show their appreciation for the environment and all that it does in contributing to the creation of its offerings.

Last month, French beauty brand Guerlain expressed its full commitment toward sustainability in an ode to nature with its new organic, eco-friendly fragrance and campaign an ode to nature.

Inspired by the earth's natural gardens, the Aqua Allegoria collection intends to symbolize the brand's continued efforts in protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity through its products. Through a corresponding campaign, which includes a short film and behind-the-scenes interviews with the director and master perfumers, Guerlain prominently features its products among nature ([see story](#)).

Last November, beauty group Este Lauder U.K. and Ireland unveiled details of its 500,000 pound, or \$678,000 at the current exchange rate, commitment to funding U.K.-based nature restoration projects over a five-year period.

The group has become a founding partner and primary funder of nature restoration project development facility Revere. The facility was designed to enable the restoration of natural habitats at scale in the United Kingdom's National Parks using private capital ([see story](#)).

Once more, Chanel takes entities that may be overwhelming to some, whether it be science, sustainability, or ingredients, and transforms its work into something exquisite and exciting to watch.

"It is equally fascinating to realize that Chanel, along with other top luxury brands, is indeed invested in sustainability

and the preservation of the environment," said Dr. Serdari. "It is reassuring to end this tour in the laboratory where advances in science allow Chanel to bring its poetry into the consumer's life."

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