

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Chanel flips Mtiers d'Art' script with Senegal, deepening demi-couture tradition in West Africa

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Opening credits for the first episode of a four-part "2022/23 Mtiers d'art CHANEL DAKAR" documentary series include a photograph by Malick Bodian and headaddresses styled by Jenke Ahmed Taily. Image credit: Chanel

By AMIRAH KEATON

French fashion house Chanel is starting a dialogue with Dakar, one that it hopes will continue to flourish well beyond current efforts to highlight the capital city's bustling art community by way of the 2022/23 Mtiers d'art collection.

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The maison's culturally-rich campaign, released ahead of the live showcase slated for Dec. 8, makes clear that the decision to fuse this year's artisanal activation with its host city's artistic community is not didactic in nature. Instead, Chanel appears to foster immersion at its best, as the brand celebrates one of its ultimate shows of savior-faire alongside the Senegalese people.

"For Chanel, the Mtiers D'art show is a way to recognize its timeless heritage by honoring the fine craftsmanship that its artisan partners bring to their collections," said Dalia Strum, founder of **ReThink Connect** and professor at The Fashion Institute of Technology, New York.

"By recognizing their partners, Chanel maintains a collaborative creative environment that encourages continuous innovation and experimentation," she said. "These experiences bring out artistic and cultural energy to stay inspired."

Ms. Strum is not affiliated with Chanel, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

### Mtiers d'art moment

Chanel's Mtiers d'art tradition seeks to preserve the sanctity of atelier artistry, paying homage to the 41 small specialist workshops that the brand has acquired along the way, beginning in 1984.

The demi-couture practice, which sits between the ready-to-wear and haute couture categories as designs are not necessarily bespoke but taps by-hand construction techniques, is completely unique to the brand, operating entirely

outside of the traditional fashion schedule.

While previous Mtiers d'Art show locations have included cities such as Mumbai, Edinburgh and Dallas, this Thursday, the French fashion house will present its 2023 Mtiers d'Art effort in Dakar, marking the 21st edition of its "art professions" showcase.

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by @chanelofficial

The location of the annual presentation is left to the discretion of the house's serving creative director. Chanel's current creative director Virginie Viard cites artistic origins as the impetus for this year's regional choice, according to a branded post.

"The choice of Dakar to present the 2022/23 Mtiers d'art CHANEL DAKAR collection is the result of meetings over the past three years between Virginie Viard and choreographers, directors, musicians and writers, all together with friends of the House, who are the plural inspiration behind this journey," reads its caption.

Directed by students who hail from the Senegalese students of the Kourtrajm film schools, founded by Ladj Ly in Dakar and Montfermeil, the maison has released a four-part documentary series that captures how this year's 2022/23 "Mtiers d'art CHANEL DAKAR" showcase come together.

*Chanel's Mtiers d'art moments are captured in a new campaign film*

Opening credits for the first episode include a photograph by Malick Bodian and headdresses styled by Jenke Ahmed Tailly.

"Chanel is not the only large brand drawn to the Dakar market right now," Ms. Sturm said.

"Earlier this year, Tommy Hilfiger opened a store in Dakar's recently upgraded Sahn shopping mall," she said. "Dakar's reputation as a 'regional fashion hub' has motivated brands like Tommy Hilfiger and Hugo Boss to explore this market as it expands its retail footprint."

Fresh frontiers

Chanel opting for the bustling African metropolitan center as a key element of its latest collection signals fashion's shift toward disparate African markets, beyond the bounds of charitable activations ([see story](#)) or namesake events that touch the region in title only ([see story](#)).

"This is a fundamentally different market, and they're going to have to adjust their sales expectations accordingly," Ms. Sturm said.

"However, the value of the creative energy stemming from that area cannot be replicated," she said. "The value of

various forms of arts can be applied toward all forms of marketing, brand building and awareness purposes from in-person performances to strategically positioned streetwear fashion shows or events, etc.

"Experiences create value because you never know who you're going to meet, where you're going to be inspired and what that path can lead to in the future."

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