

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Dior explores gender complexity, drops new menswear campaign

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*Dior is showcasing the genderspectrum found in masculinity, against a backdrop of historic gardens. Image credit: Dior*

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

French fashion house **Dior** is challenging traditional images of masculinity in the new menswear collection.

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Set in Christian Dior's garden, the summer 2023 collection features shades of pink, floral prints, reimagined outdoor attire and sunhats. The campaign is filled with wonderment, exploring the more feminine sides of the male gender duality, all while surrounded by flowers.

"What draws our attention to it is the campaign's efficiency and grace at communicating masculinity in a season that symbolizes the cultural notion that nature and spring, creation, are feminine," said Dr. Katherine C. Sredl, marketing lecturer at Loyola University Chicago's Quinlan School of Business.

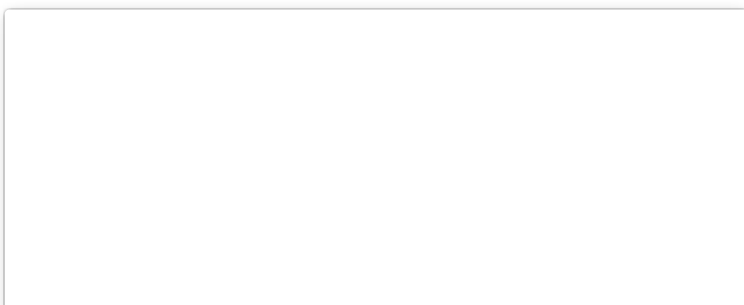
"It is also efficiently signaling the legacy of Dior, and referring to impressionism's paintings of women in repose in gardens, while the men around them do things, adding cultural credibility to the images."

Dr. Sredl is not associated with Dior, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Growing in the garden

Dior's new collection centers on wholeness, allowing the portrayals of manhood to be both adventurous and gentle.

The male models are shown lounging in sunhats, amidst exploding flowers. Simultaneously, they are shown wearing the clothing of explorers and scientists both professions that have been historically seen as male.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Dior Official (@dior)

This campaign communicates that to be a man is not just one thing. It is not either delicate or strong, but instead can be both.

"The juxtaposition of men in passive poses of reflection in a garden with their traditional male tropes the explorer, the botanist or scientist, the hiker, the urbanist allows us to explore and possibly challenge our notions of action, power, and gender roles," Dr. Sredl said.

"Perhaps this tension meets the needs of many Gen Z and younger millennials to see their ideas of gender in luxury advertising."

The modern take on gender is much more in tune with the natural world, as it is moving away from human-invented gender roles and stereotypes.

This point is driven home by the campaign's setting of Christian Dior's garden a special place of inspiration for him. The campaign also travels to the modernist artist, Duncan Grant, in Sussex England a place that hosted some of the most free-thinking artists of the 20th century.

Fusing the beauty of flowers and natural spaces with the revolutionary nature of art, this collection is about imagination and reclaiming the spectrum of gendered living found in nature. This is truly unique to male advertising.



*The recycled materials bring a gentleness to the campaign, honoring the earth. Image credit: Dior*

Additionally, in a nod to the environment, many of the pieces are made with recycled and sustainable materials such as reclaimed cashmere. This adds a level of nurture and love to the collection, in a mindful attempt to honor the outdoor spaces that made Christian Dior's creativity possible.

"For both Christian Dior and Duncan Grant, their homes, their gardens and their private environments were so important for their creativity," said Kim Jones, artistic director of men's collections at Dior, in a statement.

"It [were] these meaningful, private spheres that were translated into their work, and became public," Mr. Jones said. "Here, we are mixing the utilitarian, natural and gardening elements with stylized, luxurious, new-look facets and

Duncan Grant artworks in the collection the private and the public together.

"There is an idea of the passage of time, the changing weather and light of the seasons, as well as continuity, artistic communities and the legacy of the house of Dior."

### Modern men

While everyone participates in gender expression, society has difficulty defining precisely what that means, often confusing the concept with designated sex at birth.

Dior is among the brands beginning to explore this complete picture of gender, incorporating dualities in gendered campaigns. Recently, the brand tapped British actor Robert Pattinson to portray both the masculine and feminine faces of the male experience ([see story](#)).

Mr. Pattinson showed both proactive strength and tenderness, contradicting the emotionless, aggressive and purely athletic notions of manhood so often found in advertising. French fashion house Louis Vuitton is also diving into vulnerable portrayals of men, releasing a playful and pastel collection ([see story](#)).



*Through a mixture of traditionally male pieces and more feminine colors and prints, Dior is expanding old-fashioned ideas of gender. Image credit: Dior*

This new collection from Dior allows space for the entirety of the male experience. They are explorers, yet also nurturers; scientists and artists; suit-wearers and flower-pickers.

"In this ad, we have the expected male archetypes of urban chic, explorer and action, and knowledge," Dr. Sredl said.

"However, here they are translated into a more contemporary masculinity that allows men to hold passivity and reflection, all while dreaming in a garden," she said. "Perhaps it is their gestures of passivity in clothes that reference action the explorer in tan with a Panama hat, the urban fanny pack and backpack and the hiker's jacket that allow us to imagine them as typically masculine.

"We imagine them that way, just as we notice that their invitation to look is challenging to our notions of action, power and gender roles."

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