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January 20, 2012 10:01 pm

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Campaign trail

By Carola Long

How luxury fashion houses are advertising themselves for the spring/summer season



Prada Shot by Steven Meisel (left) and Dolce and Gabbana Shot by Giampaolo Sgura

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February's fashion magazines are out, complete with the newest spring/summer ad campaigns from the major luxury brand names. For many readers, such glossy bids for attention are as engaging as the articles and fashion shoots inside – which makes them irresistible opportunities for a brand. Mulberry's creative director Emma Hill says customers regularly come into stores to ask for products direct from the campaign and describes their advertising as “an important tool that helps us get the theme of the collection across, and helps the consumer understand and appreciate the designs. When people see this come together, they want a part of it.” At least that's the idea. The reality is not always so successful. So, this spring/ summer, who's getting ahead in advertising? Read on.

► Versace

Shot by Mert Alas and Marcus Piggott

“We loved the idea of shooting this very feminine collection inspired by the sea in an abandoned pool in the California desert,” says Donatella Versace, who is not the kind of woman to worry about the dry cleaning

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bills when leather meets chlorine. Water is one of the biggest trends this season – Versace’s collection includes neoprene fabrics and seashells and seahorses picked out in gold studs – and its various different campaign images send that message. The moodier feel of last season’s ads lacked Versace’s signature high gloss but the star of this season’s spread, the supermodel Gisele, reasserts its identity as the go-to label for glamazons.

▼ Jil Sander

Shot by Willy Vanderperre



An ad with an implied narrative not only holds consumers’ attention but suggests a label has depth. Hence Jil Sander’s strategic choice to build on its “thinking woman’s fashion label” image with a dark twisted tale that runs contrary to the simpler, bright-stuff-for-summer theme underlying many campaigns; here are film-still like images featuring a

Hitchcockian heroine trapped in a sinister house. One model, Natasha Poly even slightly resembles Hitchcock muse Grace Kelly. However, the campaign is not so conceptual that you can’t see the mid-century inspired clothes (hourglass dresses, veiled hats), and shadowy photography cleverly highlights what a killer waist that green dress creates.

Dolce & Gabbana

Shot by Giampaolo Sgura



[View the slideshow](#)

Like Mulberry, Dolce & Gabbana’s image, and its campaign, is based on its national identity – or at least a fantasy version of it. There’s no Mario Monti or debt crisis according to Dolce; instead we have a vision of family life shot in Portofino and inspired by Italian cinema. Monica Bellucci

and Bianca Balti are the voluptuous sirens making onion-print 50s dresses look va-va-voom, even amid mamas and bambini at a family party and first communion. Domenico Dolce says: “We are Italian and proud of this identity. Family and family ties mean a lot to our culture and we really like the idea to revisit visually these roles.” It’s not subtle but it is irresistible, even if it’s as likely to boost sales of Costa Smeralda holidays as it is lace dresses. Think of it as Dolce in the nation’s service.

▼ Mulberry

Shot by Tim Walker

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“We wanted the campaign to portray Mulberry in a very English, fun and colourful way,” says creative director Emma Hill, “and Brighton beach perfectly encapsulated the nostalgia, whimsy and charm for this season.” The sweetly surreal tone is typical of photographer Tim Walker, and successfully boosts Mulberry’s identity as a young, accessible

heritage brand that doesn’t take itself too seriously. Hill says her inspiration came from childhood holidays when “my family and I would go to the beach and sit in the rain in our Pac-a-macs eating seaside treats like sticks of rock and ice cream cones”. Making the most of the brand’s quintessentially British image was a smart move in the [year of the Olympics](#), the jubilee and foreign tourists roaming the shops in search of “It” bags.



◀ Gucci

Shot by Mert Alas and Marcus Piggott

Photographer Helmut Newton was the inspiration behind the Gucci ads, which feature a pair of models inside a gold panelled room: one stands awkwardly in an overtly sexy dress and another is seated in a more androgynous jacket and trousers. Dubbed Hard Deco, this collection stands out for its tough feel in a generally

romantic season, and it expresses Gucci’s confident, high-glamour DNA, but it doesn’t entirely gel. What are these two doing inside the gold room? Is one of them dancing or just swaying? Why does the standing girl look so awkward? It’s a mystery.

▶ Christian Dior

Shot by Mikael Jansson

Dior might not have a new designer but it does have a new face: actress Mila Kunis. In this shot the brand has decided to picture her sitting alone in a restaurant, with the slightly anxious expression of someone who’s been stood up on a date. The Miss Dior bag looks good, as does Kunis, but the campaign lacks a distinct identity.




▼ Burberry

Shot by Mario Testino



Here we go again with the Bright Young British Things larking about in trenchcoats. Apart from a raffia collar here, or a fur-trimmed hood there, the formula doesn’t change much at Burberry. This time the freckly chap is Eddie Redmayne, star of *My Week With Marilyn*, and the girl is Cara Delevingne, socialite model and actress. Those plain studio backgrounds might be intended to put the clothes centre stage but they’re not very exciting – surely Burberry could afford a location?

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► Louis Vuitton

Shot by Steven Meisel

“Think pink” could have been the imperative behind Louis Vuitton’s spring/summer campaign. The setting – an imaginary ice cream parlour that was carefully recreated in a New York studio – is so delightfully fun it could turn Lisbeth Salander on to pastels. Everything says youth and freshness, down to the choice of “new face” models Daria Strokous and Kati Nescher. And then, on top of the candy colours, there’s the arm candy; note the Lockit bag in sheer nylon voile and the implication that it’s equally delicious.



▼ Chanel

Shot by Karl Lagerfeld



There’s a sporty feel to the Chanel campaign but it’s a very elegant, retro take on exercise, as befits the location by the Hotel du Cap Eden Roc in the south of France. The complete series of pictures – this month’s Elle has no fewer than 10 spreads – features Saskia de Brauw (left) and Joan Smalls on gymnastic ropes and parallel bars, while

Lagerfeld cracks a visual joke with a shot of one model in a diving mask carrying strings of pearls. The distance shots of the models on a floating platform in the sea are less successful – without close-up impact the monochrome gets lost amidst pages of glossy colour.

Prada

Shot by Steven Meisel

The saturated colours, modernist gas station and hot-rod cars all say 1950s America but, this being Prada, the highway women in this campaign are anything but passive homemakers. They’ve taken clothes associated with stereotypically perfect ladies of the time – the pin-up swimsuit, the ladylike bag, the duster coat – and made them look like the uniform of two liberated women about to do a Thelma and Louise. Optimistic, escapist, with a nod to a B-movie backstory, this is one of the season’s strongest campaigns. Although the ad looks like it was shot on location in Miami, it was actually done in a studio.

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