

CHANEL

No one does deny that Chanel is the incontrovertible symbol of fashion today. The most interesting aspect is that Chanel gathered the artwork of 20 contemporary artists who had also some relationship with Chanel quilted handbags. What happens there? It is very interesting that the symbol of the luxury brand marketing needs another ambition for the brand's evolution. I love Chanel because she was very successful to merge a masculine and feminine trend by suggesting a comfortable feeling as well as luxury rather than conservative moods in 1920's. I love Chanel because its promotions today are blurring the boundary between high art and high priced daily objects. Her legend is still challenges and inspiration for many artists, fashion designers, and graphic designers, myself included, and the brand is an icon in the world of fashion today. She deserves special recognition as the most influential and innovative fashion designers in the world.



Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel, who is a founder of the company Chanel, was born in Saumur, France in 1883. She started a fashion business in 1910 in her age of 27. In the beginning she designed hats for women, and her small business was very successful. Due to the success of simple hats, she had successfully placed other fashion items such as simple suits and dresses, trousers for women, costume jewelry, and perfume and fabric. She also took on little boyish trend in herself and her design and then she set a new fashion trend at that period which contrasts to the conservative fashion trend in 1920's. Coco is her nickname of Gabrielle Chanel, and she got the nickname when she was working on a restaurant as a concert singer. We have well known Coco Chanel as one of the Chanel's perfume names. For 98 years, the company Chanel has been known as an icon of elegant fashion and Chanel logo became a symbol of elegance, wealth, and intelligence as well as criteria for superior global fashion. She designed the Chanel logo herself in 1925. Since then, the logo has not been changed, and the logo has kept its status as one of the most recognizable symbols in fashion world today.

As we already know that the logo is perfect symmetry, which is the most fundamental solution of complete balance. The logo is composed of three elements, which are double c letter and circle. The circle's width is thinner than the letter C, and the circle encloses the two letters. The overlapping double C places opposite direction – one facing forward and the

other facing backward. Although the double C and the two intersections give very strong tensions, two linking parts are stable because the clear linking position of the double C does not bother our eyes, and the tension from the two opposite directions also provides a perfect balance through its structural skeleton.

We see the double C not as either a letter C or incomplete circle, we perceive as a new symbol. Our eyes simply apply the law of simplicity on all position of the elements of the logo. We do not feel to make separate C, and we see the double C as an independent object, which is identified a simplest shape. There is no confusion. We do not have any either wired or vague feelings. Also, double C shows the law of grouping as well. Because of the law, we accept the same color and shape of the double C as a sign. The consistent C shape suggests direction, and the opposite direction intensifies more dynamic. Through these analyzing, the composition of Chanel logo includes *law of grouping by similarity* as well as *law of constancy of size and shape*. According to *Arnheim*, 2-dimensionality is represented by a figure and ground relationship with our perception. When we see Chanel logo, we notice that the circle is thinner than the width of letter C. Between the letters and the circle we also discover a negative space. The double C looks like concavity because of the uses of color, location and relative movement in structural skeleton. We separate negative and positive space through the logo orientation, which are figure and ground. After I studied Arnheim's elements, I feel that the thinner circle line seems to give 3-dimensionality to the logo which can offers complete freedom. It looks like foreshortening in terms of Arnheim's element *form*. Thus, I can feel the depth between the double C and the circle.

In terms of color, Chanel has used black and white in its most of products, packages, and advertising. The logo has kept its color either white letters with a circle on the black background or black letters with a circle on the white background color. The contrast between black and white enables us to understand what the figure and the ground. The company uses grey color as a secondary color which we usually see instruction papers inside of packages. According to the book, *1000 Symbols, What Shapes Mean in Art & Myth written by Sheperd*, black means darkness in traditional belief in European culture, which is related to evil and magic; on the contrary, black has also been connected with the female attributes which are included negative and passive, spirit and mind, and yin called moon's energy. White color in most of cultures has associated with purity. In the West and East generally use white color for baptism robes and related to bride and wedding because white symbolizes purity and innocence, positive and active, matter and body, and yang called sun's energy. Chanel's colors show not only clean and simple aesthetic aspects, but also philosophy of the brand and special meaning behind its beauty.



A certain direction, repetition, and speed also strongly affect the movement of an object. The clear opposite direction offers tension, which offers intensified balance. Repetition and overlapping of letter C also create movement although the logo is still immobile. Facing forward

C looks like moving away from the other C, which is facing backward. These aspects definitely provide dynamic movement, and the visual force from direction is very strong enough to reflect the brand identity, which is alive and active.

The open spaces of letter C facing left and right also shows movement of air although an independent letter C is boring to our eyes.

Those elements such as balance, shape, form, space, color, movement and dynamic are integrated into Chanel logo, and those aspects enhance the perception of the brand as bold and elegant. Especially the overlapping makes an oval space called a vesica. This comes from Latin language for 'fish's bladder' because the shape resembles it. According to *1000 Symbols, What shapes Mean in Art & Myth* written by Sheperd, the vesica symbolizes the intersections and interdependence of opposite worlds and forces. Thus, the shape produces not only physical tension, but also one of expression theory, *empathy*, between two forces, which can be spirit and matter or heaven and earth. Chanel had referred those characteristics such as positive and negative, male and female and passive and active through her designs and collections. In terms of expression, the logo also represents Gabrielle Chanel's personality and philosophy, which is innovative and liberated and shows her masculine characteristics and her femininity at the same time.

According to Arnheim's theory, *Empathy*, there is a relationship between physical structures or patterns and expression. The physical structures or patterns can convey a mood or feeling as same as human's face can. Chanel certainly reflects both moods between male and female, yin and yang, mind and body, passive and active and more in its unique way. She certainly improves appropriate styles with designing men's clothes and women's clothes, and she also broke rules of the uses of the fabrics and other decorative materials, which were commonly used for men's wear before. The experimental ways gave her special recognition today. According to her infamous quote, *"Fashion is not simply a matter of clothes. Fashion is in the air, born upon the wind. One intuits it. It is in the sky and on the road."*

In addition to the special symbolic meaning, there are special Chanel's pathways over 98 years. Actually she was a pioneer of that time and suggested new styles, which were very successful in changing the way women looked at clothes as well as projected themselves. She had pursued comfortable fitting, practical usages, simple and bold styles considered a feminist and as part of the women's liberation. For example, most of her clothes for women were made out of jersey, which used for men's underclothes. Although she used jersey because of the low cost, the fabric was successfully matched with her design because the fabric offers natural drapery, which emphasizes femininity. Although social environment included World War I and World War II also affects to set her functional designs by necessity, her point of view was very accurate, so that she can make it possible that her designs were always ahead of the time exactly what women needed.

Based on her femininity, she was making a style icon herself; her slim boyish figure, short hair, tanned skin, active life style and independence of her finance. All of her personal attitudes and life style had lead to women's taste throughout the 20 century. The most prominent issue was Chanel No.5, which made her forever hero in the world history. No.5 launched in 1923, and the perfume is still loved by women in all over the world. Personally I think that No.5 is the best *de toilette* in the world because the scent has a few levels by passing time. It is not too strong, but it has enough to attract by offering different degree of scent. This aspect is really feminine as a sense of sensibility. Since the successful launching of No.5, Chanel has grown to be the most prestigious luxury brand until today. After she died in 1971, Karl Lagerfeld who had been the chief designer took over the corporate Chanel. He is making Chanel more powerful than

before by keeping the originality of Chanel as a brand of luxury, uniqueness and perfection.

Have you ever seen another Moulin rouge on the TV? The commercial "Her kiss, her smile, her perfume" created for Chanel No.5 captures my eyes. Indeed, it looks like a movie where you would see Nicole Kidman. In the beginning, a man is sitting on the Chanel logo sculpture, and then screen shows city's night landscape. There is Nicole Kidman who is afraid of the around her. Her beautiful pink dress implies that she is on the way a movie award, but she does not look comfortable. She finally runs away from all people and complexity of the city. The scandal



announces through on air. Now scene is changed. Appeared Nicole Kidman meets a man in a cap she took, and she takes refuge in his apartment. They kiss each other, and the scene is very intensive and sensual. After the night, she comes back her red carpet. Nicole Kidman looks beautiful, feminine and mysterious on the red carpet, and she looks back him and smiles. When she turns around, we can see the logo Chanel No.5 in her back.



Since 2003, Chanel has worked with Nicole Kidman for a few advertisements. She represents femininity, sensuality and beauty of the brand. Especially the mood of this commercial is based on the movie Moulin Rouge where Nicole Kidman was a main actress. The strategy of this commercial shows love and self-esteem that most women need today. Chanel pushes us if you have this perfume, you would get a lot of excitements. This approach is very successful to attract more consumers. First of all, although the story is a stereotype of love story, women always dream this type of romance. Also, everyone globally knew the movie, so people feel more close to the brand although not all people buy chanel perfume. In addition, we can see Chanel logo everywhere in this commercial so that we cannot lose what Chanel wants to say through the commercial. Chanel wants to sell not only its products, the company more focused on its culture and originality. One more we have to notice is that the commercial and magazine advertisements published at the same time. Using different medium with one theme is really effective. Now Keira Knightley has continued the hero of Chanel's movie and advertisement. I think that Nicole Kidman's advertising is extremely powerful than others because it was visually attract; moreover, it stimulates our five senses with originality of No.5.



Last October Others happened in Rumsey Field in Central Park. Chanel held an event in New York to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Chanel's 2.55 quilted bag which launched on February 1955, and Chanel placed a art pavilion in there for the event called *Mobile Art Exhibition inspired by handbag*. Zaha Hadid who is a London architect designed the pavilion, which looks similar to UFO or Star Trek style spaceship. The pavilion looks very stylish because of the curve shape and liquid texture in the

surface. She used natural light during the day, and she used artificial lighting in the base of the pavilion for night. Its functional purpose was creating mobile structure, so every piece was designed to fit together because of easy transportation. The mobile art already showed in Hong Kong and Tokyo, and Central Park in New York is the third place. It will be open London, Moscow and Paris. Paris will be the last stop of the mobile art. Inside this pavilion, we can see sculpture, photographs, videos and installations, which created by almost 20 contemporary artists. They, included Yoko Ono, Sophie Calle, Subodh Gupta and more, participated in the exhibition and created art pieces, which were inspired by Chanel's 2.55 quilted bag.

Some critics complain that this exhibition seems more like advertisement rather than art; however, not all is negative for me. It seems to blend the boundary between art and commerce. Louis Vuitton has collaborated with Takashi Murakami who is Japanese artist, and Architect Rem Koolhaas has worked with Prada as well. Frank Gehry also designed for Tiffany & Company. Although it might be aroused controversy among art critics, the concerns have certainly turned out advantages for the companies, artists and designers rather than the bitter critics. Now days the trend is very common in fashion world. Mr. Lagerfeld said, *"Art is art. Fashion is fashion,"* and *"However, Andy Warhol proved that they can exist together."* I like this idea that Chanel certainly pushes its products in a museum space, and Karl Lagerfeld wants to blend art into Chanel shop.

I cannot help admitting to myself that Chanel has a great, huge marketing strategy by blurring art and its products. Probably it will be the more. The collaboration with movie, architecture, art and design certainly delivers



an important message that blurs the border between art and daily object. It also suggests a new concept of contemporary art. Through these examples and points, the communication Chanel exactly has penetrated publics' mind and their eyes with enhanced visual marketing strategy. That is the reason why I think the brand is extremely successful today. I have gotten so much inspiration from those innovative people and their different philosophy. Their experimental events and collaborations always stimulate me. For me, as a designer, artist, and crazy consumer of Chanel, those collaborations

certainly gave me tremendous delight and inspiration into my professional life. I really appreciate what Chanel and Karl Lagerfeld made today.

References

Arnheim, Rudolf, Art and Visual Perception. Berkeley :
University of California Press, 1974.

Baudot, Francios. Chanel. New York :
Assouline Publishing, 2003. (4-17)

Sheperd, Rupert. 1000 Symbols, What Shapes Mean in Art & Myth. London :
Thames & Hudson, 2002 (338-339)

Roberts, Kevin. Lovemarks: The Future Beyond Brand. New York :
Power House Books, 2004 (36 -55)

Jung, Carl G. Man and His Symbols. New York :
A Laurel book, 1968 (266 -285)

www.chanel.com. 7, Nov. 2008. Chanel. 1, Dec. 2008.

<<http://www.chanel.com/fashion/7#7-fashion-trends-making-of-7>>.

www.youtube.com. 22, DEC. 2005. Chanel. 1, Dec. 2008.

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTO4FHf8MBs#>>.

"Chanel UFO to Descend Onto Central Park." The New York Observer (New York, NY)
(July 24, 2008): NA. New York State Newspapers. Gale. Pratt Institute Libraries. 5 Dec. 2008
<<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.pratt.edu:2048/itx/start.do?prodId=SPN.SP01>>.

"Chanel Mobile Art Exhibit (Inspired by Handbags!) Opens Today." The New York Observer (New York, NY) (Oct 20, 2008):
NA. New York State Newspapers. Gale. Pratt Institute Libraries. 5 Dec. 2008
<<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.pratt.edu:2048/itx/start.do?prodId=SPN.SP01>>.

Vogel, Carol. "A 7,500-square-foot ad for Chanel, with an artistic mission.(The Arts/Cultural Desk)."
" The New York Times 157.54381 (July 24, 2008): E1(L). New York State Newspapers. Gale. Pratt Institute
Libraries. 5 Dec. 2008
<<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.pratt.edu:2048/itx/start.do?prodId=SPN.SP01>>.

"Central Park To Host a Chanel Commission.(New York)." The New York Sun (New York, NY) (July 24, 2008): 3. New York
State Newspapers. Gale. Pratt Institute Libraries. 5 Dec. 2008
<<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.pratt.edu:2048/itx/start.do?prodId=SPN.SP01>>.

"CHANEL'S MOBILE ART PAVILION LANDS AT RUMSEY PLAYFIELD.(New YorkPulse)." New York Post (New York,
NY) (Oct 21, 2008): 42. New York State Newspapers. Gale. Pratt Institute Libraries. 17 Dec. 2008
<<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.pratt.edu:2048/itx/start.do?prodId=SPN.SP01>>.