



FASHION

Sofia Coppola Wraps Chanel Couture in a Golden Glow

- The filmmaker's memories of her teen internship under Karl Lagerfeld were the starting point of her coffee-table book marking 110 years of the French house's haute couture.

BY JOELLE DIDERICH

PARIS — When Sofia Coppola first set foot in the Chanel haute couture salon at the age of 15, she was like the proverbial kid in a candy store. So when the French fashion house asked her to compile a coffee table book celebrating its 110 years of haute couture, she wanted the cover to be like a gold wrapper.

"It's almost like a box of chocolates," Coppola told WWD.

The 448-page tome, released Monday, is only the second from Important Flowers, her new publishing imprint at London-based Mack Books, which produced the book with Éditions 7L, the publishing house founded by Karl Lagerfeld and now owned by Chanel.

In the foreword, Coppola recalled arriving at the Chanel studio wearing braces and an "expensive navy knit top and skirt" that her mother had bought her.

"It was 1986, and the studio was filled with music and energy — Karl was sketching, while Victoire de Castellane, in huge earrings and a low-cut bustier, carried out trays of costume jewelry and Veronica Webb and Marpessa sashayed around with tired eyes from late nights at the Bains Douches. I was far away from the small town in Northern California where I lived and went to a rural high school," she wrote.

French actress Carole Bouquet, a family friend and Chanel ambassador, had set up the internship as the Coppolas were reeling from the loss of her brother Gian-Carlo in an accident. "That summer the hole in my heart was filled with the magic and beauty of the haute couture studio," the filmmaker recalled.

In an emailed interview, Coppola said she could still recall vivid images from those days.

"Victoire de Castellane was so cool and fun and seeing Veronica Webb — her style made a huge impression on me. She wore torn jeans and a T-shirt with a Chanel jacket, which I had never seen before! She had the cutest style. It was at an age for me when I

was trying to figure out my style and what kind of adult I would be," she said.

Those memories informed her selection of images, which are assembled collage-style, with sections devoted to themes like the tweed jacket, bows and the color pink, in a pop-infused aesthetic that will feel familiar to fans of her films, including "Marie Antoinette" and "The Bling Ring."

"I always wanted it to be more about the feeling of how they are worn, and not academic," explained Coppola, contrasting the approach with museum catalogs.

"I wanted to show how they were really worn and see the women who wore them and where and how, from films, events, shoots," she added. "And of course I'm a big photography fan and got into photography from fashion magazines as a kid, so I loved seeing the work of all these great photographers that I love."

Covering the era from founder Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel through to Virginie Viard, the volume features fashion photographs by the likes of Man Ray, Irving Penn, Steven Meisel, Helmut Newton, Cecil Beaton and Dominique Issermann, including a contact sheet of Inès de la Fressange doing an uncanny impression of Coco.

Glossy runway and editorial images are juxtaposed with backstage shots of seamstresses at work in the Chanel couture workshop, which employs 150 people to make its one-of-a-kind creations.

"I love seeing the bridal photos, after I've seen them making them on Stockman [mannequins] in the atelier — to see where they end up, how they are worn. It's all so beautiful and inspiring to me. I think I really appreciate what the studio makes because I've seen up close what goes into them," said Coppola, who frequently works with Chanel on everything from short films to show sets.

"Chanel gave me access to everything they had," she continued. "Kate, our photo editor, researched images from





films and photographers that we love. It was really a hunt, and so exciting to find the images as we went."

Among her favorites: an Antonio Lopez illustration from 1983 published alongside a Bruce Weber photo of the same dress.

In addition to famous images like Marilyn Monroe with her bottle of No. 5, there are lesser-known treasures like a documentary-style Willy Rizzo photo from a 1956 fitting; a black-and-white snap of a 1961 show where a dachshund strayed onto the catwalk, or a candid shot of Kristen Stewart on the set of "Spencer," wearing an ivory haute couture gown with battered Nike sneakers.

The book contains unseen sketches, behind-the-scenes documents and press clippings, including two WWD covers from 1986 featuring de Castellane, who also shared her Polaroids from that period. Coppola sat down with hairstylist Odile Gilbert to root through boxes of sketches and press photos of her work with

Lagerfeld at Chanel.

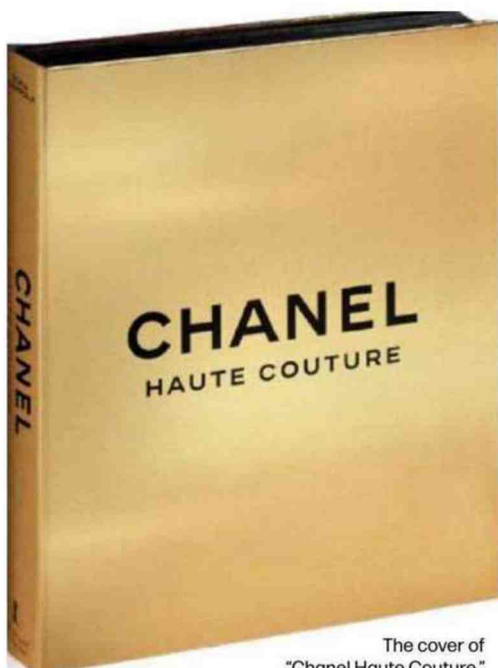
There are celebrities galore, including Nicole Kidman, Anouk Aimée, Romy Schneider, Catherine Deneuve, Penélope Cruz and Elle Fanning, as well as Kirsten Dunst shot at Versailles by Annie Leibovitz during the promotion of "Marie Antoinette" – one of several personal touches Coppola sprinkled in.

The director included a portrait of her teen self in French Vogue in 1986, and red carpet images, including a WWD photo of her and Marc Jacobs before the 2023 Met Gala. There is also an image of Cailie Spaeny in her bridal outfit from the set of "Priscilla."

For those who can't afford the five-figure price tags of haute couture, "Chanel Haute Couture" – the book – can be snapped up for a relatively affordable \$115. "I hope like couture, that it makes you dream," Coppola said.







The cover of
"Chanel Haute Couture."



Inès de la Fressange in fall
1985 Chanel haute couture.



Elle Fanning, W Mag, March
2021, The Director's Issue.