

# PLACE VENDÔME

*'I love luxury. Luxury lies not in richness and ornateness but in the absence of vulgarity. Vulgarity is the ugliest word in our language; I stay in the game to fight it.'* - Coco Chanel

**Photographer – Perry Curties**  
**Stylist – Gary Harvey at Balcony Jump**  
**Art Director – Rob Crane**  
**Makeup – Emma Osborne at Naked Artists,**  
**using Chanel Spring '09 and Rouge Allure Laque**  
**Hair – Patrice Eisley, using Shu Uemura Art of Hair**  
**Photographic assistant – Robin Boucher**  
**Retouching – Sanjay at Monkey London**  
**Perry Curties is represented by TheOfficeLondon.com**

*Shot on location at Chanel Fine Jewellery, 18 Place Vendome, Paris*  
*All fine jewellery by Chanel Fine Jewellery*  
*All clothing and accessories by Chanel RTW S/S*

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Throughout the last century, the name Chanel has become synonymous with luxury and glamour. Having started her fashion house in the early 20th century, Coco Chanel set about revolutionising the way women dressed, introducing simpler, more comfortable suits and casual outfits as a replacement for traditional corseted dresses. From the classic Chanel suit to Chanel No.5 and the little black dress, the fashion house's creations have become as iconic as the name Chanel itself, which today remains as popular as ever, producing clothing, perfume, footwear, handbags and accessories.

Since 1932, when Coco Chanel developed the first line, the fashion house has also produced exquisite jewellery. Benjamin Comar is the current International Director of Fine Jewellery at Chanel and as such is charged with developing new jewellery lines. Comar joined the fashion house four years ago, having learnt the business of fine jewellery whilst working for Cartier, and has a clear idea of why Chanel has remained popular whilst retaining its exclusivity. *'I think the strength of Chanel is firstly in its creativity. It's a brand that doesn't compromise, that doesn't make things for purely commercial reasons. The main thing is that the patrimony of the brand has to be developed. We work a lot on reviving and modernising the patrimony, and the fact that we work a lot on that makes the brand very neat and clean. The fact that we don't make compromises and we do everything for the sake of the brand is key to its success and longevity.'*

Much has been made of the current economic climate which has already claimed several high profile victims within the fashion industry, and many see the high-end luxury fashion sector as one of the most likely to suffer. How does a brand like Chanel react to such a situation?

*'Our intent is to maintain the soul of Chanel'* says Comar. *'I think the mistake that some luxury brands make is to change their strategy because of a crisis. We maintain our strategy even though times are difficult because that's how brands remain strong, by having a line of conduct that they stick by and not changing strategy every five minutes in response to the economic climate. Chanel's creativity is more discreet and not about 'showing off', and it's vital that remains the case.'*

However rich the heritage of a company is, it nonetheless needs to ensure that it is constantly adapting and evolving in order to remain fresh and relevant, whilst still staying in touch with its original identity and ethos. This can be quite a delicate balancing act and one that many brands have fallen foul of, but Chanel has consistently proved a master at combining the two elements. *'Chanel is always in its time'* states Comar. *'I think such a heritage and such a wide spectrum of icons and themes within that heritage allows us to modernise whilst still relating to the core of the brand. It's a challenge because you're always rewriting themes whilst trying to maintain a level of quality and creativity, but when the brand has such a rich culture and heritage then that challenge becomes easier.'*

Whilst the name Chanel is indeed inextricably linked with the idea of luxury, what exactly defines luxury? Comar believes there are two main factors. *'The first thing is craftsmanship, the quality of the craft - it's key to maintain that within a luxury brand. The second thing is thinking long term. When you create a product, particularly in jewellery, it's a long term item and it will be seen and worn for years, maybe 20, 30 years, and maybe even passed on to your children, so you have to create a product that will have this style and will always look in its time. Not products that only reflect the mood of the time but something on more of a long term basis.'*

Philip Goodfellow

