

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Stella McCartney films trashy tale to inspire mindful consumption

July 20, 2017



Image from Stella McCartney's winter 2017 ad campaign. Image courtesy of Stella McCartney

By SARAH JONES

British fashion label Stella McCartney is juxtaposing ready-to-wear and waste in an advertising campaign centered on a sustainable message.

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To promote its winter 2017 women's wear collection, the brand photographed its fashions against a backdrop of discarded items, making a point about the current culture of over consumption. An early luxury mover in sustainability, the brand often looks to inspire other labels and consumers to adopt greener habits.

"Clearly the brand sees the opportunity to connect with their consumers with a more emotional message, and that the brand's mission, value and purpose are all in sync with the mindset of their target," said Fred Reffsin, president of **Brandgrowth**, a luxury brand consultancy, Baltimore, MD.

"However, linking the brand to a message of wasteful over-consumption may be a bit of a stretch, and somewhat disingenuous, especially when fashion brands ask their customers at least twice a year to replenish their wardrobes," he said.

Mr. Reffsin is not affiliated with Stella McCartney, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Stella McCartney** was reached for comment.

Waste not, want not

For the campaign, Stella McCartney tapped photographer Harley Weir and artist Urs Fischer, both returning collaborators of the brand.

Turning a Scottish landfill into the set, Ms. Weir shot models against piles of items that had been tossed, using these manmade landscapes as the backdrop.



Image from Stella McCartney's winter 2017 ad campaign. Image courtesy of Stella McCartney

Making a connection with the winter runway show, the campaign casts models Birgit Kos, Jana Godnia and Huan Zhou, all of whom walked in the show.

Ms. Kos is seen lounging atop a rusting car, while Ms. Godnia looks up from her position atop a trash pile. While the brand's message is serious, the women portray a positive and hopeful spin on the issue of waste, smiling amid the garbage.



Image from Stella McCartney's winter 2017 ad campaign. Image courtesy of Stella McCartney

Accompanying Ms. Weir's photographs are illustrations from Mr. Fischer, adding a touch of whimsy to the effort with a stroke of green or tan.

"The idea we had with this campaign is to portray who we want to be and how we carry ourselves; our attitude and collective path," said designer Stella McCartney in a statement. "Our man-made constructed environments are disconnected and unaware of other life and the planet which is why there is waste."

Along with the still images, Stella McCartney has released a short film.

Giving the footage an upbeat feel, the video is set to Tkay Maida's "Tennies," which was given a brand touch with references to "Stellies." Models danced to the track at the close of the winter 2017 runway show, creating further cohesion between catwalk and campaign.

The models are first seen running, dancing and lip-syncing to the song in nature. Next, the focus shifts to the landfill, where trash blows in the wind and a bulldozer moves waste around.

Stella McCartney hopes to draw attention to the 300 tons of plastic created every year, about half of which is meant to be used only once.

The Winter 2017 Stella McCartney Campaign Film | Full Edit

"The campaign presents the brand as relevant and important," Mr. Reffsin said. "It speaks of hope, optimism and positive change."

"It takes the brand beyond the usual luxe story, replacing it with one of corporate responsibility," he said. "I am too much of a cynic to question whether it's a good idea to display your brand in or on a landfill. But I get the juxtaposition and I applaud the effort."

Green marketing

Comparatively younger than many of its peers, founded in 2001, Stella McCartney was founded on sustainable principles. This focus on vegetarian and environmentally friendly practices makes appearances in the brand's marketing while maintaining a lighthearted touch.

For instance, the Kering-owned label took a comedic look at environmentally-conscious clothing care while highlighting the high-quality and long-lasting clothes the fashion label offers.

The "Clevercare" video series celebrated Earth Day April 22 with tips for how to maintain Stella McCartney clothes and ways to minimize a consumer's carbon footprint. The six-part series took an unconventional approach for most luxury brands by making the films highly comedic in nature ([see story](#)).

The brand also put its founder's vegan values front-and-center in its winter 2016 advertising campaign.

In the brand's print effort, images of model-actress-environmentalist Amber Valletta posing in the collection were overlaid with text from artist Ed Ruscha spelling out phrases such as "Meat free." Juxtaposing the cruelty-free messaging of the print campaign was a witty mockumentary that took consumers into a humorous alternative behind-the-scenes environment ([see story](#)).

"[Sustainability] is a positioning that is neither own-able, or leverageable," Mr. Reffsin said. "Is it important? Of course. Is it a message that will pre-empt others? No. Is this a positioning they can claim as their own? No.

"Will this encourage customers to buy more or buy instead of? Maybe, but certainly not long-term," he said.

"Sustainability is much more complex than just the materials you use to manufacture your collection. It's about committing your company to a culture of sustainability across all functions. I would hope that the follow-up takes the message to this higher plane."