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Vetements visualizes fashion's waste problem in Harrods takeover

February 12, 2018



Vetements window at Harrods. Image credit: Harrods

By SARAH JONES

British department store Harrods is working with streetwear label Vetements to draw attention to the issue of overproduction.

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The Zurich-based brand has taken over four of Harrods' windows for an installation that showcases how much fashion is wasted. While potentially a counter-intuitive message for a brand and retailer, the project aims to inspire a more sustainable fashion strategy.

"The focus on overproduction will help position Harrods as socially responsible and elevate consumers' perception of the brand," said David Naumann, vice president of marketing at [Boston Retail Partners](#), Boston. "I hope this initiative on overproduction translates into improved merchandise planning strategies for Harrods that result in smarter buying and production decisions that are better aligned with consumer demand."

Donation drive

Speaking about the project, Vetements CEO Guram Gvasalia told [British Vogue](#) that while many brands are focusing their sustainability efforts on where or how garments are produced, the real issue is how much is made and therefore consumed. He further noted that anything that has been marked down has been overproduced.

To demonstrate the sheer over consumption of fashion, Vetements has piled clothing seemingly haphazardly in Harrods' windows. The garments displayed came from donations from Harrods' 4,000 employees.

Also included in the windows are authentic Parisian donation bins, a fitting choice since they feature the word "vetements," the French term for clothing.



Donation bin within the installation. Image credit: Harrods

Consumers are invited to bring their own clothing to donate. Those who do will receive a limited-edition Vetements-branded bracelet, which is made of recycled water bottles.

Proceeds from the donations will be given to Britain's National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The organization works to change policies and attitudes to better protect children from harm.

While this is a first-of-its-kind installation in the United Kingdom, Vetements has previously launched similar projects at retailers such as Saks Fifth Avenue and Los Angeles' Maxfield. Vetements plans to have about 50 of these events in the next year.



Those who donate get a bracelet. Image credit: Harrods

Consumers can donate clothes through March 2 at Harrods.

"It is an interesting juxtaposition for Harrods to team up with Vetements for this sustainability initiative, as the pragmatic, down-to-earth culture Vetements doesn't seem like a good fit with Harrods' luxury, upscale image,"

Boston Retail Partners' Mr. Naumann said. "However, the association with Vetements may create more brand awareness for Harrods among younger demographics who wouldn't normally shop at their stores."

Mindful luxury

This campaign comes as consumers appear ready to embrace a more mindful consumption.

Affluent consumers are seeking to simplify their lives, with more than half of respondents in a YouGov study saying they are looking to buy less and declutter.

The biggest motivator for this shift is saving time, as these individuals look to spend more of their time exploring their passions or having "me time." Consumption patterns have been increasingly moving away from accumulation and more towards mindful purchasing, as consumers seek to fill their lives with experiences rather than material goods ([see story](#)).

Brands are also rethinking how they produce, looking to create items in a more sustainable way.

Similarly to Vetements, sustainable fashion consultancy Eco-Age is championing artisan skills through a global initiative that pairs design talents with craftspeople.

The Commonwealth Fashion Exchange will showcase designs that utilize handwork from the organizations' 52 member countries at an event during London Fashion Week in February.

Fashion is a huge producer of waste, as about 80 billion garments are produced each year. These purchases see short lifespans as consumers constantly seek out the new.

As an alternative, this project promotes the idea of creating lasting fashion through the use of historic techniques. Compared to disposable fashion, the endeavor sees these looks as having more staying power, with potential for these creations to be passed down as heirlooms ([see story](#)).

"Many consumers' shopping decisions are influenced by the personality and image of brands," Mr. Naumann said. "While it might encourage some shoppers to think twice and ask themselves if they really need' to buy another clothing item, when they buy the next item they need, they might be inspired to shop at Harrods."