

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Stella McCartney teams with Bolt Threads to debut leather alternative

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Bolt Threads is launching Mylo, a faux leather. Image courtesy of Bolt Threads

By SARAH JONES

British fashion label Stella McCartney is further embracing alternative materials through the use of mushroom-derived faux leather.

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As the fashion industry looks to lower its environmental footprint, biotechnology company Bolt Threads is launching a more sustainably produced faux leather. An early adopter of vegetarian textiles, Stella McCartney has shown an openness to experiment with new, more eco-friendly fabrics, a strategy it is continuing with this latest Bolt Threads partnership.

Bolt Threads was reached for comment.

Fungi fabric

Stella McCartney and Bolt Threads previously teamed up to create a vegan spider silk made of yeast. This textile was used for a one-off dress exhibited at the ""Items: Is Fashion Modern?" exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York ([see story](#)).

Now, Bolt Threads is launching its second fabric creation, which uses the root structure of mushrooms, or mycelium. Dubbed Mylo, the production of the fabric begins as Bolt Threads takes mycelium cells and grows them in corn stalks, which then turn into a network of 3D cells.



Bolt Threads' Mylo. Image courtesy of Bolt Threads

From there, the cells are compressed, imprinted and dyed. As Mylo is created, Bolt Threads can control all aspects of its production, altering it for characteristics such as durability or suppleness.

Presented as an alternative to faux leathers that looks and feels more like the real thing, Mylo is also more eco-friendly than polyurethane or PVC pleathers.

Mylo, which leverages mycelium fabrication technology developed by Ecovative, is the first commercial fake leather made from mushrooms.

A Stella McCartney Falabella handbag crafted out of Mylo will be on view at the Victoria & Albert Museum's upcoming "Fashioned from Nature" exhibit.



Look from Stella McCartney's fall/winter 2017 collection that will be on display in Fashioned from Nature. Image credit: Stella McCartney

Opening April 21, the exhibition explores the connections that garments have had with nature. This includes designers' natural inspirations, the use of nature-based materials in designs and a look at sustainability in fashion.

Among the pieces on display will be a Calvin Klein dress made out of recycled plastic bottles and a Ferragamo outfit made out of an orange fiber textile. Other Stella McCartney garments will also be included.

In addition to the Stella McCartney handbag, Mylo will also launch its own branded bag in June.

Faux in fashion

Stella McCartney has helped normalize the idea of faux fabrics in luxury. From the label's start, it has championed faux leather and faux fur.

The label 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 are 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](#)).

While the fashion industry has typically relied on animal-based materials such as fur, many labels are changing their tune when it comes to textiles.

Brands including Gucci, Armani, Furla, Versace, Michael Kors and Jimmy Choo have all opted out of fur.

According to Furla, the technical advances in faux fur have rendered the use of real fur unnecessary ([see story](#)).

Luxury has traditionally been heavily associated with leather goods, but it remains to be seen whether advances in pleather could convince labels to say goodbye to the real thing.