

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Dior enters the wild with environmental portraits

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Julia Sullivan in "Queen of the Southern Sea." Image credit: Dior

By NORA HOWE

French fashion house Christian Dior is immersing itself in nature through the power of emotional storytelling.

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In an effort towards informing fashion consumers of the importance of environmental sustainability and celebrating Earth Day, the fashion brand released new installments of its "Tales of the Wild" series. The new episodes feature two individuals who are dedicated to preserving all elements of nature and determined to find the symbiotic relationship between wildlife and mankind.

"Fashion relies on storytelling to build consumer connections with a lifestyle that they want to be part of," said Dalia Strum, founder of Rethink Connect and professor at The Fashion Institute of Technology, New York. "We frequent brands that we have emotional connections to, and when we wear the items purchased from those brands, the story continues past that purchase to embrace the experience.

"Sentimental value is then associated to those items and increases their personal value," she said. "However, it starts with the desire to be connected and associated with the brand's ethos, values and lifestyle, which comes to light through the brand's ability to tell a story."

Tales of the Wild

Dior debuted the series in 2016 with a collection of episodes focusing primarily on thrill-seekers. As the face of Dior's Sauvage cologne, actor Johnny Depp lent his voice to the documentary series that emphasized the lure of adventure.

The short films detailed the lives of four men, each of whom drastically change their lives to connect with nature and tap into their adventurous spirits ([see story](#)).

Directed by Clément Beauvais and Arthur de Kersauson, the new installments feature environmentalist Julia Sullivan and bear scientist Wes Larson.

As an ocean conservationist, Ms. Sullivan is committed to raising awareness to combat plastic pollution in the ocean and aims to help local communities access clean drinking water.

The Queen of the Southern Sea

In "Queen of the Southern Sea," Ms. Sullivan shares memories of visiting the ocean as a child with her family. She recounts one specific visit, when she first heard the story of Kanjeng Ratul Kidu, the Queen of the Southern Sea, a cursed Indonesian princess who supposedly threw herself into the ocean to break a spell.

"I have always felt that the ocean is this greater thing connected to us," Ms. Sullivan says in the short film. "We are a part of it and it is a part of us, and we should be respecting it."

Throughout the film, she expresses sincere concern over the rate at which humans around the world are polluting their water ecosystems. She suggests that, on one end, water is the source of life, but on the other, so many people are dying from dirty water or lack of access to water.

"This approach is quite different than the typical Dior campaign, which is quite refreshing," Ms. Strum said. "They explored new territories with real-life heroes who would be the ideal customer for Sauvage."

"It wasn't about celebrity status, but creating an emotional connection to the cologne through genuine adventurers and explorers," she said. "It's a strong reminder of the value that brands should create and connect with their ideal customer profile."

A wildlife biologist, Mr. Larson leads the arduous life of a Jack London-type character, observing grizzly bears in the heart of the British Columbian forest in Canada.

The 7-minute long short film "Grizzly Kid" follows Mr. Larson through a day in his life in the wilderness.

"Bears are this emblem of wilderness," he says. "If you have bears in the ecosystem, and they're doing well, you know that ecosystem is healthy."

As the audience watches Mr. Larson build a fire near a lake, he discusses his relationship with bears and how it has developed throughout his life.

"It is an animal that could change your entire experience when you are in the woods because suddenly you're sharing a space with an animal that is much more powerful than you and has the ability to kill you," he says. "You're surrendering a part of yourself to them."

Grizzly Kid

As he takes photographs of two bears on the bank of a river, Mr. Larson admits that humans have forgotten how to live in harmony with the wilderness, and instead have tried to dominate it.

With these portraits, Dior aims to bring awareness to the problems facing the environment today through an emotional, yet informative lens. The campaign serves to promote the house's Sauvage fragrance.

Luxury's take on sustainability

As sustainability and environmental responsibility have become especially topical over the past year, and while there is still a long road ahead, luxury fashion houses have incorporated stricter sustainability efforts into their business and production strategies.

French luxury goods conglomerate and Dior's parent company LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton has continued its partnership with design school Central Saint Martin, launching Maison/0 for regenerative luxury.

This new phase in the partnership aims to help design a better future and respond to environmental emergencies through creative education ([see story](#)).

In February, Italy's Prada Group and UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) announced the last phase of the Sea Beyond program, an initiative that raises awareness on ocean preservation and sustainability within schools around the world.

From its launch, Sea Beyond has sought to educate new generations about adopting more responsible and mindful behaviors towards the ocean and its resources, promoting sustainable consumption in line with the [United Nations 2030 Agenda](#) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For three weeks in the beginning of the year, Prada and UNESCO tasked students in ten cities around the world with developing awareness campaigns focused on ocean preservation as part of an international competition ([see story](#)). The winning campaign, announced in March, explored the dangers of plastic pollution on the ocean and

showed how to collect plastic waste for upcycling ([see story](#)).

"Storytelling is the most valuable opportunity to build stronger relationships, share relevant information, inspire audiences and, most importantly, educate them about both the company, the overarching brand and even the customer journey," Ms. Strum said. "Through stories, we're able to build stronger connections with our community, along with sharing our company culture and values to increase connectivity."

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