

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Stella McCartney composes ode to fungi with summer campaign

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Stella McCartney is giving fungi a fashionable makeover. Image credit: Stella McCartney

By KATIE TAMOLA

British fashion label Stella McCartney is ruminating on the wondrous capabilities of fungi in an inventive new campaign.

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Two short films including a spot with Merlin Sheldrake, a mycologist who specializes in the study of fungi explores how powerful and versatile this group of spore-producing organisms can be. As Mr. Sheldrake praises the properties of fungi as remarkable, he also explains how the fashion industry at large could be headed in a fungus-laded direction.

"The short films speak directly to Stella McCartney's ethos," said Rebecca Miller, founder/CEO of **ARTful Communication**, New York. "They address her lifelong affinity for being a vegetarian, her openness towards curiosity, research, honoring nature, cultures and her position on not using any leather or fur in her designs.

"Her signature style includes sharp tailoring, natural confidence, and sexy femininity," she said. "We see these same elements featured in her films: the design of the garden's 150,000 hand-pruned boxwoods: sharp tailoring; the lady in red emerging; natural confidence; and the evolving depiction of fungi: sexy femininity."

Deserved attention

With the new series of films, Stella McCartney addresses that although fungi have amazing properties, 90 percent of fungi species are yet to be documented.

The British label believes that mushrooms are not getting the attention they deserve, and thus, the summer 2022 collection is an ode to fungi.

Stella McCartney continues to make fungi chic

The first vignette is a dreamy exploration of the environment, starring a model who fashions different Stella looks. Whether in a taupe bedazzled jumpsuit or a neon-green maxi dress, she roams several shrubs, appreciating nature.

Her last ensemble is a blazer, top with cutouts and slacks, all in red. At the end of the film, several versions of the

same woman appear throughout the shrubbery, a nod to the label's sustainable, versatile ethos.

In the second vignette, Mr. Shel Drake delves deep into the world, and immense power, of fungi.

He begins by sharing several important facts, including that fungi are everywhere but they are easy to miss and that they have astonishing abilities that make life on earth possible.

Fungi is truly all around: present in cheese, bread, soy sauce, a host of anti-cancer and antiviral compounds that make organ transplants possible.

Mr. Shel Drake explains the myriad ways fungi is truly all around us

The mycologist and author of *Entangled Life* also explicitly explains its importance to the fashion world.

Numerous brands are straying away from fur, and implementing alternatives like mushroom-based materials. This move marks a more sustainable fashion industry, but also a more sustainable world at large.

"[There are] many ways humans can partner with fungi whether foods, medicines or new materials like the leather-like fungal fabrics that promise to shape the future of fashion," Mr. Shel Drake says in the film.

Stella and the earth

Stella McCartney proudly recalls that the label has been fur-free since day one of its inception. The label continues to work diligently to remind consumers that an absence of fur can still be considered the highest of fashion.

Last May, Stella McCartney created a new set of leather-alternative garments made from lab-grown, vegan mushroom leather.

Reflecting its 20-year dedication to being a vegetarian, leather-, skin- and fur-free brand, the company highlighted the world's first-ever Mylo garments, furthering its partnership with Bolt Threads. The two products from the collaboration, a black bustier top and utilitarian trousers, are an example of what Stella McCartney believes to be the future of its fashion offerings ([see story](#)).

Last November, the designer advocated for an outright fur ban at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).

Expunging the use of fur has always been a cause dear to the designer's heart, as the animal byproduct has never been used in her own luxury fashion label. Ms. McCartney unveiled an exhibition in honor of the event, showcasing materials she has been working with that she believes operate as ethical animal alternatives ([see story](#)).

Stella McCartney proceeds to promote more ethical and sustainable living in the fashion world and beyond, with the aim that these practices become commonplace.

"Stella has been a courageous leader in several aspects of fashion, the awareness of the treatment of women and the world we need to protect," Ms. Miller said. "She views fungi as another vehicle to support her efforts towards healing.

"We see the use of fungi today in building materials, lamp shades and fabrication," she said. "I expect we will see more products developed using fungi for the home, around our health and the foods we consume."