

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Stella McCartney enlists student activists in Earth Day programming

April 25, 2023



*The brand ties the youth-led protests to its own activism, such as its use of plants, recycled materials and food waste in place of animal byproducts. Image credit: Stella McCartney*

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

British fashion house [Stella McCartney](#), with the help of young people, is bringing attention to animal rights issues.

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In honor of Earth Day, the brand asked students in London, Paris and Milan to take to the streets in support of cruelty-free fashion. The marches, led by a demographic that often spearheads climate protests, were not only characterized by the age of the participants but the Stella McCartney attire worn by them, integrating their causes.

"The youth has always been a demographic that is open to change as well as to spend time and to raise their voices on issues that they care about," said Kimmie Smith, cofounder and creative director of [Athleisure Mag](#), New York.

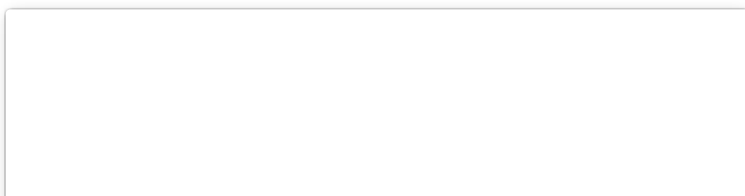
"They are individuals that will spread messages that they feel need to be known about, as well as find others who will also join them in their cause," Ms. Smith said. "By obtaining engaged students, brands are able to share their initiatives and why they are participating in them."

Ms. Smith is not affiliated with Stella McCartney, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

### Sustainable schooling

The young protestors donned Stella McCartney shirts with a favorite activist slogan of the house at each of the international protests.

"Change the History" was recently featured in a collection drop that was also centered around animal rights ([see story](#)). The phrase served as the theme for the summer 2023 campaign, created by Japanese punk artist and three-time brand collaborator Yoshitomo Nara.



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A post shared by Stella McCartney (@stellamccartney)

This time, students from Milan and London locations of the [Marangoni Institute](#) fashion and design school and from [Parsons Paris](#) school of art and design wore the slogan. Holding signs that also said "Change the History," they marched from local landmarks to Stella McCartney flagships in their cities, stopping to ask people how they would like to change history.

It seems that the brand is asking itself the same question, as working with young people inherently has an innate, future-facing quality to it.



*Young people are often the focus of Stella McCartney campaigns, bringing a sense of hope in sustainability messaging. Image credit: Stella McCartney*

"These students create an unintentional accountability in that if a brand like Stella McCartney shares that they are utilizing mycelium as a means to create an alternative leather that provides the warmth and supple aspects to its handbags, this will also create a need to push using this innovative material as well as to look at other opportunities where changing history in production can be made," Ms. Smith said.

"Student activists will want to have an exchange where further questions regarding use over the next few years, more relationships with other groups to create innovations will also be incorporated," she said. "The ability to use students as an amplifier comes with the checks and balances so that brands will not just do the status quo and will be on the lookout for continuing to do the work that they have started.

"In terms of future aspects, these students could eventually work in fields that are creating innovations, work internally with the brand if an opportunity arises or begin to think of working in a legislative capacity to ensure that other brands also find ways to embrace ecological policies in their production and materials."

Looking forward, Stella McCartney took to social media to showcase its use of the innovative mycelium material, made from mushrooms. The bag was first released in July 2022 ([see story](#)).

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A post shared by Stella McCartney (@stellamccartney)

The **Frayme bag** features the creation, as well as zero-waste zamac metal and organic cotton. According to the brand, the purse has an environmental impact that is 10 times smaller than of those made from animal materials.

"Vegan bags have always been considered the best category that doesn't use animal products, however, many have questioned its aesthetic and feel," Ms. Smith said.

"You don't want to have a premium bag that feels like plastic or PVC," she said. "You want it to have a soft hand that has that warmth like you would feel when carrying a leather, and you also want it to be able to hold up.

"The aluminum chain detail against this spongelike fungi makes it a coveted luxury piece that you would want to wear."

#### Faces of the future

American actor Madelyn Cline, star of Netflix's *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* movie and the show *Outer Banks*, was also centered on Stella McCartney's social media.

The 25-year-old actor was the model featured in the aforementioned summer 2023 campaign. In this activation, Ms. Cline, like the other young people, was shown protesting and wearing the rebellious slogan.

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A post shared by Stella McCartney (@stellamccartney)

She modeled items such as organic cotton denim chaps, lead-free crystal lingerie made from forest-friendly viscose and aviators made from wood pulp.

American actor Sadie Sink has also worn the glasses in campaign imagery for winter 2022 ([see story](#)). At 21 years old, she joins the lineup of other young people Stella McCartney has tapped to bring its conscious luxury items to life.

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