

‘Who’s in Your Clothes?’ – A Vegan Fashion Revolution on the Runway

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I will curate a fashion show highlighting one of the most controversial topics, veganism. This vegan fashion revolution, titled 'Who's in Your Clothes?' will feature breath taking artists and designers. You will see contentious fashion pieces from Stella McCartney, as well as haunting artwork by Beau White. This will exhibit in the famous Somerset House, which has hosted London Fashion Week on multiple occasions, making it a relevant space to convey my concept through curation.

In a stunning, historical Georgian building, The Somerset House, founded in 1547, seems incredibly fitting for the 'Who's in Your Clothes?' fashion show. The ancient interiors and exteriors create an illusion of what historic fashion trends could have been like, contrasting against the more recent movement of veganism, in a fashion context. This house is the heart of fashion and by it being situated in London, a town where leather and fur were once in such high demand, the idea of such an alternative fashion movement being expressed there is beyond unthinkable. 'The shoe and leather industry trades ranked high in terms of output among manufacturing industries in the early nineteenth century' (Church, p.543) but as technologies advanced in Britain, it made producing materials derived from animals more accessible and the demand continued to rise. 'Between 50 and 60 percent of the total value of leather output was used in the manufacture of boots and shoes; but estimates that for the early years of the twentieth century suggest that this proportion rose by about a half'. (Church, p.544) This information is saddening but highly informative of how animals were and still are used for their skin for fashion.

Additionally, the leather industry is currently outdated. In the 21st century people are becoming more aware of their fashion choices and how it has an impact on animals. Veganism has been around for many years, however, there has been a recent increase in this particular movement. 'Who's in Your Clothes?' will bring to you fashion of the future, present and past. The show will be "an homage to animals and an ode to the end of animal cruelty in all its forms". (Rienda) I intend to change a person's outlook and open up a new perspective.



Fig One

I propose for the fashion show to take place on the runway, having the walkway dimly lit. The walls, flooring and ceiling will be black, creating an eerie atmosphere. The idea of not fully being able to see the person sitting next to you resembles the loneliness of the unfortunate animals who are being used for their skin. The colour black, mirroring the darkness of the situation. The importance of space will mean that I will achieve my goal of the audience developing a deeper understanding on the leather and fur industry, as well as having an emotional experience.

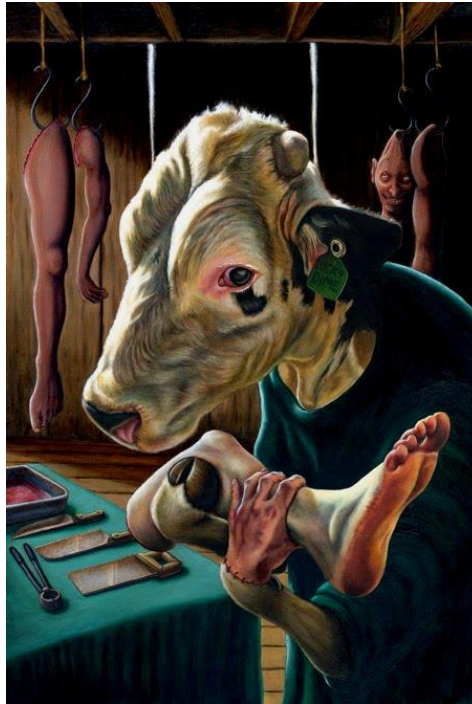


Fig Two

This haunting artwork by Beau White creepily draws in the idea of what it would be like if humans and animals were to change roles, and it were the humans who suffer, instead of the animals. White's disturbing imagery will hopefully open up a new perspective, making people come to the realisation of the type of cruelty that lies within our clothes. Often, people are consciously aware and feel genuine guilt behind animal derived clothes. Although, it is incredibly easy to see a chic pair of leather boots and admire their beauty in their present state. However, as visual beings, the audience will hopefully sympathise to the harsh reality. This eye-opening masterpiece will be placed on the wall of the runway, being one of the very first elements to be seen, due to the importance of the artwork. Even though this particular piece of art is more so highlighting the meat industry, it still demonstrates how we all know that animals are used for their flesh for human consumption, whether that is on a plate or in our favourite jacket. By White subtly changing the role of the slaughterhouse worker and the cow, the audience are made to look twice at the artwork. They are able to relate more to the piece and will hopefully come to the realisation that 'leather is someone's skin' (PETA, 2020), questioning their own fashion choices.

The order in which I will present the fashion pieces by various designers is vital. Through curation, the fashion show will tell a story; from opening up with a parade of animals, following by a dark fashion statement, ending with cruelty free fashion. Exploring historic and future trends. That is why Stella McCartney's work is first to be featured on the runway.



Fig Three

McCartney's joyous, cartoon-like animals juxtapose nicely in front of White's disturbing artwork. These animals will prance down the catwalk, making the atmosphere eerily upbeat. These costumes will distract the audience from the artwork, possibly creating a sense of innocence, but only for a short period of time, before being drawn back into reality. It is important that McCartney's costumes are first to make an appearance on the runway, due to her significance in the vegan movement, in a fashion context. "These animals are the ingredients of everyone else's fashion shows. We are the only luxury fashion house in the world that isn't killing animals on the runway" (Stella McCartney) Being one of the only luxurious brands to care about animals and treat them as actual beings, makes it special to feature her work. This message contrasts with the next fashion piece, by Dior. Transitioning into the cow no longer being on stage, but faux flesh being worn by the models.



Fig Four

Before transitioning, ‘Your Blind Passenger’ by Olafur Eliasson, brings a live experience of uncertainty, which is what most animals will face before they meet their fate. This fog will appear behind Stella McCartney’s animal costumes, just as they walk off the stage, gradually increasing in volume before consuming the entirety of the audience as the stage lights go out. The suspense created here, foreshadowing the next fashion piece, makes what the audience will see next even more powerful. Without the fog, the juxtaposition of McCartney’s joyous animal costumes to outfits mimicking animal flesh, would be too rapid. This would ruin and do the complete opposite of deepening the emotions felt by the audience, so the importance of the fog being present is crucial.



Fig Five

This fashion statement by Dior's, John Galliano, gorily depicts skin and blood, resembling that of an animal. In the fashion show, this outfit will generate a historic feel, connecting with the old Georgian Somerset House. The old-fashioned pleated collar conveys the demand for leather and fur in London. Although, people may not make the connections between the antique clothes and ancient building, it still adds character and deeper meaning to the catwalk. The pale, ghostly makeup on the models resemble the horrified animals before reaching their fate. The only colour to brighten this room is red; a symbol of warning, danger, alertness and fear. The models will stay on the runway for a longer period of time, creating a memoir for the unfortunate animals.



Fig Six

There is a light at the end of the tunnel with Maya Reik's, 'I am furless' fashion statement, bringing justice for animals. Fashion does not have to be cruel, especially in the 21st century with advanced technology, bringing top quality manmade materials, there really is no excuse. The forever changing and growing industry, suggests that in the fashion industry 'Consumers are influenced by fashion changes, marketing of new products.' (Williams, I.D, 2017) People are always looking for something new. As Veganism gets more popular, there will be a major decline in the need for animals, therefore putting This modern fashion piece contrasts well with the historic Georgian building in which the fashion show takes place, foreshadowing a cruelty free future of fashion.

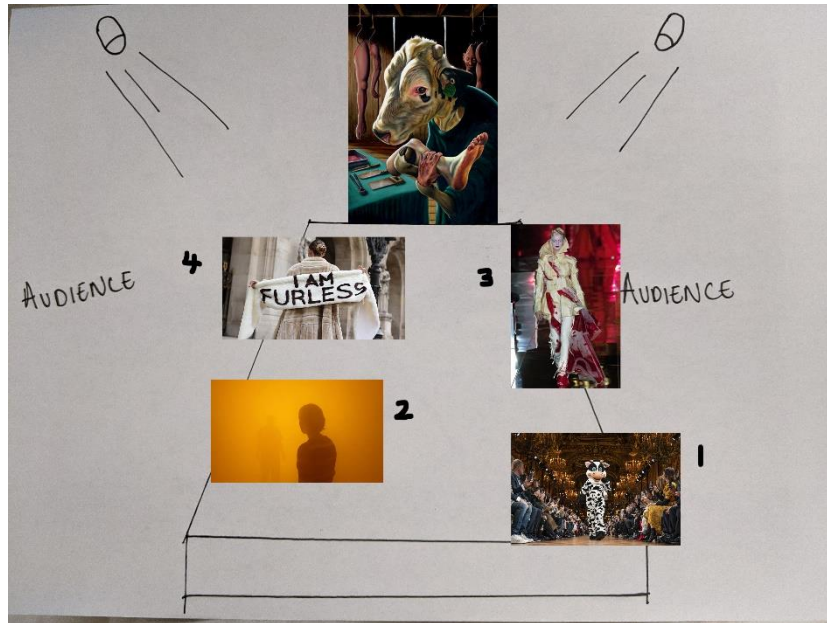


Fig Seven

I will have up to 1000 guests attending 'Who's in your clothes', all seated uncomfortably close to each other, similarly to how animals are cramped together in tiny rooms. As mentioned previously, due to the darkness the audience will be so close literally, yet figuratively so far away. By the audience being able to see all angles of the catwalk, it brings the message I want to portray to life. Each fashion piece is carefully ordered as seen in the map, depicting a story on my concept, demonstrating fashion from past to future. This fashion show will make a mark in history, purposely using particular imagery that will stay in a person's mind forever. The lack of colour, arguable, may not be considered memorable. However, with mostly no colour and a slight pop of red will most likely be remembered, in comparison to a fashion show full of colour. My intentions are to make others consider making conscious fashion choices and potentially adopting a vegan lifestyle.

Figures

Fig. One: Aksu, Bora. (2010) *Bora Aksu Catwalk Show* [Photograph] Somerset House, London Fashion Week

Fig. Two: White, Beau. *Unknown* [Artwork]

Fig. Three: McCartney, Stella. (2020) *Stella McCartney Show* [Fashion Piece] Paris

Fig. Four: Eliasson, Olafur. (2019) *Your Blind Passenger* [Photograph] Tate Modern, London

Fig. Five: Galliano, John. (2006) *Unknown* [Fashion Piece]

Fig. Six: Reik, Maya. (2018) *I Am Furless* [Fashion Piece]

Fig. Seven: My map

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