



ARABIA

NOVEMBER 2018

**A CELEBRATION OF  
ARABIA'S LEADING LADIES**

YOUSRA

NELLY KARIM

SABA MUBARAK

DORRA ZARROUK

ELISA SEDNAOUI DELLAL

YASMIN RAEIS

YASMINE SABRI

**THE ONE AND ONLY**

NAOMI

**THE ORIGINAL  
SUPERMODEL KICKS  
OFF A SEASON OF  
WILD, WILD FASHION**



# Faux or fur?

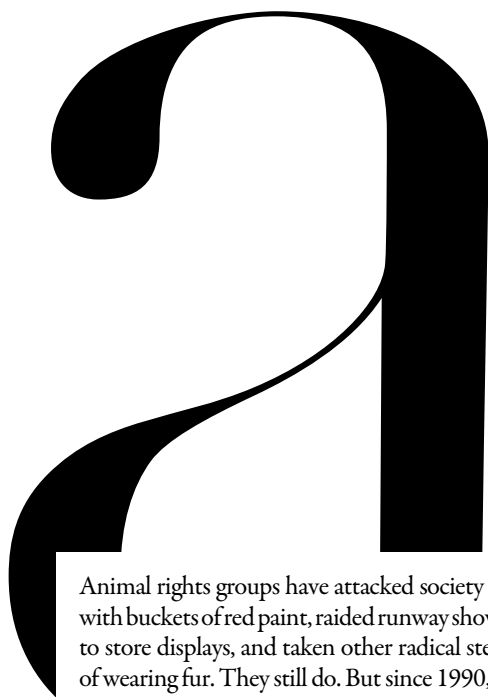


Fur is dead. Or is it? For all its apparent prestige, some say we must move on. But is going faux the answer?

Words MISHA PINKHASOV

## INSIDE FASHION'S HAIRIEST DEBATE





Animal rights groups have attacked society ladies and fashionistas with buckets of red paint, raided runway shows, chained themselves to store displays, and taken other radical steps to scare people out of wearing fur. They still do. But since 1990, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) – one of the most vocal anti-fur groups – has also tried a more seductive approach. Ads bearing celebrities in the buff tout “I’d rather go naked than wear fur,” “Be comfortable in your own skin,” and other uplifting slogans. And they seem to be getting traction.

In recent years, several dozen fashion and luxury brands have joined Stella McCartney’s decades-long stance against fur. The news from Armani and Gucci maybe made the biggest splashes. Burberry the most recent. Versace the most flamboyant. Even opulent, sensual (and newly vegan) Tom Ford is wavering. Retailer Selfridges went fur-free in 2004, and Yoox Net-a-Porter banned fur from all its online stores last year. London fashion week was the first of the big-league runway circuits to go fur-free. And in January, Norway, once the world’s largest producer of fox pelts, became the 14th European nation to begin phasing out fur farming.

Fur, it now seems, is inhuman – except that fur is deeply human. Animal pelts were among our first attire, dating back further than we can measure. One estimate (note: by the fur industry) puts it at 170 000 years and our co-human primordial relatives. The fur trade drove Europeans to explore deep into North America and far-east Russia long before gold or diamonds. Seasonal fashion aside, fur is a centuries-old staple of Inuit, Scandinavian, Slavic, and Asian cultures, and interwoven with modern rituals of nobility in societies worldwide.

We used to have no other choice. The technology of the early industrial era could get us to the North Pole, but couldn’t keep us alive once we got there. And what better way to show one’s divine right to rule than by carrying vanquished beasts upon one’s back? That is no longer the case. Functionally, high-tech, high-performance

fabrics are warmer, lighter, drier, more breathable, more durable, and more comfortable than fur. Fashionably, fluffy, hairy synthetics became available in the 1950s, evolving from dubious curiosities to something even connoisseurs can abide by. Nobody needs to trek Yeti-like through the frosts of the Arctic, the Himalayas, or Megève, unless they want to. And even those people have options.

Which begs the question: since we no longer need fur, should we continue to use it? For all its pleasures, many find fur primitive, brutal, predatory. Is it time we moved on? And, if so, is fake fur the answer?

From a fashion perspective, we cannot deny that fur conveys status. Even its humblest forms carry the primal allure of someone who has overcome middle-brow ideas. For all its establishment affiliation, fur is innately transgressive (which doesn’t bode well for the moral case against it). As for fake fur, in an episode of the British TV series *All in the Best Possible Taste with Grayson Perry*, it was found that while upper-class taste accepts thrift, it deplores pretense. A Casio? Fine. A fake Rolex? Horror! (Unless it’s ironic, and even then...) The Middle East is even more stringent: it doesn’t share Europe’s ambivalence towards acquired rather than inherited status. It expects status-seekers to make an effort.

From a function perspective, things get even fuzzier. Fur is materially obsolete, so functionality here means sustainability, a physical function, and ethics, a metaphysical one. Fur’s sustainability pros? It’s natural, renewable, reusable, and biodegradable. Its cons? Besides endangered species, which all sides reject, fur has similar issues to animal fibers like wool, leather, and food – land, water, energy, and chemical use, waste, pollution, and labor conditions. Even here fur frequently outperforms, partly due to its niche scale. An environmental assessment by Kering, Gucci’s parent company, shows fur’s total impact at just one-sixth of animal fibers and under one-fifteenth of leather. Most of that is land use, while traditional leather tanning can be highly toxic.

## When it comes to *animal rights*, CUTENESS cannot be criteria



DIANA ROSS ON THE SET OF *MAHOGANY* (1975) **OPPOSITE LEFT** ACTIVISTS FROM PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS (PETA) PROTEST AT 2004 NEW YORK FASHION WEEK, COVERED IN RED PAINT **OPPOSITE RIGHT** MODEL SONDRA PETERSON PHOTOGRAPHED BY HORST P. HORST FOR *VOGUE*, 1981

It looks even better compared to fake fur. “The absence of fur is preferred, but that’s not realistic,” says Diana Verde Nieto, co-founder and CEO of London-based Positive Luxury, which promotes sustainable luxury, working with big brands like Louis Vuitton and smaller innovators. “So real is better than fake, though animal welfare is crucial. But the problem goes deeper than ‘fake’ to ‘fur,’ which it’s not. It’s really just plastic.” Petroleum-based, polluting, and non-biodegradable. Fake fur sheds tiny fibers just like real fur, but these decompose far slower, choke ecosystems, and contaminate water and food chains. Sustainability-wise, the flap over fur misses the point.

That leaves ethics, where things get hairier still. An anti-fur stance raises issues many are unprepared for: reptile skins, down, leather, meat, zoos, even pets. Long before San Francisco banned fur, it banned foie gras and performances by exotic animals, and restricted pet stores to selling rescued dogs and cats. Net-A-Porter continues to sell other skins, as well as

though it provides employment and preserves traditional skills. Also, the fur trade is said to have advanced animal welfare. According to Copenhagen Fur, an arm of the Danish Fur Breeders Association, the fur trade prepared guidelines back in 1985, when none existed for other livestock. These pushed rules to evolve in other fields and abroad.

As time moves on, however, there is no escaping fur’s nature. “There is so much fur already that we can’t justify continuing to kill animals just for pleasure,” says Barbara Coignet, founder of Paris-based 1.618 Sustainable Luxury, which connects brands to both suppliers and customers. “There are few alternatives in terms of clean fake fur, so the question is how to collect and recycle, or upcycle what already exists.” One example: Canada’s Harricana seeks to grow heirloom and second-hand pieces into a viable market. Luxury purists will note that restricting new supply would raise the rarity, and thus the value, of what already exists while preserving skilled craftsmanship, at least

## FAUX FUR



## REAL FUR

fake fur. Notably, reptile skins feature more prominently in Spring 2019 ready-to-wear collections than the previous year. Heartstrings aside, when it comes to animal rights, cuteness cannot be criteria.

Kill or no, real or faux, the matter seems more about “how” than “if.” While Gucci banned fur, other Kering brands – including Saint Laurent and Bottega Veneta – have not. Kering policy leaves that decision to its labels, instead ensuring supply chains follow high, even species-specific, best practices. For example, angora cannot be sourced from Asia over concerns about plucking live rabbits. Karakul from unborn lambs is banned in favor of Swakara from young Namibian lambs. Kering applies strict rules to all materials – furs, skins, fibers, synthetics – using responsibility to empower rather than restrict creative expression.

The principal argument for fur is expression. Its principal defense is responsible process. It’s hard to call fur beneficial,

for a generation. Eventually the supply will degrade into non-existence, which may be fine because luxury purists should also demand the delight of something innovative and unexpected.

Here, science is not on fur’s side. “We’re still not there with lab-grown leather as a viable material and fur is vastly more complicated,” says Burak Cakmak, dean of fashion at Parsons School of Design in New York, which collaborates with brands and laboratories on developing new materials. “And frankly, nobody’s working on it. It’s not a priority,” when compared to medicine and other biological research seen as more important and lucrative.

So the choice is not between fur or faux. Those who care but still want their sartorial thrill should find either high-quality new or vintage, natural fur. Bear in mind, however, that still drives desire for fur, and that demand trickles down to less ethical practices. The other option – no fur at all. □





**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE** AN ANTI-FUR PROTESTER OUTSIDE LONDON FASHION WEEK; PETA ACTIVISTS COVERED IN RED INK OUTSIDE THE *VOGUE* US OFFICES, 2003; A MODEL WEARING A FOX FUR CAPE PHOTOGRAPHED BY HORST P. HORST FOR *VOGUE*, 1938; PETA PROTESTERS IN CANADA; A MODEL WEARING A LEOPARD CAPE PHOTOGRAPHED BY HORST P. HORST FOR *VOGUE*, 1940



“There is SO MUCH FUR already that we can’t justify *continuing to kill* animals just for PLEASURE”



# VOGUE

العربية

نوفمبر ٢٠١٨

احتفال بشميرات  
العالم العربي

YOUSRA

NELLY KARIM

SABA MUBARAK

DORRA ZARROUK

ELISA SEDNAOUI DELLAL

YASMIN RAEIS

YASMINE SABRI

36.75 AED  
10 USD



6

الفريدة

