

## Exhibition Highlights

### Fashioned from Nature

Generously supported by the European Confederation of Flax and Hemp - CELC with further support from G Star RAW

Fashion, Gallery 40 | 21 April 2018 – 27 Jan 2019

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#### Mantua, France, 1760-65 and Britain, 1760-65



The raw materials for this 18th century court dress came from around the globe, including raw silk from Italy, Spain and the Middle East; flax grown in Northern Europe; plants for dyes sourced in South America and Europe, and precious metals, most probably from Bolivia. The ermine fur was imported from North America or Russia. The silk was most likely woven in Lyon in the 1760s. The dress's origins underline the global trade that even then supported the fashion industry.

#### Muff of Raccoon fur, Britain c. 1911-13 and a Humanitarian League (1891-1919) campaign leaflet



Fashionable stoles, boas, muffs and hats were sometimes trimmed with animal parts. At the time it was accepted by most journalists without comment, but a few questioned the trend: 'The limp dangling paws look so suggestive of death.' This muff made from a number of raccoons is from a little over 100 years ago.



The Humanitarian League (1891-1919) campaigned against the cruelty of the fur trade by publishing pamphlets. In the interwar period hard-hitting advertisements were used for the first time such as this Humanitarian League leaflet which appeared in *Vogue*.

### Greenpeace 'Detox Catwalk', Indonesia, 2015 and a Top Hat, Bennet & Co, London, 1873



Though 150 years apart these objects both exemplify the impact of toxic chemicals from production on workers and the environment. Many felt hats contained traces of mercuric nitrate. The chemical was used in the felting process from the early 1700s. Mercury poisoning, which causes trembling and anxiety, was a common occupational hazard for hatters.



Greenpeace launched the Detox campaign in 2011 to encourage legislators, manufacturers and brands to eliminate chemical pollution caused by the textile and clothing industries. The toxic substances used affect drinking water and have a devastating impact on wildlife and the human population.

### Red legged honeycreeper earrings, Brazil, c.1875



In Britain, the Society for the Protection of Birds (Royal Society from 1904) was founded in 1891. It raised awareness of the devastating consequences of the plumage trade for world bird populations and lobbied for legislation to protect them. Cartoons appeared in *Punch* satirising those women that supported the feather trade.

### Felt trimmed hat, Modes du Louvre, Paris, 1885



Hat with 'improved' starling: The starling decorating this late 19th century hat has had its feathers dyed and painted, and supplemented with the dyed feathers of another bird, probably a goose or swan. The beak has also been modified. Its skin has been peeled back to elongate it and it too has been dyed.

### **Dress made from cotton, gilt metal thread and jewel beetles, India and Britain, 1868-9**



Over 5000 beetle wings and parts of wings were used to decorate this dress. Europeans first encountered the use of jewel beetles to embellish clothing in Asia and South America. By the late 1820s, European fashions were decorated with the shiny metallic wing cases. In 1867, 25,000 beetle wing cases were imported into London in a single consignment.

### **Parasol handle made from vegetable ivory, Britain, 1890-1920**



During the 19th century scientists, explorers and colonial administrators collected raw materials from around the world. These materials were often exhibited in trade shows and acquired by museums such as the V&A to demonstrate their commercial application to manufacturers, designers and the public. Vegetable ivory from South and Central America served as a substitute for animal ivory and bone. It is worked from the seeds found in the nut of a species of dwarf palm tree. The material was recommended as an ethical alternative to animal ivory for vegetarians in the early 20th century.

### **Evening dress made of Viscose rayon, Busvine, London, 1933-34**



Chic but toxic: Textured rayon was popular in the 1930s. This example by Busvine which imitates leopard fur, was manufactured from wood pulp converted to viscose rayon using carbon disulphide and other chemicals. Once released into the environment, carbon disulphide produces air and water pollution, and a noxious smell. Factory workers exposed to its fumes risked nerve damage and heart disease.

### **Harris Tweed wool suit woven from the wool of sheep reared in Scotland, 1930s**



Some fashion remains untouched by global trade. The wool is spun, dyed and finished in the Outer Hebrides and handwoven by islanders at their own homes. This suit was worn for more than 15 years. Its quality, and the wearer's attachment to it, ensured its longevity. His grandchildren continue to wear his clothes today. This is the perfect historical example of local production, transparent supply chains and long term wear.

### **'It's Getting Hot in Here' T-shirt, Greenpeace, Britain, 1990-6**



The modern environmental movement took shape in the 1970s. Its concerns were not new but they became part of the political agenda at national and international level. Campaign groups use slogan t-shirts to raise money and draw attention to their aims. For the wearer they are an effective way of expressing their commitment to a cause and offering support. Greenpeace, founded in 1971, campaigns for a peaceful world which balances the protection of the planet with sustainable development.

### **Dress made from grape leather, Tiziano Guardini for Vegea, Italy, 2017**



Vegea is a leather alternative made from the stalks, seeds and skins of grapes left over from wine production. Italy produces around seven million tonnes of this waste each year. In October 2017, Vegea launched their debut fashion collection designed by Tiziano Guardini. The animal-free leather alternative also avoids the use of harmful chemicals in its production. There are also garments on display made from orange peel and pineapple fibre, and an experimental dress created from oat roots.

### **Emma Watson wearing a Calvin Klein gown made from fabric created from recycled plastic bottles, Metropolitan Museum Gala, New York, 2016**



Emma Watson is a powerful advocate for a more sustainable fashion industry. She appeared at the Metropolitan Museum Gala in 2016 wearing this Calvin Klein gown made from fabric created from recycled plastic bottles. Compared to creating new polyester fibre, processing plastic bottles into yarn saves energy and reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. She wore this dress as part of the Green Carpet Challenge. Emma Watson also provides the foreword for the exhibition book.

### **George Stubbs "Horse Frightened by a Lion" print, woman's shirt, trousers and shoes, Stella McCartney, Britain, 2017**



Since launching her label in 2001, Stella McCartney has been a pioneer of sustainable and animal-free fashion. She has partnered with numerous manufacturers and initiatives to develop innovative materials with reduced environmental impact. Two outfits from 2017 are on display – one is made from a viscose made using wood pulp from sustainably managed and certified forests and the other from recycled nylon and cashmere regenerated from pre-consumer manufacturing waste.

### **Linen suit, John Malkovich, United States, 2017**



The actor John Malkovich launched his first menswear collection in 2017, favouring traditional fabrics such as linen. Flax – from which linen is made – requires no irrigation but instead relies entirely on groundwater and rainfall. It therefore uses substantially less water than other crops such as cotton.

### **Jacket, jeans, shirt and boots, G-star RAW, Amsterdam, 2018**



This is the first denim fabric to be Cradle to Cradle certified at the Gold Level. It sets a new industry standard for how denim is dyed and produced. It represents G Star RAW's holistic approach to denim design and includes innovative denim fabric whose chemistry presents zero risk for people and the environment.

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

For further PRESS information please contact Rebecca Ward on +44 (0)79 7707 1450 or email [rebecca@rebeccaward.co.uk](mailto:rebecca@rebeccaward.co.uk) (not for publication). A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from [pressimages.vam.ac.uk](http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk)

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#### **About the European Confederation of Flax and Hemp - CELC**

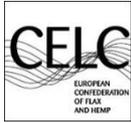
From grower to point of sale, the European Confederation of Flax and Hemp – CELC, brings together all players in the European flax fibre industry. Founded in 1951, CELC is the specialist representative of 10,000 enterprises in 14 European countries, overseeing the fibre, from plant to finished product. Its reach extends internationally by stimulating innovation and building on the values of natural fibres with established environmental qualities.

#### **About G-Star RAW**

Founded in 1989, G-Star RAW remains driven by the philosophy of “Just the Product”. With this dedication to quality and progress, the brand represents the forefront of the denim industry, producing pioneering styles and challenging industry standards. Innovation and sustainability are at the core of the G-Star DNA and the brand is committed to lead by example and develop

sustainable solutions for the future of fashion. Cradle to Cradle concept is an approach to manufacturing whereby the entire life-cycle of the product is taken into account, optimising recyclability, renewable energy use, water efficiency and quality, and social responsibility.

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