

Danish fur industry prepares for the future

By [Anais Lerévérend](#) - 14 February 2018

Gucci, Michael Kors and The Kooples are three of several fashion labels which recently announced their decision to eliminate fur from their collections. As the start of a new trend, this must worry fur specialists like Copenhagen Fur, owned by the Danish fur breeders cooperative, which claims to be the world's largest fur auction house, and generated close to €1 billion in revenue in 2017.





A fur and denim overcoat by Shangquian Xu, winner of the Imagine Talents 2018 designer competition - Copenhagen Fur

The latest winter fashion week in Copenhagen gave the long-established Danish fur industry the ideal opportunity to express itself in an environment less riven by controversy. Apart from a placard waved outside the entrance of the By Malene Birger show, animal rights activists were in fact quite discreet in the Danish capital.

On the other hand, Copenhagen Fur was present with two catwalk shows, one by its own brand Oh! by Copenhagen Fur, created in 2012, and the other staged for the Imagine Talents fashion competition. Both events emphasised the Danish cooperative's willingness to focus on creativity and connection with the young generation, two major elements in Copenhagen Fur's strategy to buck the anti-fur trend.

"The decisions taken by some labels and countries (Norway voted on the gradual closing down of fur farms last January) means we did not do our communication job properly," said Julie Marie Iversen, VP Design and Creativity for the Danish cooperative. "This stimulates us to improve our communication and emphasise the sustainability of our industry, compared to petroleum-intensive fake fur, and the creativity our pelts allow," she added.

Mink specialist Copenhagen Fur brings together 550 fur manufacturers and 6,000 breeding farms, two-thirds of which are based in Denmark. The cooperative said it is not experiencing any decline in business, and "has never sold so many pelts," according to a spokesperson. A positive trend the cooperative is keen to

bolster, notably by growing its investment in creativity and marketing.

The Oh! by Copenhagen Fur label is proof of the kind of approach the group is taking to attract a new clientèle. Launched in 2012 as an accessories brand, the label has extended its range to ready-to-wear, with a clear vision: it works with fur in an understated fashion, so that the products remain accessible, featuring a fresh style which could attract younger consumers to fur. The brand is sold via its own e-tail site and a series of multibrand retailers, and wants to convey a contemporary approach to fur, though for the time being only on the domestic market.

The other show staged at the Copenhagen fashion week presented the international aspect of Copenhagen Fur's work. The Imagine Talents programme by Copenhagen Furs has been ongoing for four years, but for the first time it took the form of a competition, in an effort to have a greater media impact. It brought together 14 international fashion design schools, with the objective of awakening the students and future designers' interest in fur. Copenhagen Fur staff held masterclasses, and the cooperative's own atelier in the Danish capital hosted teachers to train them in new techniques using fur.



Backstage at the Imagine Talents 2018 show - Copenhagen Fur

The atelier is run by Julie Marie Iversen, currently the marketing linchpin at

Kopenhagen Fur. "Our new ambition is to transform ourselves from a fur pelt auction house into a fully fledged fur fashion house, active across all the links of the supply chain," said Iversen. Every year, Kopenhagen Fur creates collections for the fashion industry at large, besides those for its own commercial label. "They are daring, experimental collections, through which we seek to inspire brands, including the biggest names in fashion, for which we design a highly secret, exclusive collection," said Iversen.

Kopenhagen Fur also puts its archives and samples at the disposal of fashion labels, to connect with them and slow the process of labels jettisoning fur items from their collections. Staying in touch with existing brands and creating new links with future designers, "is the best way to communicate," says Julie Marie Iversen. "This type of communication is most effective when conveyed by a third party, not by us directly, this is why we need such ambassadors," she added.

A strategy which has been fine-tuned in the last few years, focusing on creativity and a fresh take on fur, but one which skirts around the central issue of animal welfare. For this, Kopenhagen Fur relies on the European organisation to which it belongs, Fur Europe. In 2015, the latter started to work on a label to certify the welfare of animals bred in fur farms. It will be effective from December 2018, and it introduces a series of benchmarks for the living conditions of the animals, subject to inspections. Kopenhagen Fur, and other industry players, have pledged they will stop selling non-certified fur from 2020.

Observers think this certification has arrived late in the day, as the fur debate rages, while others doubt it will be deemed sufficient by public opinion and certain politicians. In Copenhagen, people appear not to worry about the issue. "There has always been opposition to fur," said a spokesperson for the cooperative. Kopenhagen Fur is also actively lobbying local politicians, taking them on farm visits and arguing that the industry generates, directly and indirectly, up to 20,000 jobs in Denmark.

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