

PETA ad puts consumers with animals being skinned

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PETA hopes it can shock consumers into thinking twice about buying leather or fur products with new ads that show graphic images of consumers on-the-scene as animals are being skinned.



(Photo: PETA)

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals is about to shed the sexy models for an in-your-face campaign aimed at eliciting shock — and guilt.

Striking photos of animals being skinned have been doctored to show well-to-do consumers on-the-scene at the skinning — even as they wear or tote products made from the skinned animal.

Slogan: "When you buy it, you become part of it."

The aim of the new ads -- to debut in New York City during Fashion Week in September -- is to make folks feel far less comfortable about wearing leather shoes, alligator belts or fur hats. One ad shows a woman — wearing a bear fur hat — on the scene as a bear is being skinned. Another shows a guy with an alligator briefcase, also on scene as an alligator is being skinned.

"People who wear these things bear the responsibility for the cruelty involved," says Dan Mathews, senior vice president of campaigns at PETA, the animal rights advocacy group.

The print ads, created at no charge for PETA by the Singapore office of the ad agency Lowe + Partners, feature alarming photos from National Geographic's photo library purchased for use by PETA. The images are a far cry from some previous PETA ads showing sexy celebs like Penelope Cruz or Pink in support of the group's cause. But for its fall campaign, PETA wants to take a different tact.

"We live in an escapist consumer culture, so many people don't know where products come from," says Mathews. "In the mall, you hear the music and see the bright lights and beautiful packaging, but you don't see the blood and guts behind these products."

PETA's campaigns have raised eyebrows, but also have had some success though the years. Fur sales have seriously declined over the past two decades, and major designers including Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger have dropped fur.

Even then, says Denise Lee Yohn, a brand consultant, PETA may have gone too far with this campaign. "It's more effective to make the decision-making process aspirational," she says. "You want to engage people — not shock and repel them."