

# **STELLA MCCARTNEY AND VICTORIA BECKHAM; AN INVESTIGATION OF NATURE'S INFLUENCE ON FEMALE FASHION DESIGNERS**

"In what similar ways does nature influence contemporary female fashion designers Stella McCartney and Victoria Beckham?"

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## INTRODUCTION

As nature is all around us, humans and nature are interconnectedly linked due to evolution and a necessity for humanity to survive in the wild. Like workers in other professions, fashion designers are influenced by nature in various ways. I chose to investigate this subject because I am interested in environmental protection and fashion design. Environmental study is essential, as the natural world is currently suffering; the fashion industry is one of the biggest polluting industries globally, contributing to climate change and damage to the members of the plant and animal kingdom. I questioned whether there were contemporary designers in the fashion industry, who are influenced by nature and how this reflects in their work. Therefore I formulated a research question, questioning two British designers: **"In what similar ways does nature influence contemporary female fashion designers Stella McCartney and Victoria Beckham?"**

The environment always played an essential role in visual arts. The earliest known human art are figurative drawings of animals on cave walls. Flowers, landscapes and animals have been favourite motifs for artists and natural resources like wood, stone and bones were used as materials for sculpture; after all "the inspirational and visual material that can be acquired in nature is limitless."<sup>1</sup> I wanted to research how fashion designers interpret nature in their creations and how they are influenced by nature in its widest sense. Many times nature's importance is undervalued as most people nowadays live in cities. A lack of appreciation for the plant and animal kingdom distances us from nature and makes us feel less concerned for it. When I started my research I decided to focus on female designers, as gender inequality is found while exploring the areas of the art world; men still "disproportionately dominate top roles across

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<sup>1</sup> Faerm, Steven. "Influences on Fashion Design Unit 10, Chapter 2 Design Foundations." *Fashion Design Course*, edited by Katie Hallam, First ed., Barron's Education Series, Inc., Quarto Inc., 2010, pp. 40–47.

all areas of business and the fashion industry is no exception, with only 40% of fashion designers being female and 60 % male"<sup>2</sup>. I chose to research Stella McCartney and Victoria Beckham as they are both influential females at the front of the fashion industry and, with their creations, are notably influenced by nature in its broadest sense. I looked at both second-hand and first-hand sources.

I will demonstrate how contemporary female fashion designers are similarly influenced by nature, on the examples of designers Stella McCartney and Victoria Beckham, using different dress and accessory designs. I will do so by following the methodology that a fashion designer would use in their design process. Therefore, the inspiration for their works will be explored first, followed by an analysis of the formal elements in both nature, and their works. Once a designer is inspired and has considered the formal elements, she focuses on the historical and social research; "To effect change in the present, the past must be scrutinized"<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, she is then influenced both historically, socially, or politically and continues her design process by choosing the materials for the design's execution. The last stage of a designer's design process consists of the exhibition of the artwork, either through a shop exhibition, art gallery, on the runway or in a photograph.

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<sup>2</sup> Pike, Helena. "Female Fashion Designers Are Still in the Minority." *The Business of Fashion*, 9 Sept. 2016, Accessed November 14, 2020, [www.businessoffashion.com/community/voices/discussions/how-can-fashion-develop-more-women-leaders/less-female-fashion-](http://www.businessoffashion.com/community/voices/discussions/how-can-fashion-develop-more-women-leaders/less-female-fashion-)

<sup>3</sup> Tsoleva, Dessy, et al. "Fashion Design Process Part 1: Idea to First Sketch." *Fashion Insiders*, 30 July 2019, [fashioninsiders.co/toolkit/business-basics/fashion-design-process-part1/](http://fashioninsiders.co/toolkit/business-basics/fashion-design-process-part1/).

## **Stella McCartney; Victoria Beckham**

The British fashion designer Stella McCartney has been a driving force in the sustainable fashion industry for the last 25 years. As a "lifelong vegetarian" <sup>4</sup> and animal rights activist, she sets an example as a contemporary female designer whose works reflect nature's influence, but also nature's impact on her role as a sustainable fashion designer. As she was raised by her parents to care about the environment, her brand's mission statement is to "challenge and push boundaries to make luxurious products in a way that is fit for the world we live in today and the future: beautiful and sustainable." <sup>5</sup> The designs in the Spring Summer 2020 and Autumn 2020 collections will present works that reflect the influence of nature on this designer, her art showcasing not only the aesthetic (formal elements) but the historical, social, material, and exhibition aspects of nature's influence.

Victoria Beckham not only relates to Stella McCartney culturally, as she is British and stationed alongside Stella's headquarters in White City, London, she is also influenced by nature in similar ways to Stella, which will be explored by comparing Beckham's designs from the *Pre-Autumn Winter 2020* and *Resort 2020 Collection*. They will be presented alongside Stella McCartney's designs, demonstrating nature's similar yet different influence on the designer's inspirational, formal qualities, historical/social, material choice, and exhibition aspects. A dress design inspired by the plant kingdom will be presented for each of the designers in chapter 1, and a clothing item inspired by the animal kingdom in chapter 2.

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<sup>4</sup> Mower, Sarah, and Tania Fares. "Stella McCartney." *London Uprising Fifty Fashion Designers One City*, Phaidon Press Limited, 2017, p. 368.

<sup>5</sup> "Mission Statement." *Stella McCartney*, Stella McCartney Ltd, 2020, [www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/mission-statement/](http://www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/mission-statement/).

## CHAPTER 1: DRESSES INSPIRED BY THE PLANT KINGDOM

Stella McCartney *Spring Summer 2020 Collection*; Victoria Beckham *Pre-Autumn Winter 2020* Collection

### The designs

Stella McCartney Design 1: The "*Kiara Floral Midi Dress*"



Figure 1 (left) and Figure 2 (right):

"*Kiara Floral Midi Dress.*" Stella McCartney ,  
Stella McCartney Ltd, 2020,  
[www.stellamccartney.com/us/stella-mccartney/  
midi\\_cod15034082jt.html](http://www.stellamccartney.com/us/stella-mccartney/midi_cod15034082jt.html).

Victoria Beckham Design 2: The "*Batwing Sleeve Midi Dress in Paisley Print*"



Figure 3 (left) and Figure 4 (right):

"*Batwing Sleeve Midi Dress in Paisley Print.*" Victoria  
Beckham, Victoria Beckham Inc., 2020,  
[www.victoriabeckham.com/products/batwing-sleeve-midi  
-dress-in-paisley-print?variant=32070919847972](http://www.victoriabeckham.com/products/batwing-sleeve-midi-dress-in-paisley-print?variant=32070919847972).

## Inspiration influenced by nature

McCartney spent a lot of her childhood at her parents' farmhouse in Scotland's remote wilderness, where she grew up surrounded by nature. Similarly, Victoria Beckham “spends most of her time in the English countryside”<sup>6</sup>, in her home in the Cotswolds. In relation to the above Design 1 (see figures 1 and 2), it was inspired by a field of colorful flowers. The flower print is taken from a photograph that McCartney took on a bike ride in the English countryside; they are personal memories of Stella<sup>7</sup>, showing how her design presents the personal connection between her, nature, and how it influences her. For design 2 (see figures 3 and 4), Victoria Beckham used a Persian motif *buta* or *boteh*, meaning "cluster of leaves or flower bud."<sup>8</sup> It represents a floral spray combined with a cypress tree, a Zoroastrian symbol of life and eternity<sup>9</sup>, though people have seen resemblances to a lotus, a mango<sup>10</sup>, a leech, yin and yang, and a dragon as well<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, both of the designers gained inspiration for their prints from the plant kingdom.

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<sup>6</sup> Macadrai, Madalina. “Why Sustainability?” *VICTORIOUSLY SUSTAINABLE*, Victoria Beckham Inc., 31 Jan. 2019, [victoriabeckhamsustainable.wordpress.com/2019/01/31/why-sustainability/](https://victoriabeckhamsustainable.wordpress.com/2019/01/31/why-sustainability/)

<sup>7</sup> Figueroa, Chiara. “Over 75% of Eco-Friendly for Stella McCartney Summer 2020.” Edited by Gioia Gange, *ZOE Magazine*, Albamedia SRL., 2 Oct. 2019

[www.zoemagazine.net/159393-over-75-of-eco-friendly-for-stella-mccartney-summer-2020/](https://www.zoemagazine.net/159393-over-75-of-eco-friendly-for-stella-mccartney-summer-2020/)

<sup>8</sup> Eduljee, K. Ed. “Zoroastrian Heritage.” *Boteh (Botteh, Paisley)*. *Aryan Silk & Trade*, K.E. Eduljee, Accessed 10 November 2020

[www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/trade/paisley.htm](https://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/trade/paisley.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Ringer, Monica M. *Pious Citizens: Reforming Zoroastrianism in India and Iran*. First ed., Syracuse University Press, 2011

<sup>10</sup> Moffat, Evelyn. “Roots of the Paisley Pattern.” *Roots Of The Paisley Pattern*, Paisley Scotland, Brian McGuire, 12 June 2020, [www.paisley.org.uk/2013/01/roots-of-the-paisley-pattern/](https://www.paisley.org.uk/2013/01/roots-of-the-paisley-pattern/)

<sup>11</sup> Stewart, Jude. “What Exactly Is Going On in Paisley Print?” *Slate Magazine*, The Slate Group, 20 Oct. 2015, [slate.com/culture/2015/10/a-history-of-paisley-the-origins-of-the-curved-shapes-in-paisley-print.html](https://slate.com/culture/2015/10/a-history-of-paisley-the-origins-of-the-curved-shapes-in-paisley-print.html)

## Elements and principles influenced by nature

Relating to the concept of biomimicry, which is "the emulation of the models, systems, and elements of nature for the purpose of solving complex human problems,"<sup>12</sup> designers mimic the elements found in nature and incorporate them into their designs. Although the elements and principles of art are intended for artworks, we can identify them in nature as well, for it can be considered by the religious as "God's work of art" or simply a biological creation. Author Max Conley points out the difference between the two; "While Nature needs the absence of thought to be nature, art is not art until someone thinks about it and comprehends it."<sup>13</sup> Disregarding the fact that this concept leads to the philosophical question of "what is art?" theoretically the two are not the same, but as artists are inspired by nature and try to copy it, including into their artwork composition nature's formal elements, we can analyze nature just as we would an artwork. For design 1, the elements found in the environment are presented in the print of this work; When analyzing the *Kiara Floral Midi Dress*, we spot various flower types from the plant kingdom like what seems to be the four-nerve daisy (*hymenoxys scaposa*) (**figure 5**) or paperwhites (**figure 6**), alongside the sweet alyssum (**figure 7**) and red poppy flowers (**figure 8**). All of these flowers can be found in the close up (**figure 9**) of the dress.

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<sup>12</sup> Mortice, Zach. "Nature Does It Better: Biomimicry in Architecture and Engineering." *NASA*, National Aeronautics and Space Administration Glenn Research Center, 11 July 2016, 5:27, [www.grc.nasa.gov/vine/2016/nature-better-biomimicry-architecture-engineering/](http://www.grc.nasa.gov/vine/2016/nature-better-biomimicry-architecture-engineering/).

<sup>13</sup> Conley, Max. "Nature vs Art." *Literature and the Environment*, WordPress, 12 Feb. 2013, [academics.skidmore.edu/blogs/en229-2-s13/2013/02/12/nature-vs-art/](http://academics.skidmore.edu/blogs/en229-2-s13/2013/02/12/nature-vs-art/).



Figure 5:

Kopp, JoAnna. "FOUR-NERVE DAISY *Hymenoxys Scaposa*."

Photograph, *Hill Country Wildflower Identification Guide*,  
101 Highland Lakes, 17 Mar. 2017,

[www.highlandlakes.com/miscdisplay.php?ID=8](http://www.highlandlakes.com/miscdisplay.php?ID=8).



Figure 6:

McCabe, Melanie. "All About Forcing Paperwhites."

Photograph, *Homestead Gardens*, HOMESTEAD  
GARDENS, [blog.homesteadgardens.com/all  
-about-forcing-paperwhites](http://blog.homesteadgardens.com/all-about-forcing-paperwhites).



Figure 7:

McC Campbell, Harvest. "Sweet Alyssum." Photograph,  
*Real Food & Scandalous Gardening Secrets*,

Harvest McC Campbell, 16 June 2006,

[harvestsgardeningsecrets.blogspot.com/2006/06/sweet-  
alyssum.html](http://harvestsgardeningsecrets.blogspot.com/2006/06/sweet-alyssum.html).



Figure 8:

Schwarz, Nailia. "Red Poppy Flowers 08." Photograph,

Schwarz, Nailia. "Red Poppy Flowers 08." Photograph,  
*Posterlounge*, 2003-2020 Posterlounge GmbH,

[www.posterlounge.com/p/235354.html](http://www.posterlounge.com/p/235354.html).



Figure 9:

"Kiara Floral Midi Dress." Digital image, Stella McCartney, Stella McCartney Ltd,  
2020,

[www.stellamccartney.com/us/stella-mccartney/midi\\_cod15034082jt.html](http://www.stellamccartney.com/us/stella-mccartney/midi_cod15034082jt.html).

When analyzing artwork in visual arts, we use the elements and principles of art. There are five principles of fashion design, which include proportion and scale, balance, unity (harmony), rhythm, and emphasis<sup>14</sup>. Many of these principles are present in this design, like rhythm, for example. It refers to the repeated use of lines, colors, trims, shapes, or details<sup>15</sup> that create a pattern that the eye can follow throughout the design<sup>16</sup>. Line being one of them is present almost everywhere in nature; from thick curved tree branches, wavy sticks, spiral snail shells and curly vines/roots to thin diagonal/horizontal spider webs and flower veins (vascular bundles), the element of line is found in both the animal and plant kingdom, therefore in design 1 as well, as it depicts linear flower stems. In this design, McCartney uses horizontal lines and emphasizes them with a bright orange color, creating a pattern, and presenting the principle of repetition. Rhythm as a visual tempo is created by this, guiding the viewer's eye throughout the work. Design 2, similarly to design 1, includes a pattern. Victoria Beckham incorporates natural flower shapes, which are two-dimensional, and as they repeat throughout the work, the designer utilizes the principle of regular pattern and symmetry found in nature. According to Zlatina Kazlacheva from Trakia University, there are "four basic types of symmetry"<sup>17</sup> found in nature, which can then be adopted by designers; radial, bilateral, spiral, and translational symmetry. In Victoria Beckham's dress design, radial symmetry is used, for the droplet-like motifs rotate around a point. More evidently, there is spiral symmetry; "spiral symmetry is in proportions of Golden section or Fibonacci order," as stated by Zlatina and according to nationalgeographic.com, "The golden

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<sup>14</sup> Sumathi, G. J. "Elements of Fashion Chapter 2." *Elements of Fashion and Apparel Design*, by G. J. Sumathi, First ed., New Age International, 2002, pp. 10–16

<sup>15</sup> Black, Henry Campbell. *Black's Law Dictionary*. Sixth ed., 4. , West Publishing Co., 1991, pg. 1436

<sup>16</sup> "How-To: Retail - Principles & Elements: Aspects Of Design." Edited by Oley DiCenso , *WeConnectFashion*, WeConnectFashion TM, 1998, [www.weconnectfashion.com/articles/principles-elements-aspects-of-design](http://www.weconnectfashion.com/articles/principles-elements-aspects-of-design)

<sup>17</sup> Kazlacheva, Zlatina. "Fibonacci Circle in Fashion Design." *Latest Trends in Textile and Fashion Designing*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2018, doi:10.32474/lttfd.2018.01.000114

ratio is sometimes called the “divine proportion,” because of its frequency in the natural world.”<sup>18</sup> The golden ratio has been used by many artists such as Michelangelo or Leonardo Da Vinci to achieve visual aesthetic in their paintings. The spiral symmetry in a sea snail shell can be compared to the butah flower motif. Figure 10 and my figure 11 below illustrate the spiral design according to the golden ratio:

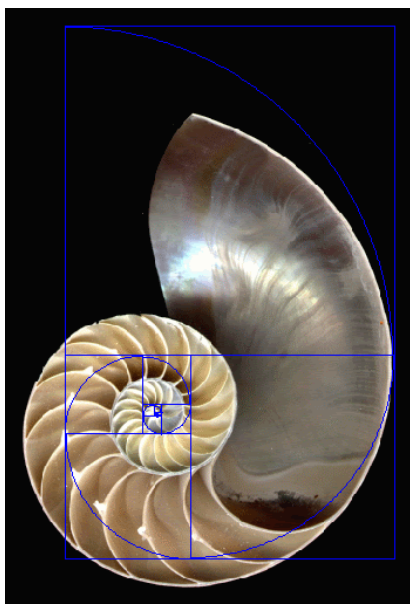


Figure 10:  
 Meisner, Gary. “Nautilus Shell Spiral Compared to a Golden Spiral.”  
 Digital image, *Spirals and the Golden Ratio*, PhiPoint Solutions  
 LLC, 25 Aug. 2012, [www.goldennumber.net/spirals/](http://www.goldennumber.net/spirals/).

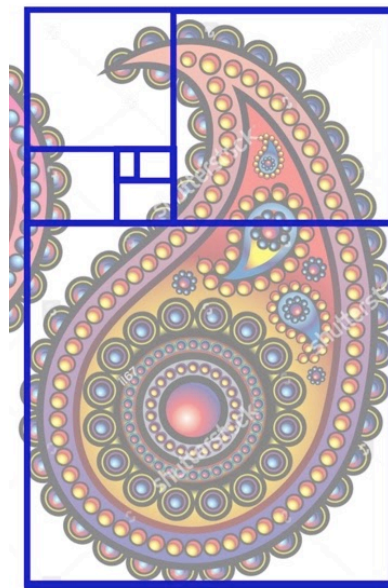


Figure 11:  
 I created it using Shutterstock Editor:  
 il67. “Pattern with Paisley .” Vector image,  
 Shutterstock, 2003-2020 Shutterstock, Inc., 18  
 Dec. 2012,  
[www.shutterstock.com/image-illustration/pattern-  
 paisley-139629020](https://www.shutterstock.com/image-illustration/pattern-paisley-139629020).

<sup>18</sup> “The Golden Ratio.” *National Geographic* , National Geographic Society, 16 Nov. 2012, [www.nationalgeographic.org/media/golden-ratio/](http://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/golden-ratio/)

Color, being one of the 7 elements of art studied in visual arts, is another formal element found in nature and used in both of the dress designs. This element and its properties (hue, value, and intensity) reflect nature's influence in design 1, as McCartney was inspired by the vibrant/intense colors of flower petals and used a bright orange for the lines, which coincides with other orange-colored flowers in the photograph. The connection with nature and color regarding fashion is powerful, as color pigments for clothes were derived from nature in the first place; for example, in the 5th century BC, vibrant pigments could only be derived from natural sources and could not be produced artificially. Many fashion designers incorporate colors into their designs with a purpose; how society forms meaning and purpose around color ranges. Often meanings can vary from culture to culture with uniquely defined symbolism<sup>19</sup>; green, for example, is universally associated with nature. We may assume that McCartney's intent was to create a "Multicolor"<sup>20</sup> warm design, with colors connecting to nature (such as green) and vibrant colors, which also reflect summer; we can assume this because the work is part of the Spring/Summer 2020 collection. Similarly, Victoria Beckham includes the color green, which reflects nature's influence, and tranquil red and yellow tones to fit the autumn season theme. In conclusion, Stella McCartney's and Victoria Beckham's dress designs prove they used elements found in nature in a similar way and incorporated them into their design, therefore being influenced by nature through the elements and principles of art in the aesthetical aspect.

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<sup>19</sup> Faerm, Steven. "Chapter 2 Design Foundations, Unit 11 Color." *Fashion Design Course*, edited by Katie Hallam, First ed., Barron's Education Series, Inc. , Quarto Inc. , 2010, p. 48

<sup>20</sup> "Women's Kiara Floral Midi Dress: Stella McCartney." *Stella McCartney* , 2020 Stella McCartney Ltd All Rights Reserved, [www.stellamccartney.com/us/stella-mccartney/midi\\_cod15034082jt.html](http://www.stellamccartney.com/us/stella-mccartney/midi_cod15034082jt.html)

## The social and historical influence of nature

"Fashion shares a deep-rooted connection with the environment, a relationship that's been both symbiotic and destructive."<sup>21</sup> According to statistics published by the UNEP and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the fashion industry is responsible for 10 % of annual global carbon emissions, more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined<sup>22</sup>. Issues such as climate change have driven Stella McCartney at the forefront of the global sustainable fashion business since 2001. McCartneys female-empowerment and environmental engagement have impacted the British fashion industry. McCartney's social engagement was demonstrated with a capsule event launched on June 14th, 2019, as an introduction of the upcoming Spring/Summer 2020 collection. The capsule "We Are the Weather", was named in honor of Jonathan Safran Foer's novel on the climate crisis and was introduced with a peaceful protest, held in a courtyard of the neighborhood Cinque Vie in Milan. Students held nature-activism posters "characterized by phrases that stimulate reflection on the themes of global warming and a solar motif graphic."<sup>23</sup> Similar to McCartney, Victoria Beckham has acknowledged issues of sustainability in the fashion industry, as she was involved in "a series of philanthropic actions throughout the years"<sup>24</sup>, for example by contributing to the Livia Firth's Green Carpet Initiative at London Fashion Week in 2016. In collaboration with other designers, Beckham helped create a capsule

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<sup>21</sup> Munyal, Panna. "V&A Exhibition Demonstrates How Fashion and Nature Influence One Another." Edited by Mina Al-Oraib, *The National*, The National, 14 Jan. 2018, [www.thenationalnews.com/lifestyle/fashion/v-a-exhibition-demonstrates-how-fashion-and-nature-influence-one-another-1.695017](http://www.thenationalnews.com/lifestyle/fashion/v-a-exhibition-demonstrates-how-fashion-and-nature-influence-one-another-1.695017)

<sup>22</sup> "How Much Do Our Wardrobes Cost to the Environment?" *World Bank*, World Bank Group, 23 Sept. 2019, [www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2019/09/23/costo-moda-medio-ambiente](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2019/09/23/costo-moda-medio-ambiente).

<sup>23</sup> Cantarini, Georgia. "Stella McCartney SS20 Fashion Show Milan." *L'Officiel UK*, LES EDITIONS JALOU, 17 June 2019, [www.lofficiel.co.uk/fashion-week/stella-mccartney-s-garden-part](http://www.lofficiel.co.uk/fashion-week/stella-mccartney-s-garden-part).

<sup>24</sup> Macadrai, Madalina. "Victoriously Sustainable Capsule Collection Spring/Summer 2019." *Victoria Beckham Brief*, vol. 1, no. Lookbook, 31 Jan. 2019, [victoriabeckhamsustainable.wordpress.com/2019/01/31/victoriously-sustainable-brief/](http://victoriabeckhamsustainable.wordpress.com/2019/01/31/victoriously-sustainable-brief/), p. 38

collection of sustainable red carpet dresses<sup>25</sup>. She has also introduced a "Victoriously sustainable" capsule design brief in 2019, where her future sustainable collection is laid out. While examining the similarities of the historical influences of nature on these designers, providing dress designs 1 and 2 as examples, the dress designs follow the invention of female fashion designer Madeleine Vionnet, known for the use of her bias cut or crosscut<sup>26</sup> during the 1920s of the previous century. Her cut (**see figures 12, 13, 14**) revolutionized women's fashion, and to achieve it Vionnet draped her designs, a technique also referred to as three-dimensional cutting. She was among the first and most important individuals to dwell on spiraling and elliptical concepts, respecting the three-dimensionality of the body and creating gowns in a way that naturally led to spiraling designs "<sup>27</sup> Therefore inspired by the Golden ratio which was first found in nature, "this cut was her great and lasting contribution to fashion"<sup>28</sup>. In Vionnet's wedding ensemble made of silk (**figures 12, 13, 14**) she elongates the train by including "leaf-vein-like separations"<sup>29</sup> making it seem more elongated than it is. The element of line is present, similarly found in leaves. To conclude, geometrical forms found in nature or harmonic natural shapes, those based on the Golden ratio (spirals), and those following the principle of asymmetrical or symmetrical balance, demonstrate the influence nature has on such historically significant fashion designers as Madeleine Vionet. Stella McCartney and Victoria Beckham have

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<sup>25</sup> Horler, Charlotte. "What Is the Green Carpet Challenge?" *Mochni*, 2020 MOCHNI, 12 June 2017, [www.mochni.com/what-is-the-green-carpet-challenge/](http://www.mochni.com/what-is-the-green-carpet-challenge/)

<sup>26</sup> Bryant, Nancy O. "Facets of Madeleine Vionnet's Cut: The Manipulation of Grain, Slashing, and Insets." *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2, Jan. 1993, pp. 28–37, doi:10.1177/0887302X9301100205

<sup>27</sup> Bissonnette, Anne. "SPIRALS & ELLIPSES: CLOTHING THE BODY THREE-Dimensionally." *Kent State University*, Mull and Palmer Galleries, 2005, [www.kent.edu/museum/spirals-ellipses-clothing-body-three-dimensionally](http://www.kent.edu/museum/spirals-ellipses-clothing-body-three-dimensionally)

<sup>28</sup> Helms, Ruby May. "Cutting the Bias: Madeleine Vionnet." *What Grandma Wore*, WordPress, 25 Jan. 2020, [whatgrandmawore.com/2020/01/25/cutting-the-bias-madeleine-vionnet](http://whatgrandmawore.com/2020/01/25/cutting-the-bias-madeleine-vionnet)

<sup>29</sup> "Wedding Ensemble." *Metmuseum.org*, The Met 150, [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/82563](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/82563)

both similarly applied the crosscut throughout their designs, proving therefore their similar historical influence.



Figures 12, 13 and 14: "Wedding Ensemble.", Photographs, *The Met 150, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.* , [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/82563](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/82563).

### **Nature influences the designer's material choice**

The choice of material for production of fibres was always dependent on naturally occurring resources, as even petroleum is of organic origin. Both natural fibres (i.e. wool, cotton, silk, jute, hemp, linen) and synthetic fibres (i.e. nylon, acrylic, and polyester) are sourced from naturally occurring raw materials. Therefore, it is important to mention that synthetic fibers can not be produced without raw materials such as petroleum based chemicals or petrochemicals sourced from natural resources.<sup>30</sup> In the 20th century it has become apparent that natural resources such as water, land, vegetation and animal life are not infinite, and contemporary designers like Stella McCartney have started turning to eco-friendly materials and sustainable practices. In relation to design 1, McCartney's Spring/Summer 2020 collection presented in the

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<sup>30</sup> McCormack, Adam. "Natural vs. Petrochemical Fibres." *Ecologyst*, Ecologyst, 20 Apr. 2020, [ecologyst.com/blogs/field-notes/natural-vs-petrochemical-fibres](http://ecologyst.com/blogs/field-notes/natural-vs-petrochemical-fibres).

Paris Ready to Wear Spring/Summer 2020 fashion show, consisted of materials that were 75% sustainable. The *Kiara Floral Midi Dress* worn on the runway by model Berit Heitmann is made from 100% organic silk and 100% organic cotton as stated on *stellamccartney.com*. The production of organic cotton "sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people by using natural processes rather than artificial inputs."<sup>31</sup>. Stella's company only uses organic cotton "certified to the GOTS or OCS standard."<sup>32</sup>, opposed to Beckham, who sells designs made from both organic and non-organic cotton. Organic cotton was used for Stella McCartney's design 1 dress orange lineage and silk was used for the floral print. McCartney has used "a mix of traditional silk and Peace Silk"<sup>33</sup> in their designs over the years, and as both are considered sustainable practices, the choice of Peace Silk also demonstrates Stella's concern for animal welfare. In the Peace Silk making process, the "butterflies can leave their cocoons" without the need to kill them<sup>34</sup>. In conclusion, Stella McCartney's design 1 is inspired by nature both in the choice of motif as well as in the choice of sustainable materials and "works with nature, instead of against it."<sup>35</sup>

Design 2 is part of Victoria Beckham's Pre-Autumn/Winter 2020 collection, from which I have gathered first-hand and second-hand information about the materials used, by visiting the Victoria Beckham store in London. I checked the labels, confirming that a combination of one or more types of the following materials are used throughout the collection: leather, virgin wool, polyester, acrylic, non organic cotton, polyamide, viscose, elastane, cashmere and commercial

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<sup>31</sup> "Find out All You Need to Know about Organic Cotton." *About Organic Cotton*, Textile Exchange, [aboutorganiccotton.org/](http://aboutorganiccotton.org/).

<sup>32</sup> "Organic Cotton: Sustainable Cotton." *Stella McCartney*, Stella McCartney Ltd, 2020, [www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/materials-and-innovation/organic-cotton/](http://www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/materials-and-innovation/organic-cotton/).

<sup>33</sup> "Silk; Sustainability." *Stella McCartney*, Stella McCartney Ltd, 2020, [www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/materials-and-innovation/silk/](http://www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/materials-and-innovation/silk/).

<sup>34</sup> Langer, Matias. "What Is Peace Silk ?" *Seidentraum*, FairCommerce, [www.seidentraum.biz/peace\\_silk](http://www.seidentraum.biz/peace_silk).

<sup>35</sup> "Silk; Sustainability." *Stella McCartney*, Stella McCartney Ltd, 2020, [www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/materials-and-innovation/silk/](http://www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/materials-and-innovation/silk/).

silk. No information is provided as to whether the materials were sourced sustainably or ethically. As stated on Victoria Beckham's official site, the *Batwing Sleeve Midi Dress in Paisley Print* is made of 97% viscose and 3% elastane, both classified as less sustainable materials according to the Environmental Benchmark for Fibres<sup>36</sup>. Garments created with spandex or in other words elastane or lycra, are not biodegradable as a variety of toxic chemicals are used in the production of elastane fabric, and if these chemicals are not disposed of properly, they can damage the environment. Although she has committed to using recyclable cartons “sourced from responsibly managed forests,”<sup>37</sup> for her make up beauty line, Beckham’s environmental commitment is offset by her continued use of leather and synthetic materials for her clothing brand.

Therefore, I conclude that Victoria Beckham and Stella McCartney are both influenced by nature’s plant kingdom similarly from the inspirational, formal qualities and social aspect; however, in the choice of materials influenced by the plant kingdom, Victoria Beckham could invest more in innovative and eco friendly materials.

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<sup>36</sup> Wolfe, Isobella. “Made-By Environmental Benchmark for Fibres.” *Good On You*, Good On You Pty Ltd and Ethical Consumers Australia Inc., Good On You, 16 Dec. 2018, [goodonyou.eco/made-by-environmental-benchmark-for-fibres/](http://goodonyou.eco/made-by-environmental-benchmark-for-fibres/)

<sup>37</sup> “Recycling Guide.” *Victoria Beckham Beauty*, Victoria Beckham Inc., VB Beauty (US) LLC, [www.victoriabeckhambeauty.com/recycling-guide/](http://www.victoriabeckhambeauty.com/recycling-guide/)

## Nature's Influence on the Exhibition

In the final stage of a fashion designer's design process the artwork is exhibited. Stella McCartney's Spring/Summer 2020 collection exhibition was influenced by nature, as the program notes for the show were handed out with an eco-manifesto, which detailed in timeline-form all that Stella McCartney has done over two decades to help promote ecological awareness<sup>38</sup>. During the fashion show animal wildlife images including zebras, turtles and lizards were projected onto the walls and columns inside of the Opera Garnier building in Paris, France. Figures 15, 16 and 17 demonstrate nature imagery projected on the ceilings and walls of the fashion runway, alongside figures 18 and 19, presenting the exhibition of the *Kiara Floral Midi Dress* on the runway at the Opera Garnier. Nature's influence on the exhibition of Victoria Beckham's designs are presented in Chapter 2.

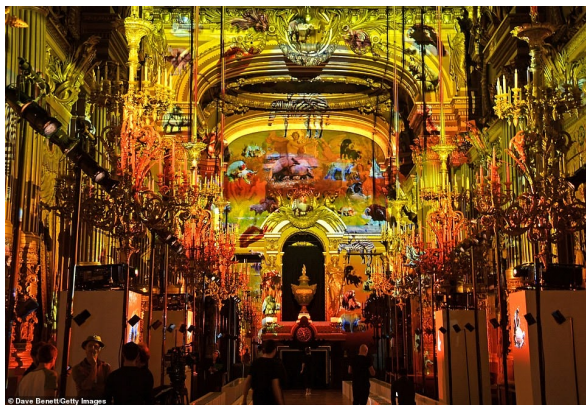


Figure 15:

Benett, David M. "Stella McCartney : Front Row - Paris Fashion Week - Womenswear Spring Summer 2020." Getty Images, Getty Images Europe, 30 Sept. 2019,

[www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/general-view-of-the-atmosphere-at-the-stella-mccartney-news-photo/1172489609?adpp\\_opup=true](https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/general-view-of-the-atmosphere-at-the-stella-mccartney-news-photo/1172489609?adpp_opup=true).

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<sup>38</sup> Adamson, Thomas. "McCartney Presents Eco-Manifesto at Paris Fashion Week Show." *CTVNews*, CTV News, 1 Oct. 2019, [www.ctvnews.ca/lifestyle/mccartney-presents-eco-manifesto-at-paris-fashion-week-show-1.4618173](https://www.ctvnews.ca/lifestyle/mccartney-presents-eco-manifesto-at-paris-fashion-week-show-1.4618173).



Figures 16 (left) and 17 (right):

Adriani, Andrea. "Atmosphere of the Spring 2020 Runway." Photograph, Spring 2020 Ready-to-Wear Stella McCartney, Vogue, 30 Sept. 2019, [www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2020-ready-to-wear/stella-mccartney/slideshow/atmosphere#7](http://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2020-ready-to-wear/stella-mccartney/slideshow/atmosphere#7).



Figures 18 (left) and 19 (right):

Fior, Filippo. "Collection of the Spring 2020 Runway." Photographs, Spring 2020 Ready-to-Wear Stella McCartney, Vogue, 30 Sept. 2019, [www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2020-ready-to-wear/stella-mccartney/slideshow/collection#46](http://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2020-ready-to-wear/stella-mccartney/slideshow/collection#46).

## CHAPTER 2: OUTERWEAR AND ACCESSORY INSPIRED BY THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

Stella McCartney **Autumn 2020 Collection**; Victoria Beckham **Resort 2020 collection**

### The designs

Stella McCartney design 3: *KOBA Fur Free Fur Adalyn Coat*



Figure 20:

*“KOBA® FUR FREE FUR Adalyn Coat.”* Photograph, Stella McCartney ,  
Stella McCartney Ltd, 2019,  
[www.stellamccartney.com/hk/stella-mccartney/mid\\_cod41977327vv.html#dept=main\\_coats\\_jackets](http://www.stellamccartney.com/hk/stella-mccartney/mid_cod41977327vv.html#dept=main_coats_jackets).

Victoria beckham design 4: *Kristie 115MM Knit Pumps*



Figure 21:

*“Kristie 115MM Knit Pumps.”* Photograph, Victoria Beckham, Victoria Beckham Inc., [international.victoriabeckham.com/products/kristie-knitted-pump-115mm-turquoise?swatch=true](http://international.victoriabeckham.com/products/kristie-knitted-pump-115mm-turquoise?swatch=true).

## Inspiration influenced by nature

As mentioned in Chapter 1, an inspiration for Stella McCartney were her parents, artists and musicians, Paul and Linda McCartney, who advocated animal welfare throughout their lives. McCartney's mother was an animal rights activist, who influenced Stella McCartney's commitment to ethical fashion. McCartney is one of the few luxury designers who have never used fur or leather in their designs<sup>39</sup>. Design 3 was inspired by animal fur, though is fur free. It was introduced at the Stella McCartney Summer 2020 show, as the first recycled and recyclable animal free fur. By collaborating with Dupont biomaterials, along with other companies like Maison Atia, McCartney has applied fundamental principles of biomimicry to fashion. As stated on the biomimicry.org website, “the first thing the fashion industry needs to learn from nature is how to design for decomposition and dispersal”<sup>40</sup> thus supporting a circular economy in fashion. I have chosen design 3 as it is made from offcuts, thus further demonstrating the zero waste principle. Victoria Beckham was similarly influenced by the animal kingdom, as her farm home in the English countryside of the Cotswolds is surrounded by nature, local wildlife and biodiversity. In a recent interview Victoria Beckham confirms this to Vogue: “I get inspired from travelling; and also being at home, and being a wife, and a mother.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “Mission Statement.” *Stella McCartney*, Stella McCartney Ltd, 2020, [www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/mission-statement/](http://www.stellamccartney.com/experience/en/sustainability/themes/mission-statement/).

<sup>40</sup> “The Nature of Fashion: Why It’s Time to Leave Petroleum Behind.” *Biomimicry Institute*, The Biomimicry Institute, 30 June 2020, [biomimicry.org/the-nature-of-fashion-why-its-time-to-leave-petroleum-behind/](http://biomimicry.org/the-nature-of-fashion-why-its-time-to-leave-petroleum-behind/).

<sup>41</sup> Wiltshire, Audrey. “On Her New Life As a Businesswoman and a Fashion Designer.” Sam, Vogue Festival, 2013, [www.sam-network.org/video/on-her-new-life-as-a-businesswoman-and-a-fashion-designer?curation=130..](http://www.sam-network.org/video/on-her-new-life-as-a-businesswoman-and-a-fashion-designer?curation=130..)

## Social and historical influences on material choices

Socially McCartney and Beckham were both undoubtedly influenced by the icon of British fashion design Dame Vivienne Westwood, who herself has been “trying to save the planet for decades”<sup>42</sup>. In an effort to encourage consumers to buy less, her company has downsized production and all collections are now 50% smaller than three years ago. Decreasing production creates less waste and benefits both the plant and the animal kingdom. “We already have enough clothes in the western world to last us for hundreds of years” says Vivienne's husband and co-designer Andreas Kronthaler<sup>43</sup>. Historically fur and leather have always been materials sourced from nature, having been widely used for shoes (**figure 21**), coats and other products. The overhunting has resulted in decimating large populations of wildlife. Many species were hunted to extinction by the end of the 20th century, for example the Tasmanian tiger, the Javan tiger and the Zanzibar leopard. In the 1990s anti-fur campaigns were started by animal rights groups such as the UK Animal Rights Movement and PETA. In those years under pressure from animal rights groups, influential fur-trading companies such as Hudson's Bay Company, a large 20th century Canadian retailer<sup>44</sup>, ended the fur component of its operation.<sup>45</sup> Along with other luxury fashion brands going fur free, both McCartney and Beckham have never used fur since

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<sup>42</sup> Cartner-Morley, Jess. “‘I’ve Always Been a Rebel’: Vivienne Westwood on Squaring Environmental Activism with Selling Fashion.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News Media & Limited, 15 Feb. 2020, 08.00 BST, [www.theguardian.com/fashion/ng-interactive/2020/feb/15/ive-always-been-a-rebel-vivienne-westwood-and-andreas-kronthaler-on-squaring-environmental-activism-with-selling-fashion](http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/ng-interactive/2020/feb/15/ive-always-been-a-rebel-vivienne-westwood-and-andreas-kronthaler-on-squaring-environmental-activism-with-selling-fashion).

<sup>43</sup> Cartner-Morley, Jess. “‘I’ve Always Been a Rebel’: Vivienne Westwood on Squaring Environmental Activism with Selling Fashion.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News Media & Limited, 15 Feb. 2020, 08.00 BST, [www.theguardian.com/fashion/ng-interactive/2020/feb/15/ive-always-been-a-rebel-vivienne-westwood-and-andreas-kronthaler-on-squaring-environmental-activism-with-selling-fashion](http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/ng-interactive/2020/feb/15/ive-always-been-a-rebel-vivienne-westwood-and-andreas-kronthaler-on-squaring-environmental-activism-with-selling-fashion).

<sup>44</sup> Rich, E. E. Hudson’s Bay Company, 1670 – 1870. 2 vols. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960.

<sup>45</sup> Carlos, Ann M., and Frank D. Lewis. “The Economic History of the Fur Trade: 1670 to 1870.” EHnet, The University Of Colorado, Queen's University, EH. Net Economic History Services, [eh.net/encyclopedia/the-economic-history-of-the-fur-trade-1670-to-1870/](http://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-economic-history-of-the-fur-trade-1670-to-1870/).

their launch in 2001 and 2008 respectively.<sup>46</sup> In 2019 Victoria Beckham banned the use exotic skins for her brand following fashion houses Chanel and Selfridges. Though, she still uses leather in designs such as demonstrated in her shoe design 4, containing "lamb leather lining and a leather sole"<sup>47</sup>, which differentiates from Stella McCartney, who never uses leather. The faux fur coat presented in design 3, consists of 100% recycled polyester, 48% organic cotton and lining 52% sustainably sourced viscose.

We can therefore state that Stella McCartney and Victoria Beckham have both been influenced by nature's animal kingdom similarly, regarding the formal elements and historical/social influences, and from 2019 onward also similarly in the choice of materials. Although McCartneys choice of materials has more source transparency, is more ethical and visionary as it promotes circular fashion.

### **Nature's influence on the exhibition**

The last stage in the design process is the exhibition of the fashion designer's art work. Both designers' photographic presentations were shot in an outdoor natural setting and the model wearing the fur free coat is holding a butterfly, thus emphasizing the connection to the animal kingdom. Photographed in "Shanghai's green spaces"<sup>48</sup>, the Autumn 2020 campaign for design 3 (see figure 22) was shot by Chinese photographer Leslie Zhang.

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<sup>46</sup> Macadrai, Madalina. "Victoriously Sustainable Capsule Collection Spring/Summer 2019." *Victoria Beckham Brief*, vol. 1, no. Lookbook, 31 Jan. 2019, [victoriabeckhamsustainable.wordpress.com/2019/01/31/victoriously-sustainable-brief/](https://victoriabeckhamsustainable.wordpress.com/2019/01/31/victoriously-sustainable-brief/), p. 38.

<sup>47</sup> "Kristie 115MM Knit Pumps." *Victoria Beckham*, Victoria Beckham Inc., 2020, [international.victoriabeckham.com/products/kristie-knitted-pump-115mm-turquoise?swatch=true](https://international.victoriabeckham.com/products/kristie-knitted-pump-115mm-turquoise?swatch=true).

<sup>48</sup> Judge, Lindsay. "Stella McCartney's New Collection Empowers Women to Be Themselves." *Aeworld Access to the World's Best*, A&E Magazine, 16 Aug. 2020, [aeworld.com/fashion/stella-mccartneys-new-collection-empowers-women-to-be-themselves/](https://aeworld.com/fashion/stella-mccartneys-new-collection-empowers-women-to-be-themselves/).



Figure 22:

Zhang, Leslie. "Autumn 2020 Campaign." Photograph, *Autumn 2020 Empowers Women Unafraid to Be Themselves*, Stella McCartney, 15 July 2020, [www.stellamccartney.com/experience/us/autumn-2020-empowers-women-unafraid-to-be-themselves/](http://www.stellamccartney.com/experience/us/autumn-2020-empowers-women-unafraid-to-be-themselves/).



Figure 23:

"Look 16/29 Resort 2020 Victoria Beckham ." Photograph, *Vogue*, Victoria Beckham, 2020, [www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/resort-2020/victoria-beckham/slideshow/collection#16](http://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/resort-2020/victoria-beckham/slideshow/collection#16).

Similarly to Stella McCartney, Victoria Beckham presents design 4 from the Resort 2020 collection photographic exhibition, with outdoor nature scenery (**see figure 23**), amidst the laden grounds of Chiswick House<sup>49</sup>. The lookbook consists of 29 looks, 18 of which include nature in their exhibitionary shot for *Vogue*, demonstrating the use of green nature imagery for the image background that complements the design. Beckham incorporates real texture in the overall exhibition, as the tree trunks, pine leaves and other natural elements contain their properties in

<sup>49</sup> Mower, Sarah. "Victoria Beckham Resort 2020 Collection." *Vogue*, Vogue, 12 July 2019, [www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/resort-2020/victoria-beckham](http://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/resort-2020/victoria-beckham).

real life. Therefore, nature, relating to the plant and animal kingdom, has influenced the exhibitionary part of these two contemporary fashion designer's design processes.

## **CONCLUSION**

Stella McCartney and Victoria Beckham are influenced by nature in similar ways, demonstrating the significance of the plant and animal kingdom in both of these designer's fashion creations. Nature influences their initial inspiration, which goes back to their lives in contact with nature, influencing the formal elements of their designs, as well as socially and historically, overall leading to a nature-inspired exhibition of their work. Nature also plays an important role in the choice of materials, as many fabrics are of plant or animal origin. In fact, contemporary designers choose materials according to their environmental impact. As they are influenced by nature both designers continue to make their business more ethical and sustainable. However the recycling and reusing of clothes should be better promoted by both designers to further the move towards a circular fashion economy.

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