

# VOGUE



KATE & CO  
WHAT THE  
'90S SUPERS  
DID NEXT

MIND, BODY  
AND SOUL  
INSIDE THE  
NEW-AGE GYM

AUTUMN'S  
BIG HITS  
THE STATEMENT  
SWEATER  
THE LEATHER DRESS  
& SPARKLING SUITS  
TO DAZZLE

PERFECT  
STORMZY

## SPECTACULAR FASHION

FRAN SUMMERS TAKES COUTURE TO NEW YORK

## WASTE NOT...

*What does sustainability look like in the beauty industry now? Kathleen Baird-Murray reports on the problem of excess packaging and a recycling crisis. Photograph by Jenny van Sommers*

My day starts with a lot of jumping up and down in the kitchen. Flattening piles of glossy white cardboard boxes until they're thin enough to wedge into the bulging recycling bin is an occupational hazard if you're a beauty writer. Lotions and potions are delicious to receive, but when they arrive at my home to be tried and tested – delivered in excess packaging – they might be chocka with suds, sunscreens and silicones, all of which are potentially toxic to the environment.

At this point I'll make a coffee, listen to the radio and every so often hear someone such as environmental strategist Professor Johan Rockström, joint director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, talking about why the planet must become more sustainable. We're at crisis point, he explains, and starting to see the cracks in the strength of the earth's system. The irony of what I've just opened does not escape me.

"Seventy per cent of the waste from the beauty industry is from packaging," says Arnaud Meyselle, CEO of Ren Clean Skincare. On the phone from Las Vegas ("Have you been to this city? It's a sustainability disaster!"), he tells me about Ren's new initiative, a first in the beauty world: a bottle made from 100 per cent recycled plastic – 20 per cent of which has come directly from the ocean, scooped up in collections organised by TerraCycle, which partners with individuals, brands and retailers to gather and sort waste previously thought to be unrecyclable.

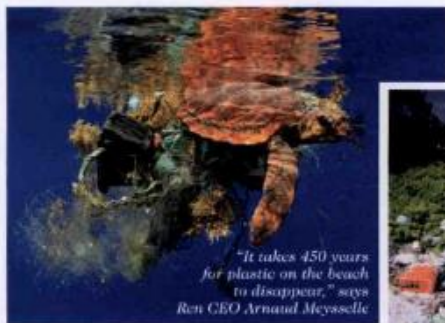
"There are 10 rivers in the world responsible for 90 per cent of the plastic in our oceans – eight in Asia, two in Africa,"

explains Meyselle. "Rubbish from gigantic landfills filters through into these rivers and flows into the sea. There are tons of ocean plastic, and it's a very long process to sort it, with the resulting bottle costing around 15 times more than virgin plastic. We were told that 10 per cent ocean plastic was the maximum we could incorporate, and we've made it 20 per cent because we wanted to make a statement."

Meyselle speaks with urgency; with a goal of zero waste by 2021, he has a lot to do. The Ocean Plastic bottle was conceived a year ago after a conversation with the Surfrider Foundation, an ocean-conservation group affiliated with UK charity Surfers Against Sewage. Meyselle took part in a 90-minute beach clean-up in L.A. "We collected 85kg of rubbish on a beach that was supposedly 'clean'. When you >

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"It takes 450 years for plastic on the beach to disappear," says Ren CEO Arnaud Meyselle

see coffee cups, straws, and understand it takes 450 years for plastic on the beach to disappear, it brings tears to your eyes. Then the day after, the tide is back... and the plastic is back."

The new bottle is grey and, admittedly, not the most luxurious-looking, but Meyselle says, "It's the future. Grey is the new green." There is certainly lots of grey in sustainability. There are so many contradictions that it's hard to decipher what's "greenwashing" – banging on about how great you are at saving dolphins/rare tribes, all the while submitting your products for animal testing in China/shipping bottles across the world/paying below-living-standard wages – and what's genuine. Even with the best intentions, it's hard to get it right. For example, while Ren's bottle is 100 per cent recycled, it's first to admit the pump isn't: "But we're working on it!"

Yet it's an incredible time to be talking about sustainability. Thanks to David Attenborough's *The Blue Planet* and the work of pioneering beauty brands such as Aveda, The Body Shop, L'Occitane, Dr Hauschka, Burt's Bees and Lush (the latter, partnering with the Ocean Legacy Foundation, aims to use 27 tons of marine debris for product packaging), the wealth of innovation and creativity makes this the most exciting "problem plus solution" the beauty industry has embraced. New technology means that fragrance house Firmenich is inventing biodegradable synthetic fragrance molecules that won't pollute water, while another, Givaudan, is working with landowners to swap harmful palm oil for profitable oud plantations. Plastics can be made from sugar cane; you can donate to wildlife conservation via brands such as Chantecaille or help female flower harvesters in Morocco with fragrance house Sana Jardin. Beauty giants LVMH, Estée Lauder, Unilever and L'Oréal have published their policies on waste reduction, respecting biodiversity, reducing water consumption and other sustainability goals. There's even a new range of skin, hair and body care by Unilever called Love Beauty and Planet – its first new beauty brand launch in more than 20 years – which focuses purely on sustainability and is 100 per cent vegan.

Beauty-brand entrepreneur Marcia Kilgore is championing the use of recycled plastic and protecting the purity of water with the charity WaterAid, via her liquid-soap brand Soaper Duper, which launched in 2016. She believes it's important to try to set the right intentions, even if it takes a while to fulfil them. "I'd rather buy from a brand that uses 50 per cent virgin plastic than one that uses 100 per cent," she says. "Better to be solving any part of the problem than not at all. We've all got to contribute to the solution." Trying not to use plastic at all isn't always viable. "Glass, for instance," she explains, "is heavier to ship than plastic, uses up the world's sand, has more of a carbon footprint in its shipping – but you'll still have people insisting that all plastics must go."

Packaging is far from the only bugbear. Nausheen Qureshi, founder of Elequra skincare, who also works behind the scenes as a chemist and formulator for several boutique skincare brands, explains: "There's a whole world beyond packaging

that's environmentally unfriendly, with certain ingredients not effectively removed from wastewater treatment plants, which means they go into the sea and pollute." She cites sunscreen, surfactants (sudding agents in shampoo and face wash), synthetic fragrances and silicones (used in everything from hair serums to moisturisers) among the worst culprits.

As consumers, a simple choice we can make is to buy natural – not for the reasons you might think. "If you squirt natural ingredients on to soil, they'll break down more quickly than synthetic ones," says Qureshi, "but the real benefit is that their biological growth period prior to extraction helped the environment by absorbing carbon dioxide."

When I ask her to go through my bathroom essentials (from a stash already edited to rule out anything tested on animals) to tell me what's good from a planet perspective, it's illuminating. My Rahua shampoo and conditioner come out top: the energy output to create them is partly offset by the positive carbon impact of growing the plants themselves. Sadly, my beloved Philip Kingsley Elasticizer has ethylhexyl dimethyl PABA and armodimethicone, which can contribute to aquatic toxicity and affect the ecosystem's balance. My Radical Age Defying Exfoliating Pads are a mixed bag, with carbon-neutral plant-derived ingredients (hurrah!) contrasting with denatured alcohol, which is harmful to marine life (boo!). My Hourglass foundation, Laura Mercier lip pencil, Vita Liberata Sheer Tint, Institut Esthederm No Sun sunscreen and BeautyPie JapanFusion Cleanser all have ingredients that can cause aqua toxicity. But with some research we can make intelligent switches that don't compromise on quality: Sister & Co's Deep Cleanse Ultimate Detoxifying Soap Bar with activated charcoal; oils by L'Officine Universelle Buly; biodegradable cleansing wipes by RMS Beauty; or serums by new naturals brand Wildsmith Skin.

Sustainability has been a buzzword for decades, yet is still in its infancy, evolving just as we are. As Camilla Marcus-Dew, founder of the Soap Co, a luxury liquid-soap company that gives 80 per cent of its jobs in the UK to blind people and those with other disabilities, puts it: "We think it's not enough just to sustain. From an environmental perspective, you can't just not negatively impact the world, you have to add a positive." Wouldn't it be great to leave this planet better than when we came into it? We can but try. ■

*"Glass is heavier to ship than plastic, uses up sand, has more of a carbon footprint in its shipping..."*



Clockwise from far left: Soaper Duper Nourishing Body Wash, \$6.50. Dr Hauschka Rose Day Cream, \$30.50. Aveda Shampoo Shampoo, \$14.50. L'Officine Universelle Buly Scented Soap Sheets, \$15, at Selfridges.co.uk. Lush Glow Stick Highlighter in Goldfinch, \$12. Sister & Co Activated Charcoal Soap Bar, \$13, at Feclunique.com. Ren Atlantic Kelp and Magnesium Anti-Fatigue Body Wash Ocean Plastic Edition, \$22, at Space NK. Wildsmith Skin Active Repair Copper Peptide Serum, \$130. Burt's Bees Cucumber Mint Lip Balm, \$4