

Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance Blasts Gucci Tiger Ad Campaign

Fashion label contributes to plight of highly endangered big cats in captivity and wild

Gucci's latest ad campaign featuring live tigers is a threat to both captive and wild tigers and public safety. The Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA) calls for Gucci to immediately end this harmful advertising campaign.

Using live tigers – regardless of whether they were filmed and later digitally inserted into ad images – sends the wrong message about a species that is desperately in need of protection.

Research suggests that seeing an endangered species in an entertainment context causes people to perceive that species as abundant – when in fact the wild population may be plummeting. Rather than raise awareness, media depictions of tigers have the effect of turning these animals into novelties and deflecting attention from the serious threats to their existence.

Equating tigers with status, as Gucci does, will only drive tigers to extinction all that much faster. Poaching is a major threat to wild tigers, whose pelts, body parts, and products are valued as status symbols. No amount of donations to conservation causes can offset the harm that Gucci is doing to the fewer than 4,000 tigers remaining in the wild.

By using images that suggest tigers are docile and compatible with humans, Gucci also promotes the private ownership of big cats. Captive tigers are not domesticated animals. Even when born in captivity they retain their wild instincts and natural reflexes, making them unpredictable and extremely dangerous. Privately owned tigers often languish in small, impoverished cages and may be denied appropriate diets and even veterinary care.

Misleading media images that distort the true nature of tigers can cost them their lives. In a recent incident at the Naples Zoo in Florida, a cleaning worker reached into a cage to pet an adult tiger. The animal clamped down on his arm and would not let go. The rare Malayan tiger named Eko was shot and killed.

True big cat sanctuaries – those that do not buy, sell, breed or trade their animals – are on the receiving end when private owners give up their animals or captive facilities shut down. Sanctuaries take on the lifelong care of animals, which is extremely expensive. Many rescued cats arrive with existing health problems, requiring specialized care that further increases costs.

It is hard to believe that a trend-setting company like Gucci would be unaware of the many issues surrounding tigers today. Their ad campaign does not serve either captive or wild tigers well. They only perpetuate the problem.

The Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance is a non-profit organization that works to end the private ownership and commercial exploitation of big cats and other wild cats, while providing expert resources to its sanctuary members aimed at improving the health and welfare of rescued captive wild cats.

The BCSA urges support of the Big Cat Public Safety Act, a federal bill that would end the private ownership of captive big cats.