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## Fashion Forward

### Art Institute students take challenge to design animal cruelty-free clothing

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Each year, 40 million animals are slaughtered so their fur can be used for clothing.

For Pierre Grzybowski, with the Humane Society of the United States, those numbers are unacceptable. He and his organization are challenging the world's future designers to change the status quo by designing animal cruelty-free clothing.

“It’s important for these students going into the fashion industry to know the cruelty of using fur,” Grzybowski said. “This way they can avoid supporting live skinning.”

As part of its third annual Cool vs. Cruel contest, HSUS partnered with the Art Institutes of the US and Canada, including the one based in



Phoenix. Contestants from the 32 participating Art Institutes are given four different photos of trendy runway designs donning real fur and are challenged to reinterpret that same style using all cruelty-free material.

Each contestant will design the garment each step of the way with the goal of creating a runway ready outfit. The winner receives an all-expenses paid week-long trip to New York to intern with a top fashion designer.

Humane Society representatives, like Grzybowski, who oversees the contest, travel to many of the design schools across the country to present information on the fur industry and emphasize the importance of cutting it out of fashion altogether. During this presentation a graphic five minute video is played that shows animals being trapped and killed for their coats.

Current law only requires 1 in 7 garments sold in US retail outlets to be labeled – mostly because manufacturers are not required to list material used in any garment under \$150. As a result, Grzybowski says, buyers can think they're buying a fake fur product when, in fact, it may contain rabbit, raccoon or domestic dog hair. HSUS is currently lobbying to change these laws to make all material listing mandatory.

Attempts to reach the Fur Information Council of America, the industry's chief lobbying group, for comment were unsuccessful.

Last year, three grand prize winners were chosen by a panel of judges including actress Elizabeth Berkley, fur-free designer Marc Bouwer and *Paper Magazine's* Mickey Boardman.

“Animals are suffering and dying for an unnecessary product,” Grzybowski says. And that's what this contest hopes to bring one step closer to an end.