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# Doutzen KROES

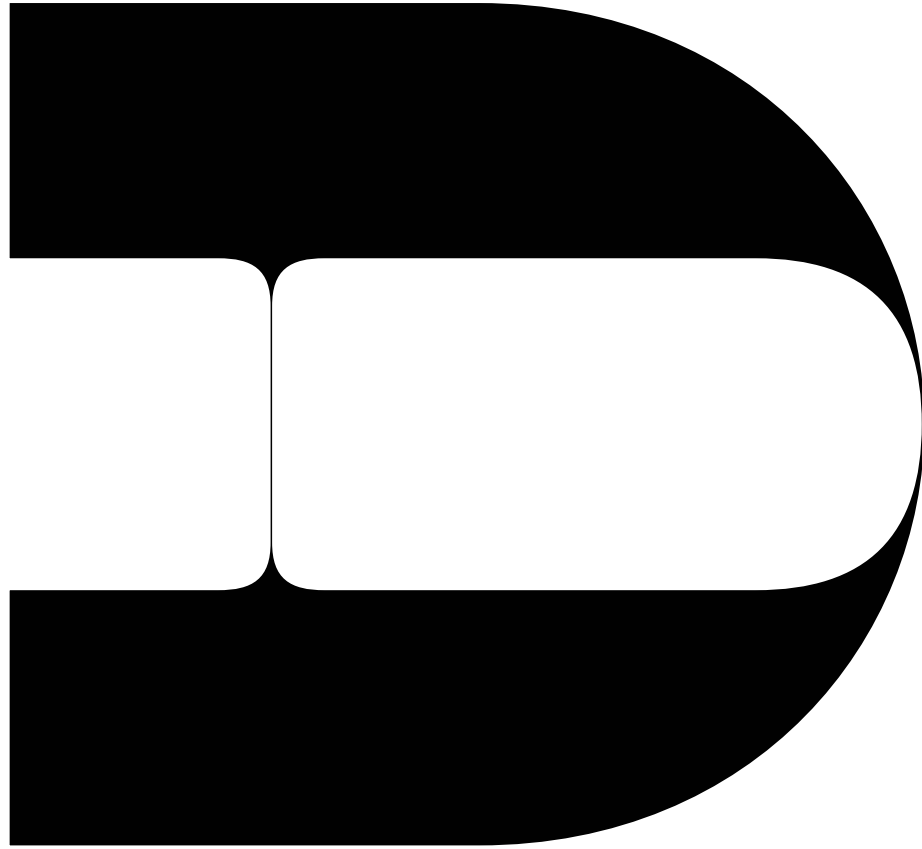


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# THE ELEPHANT GUARDIAN

A TRIP TO KENYA GALVANIZED DOUTZEN KROES'S INTEREST IN PRESERVING ELEPHANT POPULATIONS. NOW SHE'S ENLISTING THE FASHION COMMUNITY FOR THE CAUSE.



DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE LIFE-CHANGING POWER OF a vacation. "It was love at first sight with the elephants, but also with the Douglas-Hamiltons," the Dutch supermodel Doutzen Kroes says of her trip to Kenya. There she visited the Elephant Watch Camp in the country's Samburu National Reserve, operated by mother-and-daughter duo Oria and Saba Douglas-Hamilton. Kroes watched as her then four-year-old son sat transfixed by the elephants for two hours, and found herself equally fascinated. The trip also had a less idyllic element: Kroes learned about how poaching was decimating the elephant population. "I came back with so much anger, but also so much awareness about how we have to put a stop to this," she says. Post-trip, she sat down with David Bonnouvrier, the founder of DNA Model Management, and fellow model Trish Goff, and signed on as a global ambassador for Goff and Bonnouvrier's charity, Knot On My Planet. "Human beings tie knots to not forget about things, and elephants are known to never forget about anything," she says. "But we are forgetting about them." What followed was an Ice Bucket Challenge-style social media push, encouraging followers to post pictures of themselves tying knots as a symbolic show of support.

Knot On My Planet has since tapped the trio's bulging Rolodex of fashion industry contacts, launching projects with Tiffany & Co., Loewe, and Holt Renfrew. For the charity's social media launch, Kroes performed a supermodel hat trick, reuniting Naomi Campbell, Christy

Turlington, and Linda Evangelista for a black-and-white portrait. "They were my idols in the '90s!" she exclaims. "To get them involved, and to see the trio in one picture...I was on set when it happened, and it was mind-blowing. Doing that for us, and for the elephants, was incredible to witness." To date, Knot On My Planet has raised \$8 million for the cause, and is now the biggest donor to the Elephant Crisis Fund (a joint initiative between Save the Elephants, the Wildlife Conservation Network, and the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation). "To be the voice of a species that doesn't have one just feels amazing," she says.

For Kroes, who grew up in eco-friendly Holland biking and eating produce from her family's vegetable garden, the cause gave her much-needed purpose. "Something clicked. It was like, 'Now I know why I went through this, and created all these connections,' because coming from where I came from, I thought, 'What am I doing to help the world?' It was incredible to see all these people I have worked with over the years participate in our campaign."

Grand gestures aside, Kroes strives to conserve as much as possible in small ways. "We don't have plastic straws in our home—we use stainless steel straws. We don't have plastic bags; I take a [reusable] shopping bag," she says. "I drive my husband crazy. Every time he goes shopping, I tell him, 'Bring the bag!'" She even brings her own glass containers to pick up takeout, and hopes that her two children will learn by example: "Sometimes you don't even need to say anything, just do it." ■



Embellished dress, Ralph Lauren Collection, \$7,800.