

FASHION &gt; MODELS

# How Doutzen Kroes Is Calling on Fashion to Save the Elephant Population

SEPTEMBER 9, 2016 1:36 PM  
by JANELLE OKWODU



Photo: Courtesy of the Elephant Crisis Fund

**D**outzen Kroes is on a mission. “I don’t want my kids to grow up in a world without elephants in the wild,” says Kroes, who in the days leading up to New York Fashion Week has wildlife preservation on her mind. “This could become a reality if we don’t do something.” The supermodel and former Victoria’s Secret Angel has been hard at work over the past year and a half, in partnership with the Elephant Crisis Fund, on the #KnotOnMyPlanet campaign. Designed to raise awareness about the plight of elephants in the wild, the ads feature Kroes and a bevy of her supermodel brethren posing with their clothing tied into knots. The visual symbol for memory serves to connect viewers to the adage “an elephant never forgets” with a clear reminder to keep the majestic animals on our mind. “The beautiful thing about elephants is their mind, their brains,” says Kroes by phone from her home in Amsterdam. “What we want to do is give the world a message that we shouldn’t forget animals and that we don’t want [poaching] happening on our planet.”

Inspired by a trip to Kenya’s Samburu National Reserve with her husband and son, Kroes met with wildlife conservationist Saba Douglas-Hamilton, daughter of zoologist and researcher Iain Douglas-Hamilton. The experience of viewing the elephants within their natural habitat and then learning more about the effects of poaching on their population made a profound impact on Kroes, as did her conversations with Saba. “It was love at first sight,” Kroes says of her initial elephant encounter. “We did the trip that everybody does: the safari and running with elephants. I gathered a lot of background information and learned about their crisis. I knew I wanted to get involved, and I wanted to get the fashion industry involved as well.”

Rallying her network of friends and collaborators, Kroes pulled together an all-star team for the campaign. “The

beautiful thing about the fashion industry is that after all these years of working together, you create relationships,” says Kroes. “When I first started, I reached out to my colleagues, and everyone was so happy to help.” For the other women involved, participation was a no-brainer. “I was so impressed with this campaign and how ambitious it is; it was an easy choice for me to provide my support,” says Emily Ratajkowski, who joins Miranda Kerr, Joan Smalls, and Adriana Lima as part of the #KnotOnMyPlanet lineup. Even with her fellow stars chipping in, Kroes’s biggest casting coup might be reuniting the original supermodel trinity. “It means so much to me that Christy, Linda, and Naomi are involved—for me, there are no bigger models! Everyone has shown so much support, and I’m incredibly thankful for that,” says Kroes.



Photographed by Patrick Demarchelier

The celebrity factor is attention grabbing, but it’s the shared sense of purpose that fuels Kroes’s passion for the project. “It’s become a huge campaign with so many people involved all doing this for free,” says Kroes. “I’m hoping we’ll reach a lot of people and get the donations that can put more people on the ground to do the hard job of protecting the animals from poachers.” The ongoing effects of poaching—30,000 elephants die each year as a result of these cruel and illegal practices—may seem disconnected from fashion, but in a world where many still view ivory as a luxury, the industry’s ability to shape trends could serve to shift global attitudes. “It worries me that there is still a demand for ivory,” says Kroes. “This is something that needs to change, which is why these ads are important.”

With an event planned for this Saturday during New York Fashion Week, Kroes firmly believes that the campaign will have an impact. “I want to reach the masses; we need everybody to know about this,” she says. To that end, #KnotOnMyPlanet’s famous campaign stars will be using their social media feeds to spread the word, and Snapchat is creating a special elephant filter in honor of the launch, but the goal is about more than creating a viral moment. “We need to use this platform to give back,” Kroes says. “We’ve all been so lucky. This could be a great example of showing how powerful we are in the fashion industry.”