

Fashionably Great

Award-winning New York designer John Bartlett would love to see a fur-free fashion industry some day, but he's aware of the hurdles. "I think that as long as there's money being exchanged and there's still a demand for it, that it won't go away."

So, for now, Bartlett is focused on starting conversations, informing consumers, and spreading awareness among his fellow designers. He's appeared in a video for The HSUS's Fur-Free Campaign, and he's joined HSUS staff in presenting the issue to design students and industry leaders.

"I'm hoping that in the coming years, designers will start making the connections between the environmental damage of fur, the cruelty of fur, and ... we'll start moving in the right direction," he says.

Bartlett is similarly committed to companion animal rescue—inspired by the three-legged rottweiler-shepherd mix he adopted in 2003. Tiny Tim, whose silhouette serves as the logo of Bartlett's fashion label, died last fall. To honor his beloved companion, Bartlett began volunteering at a local shelter and created a special collection of T-shirts and hoodies to benefit the Tiny Tim Rescue Fund, which supports rescue groups across the country.

In this excerpted interview with *All Animals* assistant managing editor Michael Sharp, Bartlett talks about his fur-free advocacy and Tiny Tim's legacy.

Q: When did the issue of fur in fashion hit home for you?

BARTLETT: I had worked in leather for many years, and I did a couple of pieces in rabbit fur in 2000. And I remember after I used that, it didn't feel good.

But the whole reality of fur and the fashion industry, it kind of hit home for me about a year ago. The fall collections that were shown in February 2010 were suddenly filled with fur. Two-thirds of the designers in New York used fur in some way in their shows. So I suddenly had this incredible reaction and started just doing research and trying to understand that industry.

And the biggest response, or the biggest reaction that I had personally, is that I ended up going vegan because I started connecting the dots and seeing that all animals should be treated humanely. And that goes from clothing to food to entertainment. So I had a big "aha" moment, and the catalyst was all of this fur on the runway. It really provided an incredible wake-up call for me in my own career, in my own personal journey.

Q: What changes have you made to your collection?

BARTLETT: Over the past year for my main collection, John Bartlett, I stopped using leather. I'm moving away from wool. I'm moving

away from using anything with down.

I did inherit a leather belt collection because it was part of the brand that I had started designing, that I took over. So I do have leather belts coming out in the Bon-Ton stores for this fall, but I also now am working with them so that we can slowly change all of those leather products to non-leather.



Q: You've mentioned that department stores can make a difference as well?

BARTLETT: I think slowly retailers can certainly make a big impact, but the issue is that they are [also] responding to the requests of consumers. At the end of the day, I'm realizing that a lot of the weight is carried by the consumer. So it's all about educating the consumer, and hopefully he or she

will find it in their heart and understand that fur is an unnecessary and very cruel aspect of the fashion industry.

Q: What led you to speak before the Council of Fashion Designers of America?

BARTLETT: I had come down to Washington, D.C., to meet with the people that work on the Fur-Free Campaign at The Humane Society, and had the opportunity as well to meet with Wayne Pacelle and the other leaders. And it inspired me so much that I wanted to take that

enthusiasm and express it to my fellow designers.

So I spoke in front of the board of the CFDA and explained to them the closing of this fur labeling loophole [through the December 2010 passage of the Truth in Fur Labeling Act] and that that was a very important thing for designers to know about if they were using fur. I also came out to them as an animal welfare activist and that I was personally opposed to fur, and that I was working with other designers to form a group we are now calling the Fashion Compassion Initiative—to just kind of spread the word about alternatives to fur and the darker sides of the fur industry.

Q: And what was the reaction to that?

BARTLETT: The [board's] reaction was mixed, and I wasn't expecting any more than that because many of the designers in the room use fur. But I got a good response from the designers who do not use fur. It was just a great opportunity to bring up what I consider to be an elephant in the room because my industry glorifies fur, sadly, and I think it's important that the industry knows that not everybody supports this.

I think there's a big disconnect with many designers who think that designing in fur is going to take them to the next level—because they are not thinking about how the fur is getting to them, or really seeing the underside or the reality of the carnage that's involved in this industry.

Q: How will the new fur labeling law impact designers?

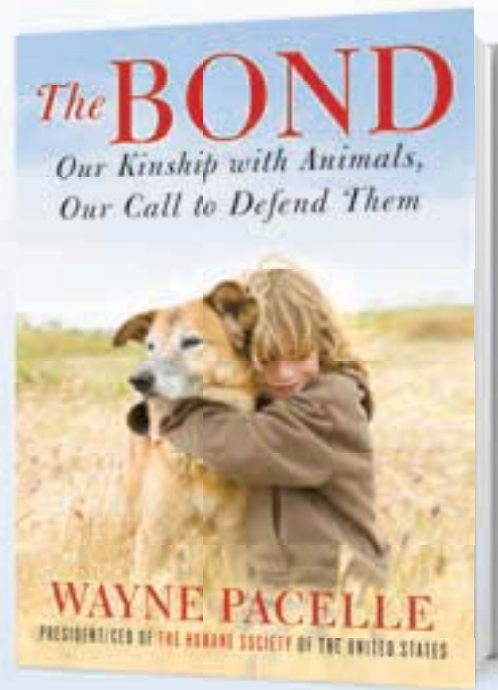
BARTLETT: It will force designers to be very clear about their labeling and very clear about where they're getting their fur product from. And I think that, in and of itself, will encourage designers to just think a little bit further about why they're using fur anyway. I think they will be more informed, and I think that they will also ask more questions. Many designers don't know where their fur is coming from or even what kind of animal it's coming from. Now they have to know.

Q: Let's switch gears and talk about Tiny Tim. You've said of his adoption: "He rescued me back."

BARTLETT: When I walked into the shelter eight years ago, my eyes immediately went to him, even before I realized that he was handicapped. And he basically picked me, and he saved me. And I believe that this is something that happens quite often; when a human goes in to rescue or adopt an animal, the animal ends up rescuing and adopting them. And it's an incredible bond that is created.

He taught me unconditional love, and I still hear his tail thumping every morning. So for me, Tiny Tim absolutely rescued me and taught me so many things that now I'm trying to carry on in his name.

➤ **TO VIEW** the Tiny Tim collection and support Bartlett's rescue fund, go to johnbartletttny.com. Check out The HSUS's list of fur-free retailers, designers, and brands at humansociety.org/furfrees hopping.



The Bond

Starting a national conversation
about animal welfare

It is thought-provoking, and for some it will be thought-changing. If the animals knew about this book they would, without doubt, confer on Wayne their highest honor.

– Jane Goodall

The Bond is a life-changing read. The book contains moments of horror as seemingly unbearable cruel practices are revealed in the meat industry, the animal-entertainment and sports worlds, and sometimes at the hands of ordinary people. . . . The book also shows the hope for change when knowledge is shared and mankind stands together.

– *Deseret News*