

Stella McCartney Pops Up in Springs

By Kate Maier

(Aug. 27, 2009) East Hampton's pop-up shop phenomenon took a strange turn over the weekend with the opening and closing of the shortest-lived designer boutique the town has seen to date.

Shoppers in the know, and perhaps a few lucky stragglers who happened through Springs, scored designer duds by Stella McCartney at a "Pop-Up, Pop-In" store at the Fireplace Project on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

Racks of clothing were set up alongside Agathe Snow's "Terrestrial Forms" installation, which has been on display at the gallery since Aug. 14. The show is to stay up through Monday, but by today, the store will have become ancient history.

A select group of celebrity shoppers and their children were invited to a reception hosted by Ms. McCartney Monday evening after the pop-up closed down. The surreal experience included vegetarian victuals from the Springs General Store, pony rides and a rabbit petting zoo from a nearby farm, and a photo shoot by Elle magazine.

Gwyneth Paltrow, Naomi Watts, and Kate Capshaw Spielberg browsed through the designer's Spring 2010 collection, which was set up under a tent on a gravel driveway behind the gallery, while a Bette Midler look-alike praised her for carrying fashions that flatter her "huge knockers" and queried her for advice on future purchases.

Ms. McCartney floated among guests who sipped on Stella Artois lager, her jersey-striped evergreen-and-ivory alkaret dress complementing her wavy, strawberry-blond mane.



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Stella McCartney, talking to Bruce Weber, set up shop at the Fireplace Project for a few days.



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“I basically have spent every single summer of my life in East Hampton, before it was fashionable,” she said before referring the busty woman who interrupted her conversation to one of the well-trained personal shoppers on hand. “I love the Fireplace Project,” she said, so setting up the shop in Springs rather than in a more prominent downtown location was a no-brainer.

Under the tent, Ms. McCartney’s design team took great pains to create a kid-friendly-barbecue-meets-high-fashion ambience. Designer boots were strategically placed on cherry-red paper plates set on checkered plastic tablecloths with candy and other goodies strewn about. On the lawn of the Fireplace Project, a group of models wearing Ms. McCartney’s latest designs draped themselves across oversize children’s building blocks that spelled out the designer’s first name while security monitored the guest list.

Meanwhile, a casually dressed Sir Paul McCartney wore sandals, plaid shorts, and a surf T-shirt while keeping a watchful eye on photographers, lest they photograph his youngest daughter or grandchildren. He said he attends his elder daughter’s fashion events when possible and offered that “she’s brilliant — a

hard-working girl, and brilliant.”

While Ms. McCartney was certainly the star of the show at the reception, the former Beatle did draw some attention from a group of preteens who live nearby. “Oh my God, he talked to me,” squealed Elizabeth Vespe, a ninth-grader at East Hampton High School who got an autograph on a waitress’s duplicate pad she borrowed.

McKenzie Frazier and Alana Ellis, sixth-grade students from Springs, found jobs running the pony rides for the children of celebrities including Ms. Paltrow, Ms. Watts, and Ms. Capshaw Spielberg. A never-ending supply of pinatas and a tire swing rounded out the children’s entertainment.

For Edsel Williams, who directs and owns the Fireplace Project, the opportunity to host the short-lived store was a win-win situation. An artist and friend of Ms. McCartney’s had contacted him a few weeks ago and presented him with the idea. He said he was happy to oblige new patrons who might be interested in the artwork, which also served as a backdrop for the Elle fashion shoot.

“It’s been huge. There’s been a lot of traffic” all weekend, he said, adding that it was somewhat overwhelming. With pout-faced models blending into the decor like part of the furniture and a frenzy of designers tying up loose ends and scurrying with clipboards in hand, “it’s kind of like having 10 new roommates move in with you at the same time,” he said.

According to a release, a portion of the proceeds from the event are to be donated to the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, across the street from the Fireplace Project. If Susan Jacobson’s shopping spree was any indicator of how sales went for Ms. McCartney over the weekend, the center should be raking in a decent chunk of change.

“It’s wild and it’s fun. It’s a perfect combo of art and fashion,” Ms. Jacobson, a friend of Mr. Williams who lives in East Hampton Village, said as she showed off a vibrant purple boucle bag that retails for \$1,395 on Ms. McCartney’s Web site, among other purchases. “This is why we love the Hamptons so much.”