

Exhibition Highlights

Bags: Inside Out

Sponsored by Mulberry

Gallery 40, V&A

Opens 12 December 2020

Sponsored by Mulberry

#BagsInsideOut

Section 1 – Function and Utility



Chatelaine, mounted on replica garment

1863–85, probably England

Cut steel

A chatelaine is a waist-hung appendage, suspended from a hook or brooch, with multiple attachments. This example in cut steel features 13 hanging accessories, including scissors, purse, thimble, miniature notebook and magnifying glass.



Yellow tie-on pockets, mounted on replica garment

1740s, England

Silk

Between the late seventeenth century and the early nineteenth century, women in England owned several pairs of detachable tie-on pockets. Worn tied around the waist and accessed through openings in the seams of petticoats and outer gowns, they were used to carry personal items such as watches, snuff boxes, money, jewellery and even food.



Burse for the Great Seal of England

1558–1603, England

Silk, silver-gilt thread, sequins, glass beads

This densely embroidered burse protected the silver matrix of Elizabeth I's Great Seal of England. Matrices were used to make wax seal impressions that were applied to decrees, charters and royal proclamations. The bag was possibly used by Sir Christopher Hatton (1540–1591), one of Elizabeth I's Keepers of the Great Seal and Lord Chancellor between 1587 and 1591. He is shown proudly displaying a similar seal burse in a portrait miniature by

Nicholas Hilliard, painted around 1588.



Lemière

Opera bag and contents

c.1910, Paris

Calf leather, silk, glass, bone, metal, plastic, swansdown

This small leather bag measures just 16cm when closed. But when opened, it reveals a spacious interior divided into compartments and pockets in which all the necessary accessories needed for a night at the opera could be neatly kept: a snap-fastening change purse at the top, a scalloped pocket containing a leather-backed mirror, a bone notecard and a pencil. There is also enough space for opera glasses and a

collapsible fan of embroidered white silk and a powder puff.



Louis Vuitton

Malle Haute trunk

c.1900, Paris

Canvas, wood, metal, leather

This trunk belonged to Emilie Busbey Grigsby (1876–1964), an American socialite who moved to England in 1911 or 1912. Paper labels glued onto the trunk, and passenger lists from the early twentieth century, reveal that it accompanied her on many of the most significant ocean liners of the time, including the Lusitania and Aquitania on the Cunard Line and Titanic's sister ship the Olympic on the White Star Line.



John Peck & Son

Despatch Box owned by Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

c.1921, London

Leather, pine, metal

The distinctive red boxes used by royalty and government have been used to hold and transport State documents safely since the 1840s. William Gladstone's box is still, famously, used by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and held aloft by him on Budget Day. This box

belonged to Sir Winston Churchill when Secretary of State for the Colonies (1921 – 1922).



Dowry bag (*bhujki*),

Mid 20th century, Sindh, Pakistan

Cotton, silk, glass beads, silver wire, mirrors This embellished dowry bag would have been embroidered in advance of a wedding. It is designed in the shape of an envelope, folding square when closed. The vibrant colours and intricate geometric and floral patterns are distinctive characteristics of Sindhi embroidery.



Portfolio
c.1715–18, Istanbul
Goat leather, silver, metal, gold leaf

This lavishly decorated portfolio features embroidered leather on the outside and red gilded leather on the inside. It is internally divided into three compartments and would have been used to carry documents and letters. The coat of arms depicted on the back belongs to Thomas Pelham-Holles (1693–1768), 1st Duke of Newcastle, an influential minister in the British government from 1724 and Prime Minister twice between 1754 and 1762.



Inrō* with *netsuke* and *ojime
c.1750–1850, Japan
Lacquer and gold foil (*inrō*); wood (*netsuke*); bone (*ojime*)

Inrō (seal-baskets) are small, tiered, containers worn suspended from the obi, a waist-sash, as part of traditional Japanese dress. They originated at the end of the sixteenth century and were worn by men to carry personal seals, ink pads and medicines. The compartments of this *inrō*, only two of which are visible here, feature inscriptions relating to the medicines kept inside: *kanryō* (liver calmer), *saikō* (bringer of life/aphrodisiac).



Hermès
'Sac Mallette' handbag
1960s, Paris
Box calf leather, metal

Hermès was established in 1837 by Thierry Hermès (1801–1878) as a horse-harness and bridle workshop in Paris. With the demise of the horse-drawn carriage in the early twentieth century, Hermès applied its leatherworking expertise to other products, including handbags. This 'Sac Mallette' handbag features two separate compartments. The top one opens via two sliding side latches and a push button, similar to a capacious doctor's

bag. The lower compartment is secured with a lock and key, and once opened reveals a deep red velvet interior that could be used to keep valuables safe while travelling.



Shoulder bag (N'hpye)
1900–35, Myanmar, Burma
Cotton, wool, seeds, glass beads, silver

This shoulder bag is part of the traditional dress of one of the ethnic groups of Kachin State, the northernmost state of Myanmar, Burma. This territory is heavily forested, and people would have worn these types of bags to transport personal items when walking long distances on foot.

Section 2 – Status and Identity



Hermès
Jane Birkin's 'Birkin' bag
1984, Paris
Leather, metal
Courtesy of Catherine B Paris

Hermès' chief executive Jean-Louis Dumas created this now-legendary bag for English singer Jane Birkin after they sat together on a flight and she complained of being unable to find a leather carrier with pockets that she liked. This 'Birkin' was the first ever made and, unlike the ones that followed, it is also equipped with a shoulder strap. It was heavily used by Jane Birkin and shows residue of adhesive from the stickers she liked to apply to it.



Mulberry
Kate Moss' 'Bayswater', Autumn – Winter 2009, London
Leather, Metal
Alexa Chung's 'Alexa', Spring – Summer 2010, London
Leather, Metal

The Mulberry Bayswater is one of the brand's most iconic handbags, as popular today as it was when it launched in 2003. Designed by Nicholas Knightly, the Bayswater unites the very best of Mulberry's craft skills and heritage influences. Supermodel Kate Moss was one of the bags first celebrity fans and has carried many different styles and colours over the years - including the example that will feature in the exhibition.

The Alexa, launched in 2010, was inspired by British style icon Alexa Chung who was often photographed carrying a well-loved Mulberry Elkington satchel. This caught the eye of the Mulberry design team and Chung's effortlessly chic style influenced the shape and leather choices for this new bag. The Alexa played a key role in the revival of the 'It Bag' and quickly became one of the most coveted bags of a generation.



Hermès
'Kelly' handbag
2018, Paris
Box calf leather, metal

This simple trapezoid bag was first created in the 1930s by Robert Dumas-Hermès (1898–1978). Originally named Sac à dépêches, the name 'Kelly' was given in honour of Grace Kelly (1929–1982), the Hollywood star who married Prince Rainier III of Monaco (1923–2005) in 1955. Through its association with the Princess, it has become one of the most iconic and popular handbags of all time.



Nuovo Bidente
Margaret Thatcher's Handbag
c.1984, possibly Italy
Leather, metal

During her tenure as Britain's first female Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, Margaret Thatcher understood the power of dress and accessories to emphasise her image. Her handbag became a recognisable symbol of both her femininity and power. Often referred to as her 'secret weapon' or the 'sceptre of her rule', Thatcher's handbag even influenced a new verb, 'to handbag' meaning to verbally attack a person or crush an idea.



Fendi
'Baguette' bag worn by Sarah Jessica Parker in Sex and the City 2000, Italy
Leather, sequins, metal

The Fendi Baguette has been heralded as the first global 'It bag'. It has been reported that around 600,000 Baguette handbags were sold between 1997 and 2007. Its status was elevated by TV character Carrie Bradshaw who, while being robbed of her purple sequin version in a 1997 episode of *Sex and the City*, famously corrected the thief by saying, 'It's a Baguette'.



Marc Jacobs for Louis Vuitton
Speedy handbag
Autumn–Winter 2006, Paris
Vinyl, metal

Louis Vuitton's Creative Director Marc Jacobs (b.1963) debuted his 'Monogram Miroir' collection of handbags during the brand's Autumn–Winter 2006 runway show. This example made from gold reflective vinyl is embossed with the famous monogram. Highly sought after, the mirrored bags were popularized by celebrities such as Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian during the 'It bag' craze of the early 2000s.



Mr. Bags in collaboration with TOD'S
TOD'S 'Unicorn D-Styling' bag
2019, Italy
Leather, metal

Chinese blogger and influencer Tao Liang, also known as Mr. Bags, regularly collaborates with fashion brands such as TOD'S to create limited- edition capsule collections. These are primarily sold to his seven million followers on social media @mrbags. This new mode of communication lies beyond the traditional catwalks and boutiques, and is so successful that the Mr. Bags' mini-website Baoshop can sell out within minutes.



Gianni Versace
'Safety pin' handbag
Spring–Summer 1994, Italy
Leather, metal

Gianni Versace's (1946–1997) 'safety-pin' collection was one of his most iconic shows, featuring supermodels Kate Moss (b.1974), Christy Turlington (b.1969) and Naomi Campbell (b.1970). Although not included on the catwalk, this handbag was available in-store and retains the collection's eye-catching aesthetic.



Christian Dior
'Lady Dior' handbag
Paris, 2020
Lambskin leather, metal

The 'Lady Dior' has been one of Christian Dior's most recognised products since it was launched in 1995. Originally named 'Chouchou', meaning favourite, France's then-First Lady, Bernadette Chirac, gave the bag as a gift to Diana Princess of Wales, formerly Lady Diana Spencer. It was renamed 'Lady Dior' in Diana's honour and has remained one of the brand's most coveted pieces ever since.



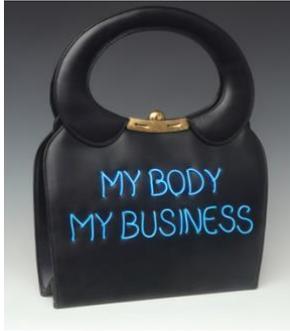
Samuel Lines (designer), Female Society for Birmingham (maker)
Anti-slavery workbag
1828, Birmingham, England
Silk

Despite the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807, slavery remained legal in the British Caribbean until 1834. Workbags bearing images of the enslaved, often accompanied by poems such as this one, were produced by the Female Society of Birmingham. They were sold together with pamphlets and campaign materials. The money raised helped the further circulation of information, ultimately relieving the conditions of the enslaved in this region. These bags allowed women to convey their political beliefs and disseminate antislavery messages.



Anya Hindmarch and We Are What We Do
'I'm NOT A Plastic bag' tote bag
2007, London
Cotton

This simple and cheap limited-edition tote bag was primarily sold in Sainsbury's supermarkets for £5 when it was launched in 2007. It was designed by Anya Hindmarch (b.1968) in collaboration with We Are What We Do – a global social change movement whose mission was 'to persuade people it's cool not to use plastic bags'.



Michele Pred
'My Body My Business' handbag
2019, USA

Leather, metal, electroluminescent wire

Swedish-American conceptual artist Michele Pred has chosen vintage handbags to use as her canvas. In her work *Power of the Purse*, vintage bags are modified to feature neon slogans. These artworks USA are meant to be carried and serve as small-scale political billboards. Pred has explained that these bags represent, 'women's modern economic power and the possibilities for change that come with it'.

Section 3 – Design and Making



Thom Browne
'Hector' handbag
Autumn-Winter 2019, New York
Leather, metal

Thom Browne immortalised his dog, a dachshund named Hector, in this life-sized handbag available in different materials and colours. Despite its unconventional shape, the bag is fully functional with a deep inside pocket and handles.



Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel
'Lait de Coco' evening bag
Autumn–Winter 2014, Paris
Lambskin leather, metal

This evening bag in the shape of a milk carton was featured in Chanel's supermarket-inspired Autumn–Winter 2014 collection, designed by Karl Lagerfeld (1933–2019). The bag features many of the classic Chanel symbols such as quilting, interlocking CC motif and pearls. The text on the front of the bag reads 'lait de coco' (coconut milk) playing on Gabrielle Chanel's nickname.



'Frog' purse
1600s, England
Silk, metal threads, mixed media

A number of 17th century purses survive in museum collections in the shape of fruits and small animals, including bunches of grapes, open nuts and frogs. They could have been used as 'sweet bags' and filled with scented herbs, dried flowers or sweet-smelling powders or as wrapping for a gift.



Judith Leiber
'Fabergé Egg' evening bag
1983, United States
Crystals, metal

Judith Leiber's (1921-2018) whimsical evening bag designs took on a variety of forms, from animals, to fruits or in this case a Faberge egg. Highly collectable, these bags were handcrafted and often encrusted with thousands of crystals.



Emily Jo Gibbs
'Horse Chestnut bag with Conker purse'
1996, London
Silk, copper wire

Taking inspiration from nature, Gibbs designed this bag in the shape of a horse chestnut. The green surface acts as a shell that when opened reveals a 'conker' shaped purse. Realistic details such as copper wire points to represent the spiked surface of a

horse chestnut demonstrate Gibbs care and craftsmanship.



Tracey Emin for Longchamp
'International Woman' suitcase
2004, France
Wool, cotton, leather

Longchamp launched its foldable Le Pliage bags in 1994.

To celebrate the line's tenth anniversary, the brand collaborated with British artist Tracey Emin (b.1963).

Emin designed 200 suitcases for the occasion inspired

by the story of an 'International Woman', travelling from one city

to the other, in search of an 'International Love with an International Man'. Each suitcase carries a unique rosette, signed by Emin and inscribed with a different location, one for each place that reminds her of a moment of love.



Bethan Laura Wood
Valextra 'Iside Toothpaste' bag
Spring – Summer 2018, Italy
Leather, metal

When British designer Bethan Laura Wood was asked to reinterpret the clean shape of Valextra's handbags, she reinvented the bags' signature black piping as wiggly and colorful handles. She was inspired by the sinuous lines of artist Eduardo Paolozzi's work. Her paper prototypes give an insight into the creative process and experimentation. Wood tested her ideas in London before creating the technical drawing

(reproduced on the right) for the manufacturer in Italy to produce the final pieces.



Alessandro Michele in collaboration with Trevor Andrew

Gucci Tote Bag

Autumn – Winter 2016, Italy

Leather

Former Olympic snowboarder turned street artist Trevor Andrew (alias Trouble Andrew), is also known as GucciGhost. Alessandro Michele, creative director of Gucci, asked him to collaborate on a project after seeing the artist's interpretation of the decontextualised his street-art aesthetics, signature and the logo, applying them to real Gucci handbags and outfits for the catwalk.



Beaded purse

1750-99, probably Paris

Silk, glass beads, silver-gilt thread

This silk purse is covered in thousands of tiny colourful glass beads using a technique known as sablé (meaning covered with sand). It is believed that only one or two Parisian workshops could have mastered such a meticulous and difficult technique, making these items so expensive they were only available to the wealthiest classes.



Filigree heart-shaped purse

1660–99, probably Nuremberg, Germany

Silver, silk

During the seventeenth century, filigree was considered a fashionable new technique, often employed in the making of gifts exchanged between aristocrats. The two sides of this heart-shaped purse are made from flattened silver wires that have been curled, twisted and soldered to achieve decorative motifs.



Letter case

c.1810, England

Silk, straw

Ornamental straw work can be traced back hundreds of years. Using similar techniques to those applied in traditional needlework, straw can be plaited, woven, couched and embroidered, providing decorative interest to flat textiles and three-dimensional objects, such as this letter case.



H Wald & Co.

'Waldybag' handbag

1950s, London

Silk, glass beads, paint, metal

'Waldybags' made by H Wald & Co. were popular in England in the 1940s and '50s. Company designer Florence Campbell adapted the traditional German craft of fabric-painting by applying beads. She started by painting designs onto transparent plastic sheets to hold against plain satin bags, enabling clients to choose a pattern and style. The design was traced onto greaseproof paper, then transferred to the bag by pricking the paper to create an outline.

Campbell would finish by directly hand-painting the bag.



Stella McCartney x Parley for the Oceans

'Ocean Legend - Falabella Go' backpack

Spring–Summer 2018, London

Ocean Plastic[®], metal

Ocean Plastic[®] is a material made from marine plastic waste. Stella McCartney (b.1971) used this fibre to make this limited-edition backpack to raise awareness of the problem of ocean plastic pollution. All proceeds were donated to Sea Shepherd, an organization established in 1977 to protect marine life.