

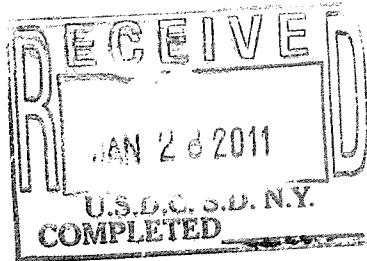
JUDGE HELLERSTEIN

11 CV 0580

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Attorneys for Plaintiff

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK



HERMÈS INTERNATIONAL, a French
corporation,

Plaintiff,

v.

THURSDAY FRIDAY INC., a California
corporation,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION NO.

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Hermès International (“Hermès” or “Plaintiff”), for its Complaint against Thursday Friday Inc. (“Defendant”), states as follows.

INTRODUCTION

1. Hermès created, manufactures and sells the iconic “Birkin” handbag. Through enormous sales, publicity and media attention, the appearance of the Birkin Bag has become immediately recognizable to millions of women. Defendant is selling cotton tote bags which bear, on each of their surfaces, a color photograph of the corresponding surfaces of what appears to be a Birkin Bag. Defendant is simply riding on the reputation and recognition of the Birkin

Bag to sell its otherwise generic tote bags. In so doing, Defendant is creating confusion among the public and is putting Plaintiff's reputation at risk.

2. This is an action under federal and state law for trademark infringement, false designation of origin, unfair competition and dilution by tarnishment. Hermès seeks injunctive relief, damages, statutory treble damages, costs, an accounting of profits, and attorneys' fees based on Defendant's intentional infringement and related misconduct. Hermès brings these claims pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §§ 1125(a) and 1125(c), the common law of the State of New York, and N.Y. Gen. Bus. Law § 360-1.

PARTIES

3. Hermès is a French corporation having its principal place of business at 24, rue du Faubourg, St. Honore 75008 Paris, France. Hermès does business in the United States through its wholly-owned subsidiary Hermès of Paris, Inc., a New York corporation having its principal office at 55 East 59th Street, New York, New York 10022.

4. Upon information and belief, Thursday Friday Inc. is a California corporation having its principal place of business at 2672 S. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90034, and is doing business on a systematic and regular basis within the State of New York through its interactive website located at www.thufri.com.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

5. This Court has original jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1121. This court has subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338, as questions of federal law have been presented under 15 U.S.C. § 1125(a). This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's state law claims pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

6. This Court has *in personam* jurisdiction over Defendant pursuant to N.Y.C.P.L.R. §§ 302(a)(1) and (2) in that, upon information and belief, Defendant, by itself or through its agents, regularly solicits, transacts, and engages in business in New York, and has committed tortuous acts in New York, including this jurisdiction.

7. Venue is appropriate in this Court over Defendant pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) because it is a corporation over whom this Court has personal jurisdiction, and therefore resides here, and because a substantial part of the claims arose in this district.

FACTS COMMON TO ALL COUNTS

Plaintiff and the Birkin Bag

8. Continuously since long prior to the acts of Defendant alleged herein, Plaintiff has been renowned throughout the world and in the United States for its high quality goods and services in the fields of leather goods, wearing apparel, fragrances, fashion accessories and home furnishings.

9. Plaintiff's original business was the production of elegant, custom made, high quality harnesses for horses. During the nineteenth century, Plaintiff's harness business expanded to saddlery and other related horseback riding equipment. During the twentieth century, Plaintiff expanded its business further to include hand made handbags, personal leather goods, and wearing apparel of the highest quality. Throughout its history, Plaintiff has maintained its reputation for the manufacture of goods of the highest quality, without compromise. Unlike some other so-called luxury goods manufacturers, Plaintiff does not license its trademarks for use on goods made by others, and all of its leather goods are made within Plaintiff's own factories and workrooms.

10. Continuously since at least as early as 1986, Plaintiff has manufactured and sold, within the United States and in other countries, a handbag which has become known as the Birkin Bag. The Birkin Bag is named after the actress and singer Jane Birkin, and was created out of a chance meeting between Ms. Birkin and Jean-Louis Dumas, then chairman of Hermès. M. Dumas remodeled a capacious tapestry bag to suit Ms. Birkin's needs.

11. The Birkin Bag has a distinctive design that is characterized by, *inter alia*, (a) a distinctive three lobed flap design with keyhole shaped notches to fit around the base of the handle, (b) a dimpled triangular profile, (c) a closure which consists of two thin, horizontal straps with metal plates at their end that fit over a circular turn lock, and (e) a padlock, which sometimes is placed within the turn lock and is sometimes placed at the end of a leather fob. A photograph of a Birkin Bag is attached as Exhibit A.

12. The closure of the Birkin Bag itself has become so recognizable and distinctive that it is the subject of U.S. Trademark Registration No. 1,806,107 which registration is in full force and effect and is incontestable. A copy of the Certificate of Registration for this Birkin closure is attached as Exhibit B.

13. Each Birkin Bag is handcrafted from the finest leather by an experienced artisan or artisans. A single such handbag requires between sixteen and nineteen hours of labor to create. Because of the intensive labor and craftsmanship involved in creating Birkin Bags, they are very expensive. Prices start at about \$6,000, and some models are more expensive. Nevertheless, there is a waiting list to obtain such bags. Currently, a customer must wait at least eighteen months to obtain a Birkin Bag from one of Plaintiff's stores in the United States.

14. During the period 2002 to 2008 inclusive, Plaintiff sold more than thirty thousand Birkin Bags in the United States, representing total revenue in excess of \$200 million.

15. Despite the high price and exclusivity of the Birkin Bag, its design has become enormously identifiable and well recognized among the general public, primarily due to the considerable attention given by the fashion press and general media. Indeed, photo spreads incorporating the Birkin Bag are a staple of fashion magazines. Attached as Exhibit C are samples of such publicity from publications with nationwide circulations such as *Allure*, *Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, *Style* and *People* ranging in date from 1998 through 2009.

16. The Birkin Bag, and the desire to own one, became so well known that it became a key plot element in an episode of the HBO series *Sex and the City*. Attached as Exhibit D is a synopsis of the episode, in which a Birkin Bag is prominently displayed. The Birkin Bag has also been featured in episodes of television shows such as *Gilmore Girls*, *Will and Grace* and *Gossip Girls*.

17. Further evidence of the widespread fame of the Birkin Bag, and the urgent desire of many women to own it, is a book entitled *Bringing Home the Birkin*. This book describes author Michael Tonello's business venture buying and selling Plaintiff's luxury products, primarily Birkin Bags, at premium prices in order to satisfy customer demands. The cover of the book emulates the distinctive flap of the Birkin bag and the outer jacket includes a rendering of the entire Birkin Bag. See Exhibit E. The Birkin Bag was featured prominently in materials and events in connection with *Bringing Home the Birkin*, including a book review in *The New York Times* and a segment on CBS's *The Early Show*. Copies of materials related to publicity over *Bringing Home the Birkin* are attached as Exhibit F.

18. The Birkin Bag does not bear any visible word trademark on its exterior or on any hang tags sold with it. As a result of this, and as a result of the enormous sales, extensive advertising and promotion and ubiquitous publicity and attention in the press and media, the design of the Birkin Bag has acquired secondary meaning and has become a famous trademark (the “Birkin Bag Trademark”), associated exclusively with Plaintiff.

19. Plaintiff’s rights in the design of the Birkin Bag have been judicially tested and approved by cases such as *Hermès International et al. v. Lederer de Paris, Inc. and Pelle Via Roma, Inc.*, 98 Civ. 2820 (SAS), in which two separate juries found that the design of the Birkin Bag had acquired distinctiveness and was infringed by a knockoff bag.

Defendant’s Acts

20. Upon information and belief, Defendant is a recently formed corporation whose principals have no prior experience in the handbag industry.

21. Defendant recently began offering for sale and selling, through its fully interactive website located at www.thufri.com, a cotton canvas tote bag called the Together Bag. The Together Bag contains, on each of its five exterior surfaces (front, back, sides and bottom) a photograph of the corresponding sides of what appears to be a genuine Birkin Bag. Photographs of the Together Bag are attached hereto as Exhibit G.

22. Defendant’s website includes the ability to order products directly from the website, and payment for the goods may be made through the website. Upon information and belief, Defendant has sold the Together Bag through this website to persons within the State of New York, including this juridical district.

23. Defendant's affixation of the photographs of what is apparently a Birkin Bag to its cotton tote bags, and the advertising and sale thereof, is likely to create confusion, mistake or deception, in that persons will believe that the bag is either sold by Plaintiff or has been licensed, sponsored or endorsed by Plaintiff.

24. By its actions alleged herein, Defendant is seeking to take unfair advantage of the fame and reputation of the Birkin Bag, and by leading people to believe that Plaintiff has engaged in the licensing of the image of its bag in connection with inexpensive goods, is tarnishing Plaintiff's reputation for quality and commercial integrity.

25. Defendant's acts alleged herein were undertaken willfully and with the purpose of confusing the public and unfairly exploiting the wide fame and reputation of Plaintiff and the Birkin Bag.

COUNT ONE

(False Designation of Origin – 15 U.S.C. § 1125(a)(1)(A))

26. Hermès repeats and realleges the allegations contained in paragraphs 1-25 of its Complaint as if set forth herein.

27. The Birkin Bag Trademark has acquired a secondary meaning and has become identified by consumers as associated with Hermès exclusively. The design of the Birkin Bag is not functional.

28. Defendant's advertising and sale of tote bags bearing a photographic production of what appears to be a genuine Birkin Bag on its exterior surfaces is likely to cause confusion, mistake, or deception as to the origin, sponsorship, or approval of Defendant's bag. Defendant's

use of these photographs is likely to cause consumers to believe that Defendant's bags originate, and/or is licensed by or otherwise authorized by Hermès. Defendant's actions therefore constitute common-law trademark infringement and false designation of origin under the Lanham Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1125(a)(1)(A).

29. Upon information and belief, Defendant has undertaken these acts with the express intent to confuse, mislead, or deceive the public as to the origin of Defendant's products.

30. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's actions, Hermès and the public have been and will continue to be irreparably damaged unless Defendant is enjoined by this Court from advertising and selling its infringing tote bag.

31. Hermès has no adequate remedy at law.

COUNT TWO

(Federal Trademark Infringement -- 15 U.S.C. § 1114)

32. Hermès repeats and realleges the allegations contained in paragraphs 1-31 of its Complaint as if set forth herein.

33. By its actions, Defendant has infringed Plaintiff's registered trademark, the Birkin Closure, set forth in U.S. Reg. No. 1,806,107, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1114.

34. By affixing to its tote bags photographs of what appears to be a Birkin Bag, including the Birkin Closure registered trademark, Defendant expressly intends to confuse, mislead or deceive the public as to the origin of Defendant's products.

35. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's actions, Hermès and the public have been and will continue to be irreparably damaged unless Defendant is enjoined by this Court from advertising and selling its infringing tote bag.

36. Hermès has no adequate remedy at law.

COUNT THREE

(New York Common Law Trademark Infringement and Unfair Competition)

37. Hermès repeats and realleges the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 36 of its Complaint as if set forth herein.

38. Defendant's actions constitute trademark infringement and unfair competition under the common law of New York.

39. Upon information and belief, Defendant has undertaken these acts with the express intent to confuse, mislead, or deceive the public as to the origin of Defendant's products.

40. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's actions, Hermès and the public have been and will continue to be irreparably damaged unless Defendant is enjoined by this Court from advertising and selling its infringing tote bag.

41. Hermès has no adequate remedy at law.

COUNT FOUR

(Dilution – 15 U.S.C. § 1125(c))

42. Hermès repeats and realleges the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 41 of its Complaint as if set forth herein.

43. Plaintiff's Birkin Bag Trademark is a famous trademark.

44. By affixing a photograph of what appears to be a genuine Plaintiff's Birkin Bag to its inexpensive tote bag, Defendant is likely to create dilution of Plaintiff's famous trademark by tarnishment, by associating Plaintiff's fine goods with Defendant's inexpensive, lower quality products and by creating the false impression that Plaintiff has given in to the temptation to license its famous trademark for mass market goods.

45. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's actions, Hermès has been and will continue to be irreparably damaged unless Defendant is enjoined by this Court from advertising and selling its infringing tote bag.

46. Hermès has no adequate remedy at law.

COUNT FIVE

(Dilution Under New York General Business Law Section 360-I)

47. Hermès repeats and realleges the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 46 of its Complaint as if set forth herein.

48. By its acts alleged herein, Defendant is creating a likelihood of injury to the business reputation of Hermès, in violation of the New York Anti-dilution Act, N.Y. Gen. Bus. Law § 360-I.

49. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's actions, Hermès has been and will continue to be irreparably damaged unless Defendant is enjoined by this Court from advertising and selling its infringing tote bag.

50. Hermès has no adequate remedy at law.

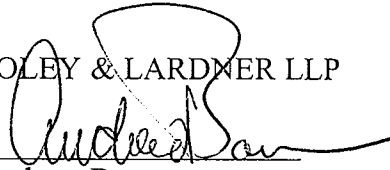
PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment that:

- a. Defendant, its officers, agents, servants, employees, attorneys, and all persons acting in active concert with them, be enjoined during the pendency of this action, and thereafter permanently enjoined and restrained from using any photographs or reproductions of Plaintiff's Birkin Bag, or any substantially identical bag, on or in connection with the advertising, promotion, importation, offering for sale or sale of tote bags or handbags of any kind;
- b. Defendant be ordered to deliver up for destruction any and all inventory, packaging, labels, advertising, or sales promotional materials, and all prints, mechanicals, plates, or means used to reproduce the labels and packaging bearing any reproduction of Plaintiff's Birkin Bag and/or any designs confusingly similar to Plaintiff's Birkin Bag;
- c. Defendant be required to account for and pay over to Plaintiff all damages sustained by Plaintiff and all profits realized by Defendant by reason of its unlawful acts alleged herein;
- d. All damages awarded to Plaintiff under Count I be trebled, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1117;
- e. Defendant be required to pay to Plaintiff all of Plaintiff's costs, disbursements, and attorneys' fees in this action, as provided by law, including 15 U.S.C. § 1117;

- f. Defendant be required to file with the Court and serve upon Plaintiff's counsel within thirty (30) days after entry of any injunctive relief herein a written report under oath setting forth in detail the manner and form in which Defendant has complied with the requirements of the aforementioned orders; and
- g. Plaintiff have such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and equitable.

Dated: January 27, 2011
New York, New York

FOLEY & LARDNER LLP
By: 
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90 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10016
Tel: (212) 338-3527
Fax: (212) 687-2329

Attorneys for Plaintiff

EXHIBIT LIST

- Exhibit A: Photograph of Plaintiff's Birkin Bag
- Exhibit B: Certificate of Registration for U.S. Reg. No. 1,806,107
- Exhibit C: Magazine photo spreads showing Birkin Bag
- Exhibit D: Synopsis of "Sex and the City" episode involving Birkin Bag
- Exhibit E: Cover of *Bringing Home the Birkin*
- Exhibit F: Publicity on *Bringing Home the Birkin*
- Exhibit G: Photographs of Defendant's "Together Bag"

EXHIBIT A

last look at

editor Michelle Sanders

hermes birkin 25



...the day parties go, it was pretty damn well. The culture of Brunei threw a standing ovation and all kinds when he celebrated his fiftieth in 1996 with an evening that cost a mere \$5 million. In a similar spirit of excess, Hermès trumped the recent launch of one of its most iconic bags with a new seasonal version, the Birkin 25. The original might have been created under relatively humble circumstances—Mme. Simone Cambiure needed a bag to tote around Paris while her husband, a Parisian, needed to tote around in 1984. But look at you now. The 25 is crafted from bruno-shaded crocodile with an 18K white-gold clasp and padlock that's studded with diamonds totaling nearly six carats. The cost? A cool \$81,000. But hey, when the party's going that well, who's counting?



EXHIBIT B

Int. Cl.: 18

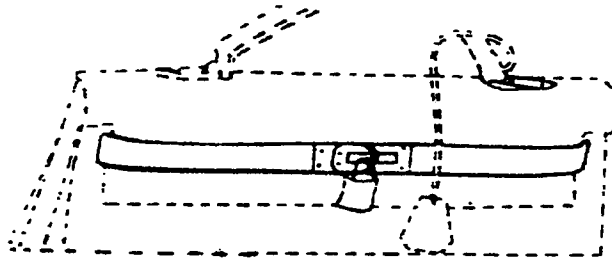
Prior U.S. Cl.: 3

United States Patent and Trademark Office

Reg. No. 1,806,107

Registered Nov. 23, 1993

**TRADEMARK
PRINCIPAL REGISTER**



HERMES GESTION, INC. (DELAWARE CORPORATION)
1409 FOULK ROAD, SUITE 102
P.O. BOX 7108
WILMINGTON, DE 19803

FOR: LEATHER HANDBAGS, IN CLASS 18
(U.S. CL. 3).

FIRST USE 1-1-1972; IN COMMERCE
1-1-1972.

THE MARK CONSISTS OF A RECTANGULAR DESIGN ATTACHED TO THE FLAP OF A HANDBAG AND THE DOTTED LINE APPEARING ON THE DRAWING IS NOT A PART OF THE MARK AND SERVES ONLY TO SHOW THE POSITION OF THE MARK.

SEC. 2(F).

SER. NO. 74-336,038, FILED 12-2-1992.

DAVID CHO, EXAMINING ATTORNEY

EXHIBIT C

20 OBJECTS OF DESIRE

What treats and treasures deserve a place on your most-wanted list for 2008? We have some dandy suggestions.

1. HAUTE HANDBAG

Get in line now for the Hermes Birkin bag—you may be there for a while. Named in 1984 for actress Jane Birkin, this prized accessory (at left, in violet crocodile, \$27,400) has topped the fashion charts for so long that it's redefined our concept of what fashionable means. From selecting the exotic skins to handcrafting the end result, each bag typically takes between six months and two years to make. Worth the wait? Stylish women the world over think so. 800-441-4488; hermes.com.



2. PRECIOUS PERFUME

Douse yourself if you dare, but at \$2,350 an ounce, perhaps a discreet little dab of the fragrance called No. 1 had better do. This exquisite floral-oriental composition is reminiscent of the days when Queen Victoria granted the English perfumery that is now Clive Christian the right to use her crown's likeness on the bottle stopper. A diamond embellishes the lead-crystal flacon. At Bergdorf Goodman, NYC, 800-558-1855; clive.com.



3. AN ETHEREAL GARDEN

Hire in-demand British landscape designer Tom Stuart-Smith and fill your beds not with traditional cottage-garden flowers but with masses of lovingly selected, artistically placed plants. This winner of several Chelsea Flower Show awards, whose work has been commissioned by Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel, the Earl of March and Her Majesty the Queen, will wow you. Prices on request. 011-44-207-253-2100; www.tomstuartsmith.co.uk.





JENNIFER
POMERANTZ

FORBES LIFE EXEC WOMAN - SPRING 2008

Personal Style

the Bombshell

Your everyday staples are red-hot lipstick, metallic stilettos and movie-star sunglasses. Even sexier is what's underneath.



Top Bomb: MAC lipstick in Russian Red, \$14; maccosmetics.com

SHOP YOUR TYPE

Credit	Debit
Cavalli	Bebe
Kle de Montparnasse	Victoria's Secret
Dior	Steve Madden

Sally Strides Acetate and stainless-steel sunglasses with diamonds. More at \$1250; micrate.com



Hot Boy Leather pumps Jimmy Choo \$725 212-759-7078

Ruby Lurex Polyester cami (\$115) and tangi (\$68). Chantelle; at Saks Fifth Avenue

YOUR RIDE



Squad in Rolls-Royce Phantom Drophead coupe, from \$407,000; rolls-royceautomotors.com for dealer slips

the Sophisticate

Luxe classics like a Birkin bag, a Rolex and barely there lip color define your sensibility. When in doubt, let Tory Burch be your guide.



Golden Time 18k rose-gold Oyster Perpetual Datejust watch, \$21,000 800-367-8539 for stores



Grab Bag: Buffalo Birkin 35 tote, Hermes, \$7,850; hermes.com for stores



A Hint of Pink Armani Silk lipstick in No. 15, \$20; [arnibauty.com](http://www.arnibauty.com)



Mrs. Good Terrain: Tory Burch's 'Tory' tote, \$295; toryburch.com

SHOP YOUR TYPE

Credit	Debit
Bergdorf Goodman	Kohl's
Hermes	Banana Republic
Michael Kors	J. Crew

to

Grabbed Bags

From a GG'd clutch to an FF'd baguette, most accessories of the moment change with the wind. But some handbags weather any storm, surviving on their own merit: Louis Vuitton's accessoires pouch can hold a full-size wallet and cell phone yet double as an evening bag. Others earn a following through careful planning: Prada's bowling bag was given to fashion editors at the spring runway show. Some bags are simply so cool, their appeal cannot be explained. Of her denim-and-leather Hermès Birkin bag, Kate Moss admits, "I love it because I love it. I love it because it's genius." —MICHELLE MAGUIRE



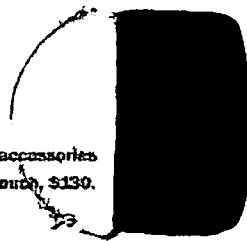
leather bowling bag, \$870.



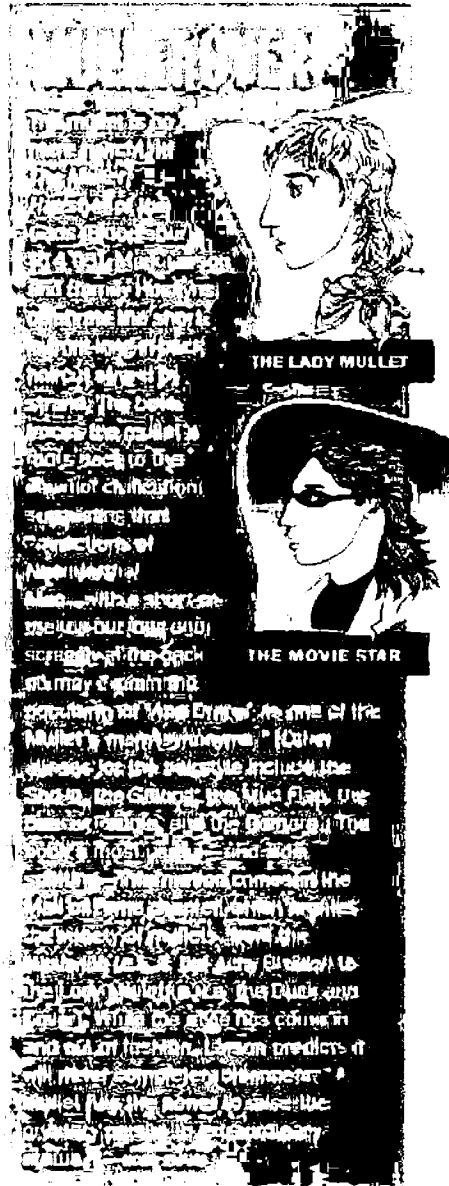
canvas-and-leather Birkin bag, \$8,000.



leather city bag, \$1,300.



leather accessories pouch, \$130.



Stink Tank

It's a dirty job, but somebody's got to do it—test deodorant, that is. So when Unilever introduces a new one—most recently, Dove Anti-Perspirant—it relies on what might be called its Ampit Corps of Engineers. "We've never been able to replicate the human nose," explains Judy Rahn, clinical science manager for Unilever. "It's the most sensitive instrument out there." The troops are divided into sniffers, sweaters, and—for lack of a better word—stinkers. The sweaters test wetness by spending 80 minutes in a 100-degree sauna with moisture-collecting pads under their arms. Stinkers test odor after a week without deodorant. Once they've achieved a suitable level of gaminess, the stinkers have their pits judged by the sniffers. The stinkers then start wearing deodorant, checking back to see how well the product is working. Most stinkers welcome the deodorant with open armpits. "You walk into that room and it's pretty stinky," Rahn acknowledges. "We're happy to get them treated." —LINDSY VAN BELDER

For photographers, credits and costs, see Credits page



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Q&A with Anna Meloni

Chic thrills: Medicine is a retreat for me. It's my own territory and gives me a sense of what's important. When you're wearing scrubs all day, dressing up to go out becomes sort of a thrill.

Food for thought: JG Melon [where photograph was taken] represents wonderful memories for me: many Sundays of hamburgers and french fries. It's been a constant in my life.

Stylish: I like to come across as someone who's confident, accomplished, and happy. If you take your style too seriously, it's a reflection of who you are.

Party pass: There are a lot of party invitations cruising around these days. But the greatest luxury is to be invited to someone's house for dinner. It's my favorite thing to do.

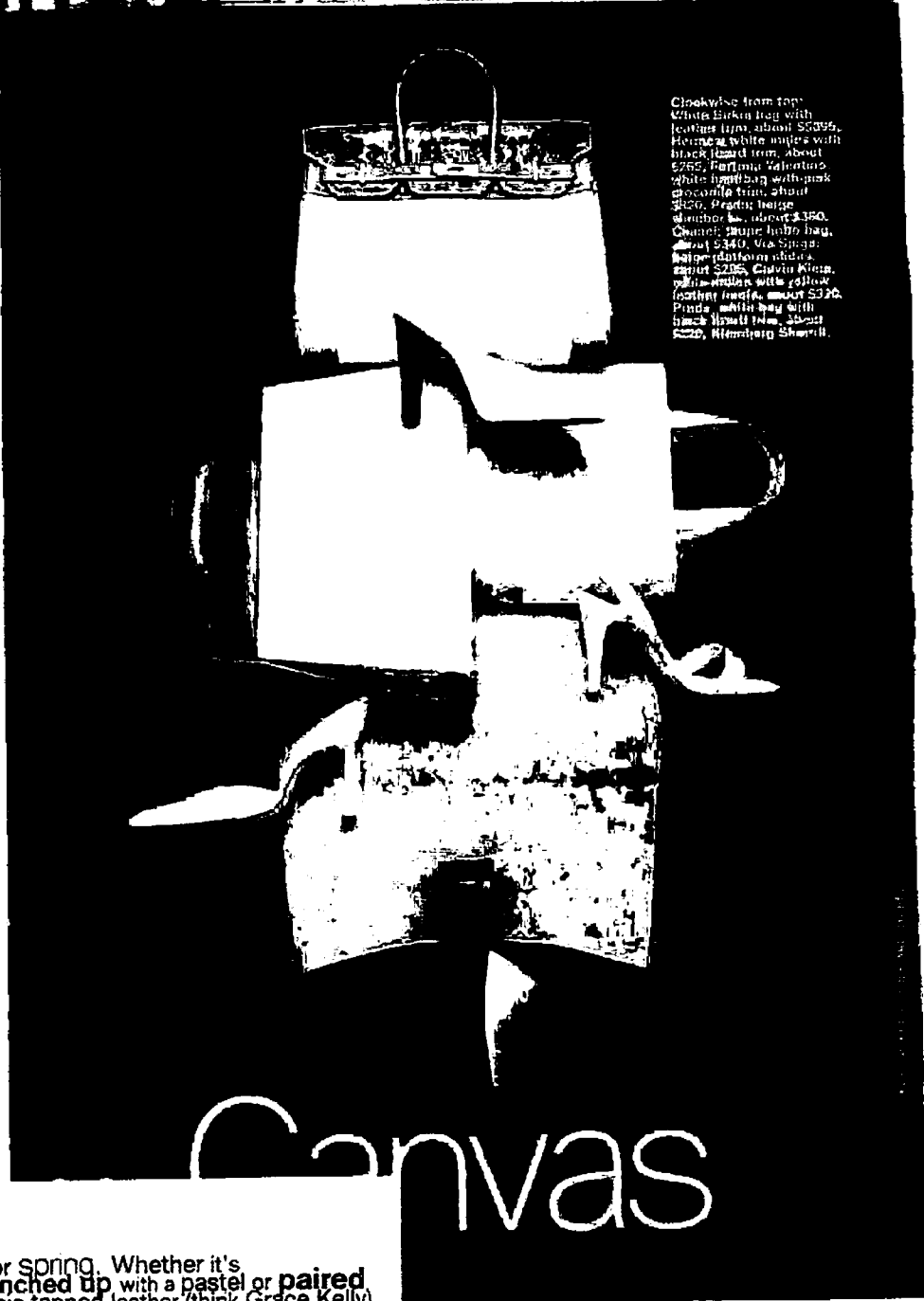
Wired woman: The Internet offers great possibilities. I go online for information or to order dinner from Joe's Stone Crab in Florida.

Stylish: I like to come across as someone who's confident, accomplished, and happy. If you take your style too seriously, it's a reflection of who you are.

Dress code: I like to come across as someone who's confident, accomplished, and happy. If you take your style too seriously, it's a reflection of who you are.

Split personality: I'm a mom by day and completely change gears at night. That's the essence of a typical busy New Yorker. We spent two and a half weeks in Argentina's pampas, and I thought, it's pretty scary I have to go this far to get away.

Stim
h w



Clockwise from top: White Birkin bag with leather trim, about \$5,000; Hermès white saddle with black lizard trim, about \$2,500; Prada white nylon bag with pink crocodile trim, about \$1,200; Prada beige diamond bag, about \$350; Coach white nylon bag, about \$340; Vera Wang beige cotton canvas bag, about \$200; Calvin Klein nylon saddle with yellow leather trim, about \$120; Fendi white bag with black lizard trim, about \$200; Hirschberg Sherrill.

Canvas

Especially for spring. Whether it's punched up with a pastel or paired with classic tanned leather (think Grace Kelly), this warm-weather favorite is the clean, crisp way to go. By Richard Sinnott

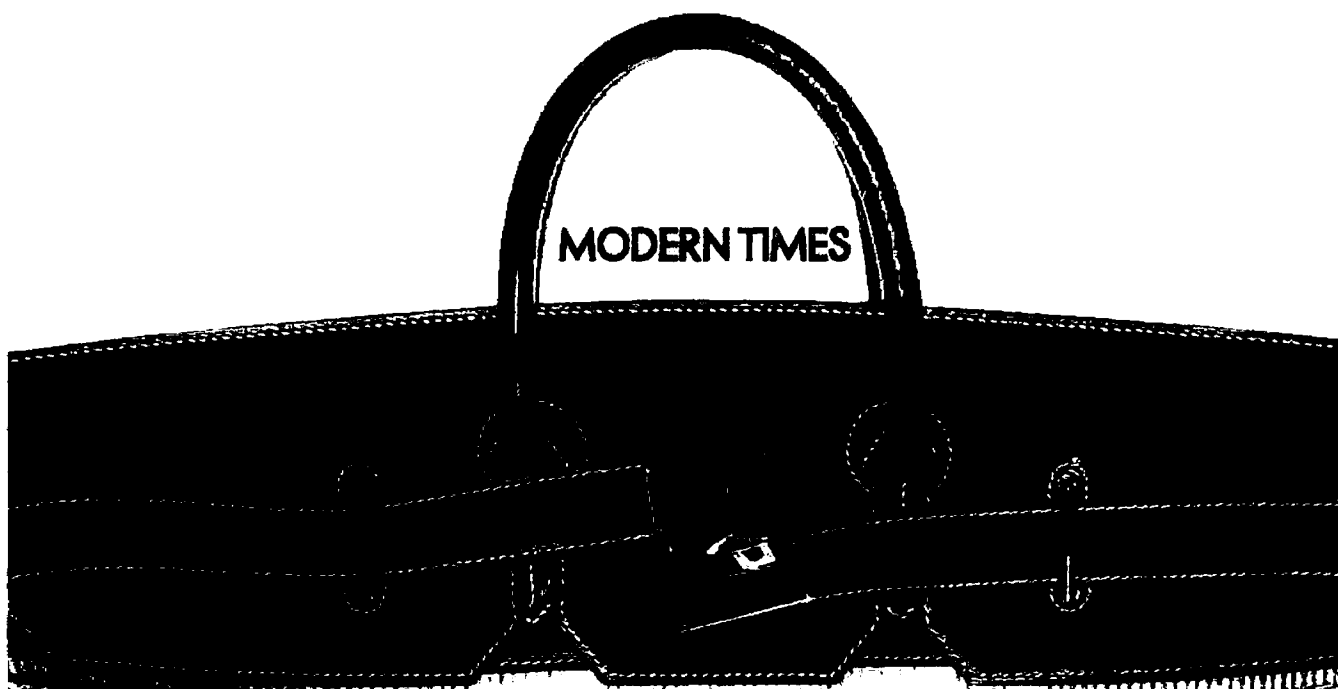


Tote Couture

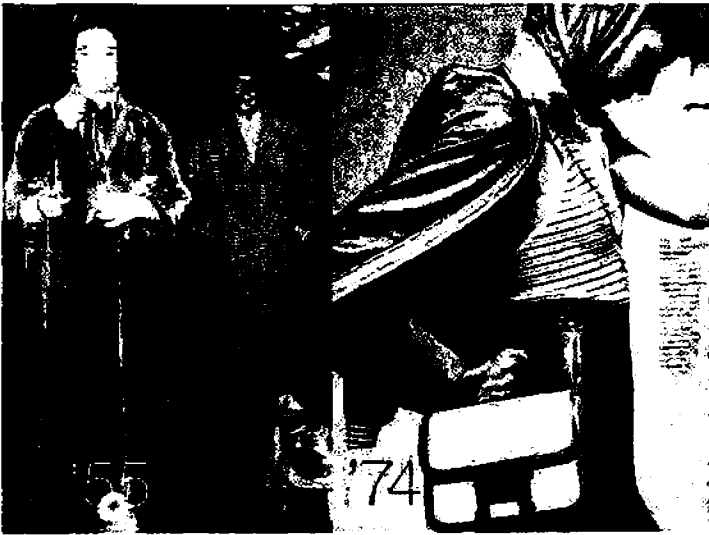
...of average (and medium) size, and the envy ... With heavy goods racking up big ...
 ... was "list right now. Named for actress Jane Fonda (her straw ...
 ... Hermes CEO and Chairman Louis Vuitton when he sat next to her on an ...
 ... from leather to lizard to the latest incarnation, ...

ELLE

FEBRUARY 2000



The Spring 2000 collections—the first of the millennium—mark a welcome return to sophistication in all its forms. Logos, the ultimate status symbols, adorn everything, from suits to shoes. As for sex symbols, there are cool, *Charlie's Angels*-style separates to wear to work and play. Silk chiffon—the fabric of the moment—is cut into dramatic dresses or shirts that are paired with knee-length skirts, making one of the most put-together looks in years. The finishing touch? A time-tested classic like the Hermes Kelly bag shown here.



Wallis, Duchess of Windsor, with a croc Haut à Courtois



Constance craving: Harper's Bazaar editorial featuring a leather-and-linen Constance bag



Riding high: Hermès' equestrian chic in Bazaar, a look Jean Paul Gaultier paid homage to with his first collection for the house nearly two decades later



Another witty take on the Hermès scarf in Bazaar?



Linda Evangelista with her Jean Paul Gaultier-customized Birkin



For his runway debut, Jean Paul Gaultier shortened the height of the Birkin to create this luxe, must-have carryall.



Another fall hit: a pint-size Kelly



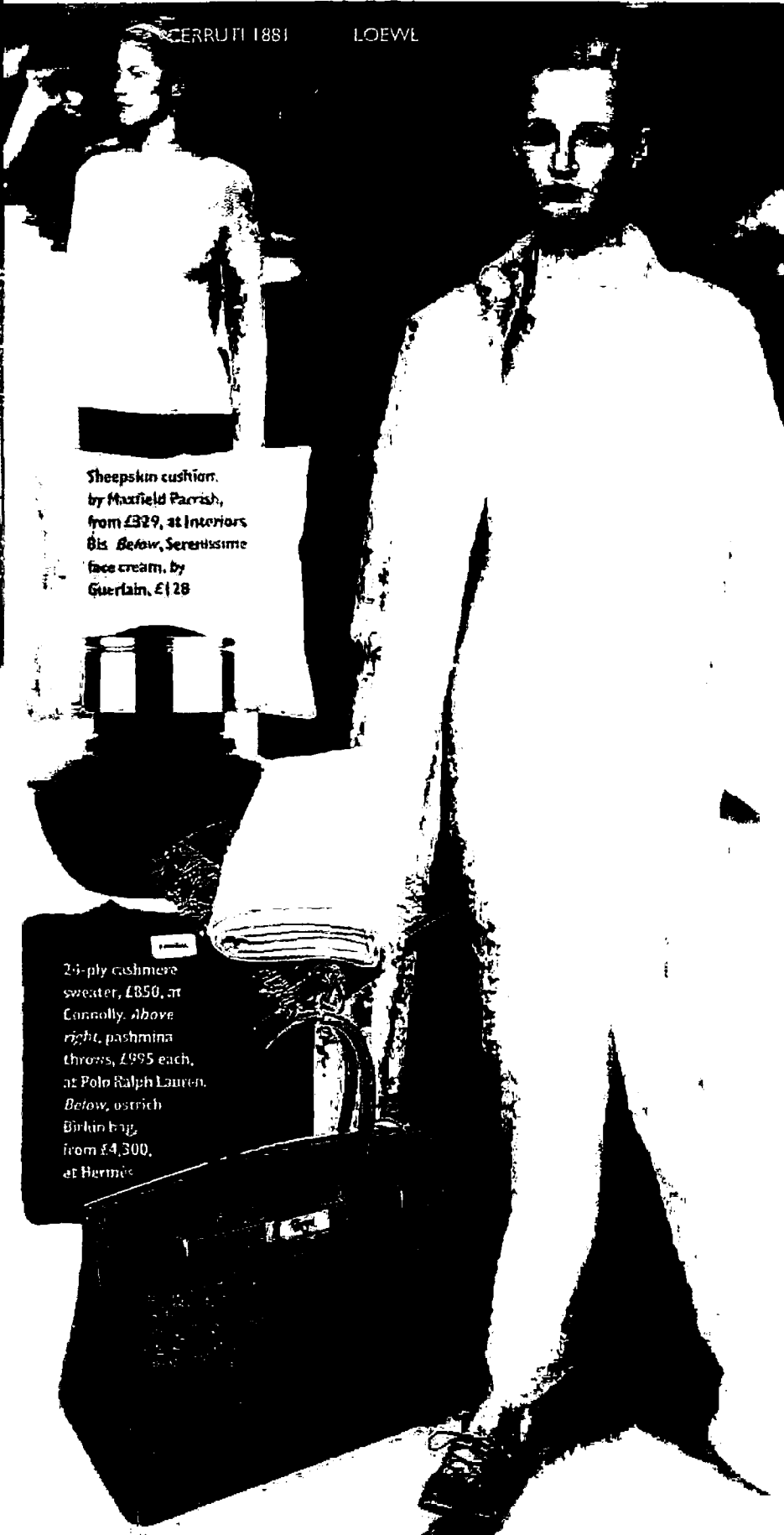
Introduced: 1930.
Famous fans: Catherine Deneuve (left), Carla Sozzani.
Most-wanted style: The often-copied bag is best in the pared-down, throw-over-your-arm, 27-cm size; go for a luxe skin. Due to their renewed popularity, early-'90s Plumes are the hottest on the vintage market. A leather one costs about \$2000; the coveted croc between \$6000 and \$8000.



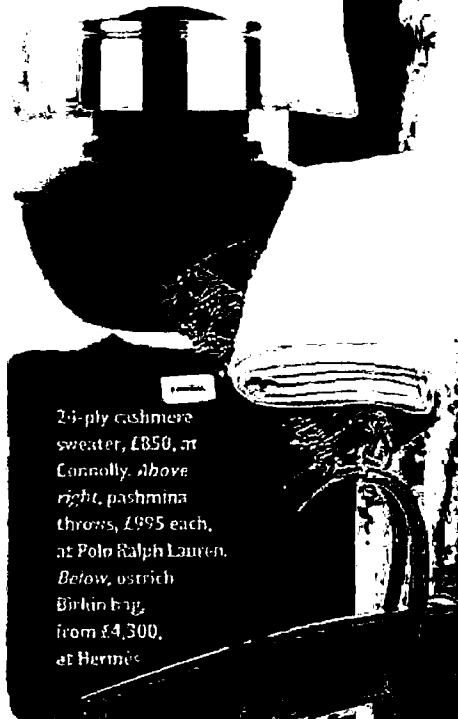
Introduced: 1960s.
Famous fans: Suzanne Saperstein (left).
Most-wanted style: The closest thing to a logo bag by Hermès, the Constance has bold hardware that looks best with ladylike Easter hues, like pale pink and green. Black versions from the bag's early days of production are in demand at vintage stores and cost around \$2000.



Introduced: 1984.
Famous fans: Jane Birkin (far left), Demi Moore (left), Lucy Liu, Naomi Campbell.
Most-wanted style: The smallest size—25 cm, like Moore's black version—is causing a frenzy. At vintage and consignment stores, getting your hands on a Birkin in the bright blue denim color would be a major score. Often, prices soar above retail, and bags in basic leather can cost close to \$8000.



Sheepskin cushion,
by Maxfield Parrish,
from £329, at Interiors
Bis Below, Serentissime
face cream, by
Guerlain, £128



24-ply cashmere
sweater, £850, at
Connolly, Above
right, pashmina
throws, £995 each,
at Polo Ralph Lauren.
Below, ostrich
Birkin bag,
from £4,300,
at Hermès

ude; the delicious scent of a Dyprique
andle enrichés a'room. The connoisseur
ed not opt for a Kelly to understand the
nall but effective luxuries in life.

But, inevitably, one graduates to the hard
uff. One day, not long ago, my bank
count stayed black for longer than usual
ohji beckoned. Once you have the where-
ithal, you develop a blanket approach to
te whole enterprise - anything by Yohji
umamoto would do. The £900 skirt was
xurating in the downstairs department
t Joseph in Brompton Cross, hanging
rovocatively on a shiny aluminium hanger.
or the first time, it was no longer utterly
ut of bounds. I could own this skirt! It
ould be mine, hanging in my wardrobe,
utting all the lesser labels and cheaper
ibrics to shame like a magnum of cham-
agne in a fridge full of lemonade.

I peeled the skirt from its hanger and
ingerly held it against my chest as I headed
or the changing cubicle. My heart sang. On
vent the skirt and... Damnation take it.
The glorious skirt, apple of my eye, label of
ny dreams for a decade, was not for me
it was, as it turned out, for my friend
(uzannah) No matter. I still have a bottle
of Issima Midnight Secret in my Fendi
uquette bag. And I have my eye on a very
ood-looking leather jacket (soft, soft, soft)
rying out for attention at Gucci.

*Wm Spencer is fashion editor of the
Evening Standard*

For stockists, see *Vogue Information*



1998

stiff competition from Prada, Gucci, and now Dior. The classic Chanel bag, some would argue, fell out of favor in the early nineties, when tastes moved away from label love and toward grunge (that was precisely when Miuccia Prada's utility-style nylon bags hit the headlines). Others might add that Lagerfeld's efforts to modernize the icon only served to devalue it: With his mutated forms of the Chanel bag—attached to a garter in one memorable 1991 show—he had, according to one pundit, “laughed the bag out of existence as a serious accessory.” Another lesson: Respect your cash now.

What's clear is that there is no love lost between Dior and Chanel over bags, a feud that emerged when the Lady Dior began to eat into an area Chanel once dominated. Launching an incendiary into the arena, Cirkva is not averse to pointing up the similarities between the bags. “Lady Dior,” she says, “was heavily inspired by Chanel. You only have to look at it to see the similarities. Dior clearly wanted to create their own version of the Chanel bag. I have to assume it was part of their strategy.”

Another part of the strategy—and a key in the hot product equation—is streamlining. In 1994 and 1995, Dior rolled back its licensed products, and the quality of logo-bearing goods was improved dramatically. Now you can't buy a polyester Dior tie even if you want one. Tom Ford did something similar at Gucci in the late

1980s: To save the mark, 15,000 Gucci product lines were jettisoned; logos were bumped off the front of products; quality was bumped up; and the design diamonds (bamboo handles, double Gs) were reassessed, with the modern spin of Ford's enviable design touch.

If anyone knows the formula for a hot bag, it's Ford. His take is that, ultimately, the design will sell a bag: “If a bag is attractive, it makes you feel good by default. It's all about proportion, shape, line, finish, fabric, balance. If all that is pleasing, it will sell. More than that, it's like you gotta have it or you'll die. A bag, if you think about it—and I do, a lot—has a life of its own. It just is, whereas clothing is nothing without a body inside.” And how important is the label? “Yeah,” shrugs Ford. “It helps if you can recognize that it's Gucci.”

Of course it does. Just like the interlocking Gs, the Lady Dior is selling fast on the back of a buzz; it is the swiftest, neatest way to buy into the Dior dream. Needless to say, Bernard Arnault has been watching the boom-bag market closely, and the signs

are that bags will be pushed, hard, at the other houses in the LVMH stable. Michael Kors will be overrunning the bags at Céline; at the Spanish-leather label Loewe, Narciso Rodríguez's new home since leaving Carruti, bags are also being shuffled into the limelight, with the help of Robert Page, formerly accessories maestro at Calvin Klein. And of course, Louis Vuitton, already a classic bag house, will get an extra spin when Marc Jacobs's first ready-to-wear collection arrives in stores this fall.



Classic with a twist: the Hermès Birkin bag in calf and canvas. At Hermès boutiques, or call (800) 441-4488 for more information. Details, see p. 100.

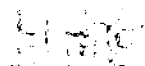
Ah, but here's the rub (and another note to jot down should you be thinking about entering the hot-bag game). Americans won't be able to buy Jacobs's first designs for Vuitton, including his retakes on the bags, unless they book a ticket to Paris or London. “It might,” reports a benevolent Jean-Marc Leubier, worldwide marketing and communications director at Vuitton, “be available in eight to ten of our stores by the end of the year.” Might. This is basic psychology, of course; don't let them at it, and they'll go nuts for it. Exclusivity. Limited distribution. Waiting lists. Drip-fed stock. These are the watchwords of modern luxury retailing. Equally, and perversely when you consider the enormous sums spent on advertising, if a product is overhyped or overexposed, sales can plummet like a scufflé in a draft.

Meanwhile, the market is filling up—analysis any near saturation point. Chloe's Susie McCarthy is working hard on the de-

signs of its new bag line. Bottega Veneta has hired a new creative team in Milan to inject something edgy into its bag design. Ralph Lauren, meanwhile, has snapped up talent from Mark Cross to put his bags on the map, and even Jean Paul Gaultier has launched an accessories line, complete with branded crocodile handbags retailing for \$620.

Interestingly, at the “been there, done that” houses, the market is evolving away from the one-push bag and toward a broader spread. Prada has three new “important bags” for spring, including one with nylon handles and a Velcro fastening. Gucci has several hot new shapes to trumpet: “When a company's in oblivion,” says Ford, “you just do one thing and really push it. Now, as a reflection of the life of the company, we have more choice. For spring, there's the Ruler bag; then there's the crocodile flap bag that's more north-south than east-west, and the red croc bag—I love that one. . . . People say you need to buy only one cashmere sweater and it will last for 20 years. I say, who wants to wear the same sweater for two decades?”

EXHIBIT D



SERIES | MOVIES | SPORTS | DOCUMENTARIES | HBO FILMS | SCHEDULE | ON DEMAND | SHOP HBO



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PREVIOUS

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

NEXT

EPISODE 59 "Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda"

"If it's so hard to get pregnant, how do you account for the number of crying children on planes?" - Samantha

Directed by: David Frankel
Written by: Jenny Bicks

Synopsis

Miranda tells Carrie that she's pregnant from having unprotected sex with Steve and his one ball. Miranda doesn't want the baby and doesn't want to tell Steve. Charlotte, however, can't seem to get pregnant no matter what bedroom techniques she tries. When she finds out that Miranda is pregnant and is going to have an abortion, she's so upset she storms away. Carrie and Samantha admit that they've both had abortions - Carrie after a one-night stand with a waiter in the '80s. Carrie tells Aidan about Miranda and swears him to secrecy. Aidan is appalled that Miranda isn't going to tell Steve. Carrie lies to Aidan about having had an abortion herself.

Samantha has lunch with Lucy Liu, hoping to represent her. They hit it off and

Summary - Select a

Season 1 Episodes

Season 2 Episodes

Season 3 Episodes

Season 4 Episodes

49 The Agony and the 'Ex'-

50 The Real Me

51 Defining Moments

52 What's Sex Got to Do W

53 Ghost Town

54 Baby, Talk is Cheap

55 Time and Punishment

56 My Motherboard, My Sel

57 Sex and the Country

58 Belles of the Balls

59 Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda

60 Just Say Yes

61 The Good Fight

62 All That Glitters...

63 Change of a Dress

64 Ring a Ding Ding

65 A 'Vogue' Idea

66 I Heart NY

Season 5 Episodes

Season 6 Episodes

Inside Sex and the

Sign up for "The Dish", the official Sex and the City

email address

Lucy tells Samantha that she refuses to be lied to. Samantha also has her eye on the coveted Hermes red "Birkin" handbag. Unfortunately, there's an eternally long waiting list, so Samantha uses Lucy Liu's starpower to score a bag. When Lucy shows up at their next lunch carrying the "free" bag, Samantha tells her it's actually for herself. Lucy is furious, fires Samantha and walks off with the bag.

Charlotte sees a fertility doctor and finds out that she has only a 15 percent chance of conceiving naturally. She bumps into Miranda on the street, tells her the news and walks away from the unhappily pregnant Miranda. Carrie accompanies Miranda to have her abortion. While they're waiting Miranda becomes increasingly worried that she's not making the right decision. She wonders if this is her only chance to have a baby. She decides to keep the baby and the girls, including Charlotte, gather around her and support her decision.

Carrie returns to the restaurant where she had met Chad, the waiter who had gotten her pregnant years ago. He's still there and doesn't remember Carrie. She realizes she made the right decision and leaves. Carrie decides to be honest and admits to Aidan that she had an abortion when she was 22. She was worried that he would criticize her, but Aidan is non-judgmental.

Discuss this episode in the Sex and the City [Bulletin Board](#).



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Bag**
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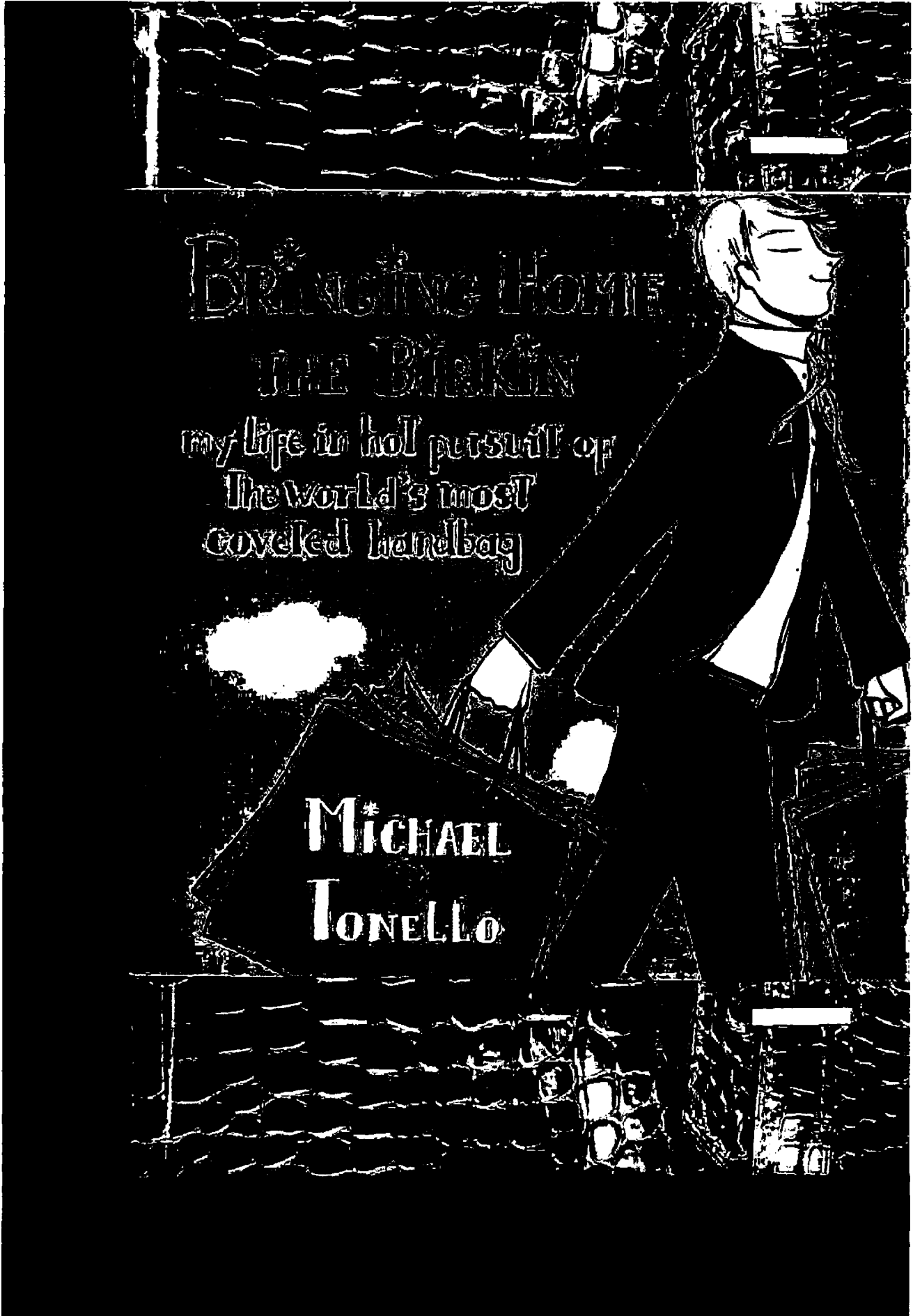
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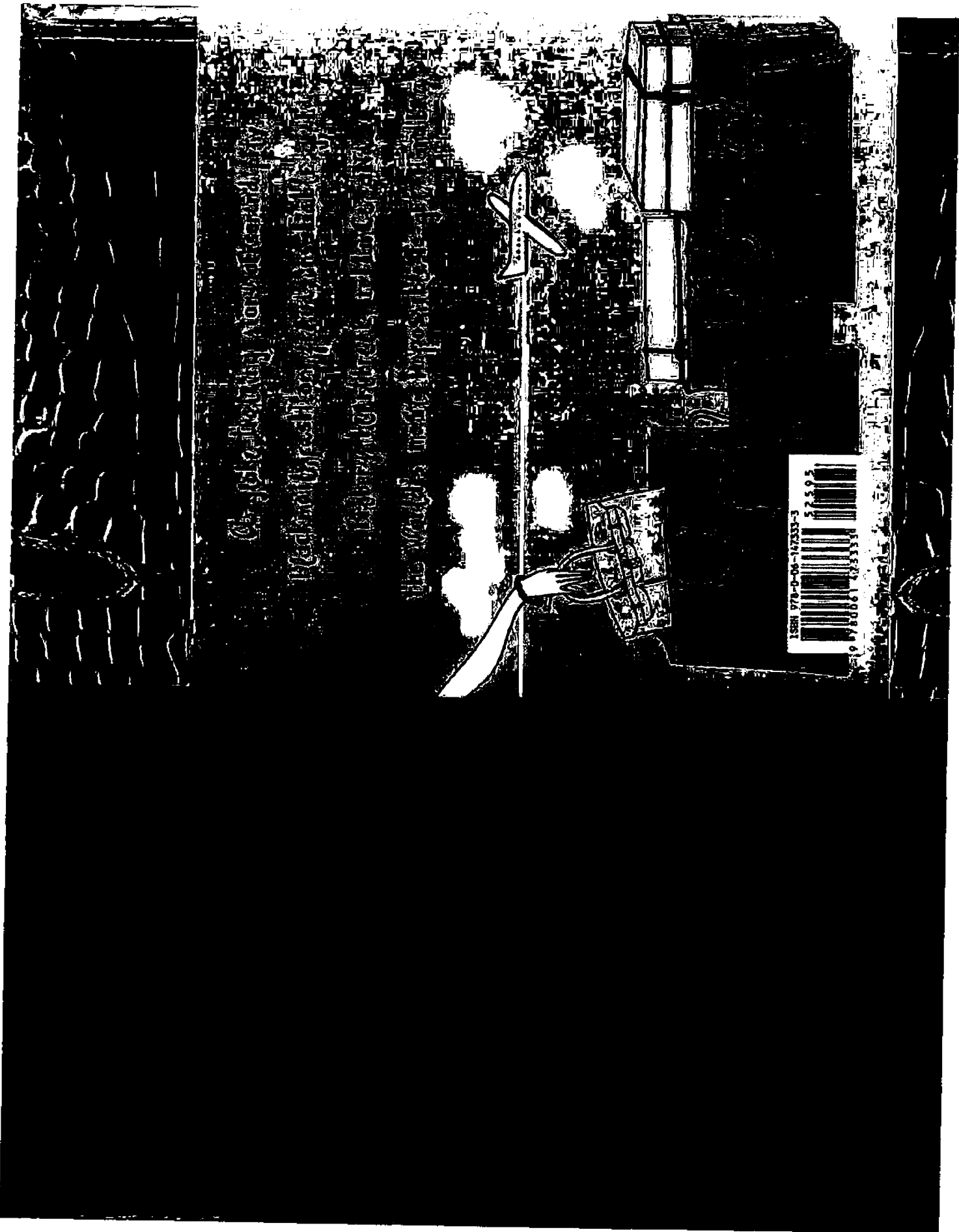
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EXHIBIT E



BRINGING HOME
THE BIKIN
my life in hot pursuit of
the world's most
coveted handbag

MICHAEL
TONELLO



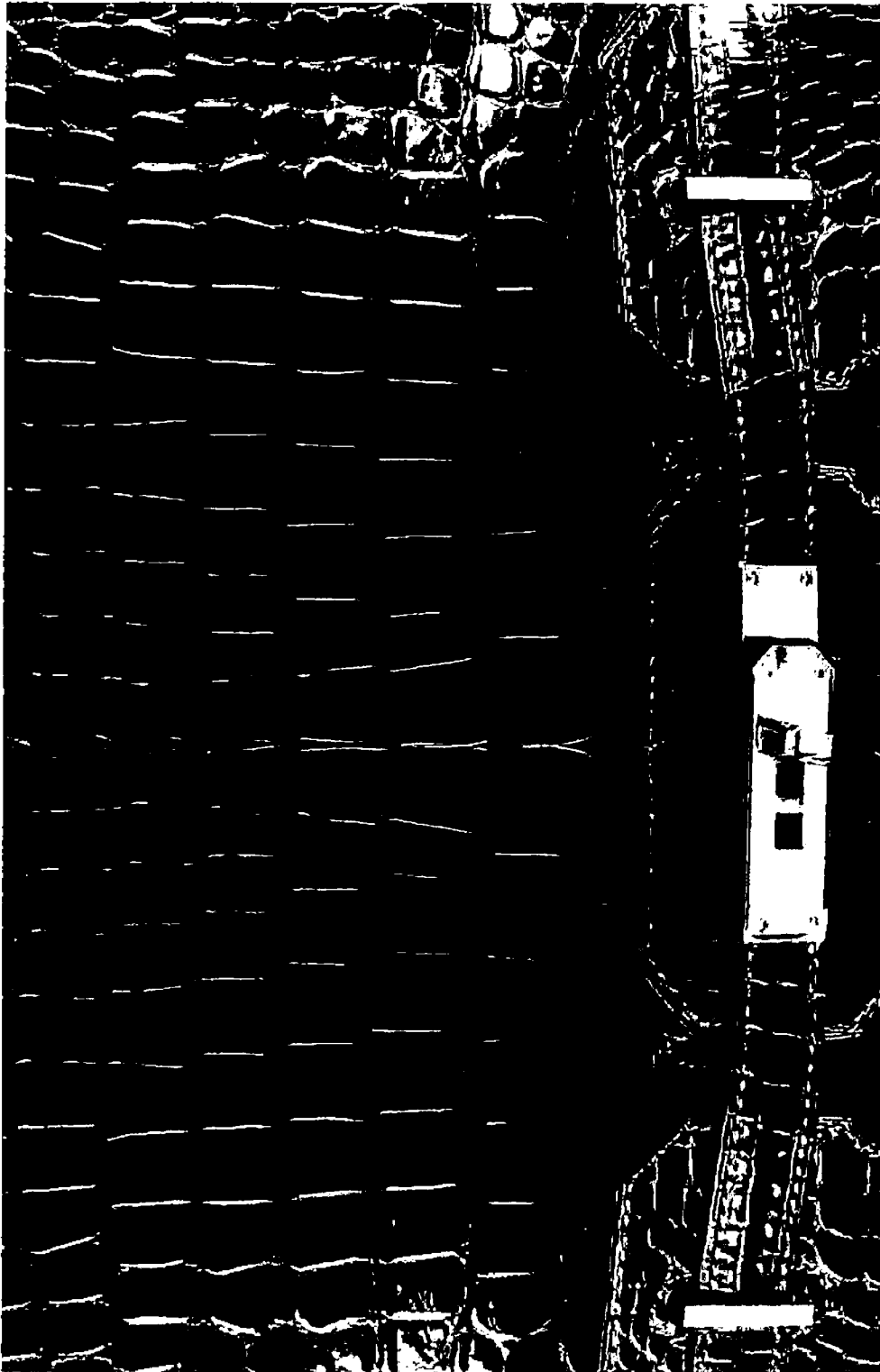


EXHIBIT F

Bag Man

On the trail of the elusive Birkin.

BY CHRISTINE MUHLKE

THE end of the world just inched a little nearer: an eBay seller has written a memoir. About handbags.

Not just any handbag. For those not familiar with the Birkin bag — made by Hermès, the French luxury leather-goods company, for the singer Jane Birkin in the early '80s, after its chief executive saw the chanteuse struggling with her vagabond-verging-on-cat-lady straw purse on a

BRINGING HOME THE BIRKIN
My Life in Hot Pursuit of the World's Most Coveted Handbag.
By Michael Tonello.
Illustrated, 257 pp., William Morrow/
HarperCollins Publishers, \$25.95.

plane — it doesn't matter, because you can't get one anyway. Any other Jane who walks in off the street and asks for a Birkin is politely told there is a two-to-three-year waiting list. Oh, and the entry-level leather model costs about \$7,500, with a crocodile-and-diamond version topping out at \$150,000.

These days, Americans versed in pop culture — “Sex and the City,” Oprah being turned away at the Paris Hermès store — know about Birkins. And for a woman of a certain class anywhere in the world, carrying one is the quickest way to telegraph to other women, “I win.” And so some of them will do or pay just about anything to get one.

At the start of “Bringing Home the Birkin,” the author, Michael Tonello, is a party boy in Provincetown, Mass., who doesn't know a Birkin from Burkina Faso. Weary of traveling the world as a hair and makeup artist for commercials, he decides to move to Barcelona after working on an I.B.M. shoot in the city. A job magically materializes, then vanishes, and Tonello is stuck in Spain with a five-year lease, no work visa and expensive custom closets he had built to fit his designer clothes. He was up a particular creek “without a paddle,” he writes. But his father reminds him of his American entrepreneurial pluck, recalling how, as a teenager, Michael made money for his French class trip by selling sandwiches at their country club out of a golf cart. Lightning soon strikes, as I suppose it sometimes does, in the form of cashmere: rearranging his sweaters for the “800th time,” he realizes it's not actually that cold in Spain. He lists a Ralph Lauren scarf on eBay, bought at an outlet for \$99, which sells for \$430. *Paleta* found.

Suddenly, everything in his apartment has eBay appeal. Even his “friends,” his first-edition Lillian Hellman and Truman Capote books, are put on the virtual block. Tonello breezes through a paragraph of

Christine Muhlke is a deputy editor of *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*.



advice for potential sellers, then barrels toward his fateful sale, a silk Hermès scarf that draws aggressive bidding, as well as e-mail messages from desperate collectors imploring him to help them complete their scarf “wish lists.” “I intimated that this was ‘only the tip of the iceberg,’” he writes in his exhaustingly chatty, girlfriend-&-girlfriend tone. (Tonello has never met a cliché he didn't love, and is addicted to alliteration. Sample: “I didn't mind the calculus of currency conversion or the etymology of exotic entrees.”)

Soon our plucky hero is an eBay “Platinum PowerSeller,” shipping over \$25,000 in Hermès merchandise a month. His life becomes a circuit of computer to post office, plus buying trips around the continent. (“I was drowning in silk by the time I realized I was in uncharted waters.”) Many of his conversations are recounted in e-mail form, as the only other contact is with his new love, Juan, and their cat, Dalí.

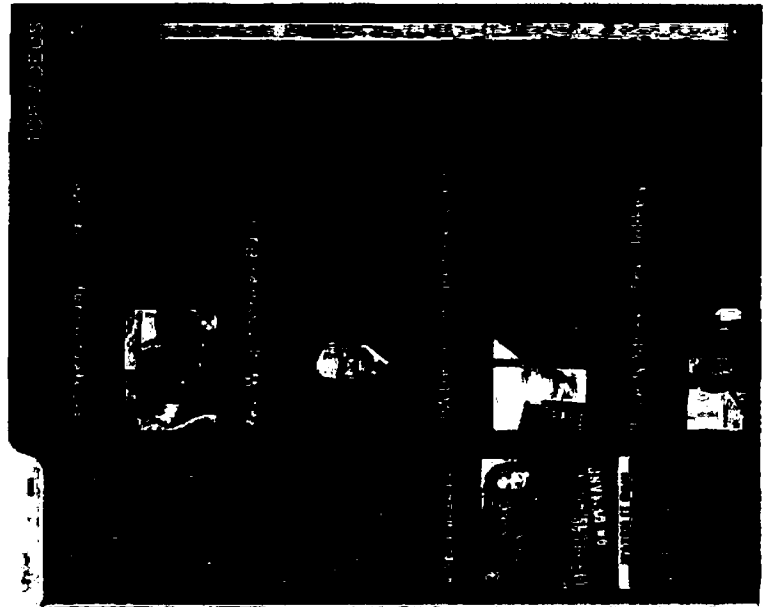
When the buyer of a deck of Hermès playing cards asks him if he has any Birkin bags, Tonello has to contact his scarf mentor, *graceofthegarden@yahoo.com*, to ask what one is, which seems disingenuous, since even when this was taking place, pre-BlackBerry, any eBay search for “Hermès” turned up pages of Birkin auctions. (Trust me, I was looking then; I have a little Hermès “wish list” of my own.) Dazzled by the potential profit margin, he phones every boutique in Spain and asks for one. No dice. He drives to every store in the South of France and inquires: *Tantipis*. On a scarf-buying mission in Madrid, however, he accidentally hits upon the winning formula: he piles up 10 or so scarves, then casually asks, “Oh . . . and one more thing . . . Do you have a Birkin?” The \$18,000 bag nets him a \$5,000 profit

and soon he's spending over \$1.6 million a year on handbags bought through an international network he's established to feed to the market for marked-up Birkins (especially crocodile).

His business affords him a great lifestyle. He recounts tales of expensive meals, bottles of Champagne, chic hotels and shopping sprees. One buyer asks him to drive her Aston Martin from Massachusetts to Florida; *graceofthegarden* lends him her Upper East Side apartment — and he'd never met either woman, such being the bond of luxury. It also gives Tonello that je ne sais Rohini Hood feeling. He writes: “I definitely dug the idea of beating Hermès at its own game. Maybe it was silly, but I found it exciting to think I had knowledge that had eluded even the wealthiest people in the world.” But outwitting the fiercely protective company loses its appeal after the death of his mother (“I didn't know if my malaise was a phase, or what”), and he realizes that his role was to satisfy the narcissism and insecurity of people who “lacked for nothing but who longed for more.”

Is Tonello biting the hand that clicked “Buy It Now”? Just a coy nibble. He presents himself as a blithe ingénue in “Jill Sauder charcoal trousers and a dark lime-green cashmere turtleneck, with a pair of tabac matte crocodile Bottega Veneta brogues” who'd rather gossip over a few bottles of wine than think about his own relationship to designer goods, which led him to where he was in the first place. If he'd tucked into what really makes people define themselves by their obsession to Hermès, “Bringing Home the Birkin” could have brought home some very important truths about our times. But that might have gotten in the way of a potential miracle.

CBS NEWS VIDEO 1:00:00



Cheapest
Starter
\$8.500

Amus-gram accessory for the rich and famous, the Olsen bag has become an ultimate status symbol. Author of "The Olsen Bag" reveals the truth about the covered bag.

0:50



Senius | 11/11

CBS NEWS VIDEO

12/27/2010 11:00 AM EST

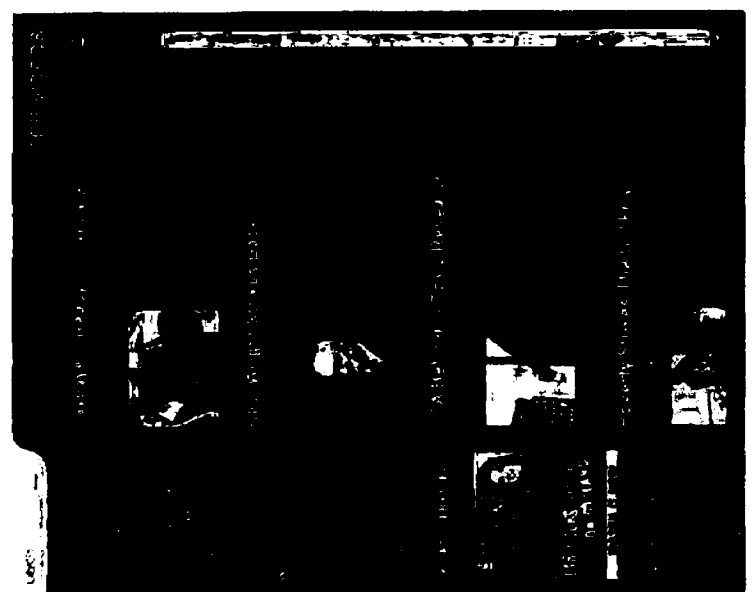


A must-have accessory for the rich and famous, the **OLAY** egg has become an ultimate status symbol. Author of *Strongman The Bible*, **Michael Tomallo** talks about the secret to...

OLAY



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Welcome To The OFFICIAL Myspace Page of MICHAEL TONELLO

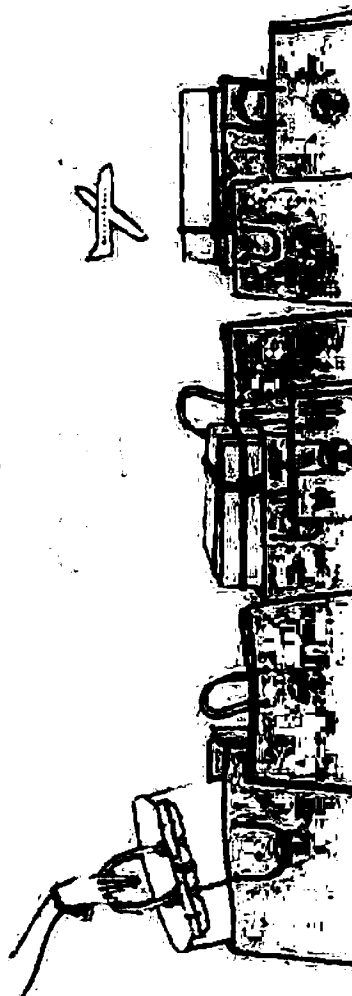
author of the BRAND NEW book

BRINGING HOME THE BIDKIN

Raccourcis de l'utilisateur

Membres

to hit shelves April 22, 2008

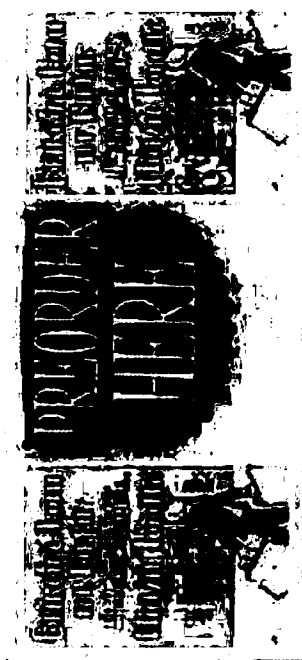


Hume
Voir :

Contacte Michael

Michael : Présentation

Qui je suis :



URL de son profil :
<http://www.myspace.com/michaeltonello>

Michael : Ses centres d'intérêt

Général :
travelling, fine dining,
reading, writing,
champagne drinking, Birkin
buying

Musique :



Films :
A River Runs Through It,
Billy Elliot, Borat, All About

About those free books... Wanna skip the waitlist? No, no, not the Birkin waitlist--although of course I could help with that, too. But right now I am talking about the waitlist for my book. The first 25 people to email/message me with their name and address today will be sent a free advance reader's copy of Bringing Home the Birkin. No catches. Just a complimentary book.

I grew up in Massachusetts, on Cape Cod, and since then have lived in New York City, San Francisco, Boston, and Provincetown. But for the last seven years I have been making my home in Barcelona, Spain, and I love it here.

Work-wise, I co-founded an advertising collaborative called TEAM a number of years ago, but more recently I have worked as a reseller of high end luxury goods, primarily from the French company Hermès. I began "specializing" in their Birkin handbags about five years ago, and some of my adventures were crazy enough that I

My Mother, Pulp Fiction, Little Miss Sunshine, What's Up Doc, Moulin Rouge, Good Will Hunting, Mystic River, Brokeback Mountain

I don't watch very much tv, although I have developed a fondness for Spanish game shows.

too many to name...some favorite writers are Lillian Hellman, Truman Capote, David Sedaris, Augusten Burroughs, Gore Vidal, a bunch more I can't think of right now

Kind people

Michael : Détails

Statut : En couple

Sur MySpace pour : Réseau, Amis

Orientation : Gay

Osterville, Massachusetts

decided to do something I had always wanted to do-- write a book. I had no idea what I was getting myself into! As we head into the last few months before publication, things are heating up, and the book pretty much takes up most of my life. Oh, and I also contribute a blog (here and there) at the Huffington Post..

SO, 'bout that book. Well, this is what my publisher, William Morrow (a division of HarperCollins) has to say about Bringing Home the Birkin.

An insider's hilarious, whirlwind account of globetrotting and gaming the Hermès system to buy and resell millions of dollars worth of the world's most impossible-to-get handbag, the Birkin. The Hermès Birkin handbag is so exclusive that even the rich, famous, and desperate must put their names on a two-year waiting list to get their hands on one. Enter Michael Tonello, an American expatriate living in Barcelona. Strapped for cash, he stumbles on the almost magical secret to buying Birkins off the waiting list, and virtually overnight becomes one of eBay's most successful entrepreneurs—a Robin Hood to the rich, delivering genuine bags on demand to eager customers. In Bringing Home the Birkin, Tonello recalls the events that led to his five-year accidental career and shares the forays that took him inside Hermès stores on six continents, into the lives of celebrities and poseurs . . . and sometimes into danger.

So there we have it. And if you want a peek, check out the two snippets I posted as blogs. Anything else you want to know, please drop me a line!

Qui j'aimerais rencontrer :

StyleMaven Blog - Shopping Inspiration

April 24, 2008

"Bringing Home the Birkin" - Win a Birkin handbag!



Have you ever dreamed of claiming your very own Birkin? Besides the hefty price tag, the wait list may last at least two years. Enter to win a Birkin of your very own - it's a promotion from Harper Collins Publishers to promote a new book, "Bringing Home the Birkin" by Michael Tonello.

[Bringing Home the Birkin: My Life in Hot Pursuit of the World's Most Coveted Handbag](#) tells of Michael's adventures as a Birkin hunter of sorts and a seller of Genuine Birkins on eBay. The pursuit of the coveted bag and discovering the insider secret to the Hermès waiting list. We can't wait to read this title and learn more of the intrigue, humor and the secrets of the snagging a Birkin - without the waitlist!

[Bringing Home the Birkin Contest Site](#)

Posted at 11:52 AM in [Bags](#) | [Permalink](#)

[Technorati](#) Tags: [Birkin](#), [Contest](#), [Handbag](#), [Hermes](#)

Comments

Love this! Did you see his interview on the Early Show?

http://www.cbsnews.com/sections/i_video/main500251.shtml?id=4044433n

Posted by: [Tavia](#) | [April 25, 2008 at 08:25 AM](#)

No, I missed the interview. Too bad... I would LOVED have caught it though. Does he have an amazing job or what? A Birkin hunter extraordinaire! I'll check out the video.

Posted by: [Stephanie](#) | [April 25, 2008 at 02:08 PM](#)

Friday, April 25, 2008

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Magic Johnson on Succeeding in Business



2 of 10

When Buildings Try Too Hard



BOOKS APRIL 25, 2008

The Great Search for a Luxury Good

By LAUREN LIPTON

Article

Comments

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A Birkin handbag – the ultimate “it” bag since Hermès introduced it in 1984 – starts at around \$7,000 and, depending on what kind of hide it’s made of, can cost as much as \$100,000. Say that you want one. Say that you can afford one. You’ll still have to cool your well-heeled heels to get one by joining Hermès’s years-long waiting list. Unless you’re Michael Tonello and know how to talk snooty Hermès salespeople into selling to you, right this minute, that extra Birkin they just happen to have stashed in the back room.



In his sunny memoir, “Bringing Home the Birkin,” Mr. Tonello, an American beautician who moved to Barcelona a few years ago, stumbles onto a lucrative career as a Hermès reseller – or, as he puts it, a “leather liaison.” His business is simple. Buy new Birkins at retail – the five-figure crocodile styles are the most wanted – and then flip them on eBay, where the (boxy, cumbersome)

bags get snapped up almost immediately despite Mr. Tonello’s substantial markup. At one point he refers to selling a \$22,000 bag for a \$5,000 profit.

Of course, the scale of his income depends on the number of bags he can sweet-talk out of Hermès, a French luxury-goods maker that sells its merchandise at its own stores and controls its Birkin supply with DeBeers-like obsession. Mr. Tonello soon gets wise. “I have to laugh when I read articles that claim Hermès produces ‘about 100 Birkins per year,’” he writes. If that were true, he adds, then in 2005 “I bought the entire annual production and then some!” How is this regular person able to get his hands on so many Birkins, when the rich and famous often can’t buy one? It all comes down to Mr. Tonello’s “Formula,” a buying strategy that depends on social subtlety and a generous budget.

Even Mr. Tonello can’t believe his good fortune when the Formula dawns on him. He travels through Europe mostly, but also Asia and South America, stopping at Hermès boutiques dressed to the nines, pouring on the charm, and making sure to avoid asking for a Birkin outright, at least at first. Instead, he spends a couple of grand on other Hermès items (which he also resells on eBay) and then asks, as if by the way, whether the store has a Birkin that he might buy – often



Video



"for my mother."

Book Excerpt



Read an excerpt from "Bringing Home the Birkin"

Whereas the direct approach might well have elicited the usual waiting-list reply — adding to the Birkin aura but thwarting an actual sale — Mr. Tonello's roundabout method somehow inspires clerks to discover a Birkin or two in their inventory, bags they might have otherwise held back. He refines his Formula by breaking down Hermès salespeople into types ("the Grandmother," "the Nazi" and so on) and tailoring his pitch accordingly.

In no time he is maxing out his credit cards, buying Birkins from place to place and shop to shop — one year, he buys \$1.6 million in bags and other Hermès goodies — and reselling them to a seemingly insatiable Internet clientele. The only venue where the Formula fails to work is New York, where the price of admission is too high: To be taken seriously, it seems, requires spending far more than a couple of thousand dollars.

"Bringing Home the Birkin" threatens to lose pace when Mr. Tonello recounts his Formula triumphs again and again. A Hermès store in Santiago, for instance, has only two Birkin bags: The saleswoman tells him that "Paris does not really like it if we sell two bags to one individual" — and then invites Mr. Tonello to buy one today with his credit card and the other tomorrow with cash. But the book offers subplots, too, including Mr. Tonello's finding true love. And there are memorable business moments. He solves his supply-chain problem by using free-lance buyers who apply the Formula, pass the bags along to Mr. Tonello and receive, in return, a share of the profit. When he buys more bags on his travels than he can carry onto the plane back to Barcelona, he starts shipping them to his beloved parents in Florida, who become a de facto fulfillment center, eventually sending the bags on to eBay buyers.



In one amusing scene at the Athens Hermès boutique, Mr. Tonello beats a group of competing resellers at their own game, buying their reserved Birkins out from underneath them. He calls the shop and claims that earlier in the day he had put the cream crocodile Birkin on hold for his wife but that, alas, she already has a bag in that color. "Would you please tell the lady who put it on hold for me that I don't need it?" A half-hour later he goes into the store and buys the bag himself. He even has his mother phone from Florida to remove "her" hold from a second bag, then he buys it as well.

But the memoir reads as much like a breezy travelogue as a business story, with descriptions of gourmet menus ("toast with woodcock and sardines") and sumptuous lodgings ("a natural hot-spring Jacuzzi tucked in a bamboo hut"). The prose is vivid, the tone lighthearted. Mr. Tonello comes off as the fantasy gay best friend immortalized in contemporary women's fiction: sassy, plucky, optimistic — oh, and he can get you a Birkin.

More than once, "Bringing Home the Birkin" raises a question at its own expense: Is this any way to make a living? Mr. Tonello remarks many times that he thinks spending major money on a

Talking to the Authors of 'Barbarians Gate'
4/20

More in E
The Road to
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handbag is ridiculous. But he is only too glad to exploit such folly for his own purposes. At least for a while. At the end of the book, after a family tragedy, he realizes that he is weary of the game and decides to make his money some other way. Of course, he comes to this decision while soaking up the sun on a glamorous vacation in Greece.

Ms. Lipton covered online shopping and luxury goods at the Journal. Her second novel, "Mating Rituals of the North American WASP," will be published next year.

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