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Fashion Statement: Tackling fashion's weighty issues

Kate Carter on the lighter side of handbags, how to dress warmly, and Cheryl Cole's latest outfit

Kate Carter

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FASHION DILEMMA



Clockwise from top

left: Bobelle, Jaeger, A-Wear, Storksak and Anya Hindmarch.

How much does your bag weigh?

Here at Fashion Statement Towers we never wish to be accused of a lack of commitment to the noble cause of sartorial perfection. We scratch our heads as we ponder those age-old philosophical dilemmas: is the pointy-shouldered look really practical on public transport at rush hour? Was Superman the first to rock the underwear as outerwear trend? We even risk mockery as we dare to ask the forbidden questions - why IS the Emperor in his birthday suit? Yet sometimes, as we toss and turn at night under our hand-sewn silk sheets with matching eye mask, a tiny nagging voice whispers, "Are skirt lengths REALLY that important?"

Then we arrive in the office, sit down at our mahogany, monogrammed desk, and know that the answer is a resounding YES, and all is right with the world. For an email arrives in our oh-so-chic inbox bringing us felicitous tidings from the noted research institute/high street store Debenhams, proclaiming that the weight of the average women's handbag, including contents, has fallen from 7.69lb in 2007 to 3.31lb today. Yes, that's just HALF the weight. And lo, the healing power of fashion reached out across the land and the backs of the nation's women became less sore.

Debenhams put it down to advances in technology (what were we carrying in 2007, Dom Joly's phone?) but we prefer to believe it's simply proof that the more you immerse yourself in fashion, the lighter the weight of the world on your shoulder becomes. Gives us another few years and we'll be floating to work on a wafting cloud of Chanel No 5. So in celebration of these joyous tidings, we've been window shopping on your behalf - for the loveliest, shiniest, brightest bags.

FS has a big old fashion crush at the moment on Jaeger's new Evie bag, which comes in glorious cobalt blue, red, green, yellow - and plain old black if you must - and will set you back £150. We want one in every colour, please. If, however, one colour per bag just won't cut it for you, there is a wonderfully sparkly number by Anya Hindmarch at Mywardrobe.com - they note its tardis-like qualities, so we feel sure you can cram the full

3.31lb of possessions in there. Another more budget-friendly pop of colour can be found at A-Wear, who have for your shopping pleasure this [cute pink quilted bag](#) for a mere £8.

But if you do prefer something a little larger (you passé old thing) then we have some treats for you. How about an eel-skin bag? The leather is a byproduct of the culinary industry in Asia, and is wonderfully supple. [BoBelle's Hemera bag](#) is the one to go for, in this lovely deep purple. We love the so-clashing-it's-right red lining. Finally, Fashion Statement has a baby fashionista these days (dressed entirely in haute couture babygrows, of course) and so finds that the contents of its bags rarely weigh less than 20lb. So we were therefore delighted find this lovely [Storksak leather Elizabeth bag](#). Yes, it's a changing bag, but we have had more compliments on this armwear than any other bag we've toted in a long time.

BANG ON TREND



London Undercover

Fish & Chips umbrella. Photograph: PR

Practicality may be a four-letter word in fashion circles (well, numerically illiterate fashion circles, anyway) but it's our theme of the day. This week's trend is, therefore, the staggeringly novel one of warmth. It's cold out there, folks, and we think years of oversized handbags have caused enough suffering in your lives.

So, the first things you reach for on a cold day should always be layers. And there are no better layers for keeping you snug and cosy than Howie's merinos. A [plain black long-sleeved merino base layer](#) will fit under many a fashionable frock. FS for one credits them with saving it from frostbite during the Great Snowstorm of early 2010.

Over our merino what we would really like to be wearing is this gorgeous [cobalt blue Goat coatigan](#). At £220 it's not cheap, but we think it is worth saving up for. Likewise this [lovely embellished jumper dress](#) from one of our favourite labels, Day Birger et Mikkelsen, at £240.

Finally, if you want not only to stay warm but also dry, we've discovered these fabulous [London Undercover umbrellas](#) (see pictures above). Newsprint on the outside, fish'n'chips inside: genius.

FASHIONISTA OF THE WEEK

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Steiff bears dressed by

Twiggy and Vivienne Westwood for Living Pictures.

See, we told you we take fashion seriously. The pawtraits above are of two lucky young fashionistas dressed by Twiggy (left) and Vivienne Westwood (right). Stella McCartney is also designing an outfit (presumably without the use of fur, which might be tricky for the model) - and all will be up for auction on 25 February at the V&A for the charity [Living Pictures](#). Bid for a unique piece of haute couture.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The nearest I have come to it [homelessness] is going home and finding I don't have my door key," she said. "I mean, what a disaster that is, dying to get in your house and you can't. And what if it wasn't there any more?"

Vivienne Westwood (yes, the same Vivienne Westwood who is designing bear clothes for charity) on her homeless-inspired menswear collection last week.

FASHION GRAVEYARD



Cheryl Cole

performing in Germany. Photograph: Andreas Rentz/Getty

Cheryl, Cheryl, Cheryl. There's no need for a full sentence to describe this - single words will do: catsuit, diamante, cutout, fishnet, thigh-high ... No, no, no. Even the Black Eyed Peas' will.i.am looks somewhat stunned by this number. So stunned he forgot to do up his shoelaces.

OUT AND ABOUT

This weekend the Southbank Centre's SHIFT festival includes three projects from the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, including a showcase of graduate work from the London College of Fashion and an interactive sewing workshop. [See the website](#) for more details.

Inspired by Chanel's temporary tattoos? Then head over to Anya Hindmarch's pop-up tattoo parlour in Notting Hill. Whether you go for a romantic Valentine's Day gesture or

your mum's name, it'll all come off in the wash.

Anya's Ink Pop-up Shop, February 11-13, 63 Ledbury Road, Notting Hill, London W11 2AJ. Call 020 7792 4427 for more information.

SHOPPING NEWS

If our selection of bags has got you pining for some new shoulder candy, we suggest a trip to [Radley](#). They've teamed up with the British Heart Foundation to launch a handbag amnesty on 1 February. You bring in your old unwanted bag (from any brand or label), and they will pass it on to the charity for sale in their shops and give you a generous £30 off a new bag. We saw their new collection recently and were really impressed - particularly the Blandford cross-body bags.

If the high street depresses you and you want something unique, [Beyond the Valley's](#) great website (and shop in Newburgh street, London) showcases a range of up-and-coming designers, with products from jewellery to wallpaper.

OFFCUTS

Haute couture may be undeniably beautiful, but is it art, [ponders Jess Cartner-Morley](#)

Imogen Fox replays the hits, misses and double faults of [tennis fashion](#) over the years.

[Ten key trends](#) from the menswear shows in Paris and Milan.

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