



Carlos Falchi and his collection. (Staff photos by Barbara McClellan)

# Falchi designs snake into fashion world

By CHRISTINE WALDEN

It is quite by accident that Carlos Falchi creates beauty from something which makes many women scream.

But his use of creepy crawling snake skins or the hide of an unattractive anteater results in some of the most magnificent handbags around.

Each bag, be it clutch, pouch or bicycle purse, improves on what nature has already provided and, by way of color, design and balance, could be considered art.

For Falchi, they are his pleasure and a way to make a living.

IT BEGAN for him three years ago working for a movie company and "earning nothing" as an underpaid film splicer, the young Brazilian was disgusted when his wife paid \$12 for a belt.

"I told her to return it and I went out, bought some leather and hand painted a belt for her. My boss saw it, showed it to his wife—who owns a boutique—and in a weekend, she sold out of the three belts I had made.

That started it, and Falchi went from splicing film to splicing skins.

However, it wasn't until he got into snake skins (which was another accident) that buyers, customers, designers and news media people began to take note of what Carlos Falchi was doing.

"I was getting some leather one day, and I saw some snake skins. I thought they were really gorgeous, so I got some and started playing with them.

PLAY TURNED INTO mania, and now all his bags combine silk, suede, a few, specially tanned skin, and textured skins of the iguana, Caiman lizard, alligator and others.

"I am always looking for unusual skins," he said. "Also none of our skins are on the endangered species list and all of them are farmed."

In designing, Falchi lets the skins lead the way. "I let them be themselves," he said.

After deciding on the shape of the bag, he then creates the pattern to go on it.

"I usually come up with my designs after hours, late at night. And the backs of the purses are always more interesting than the fronts. I think that's because I start in the front and then I really get going."

Where there are good patterns, there are also groups of free form arrangements.

"My canvas bags are really spur of the moment," he said.

Instead of repetitive patterns, the canvas bags hold perhaps an entire skin in its original shape, or several skins arranged in a totally free form design.

WHETHER PATTERNED or abstract, each bag is individual. Because skins are like fingerprints, no two are alike just using them over another material makes each purse unique.

Of course there are other makes of snakeskin purses. But Falchi adds color, and it is through his color that the bags stand out from all others.

"Color, to me, is so important. I have all



Though Falchi repeats designs to create matching pieces, each bag is an original.

my own colors, and I can feel it start to hurt in my stomach if the colors aren't right."

THERE IS LITTLE evidence of pain in the final collection shown recently at Claire Peatone's. Subtle colors have been paired with stronger ones. Deep plum can be paired with grey and black. Shades of blue color another. Purses vary in strength and work together to create patterns. A tan skin flecked with grey is paired with an entirely grey skin or an off-white canvas.

Beyond beauty are the practical aspects. The purses are made to last and carefully finished.

All my bags are lined with leather. It is so stupid, someone will make a beautiful bag and then line it with plastic. These

will last, and they are practical.

They could also be an arm's length which to build an ensemble, although Falchi doesn't exactly see it that way.

Women today are not into the skin days, their shoes and her purses don't have to match what she is wearing. Whatever she wears, she can just grab this bag and carry it.

Many women seem to agree, and Falchi nearly has success in the bag.

Already, he works with designers such as Sonia Rykiel, Jean Marc and (last in) Leading fashion magazines have focused on his designs. And though he isn't producing any belts for under \$12, he is penetrating the fashion world with an accessory that is becoming a classic fashion fact.

## fashion calendar

### CLUB SHOWS

June 1—The Troy Mints skunks of the Troy Newcomers Club will have a fashion show at noon at the Somerset Inn, Troy. The show will feature 25 authentic dresses from 1870 to 1970 including several old-fashioned wedding dresses. Call Jean Quinn at 688-2949 for ticket information.

June 4—"Fashions With Irene" will be shown at noon at the Farmington Community Center. The show will include fashions made by the models with commentary by Irene McKinnon. Call the center at 671-8881 for ticket information.

### LUNCHEON SHOWS

Tuesdays—Informal modeling by Alvin's

at Cooper's Arms Restaurant, Rochester

Tuesdays—Informal modeling by Boulevard Fashion Salon at the Altrium, Telegraph north of Twelve Mile

Wednesdays—Informal modeling by Alvin's at the Troy Hilton Haymarket, Troy

Fridays—Informal modeling by Alvin's at Bedford, Bloomfield Hills

The fashion calendar is published every Monday in the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. For consideration of listings, write Fashion Calendar, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012.

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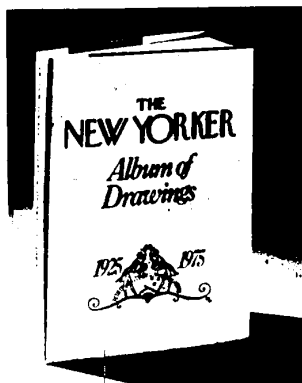
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Tuesday June 1 thru Saturday June 5

Photographer will be at the following stores June 1 to June 5: Oakland Mall, Lincoln Park, Farmington Mall, Northland Mall, Lakeside Shopping Center, Fairlane Shopping Center, Ann Arbor. Photographer will be at the following stores June 2 to June 5: Highland Park, Grand River, Southfield, Crossroads.

PHOTOGRAPHER'S HOURS

Weekdays 10 am until 1 hour prior to closing. Saturday 10 am to 5 pm LUNCH HOUR 2-3 pm.