

Handbags are all the rage for spring and summer

REAL DEAL



CARI WALDMAN

Well girls, if there's one place to put your money this season, it's in the bag.

Specifically, a new handbag. Purse are all the rage this season. And, rather than there being a must-have element or design trend, there's something for everybody.

While Kate Spade has made preppy colors, like baby blue and pastel pink, chic again in her purses, Donna Karan has reinvented the lady-like clutch in faux crocodile and snake skin.

Although a variety of elements are making this season's purses interesting and exciting, texture is probably the most important.

Beading, one texture alternative, adds romance to daytime dressing.

Animal print on backpacks, on the other hand, brings new spirit to college campuses. One designer that went strong with animal print was Nine West. Their square totes in leopard, pony and cow prints have a fresh look for day or evening dressing.

Other texture trends to look out for include floral embellishments, sequins, embroidery and straw.

While straw bags have been around for ages, designers are making them interesting for today's woman. One example can be seen at Tender, a women's clothing boutique in downtown Birmingham. The store's straw bags by Lulu Guinness scream unique.

"This season is about adding interest via accessories," says Tender's owner Cheryl Daskas of the trend. "When wearing a pair of black cropped pants and a colorful cashmere sweater, pull it together with a patterned purse. This season is not about black," says Daskas.

And, color is a huge consideration this season.

Just in time for spring, designers are unleashing a variety of bags in a rainbow of colors, as well as patterns and shapes, which are spectacular enough to make anyone's arm ache for a new satchel.

When it comes to making a statement with a bag, how better to do it with color? Bright red, citrus orange and sunshine yellow are hot picks, if you are looking to introduce color into your wardrobe.

Choose one that is strong enough to make an entrance, but not so bold as to overwhelm your outfit. Such vibrancy goes well with slinky bags that easily drip over the shoulders.

Size and function also have arose as important handbag elements. After a season of small styling, totes have appeared again, taking on the size of any load, even a trip to the beach.

Emphasizing fashion and function, Lord and Taylor's own label has a few semi-structured, mid-size handbags designed to take you just about anywhere.

Especially notable are the retailer's Bohemian-striped canvas bag and pastel cotton tote with just the perfect amount of beading.

Need a look that's practical, hip and 21st century all at the same time?

For the die-hard user of technology, there are a slew of bags with cell phone compartments.

And, if embellishment isn't your style, and the new twist on purses doesn't feel right, there's still lots of micro-fiber bags out there.

Across the board, the variations are endless. So for a quick update to your wardrobe, consider one of the new handbags of the season. The bottom line: from soccer mom to young professional, every woman can find a place for a new purse in her wardrobe.

Please send your style and shopping questions to Cari at OREalDeal@aol.com



Elements: Christian Dior's Malice handbag in golden yellow crocodile brings together texture and color.



STAFF PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CARLISLE

Anticipating spring: Saks Fifth Avenue's runway show of the St. John spring collection, the first fashion show of the season, drew an excited crowd. Holding their front row seats are, left to right, Janna Schlitter of Bloomfield Hills, Dotti Howe of Birmingham, Kelly Gustafson of Birmingham, and Margaret Gressle of Troy. Many of the show's attendees donned pink and other spring colors, showing they're more than ready for the new season. A benefit for The Community House in Birmingham, the St. John show presented classic looks in vibrant colors.

Itching for spring

First local fashion show of the season packs in pastels and tropical hues

BY NICOLE STAFFORD

SPECIAL EDITOR
nstafford@oc.homedm.com

Ladies, dressed in suits - several are pink - stand in clusters in the designer department of Saks Fifth Avenue in Troy, talking.

At the same time, they balance glasses of white wine and small plates of poached salmon and dainty roll-up sandwiches in their hands. One woman dons a strawberry-colored hat. Another wears a bright teal print skirt. Many wear basic black with Pushman wraps and tops in hot pink and other spring colors.

The scene, if you haven't yet guessed, is a reception for the first fashion show of the season, a runway presentation of St. John's spring collection hosted by Saks.

Never mind the groundhog's shadow. Spring fashion has arrived.

Once more, fashion-forward shoppers will have ample opportunity in coming weeks to scrutinize the season's cuts and colors and particulars on local runways.

The St. John show, held Thursday to benefit The Community House in Birmingham, precedes several planned spring fashion shows, including a presentation of Michael Kors Celine line hosted by Jacobson's.

Even if you're not ready to start donning traditional spring colors like pastels like lilac, ice pink, or pale to be bombarded by sherbet colors and bright citrus tones on area runways.

"Color. Color. That's it," said Amanda Turner, Somerset Collection fashion director, following the presentation, which was dominated by spring pastels like lilac, ice pink and mint green and tropical colors, such as bright turquoise and lime.

The audience seemed to embrace the flood of spring and summer shades, and even those dressed in darker colors said they planned to wear bright colors this season. "Everything's been gray, blue and black for

so long," said Dotti Howe, of Birmingham. "We need cheering up."

Color aside, St. John's spring line, like other designer collections, showcased feminine details. Among them tiny bows at the cuff and on colorful shoes, three-quarter-length sleeves reminiscent of Jackie Onassis, scalloped edges and loads of sequins, beads and pearls on both day and evening wear.

"Very feminine without being frou-frou, without being girlish," Turner said of the collection. "And lady-like, even when casual."

The word casual did seem to enter St. John's vocabulary in a way it hasn't before. St. John is best known for making quality knit suiting, but denim jackets and jeans in pink and black and blueberry and ivory with backpacks, mesh pockets and silver clasps made an appearance midway through the show.

Turner said St. John is probably making casual sportswear because we're headed towards refining our casual Friday attire. "It's that dress-up casual look," said Turner. That's the next word we're going to get sick of."

Likewise, St. John's evening wear did include a few sportswear pieces, sexy halter tops and halter-top dresses that revealed the back. Several other evening garments showed skin through sheer black fabric at the bodice, shoulders and side hem lines.

"Everyone loves the way St. John clothes fit, but for years people have thought of the clothes as mature," said Cheryl Hall-Lindsay, special events director for Saks Fifth Avenue and the show's host. "I think that's going to change after tonight. ... (The collection) is lady-like and sophisticated, but fun with a twist. It's young. It's sexy."

Upcoming fashion shows

Jacobson's debuts Celine by Michael Kors

When: noon (luncheon), 12:45 p.m. (show), Tuesday, March 14
Where: Townsend Hotel in downtown Birmingham
Seating: Limited, call (248) 644-6900, ext. 585

Saks Fifth Avenue shows Anne Klein 2000 for benefit

When: 11 a.m. (brunch), 11:30 a.m. (show), Thursday, March 16
Where: Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy, Anne Klein Boutique, second floor
Tickets: \$25-\$35 to benefit Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County, call (248) 332-7173

St. Patrick's Day spring fashion show for benefit

When: Strolling buffet and auction begin at 7 p.m., fashion show follows, Friday, March 17
Where: Somerset Collection in Troy, South, main entrance
Tickets: \$85 to benefit On My Own of Michigan, call (248) 649-3739

Somerset Collection shows spring collections

When: 1 p.m. Saturday, March 18
Where: Somerset Collection in Troy, South, South Rotunda
Seating: Limited, but open to the public



Citrus hues: A classic St. John suit looks fresh and vibrant in a tropical time shade.

Retail, style and special store events are listed in this calendar. Please send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009, Fax: (248) 644-1314. Information must be received by 5 p.m. Monday for publication the following Sunday.
SUNDAY, MARCH 5

ARMANI MEN'S COLLECTION
Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy, hosts a trunk show of Giorgio Armani Le Collection for men (special order), noon-8 p.m., The Men's Store, first floor.

BREATHERS WORKSHOP
Transformations - A Holistic Spa, 33060 Northwest Highway in West Bloomfield, holds free, introductory lectures about Butyko breathing and their workshops, 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. For more information, call (248) 626-3700.

WARDROBE EVENTS
Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy, hosts several wardrobe planning events with designer representatives through March 11. For times, personal appointments and locations for Lafayette 148

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

on March 7, call (248) 614-3347; Escada on March 8, call (248) 614-3368; TSE Surface on March 9, call (248) 643-9000, ext. 247; Tahari, on March 9 and 10, call (248) 643-9000, ext. 401; Jennifer Roberts, on March 10 and 11, call (248) 614-3323; and Michael Kors on March 11, call (248) 614-3347.
THURSDAY, MARCH 9

JONES NEW YORK SHOW
Hudson's, the Somerset Collection in Troy, presents a runway show of spring fashion by Jones New York, 7 p.m., Second Floor.

JEWELRY TRUNK SHOW
Rox & Sherm, 6536 Telegraph Road in Bloomfield Township, presents a trunk show of M & J Seville jewelry through March 11, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. on Thursday and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. For details, call (248) 855-8955.
THURSDAY, MARCH 9-10

JEWELRY DESIGNER VISITS

Jewelry designer Laura Gibson brings her collection to Jacobson's store: March 9 at Rochester Hills store and March 10 at downtown Birmingham store, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Fine Jewelry.

ESCADA STOCK SHOW
View Escada's spring and summer collection at Neiman Marcus, the Somerset Collection in Troy, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Designer Sportswear, third floor.
SATURDAY, MARCH 11

MOTHER-OF-THE-BRIDE SHOW
Jacobson's at Laurel Park Place in Livonia holds two fashion shows highlighting the latest looks for the mother-of-the-bride, 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Fashion also may be seen in a trunk show, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

TAHARI TRUNK SHOW
View Tahari's spring collection of suiting at Neiman Marcus, the Somerset Collection in Troy, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Galleria, third floor.
SUNDAY, MARCH 12

PUNCH AND JUDY SHOW
Livonia Mall, 7 Mile and Middlebelt roads, hosts a puppet performance of Punch and Judy for children and families, 1 p.m., Value City court.