

Vintage Fashion Accessories: Kerry Taylor's 'Passion for Fashion', June 2012 and Christie's 'Elegance handbags' May 2012

By Zita Thornton

Accessories add a vintage flavour to any outfit and handbags are a popular choice of achieving 'The Look'.

Kerry Taylor's latest sale 'Passion For Fashion' on June 26th offered around twenty-five quality handbags, as well as luggage, hats and antique shoes.

Top of the range designers such as Chanel, Gucci and Hermès were represented in the sale. The first lot (**Fig 1**) offered a 1960s 2.55 handbag by Chanel, featuring the company's iconic quilting, in jersey like the original, a gilt CC clasp and gilt chain handle. These are all instantly recognisable Chanel features. The style is named after the release of the original 2.55 bag in February 1955. This vintage example raised £500 which should be compared with the current price of a new 2.55 handbag of £2,600! A later, 1980s quilted satin evening bag, from the same designer, which also featured the gilt CC clasp and a gilt chain handle, threaded with leather, this time, as well as the traditional deep red leather lining sold for £400. A quilted leather handbag from the same period raised £1,000. One of the most colourful bags in the sale was a Pucci printed velvet and leather beach bag from the early 1970s. (£150. Lot 24 **Fig 2**). Gucci was represented by three 1960s crocodile or lizard skin handbags and a useful vanity case from the next decade. However, these did not appeal to the bidding public and they all remained unsold.

The best selling handbags at auction are normally from Hermès. Top notch craftsmanship (the bags are hand-made) and materials make them high quality accessories.

The sale included various styles including 'Kelly bags'. This style has been in use since the 1930s and was given this name after Grace Kelly started using one in the 1950s. (Lot 22 **Fig 3**) From the 1960s, the examples here raised around £1,000 or £2,600 for a newer example. Other vintage Hermès bags from the 1960s sold for around £1,500 and a rare, early 'Isabeau' handbag from the 1930s, £950. (Lot 15 **Fig 4**)

Surprisingly, a red crocodile skin Birkin bag (Lot 11 **Fig 5**), remained unsold. This is surprising after the successful sale of a number of Birkin bags just one month earlier at Christies. Hermès 'Birkin' bags have never gone out of fashion since they were created in the mid 1980s. It is said that the original design was created for Jane Birkin, the actress and singer -hence their name - and based on a nineteenth century design. Birkin appeared in the Agatha Christie films *Death on the Nile* (1978) and *Evil Under the Sun* (1982), and recorded several albums, including *Baby Alone in Babylone*, *Amours des Feintes*, *Lolita Go Home* and *Rendez-vous*. She won Female Artist of the Year in the 1992 Victoires de la Musique.

Of the fifty-eight Hermès bags in the Christies 'Elegance - handbags' sale in May, the top seller (Lot 305 **Fig 6**) was similar to the one at Kerry Taylor's mentioned above, though only one year old, and raised £48,050, £20,000 above the



Fig 1. Lot 1. A Chanel black quilted jersey 2.55 bag, 1960s, with gilt CC clasp, gilt chain handle, wine leather interior, 25.5cm, 10in long. Hammer Price: £500. Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 2. Lot 24. A Pucci printed velvet and leather beach bag, early 1970s, 41cm, 16in wide, in original box. (2) Hammer Price: £150. Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 3. Lot 22. A Hermès dark brown leather Kelly bag, late 1960s, stamped under the closure flap Hermès Paris, with padlock, fob with two keys, brass padlock, optional shoulder strap, 32cm, 12.5in long. Hammer Price: £950. Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 4. Lot 15. A rare and early Hermès 'Isabeau' black crocodile handbag, 1930s, Crocodylus Porosus, engraved to the interior Hermès, Paris, the silvered angular mounts with ingenious opening device - the plated lower handle flange sections are spring-mounted to pull apart allowing the central frame to open, lined in grey suede, 21cm, 8in high. Hammer Price: £950. Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 5. Lot 11. A fine Hermès red crocodile Birkin, Crocodylus Porosus, blind stamp A square, with gilt hardware, stamped below the closure flap Hermès Paris made in France, with inverted V, with key fob, leather covered padlock and dustbag, 30cm, 11.75in. Hammer Price: Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 6. Lot 305. A Braise Crocodile 'Birkin' bag, Hermès, 2011. Silver palladium hardware, with padlock, keyfob, dustbag, raincovers and box. Crocodylus Porosus. 30 cm. £48,050. Christies: prices incl. buyer's premium 25%.



Fig 7. Lot 303. A chocolate brown 'Birkin' bag, Hermès, 1997. Goldtone metal hardware, with padlock, keyfob and dustbag 35 cm. £5000 Christies: prices incl. buyer's premium 25%.



Fig 10. Lot 352. A black box leather 'Ring' bag, Hermès, circa 1955. Goldtone metal hardware, 26 cm. Stamped 'HERMÈS, PARIS' to the interior. £1,000. Christies: prices incl. buyer's premium 25%.



Fig 8. Lot 311. A brown leather and toile 'Constance' bag, Hermès, probably 1970s. Goldtone metal hardware, with dustbag, 22 cm.. Stamped 'HERMÈS, PARIS, MADE IN FRANCE' £3,750. Christies: prices incl. buyer's premium 25%.



Fig 11. Lot 315. A black box leather 'Kelly' bag, Hermès, 1970. Goldtone metal hardware, with padlock, 32 cm. £875. Christies: prices incl. buyer's premium 25%.



Fig 9. Lot 350. A russet brown crocodile 'Piano' bag, Hermès, early 1960s. Goldtone metal hardware, with associated pair of lorgnettes in crocodile case, coin purse and mirror, 26 cm. Stamped 'HERMÈS, PARIS, MADE IN FRANCE' in gilt. £1,750. Christies: prices incl. buyer's premium 25%.



Fig 12. Lot 319. A navy blue leather 'Kelly' bag, Hermès, 1969. Goldtone metal hardware, with padlock, keyfob and toile shoulder strap, 32 cm. £813. Christies: prices incl. buyer's premium 25%.



Fig 13. Lot 41. A Louis Vuitton suitcase, with traditional LV canvas, leather handle and trim, brass lock engraved LV H8, initialled to the top in red ECJ, 52cm, 20.5in high, 80cm, 31.5in long, 21cm, 8.5in wide, with a leather gladstone case, a brown leather suitcase with black and wine painted stripes, a small leather box (4) Hammer Price: £850. Kerry Taylor Auctions.

high end estimate. Even given that this price included £20% buyers premium, that is some difference. Perhaps like cars, Hermès handbags depreciate every year they are on the road!

Nine of the top selling lots in the Christies sale were Birkin bags, ranging in value from £23,750-£48,050. These were generally well over the estimated value, beating a previous 'exceptional' price of £37,250 three years earlier. These top selling examples were brightly coloured, including orange and lime green, and fashioned from exotic skins such as crocodile, lizard or alligator. In general, the reptile skin Birkin bags realised at least twice the price of the leather ones which sold from £5,000-£17,000. (Lot 303 **Fig 7**)

Only a third of the top nine bags, however, can really be classed as vintage. These were from the late 1990s. The rest were only five or six years old, or even younger.

However, other lots included a choice of vintage Hermès bags. The oldest Birkin bag was from 1993 (£6,875) but there were other styles from the 1950s to the 1970s instance (Lot 311 **Fig 8**, Lot 350 **Fig 9**, Lot 352 **Fig 10**) Two Kelly bags (Lot 315 **Fig 11**) (Lot 319 **Fig 12**) from 1969 and 1970 each sold for just over £800 which was comparable with the Kerry Taylor sale results for similar bags.

The Kerry Taylor sale included four lots of luggage. Although two included Louis Vuitton examples, a Victorian chest did not interest bidders and it was a suitcase along with some other items that sold (Lot 41 **Fig 13** £850). Two mid twentieth century Goyard suitcases made just under that but the Royal connection of an Ede & Sons wooden trunk, belonging to King George V, probably used to store his Garter robes, raised £4,500 after competitive bidding.

The Royal connection was apparent in two hats hired, and worn by Kate Middleton. Both had good provenance including rental receipts, and after international bidding sold for around twice the high end estimate (£2,600 and £3,000), reflecting the global interest we have seen before in this lady's wardrobe. (Lot 46 **Fig 14**.) However, a Royal connection did not help the sale of H.R.H the Duke of Windsor's tartan evening suit, despite high expectations (Lot 44 **Fig 15**).

Surprisingly too, Michael Jackson's white felt Fedora, signed on the brim, also remained unsold. (Lot 59 **Fig 16**) Previously, a black fedora which he wore on his Bad tour, sold in 2010 for \$72,000 in the US. (£46,225 at today's rates.)

Three examples of antique shoes sold at Kerry Taylor's. An eighteenth century pair of embroidered gentleman's mules sold for £3,000 (Lot 60 **Fig 17**). A late Victorian pair of repoussé lady's shoes were £460 (Lot 62 **Fig 18**). As expected, a rare and fine pair of gilded and painted wooden ladies shoes from the 1650-1670 sold for £8,000 (Lot 64 **Fig 19**).

Away from accessories, the star of the sale was a rare and important Vionnet 1922 evening gown (Lot 122 **Fig 20**) which raised an astounding £50,000. Although unlabelled it was recognised by Kerry Taylor due to the characteristic Lesage beading and embroidery.

Other fashion highlights included the Bill Gibb ivory wool ensemble worn by Lulu for her wedding to John Frieda in 1976 (Lot 170 **Fig 21**) which sold for £650.

A fine Alexander McQueen cape dress made for his final collection in 2010 sold for £14,000. An earlier velvet, beaded evening gown designed by him made £10,000 but another from the same year remained unsold, showing once again the unpredictable nature of auctions.

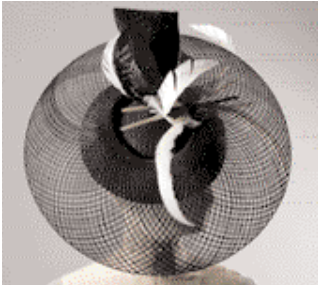


Fig 14. Lot 46. The black 'Aurora' picture hat worn by Kate Middleton on the occasion of the wedding of Harry Meade, in the company of H.R.H. Prince William, 23rd October 2010, labelled 'Get Ahead Hats', with swirling organza crown, transparent wired open-weave brim, adorned with two plumes and a curleque, 51cm, 20in dia, with a letter of authenticity from the vendor, a rental receipt and a xerox copy from her diary showing the meeting with Catherine Middleton and her mother (4) Hammer Price: £3,000. Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 15. Lot 44. H.R.H. the Duke of Windsor's Hunting Lord of the Isles tartan evening suit, 1951, woven in shades of green and white wool, the Scholte double-breasted jacket labelled and indistinctly annotated 'H.R.H. the Duke of Windsor', dated 8.6.51 and numbered 2719, with wide lapels, side vents, curved cuffs with three buttons; the matching trousers by Harris of New York, zip fastened, with narrow tapering legs to the ankle; together with a Hawes & Curtis matching backless waistcoat, no 4996, and cummerbund; a Scholte dark green corduroy backless waistcoat, bearing the Duke's name, dated 8.10.47, no 189493; and two Hawes & Curtis white pique highland style dress-waistcoats chest 97cm, 38in, waist 74cm, 29in. (7) Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 16. Lot 59. Michael Jackson's white felt Fedora, signed to the brim 'Michael Jackson' with a star, initials LA with an arrow, black gros-grain ribbon with bow, inner leather headband stamped in gold 'Michael Jackson' and USA manufacture tag 'size Large'. With a letter of authenticity signed by Matthew Fiddes. (2) Provenance: This hat was given to the vendor Matthew Fiddes by Michael Jackson in 2008. He acted as body-guard for Jackson over a period of 12 years after being introduced to the star by their mutual friend, Uri Geller. In Mr Fiddes' letter of authenticity he states that he and Michael Jackson became good friends. He asked Michael Jackson if he could have the 'Billie Jean' fedora that was displayed in Jackson's own private Neverland museum, but Jackson declined saying that he wanted to keep it - but that he could have this white fedora instead. The 'LA' and arrow written separate to the signature on the brim by Jackson were an instruction that the hat was to be returned to Los Angeles. He gave the hat to Mr.Fiddes and signed it in the Palm Springs Hotel, Las Vegas in 2008 whilst recording a new album but asked if Matt would make a donation to charity which Fiddes duly did. Mr Fiddes believes this to be the last hat signed by Michael Jackson before his death in 2009.



Fig 17. Lot 60. Pair of embroidered gentlemen's mules, Ottoman for the European market, 18thC, uppers of green satin embroidered in chain-stitch in silver thread, coloured silks with stylised flowers and foliage, thick leather soles, insole with remains of embroidered beige silk, 29cm, 11.25in. (2) Hammer Price: £3,000. Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 18. Lot 62. A pair of repoussé lady's shoes, probably Indian for the European market, circa 1880-90, the leather upper entirely covered in chased white metal (probably low grade silver) adorned with fruits and blossom, low curved heel, pointed toes, 15cm, 9.75in. (2) Hammer price: £460. Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 19. Lot 64. A fine and rare pair of gilded and painted carved wood ladies shoes, Italian, Dutch or French, second half 17thC, pierced and carved gesso and lacquered wood, exaggerated pointed toes painted with tulips and dog roses, upper with lace-effect piercings with faux lachets and eyelets for threading ribbons, foliate medallions and hearts, curved and gilded low set heels with faux stitch marks up the centre back and also to the sides of the upper, interiors painted with faux ermine flecks, crimson painted soles with felt pads to heel and ball of foot, one applied with an old collection/museum label, 'mules bois sculpté et doré. Travail Venetian du XVIII S.' 29cm, 11.5in long. (2) Literature: A single, similar carved wooden shoe is illustrated in 'Schuhe' by Saskia Durian-Ress (1991) catalogue no 57, pp 59-61. A very similar pair are in the Northampton Shoe Museum and they are dated 1650-75 and were purchased in France. Hammer Price: £8,000. Kerry Taylor Auctions.



Fig 20. Lot 122. A rare and important Madeleine Vionnet evening gown, model 4113, Spring-Summer, 1925, of black crêpe romain, with Lesage embroidered droplet shaped motif to central bodice worked in silver strip and copper beads, the hips with similar, more rounded motifs, the hem falling in points at each side, bust 86cm, 34in. £50,000. Kerry Taylor Auctions. Hammer Price.



Fig 21. Lot 170. The Bill Gibb ivory wool ensemble worn by Lulu for her wedding to John Frieda in 1976, labelled, comprising: halter neck gown, collar with beaded palmettes and fringes in shades of grey, handkerchief point to the front bodice hem, pleated skirt edged in pastel ribbons; matching full length coat with similarly beaded shoulders, rear yoke and cuffs, bust approx 81-86cm, 32-34in. With a newspaper article written by Lulu showing her photographed in the gown. (3) Lulu has confirmed that this is indeed the outfit she wore for her marriage to the hairdresser John Frieda. In her memoirs she records 'The wedding was at Hampstead Register Office, that October (1976) and Bill Gibb, a Scottish designer, created an Arabian style gown in pale cream wool for me. We did three fittings to make sure everything was absolutely right.' The dress was purchased in an antiques/second hand shop in Margate in 1991. The shopkeeper stated that the dress had belonged to Lulu (who had been appearing in the Winter Gardens the previous season there). Hammer Price: £650. Kerry Taylor Auctions.