

From Lucite purse to PVC handbag

Seeing through the clear bag trend

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1. Introduction

Trends come and go, and can come back again. This is the lifecycle of the trend we will be exploring; the transparent bag. Nowadays, the see-through bag is a staple. It's fun, innovative and trendy. However, when did this trend appear and how popular was it?

The historical part of the transparent bag will be our focus in the first section of this research. Then, we will see how the trend came back recently and which designer has made it popular.

How did the clear bag make its way back to the top, reaching the peak of trends?

A concise analysis of these points followed by concrete examples will make it clearer and may help us see-through the future of this trend.



2. History of the transparent bag: 1950s Lucite purse

In 1950, the world was still slowly recovering economically as well as socially from the devastations of World War Two. As this was happening, having a perfect image was expected in all households, with a focus on the United States of America, with notably the cult of the perfect housewife, as reported by Vintage Dancer (2019).

Thus why the love for fashion came back to life in the 1950s, with the desire to show off one's wealth through expensive looking clothes and accessories. Handbags were an excellent way of showing off ones class, elegance and modernity, to a certain extent.

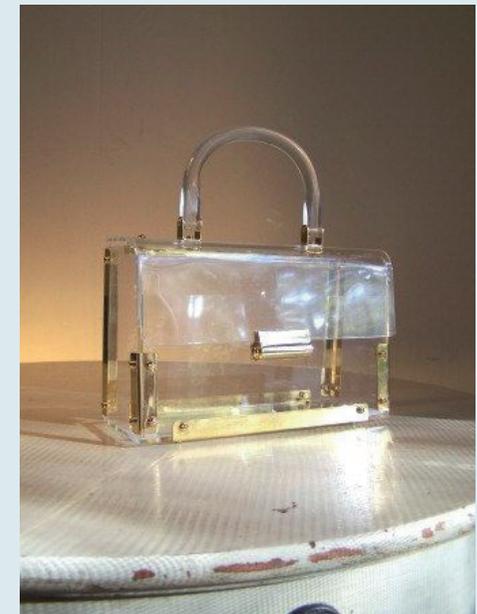
One interesting and innovating material was used in the 1950s for the creation of clear purses; Lucite, as reported by Lister (2018).

Lucite was invented by the Dupont Corporation in 1931 and used during the Second World War in aircraft. This plastic proved to be more resistant and stronger than earlier plastics, as reported by Century Manufacturing (2019). In 1950, a few designers from the United States started using this material to create purses, which were in consequence named "Lucite purses".

This clear plastic bag was quickly adopted by all fashionable women of the time, as an innovative and chic purse, which price



1: A 1953 Lucite handbag.
(Women's Museum, 2017)

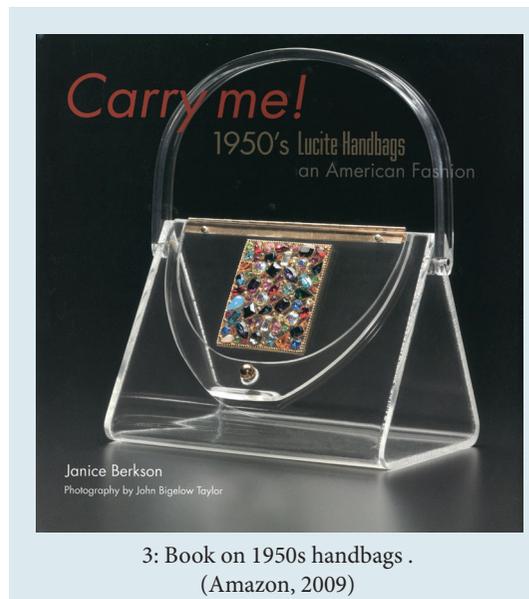


2: 1950s Lucite handbag.
(Go Cheap and Chic, 2012)

ranged from 5\$ to 80\$, as reported by Fendelman (2007).

It is hard to put a name on the actual creator of the Lucite purse. However, the Wilardy clear purse, invented by Will Hardy in 1948, as reported by Historia de la mode y los tejidos (2012), as well as the successful Lucite bags by Charles S. Kahn, as reported by Fendelman (2007), were among the most popular ones of the time. The advantage of these clear purses was how versatile they could be. In fact, some came with paintings, jewels and even glitter on them. The other advantage of the Lucite bag was that it could also be colored in different shades such as pastel pink or blue, as reported by Vintage Dancer (2019). Versatile, practical, innovative and trendy, this was the description of the 1950s Lucite bag, for sure.

*Versatile, practical,
innovative and trendy.*



3: Book on 1950s handbags .
(Amazon, 2009)



4: Campaign for transparent 1950s accessories.
(Vintage Dancer, no date)

What makes a product even more successful is having well-known public figures loving it, and this is exactly what happened in the 1950s when movie stars wore Lucite purses. This point is crucial in how trendy the bag became. Indeed, Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor were head over heels for these see-through purses. It is even said that Will Hardy got the inspiration from Marilyn Monroe for one of his famous bejeweled Lucite purses (Paul, 2010, p. 136).

In “Niagara”, a 1953 movie, we see a chic and seductive Marilyn Monroe holding a Lucite purse during nearly the entire film. Thus, proving how big the trend was in the 50s.

However, one crucial down side to this innovative bag was the actual material it was made of. In fact, the plastic could melt in the heat, which unfortunately let off toxic gasses, not too alluring for such a glamorous fashion product, as reported by Women’s Museum of California (2017).

The Lucite purse proved to be trendy during a certain time in history. Furthermore, the trend seems to be back on the catwalk since 2017. How does a trend from more than 50 years ago can suddenly make a comeback?



5: Elizabeth Taylor with a Lucite bag.
(Vintage Revival, no date)



6: Marilyn Monroe in «Niagara».
(Byrd Barn House, no date)



7: Marilyn Monroe and Jean Peters in «Niagara».
(Photos de mode, no date)



8: Marilyn Monroe in «Niagara».
(Marilyn Monroe Video Archives, 2018)



9: Elizabeth Taylor with a Lucite bag.
(Le Monde, 2011)

*Marilyn Monroe and
Elizabeth Taylor were
head over heels for these
see-through purses.*



10: Marie Windsor (right) with a Lucite purse.
(Here's looking like you kid, 2008)

3. Nowadays: evolution of the trend and Chanel case study

Lucite was a type of material discovered, as we previously saw, during the Second World War. It was brilliant for the time and proved itself useful to create a new type of bag but it did not come without risks.

Nowadays, another material is used: PVC or polyvinyl chloride. This material is created by polymerizing vinyl chloride as reported by Reverso Dictionary (2019).

This type of waterproof plastic is very flexible, strong and durable and it is used for hosepipe isolation as well as to make garments and accessories, as reported by Finoak (2013).

PVC interests us since this is the material brands use to make transparent bags that are coming back on trend. PVC bags come in various colors but for our research we shall mostly focus on the transparent version.

One specific brand will be the focus of our work; Chanel.

In fact, Chanel has decided to bring back the trend of the 50s. Its Spring/Summer 2018 show transported us to a rainy, waterproof and see-through land. Up to 10 bags on the Chanel SS18 runway were completely see-through. Some were colored and most were transparent. They came in different sizes and shapes, which is something the 50s Lucite purses could only do to a certain extent. In fact, nowadays the possibilities are endless, thanks to new manufacturing processes but also to PVC.

To come back to Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld was able to revive this clear bag trend by showing off the maison's characteristics; using the

Chanel logo or simply revisiting some classic designs and using PVC as a key material.

After this magnificent SS 18 runway show, various brands started to analyze this trend that seemed to be back and ready to stay for a while.

In fact, the famous trend forecasting website WGSN (2019) even has reports on this trend that is underlined as innovative and fun.

Did we continue seeing the trend of see-through bags on the runway for Spring/Summer 2019? The answer is yes. Of course, the spotlight is still on Chanel.

For their SS 19 fashion show, we were this time transported on the beach. Models walking bare foot and for some, holding PVC clear handbags. Here we go again with the trend. Lagerfeld this time put a twist on the bag by definitely showing the endless shapes possible. We see a round, beach-volley ball-like, bag and a transparent versions of the Chanel boy bag. Fortunately, the trend was also embraced, more timidly, by other brands for their Spring/Summer 2019 collections. Sally Lapointe had a small version of a transparent handbag, Christian Cowan created a more sporty version of it by having a PVC transparent fanny pack on the catwalk. Not sure Marilyn Monroe would've worn it back in the 50s, but it surely made an impression in our love-for-athleisure world that we live in. Finally, Mary Katrantzou made a transparent pochette to wear out. Designers surely understood how powerful this trend is nowadays.



11: Chanel S/S 18 look.
(Vogue, 2017)



12: Chanel S/S 18 bag.
(Vogue, 2017)



13: Chanel S/S 18 look.
(Vogue, 2017)



14: Chanel S/S 18 bags.
(Vogue, 2017)



15: Chanel S/S 18 bag.
(Vogue, 2017)



16: Chanel S/S 18 look.
(Vogue, 2017)



17: Chanel S/S 18 bag.
(Vogue, 2017)



18: Chanel S/S 18 look.
(Vogue, 2017)



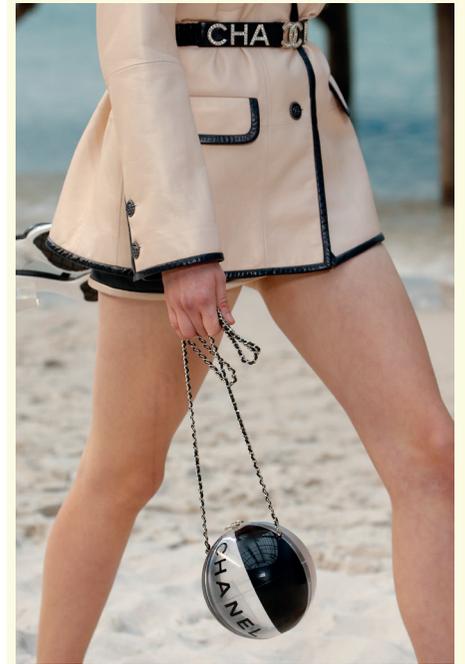
19: Chanel S/S 19 look.
(Vogue, 2018)



20: Chanel S/S 19 bag.
(Vogue, 2018)



21: Chanel S/S 19 look.
(Vogue, 2018)



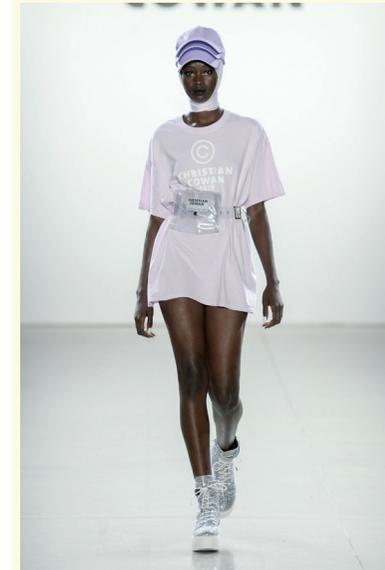
22: Chanel S/S 19 bag.
(Vogue, 2018)



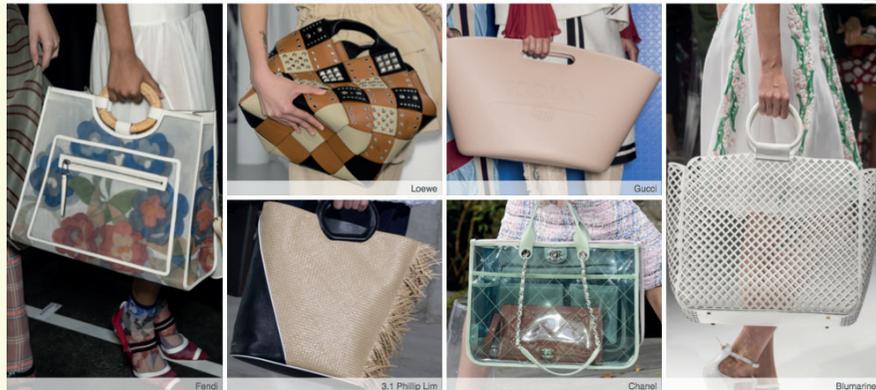
23: Mary Katrantzou S/S 19 bag.
(Vogue, 2018)



24: Sally LaPointe S/S 19 look.
(Vogue, 2018)



25: Christian Cowan S/S 19 look.
(Vogue, 2018)



The Market Tote

The staple tote is reworked in line with the renewed interest in authentic and nostalgic product, with particular emphasis on grocery bag styles. Classic East-West profiles underpin this tote, with wide open-top constructions proving functional. Handles are a new area of focus, as wicker or leather constructions offset woven straw and leather designs for an authentic feel while transparent options feel modern.

26: Key Items S/S 18: Bags.
(WGSN, 2017)



Add X-ray vision to statement bags

- Part of the ongoing layering trend and a growing interest in plastics, transparency is offering new and fun takes on holiday and resort themes beyond the obligatory requirements of airport security checks
- Working equally across a variety of bag styles, coloured and smoky plastics provide a sophisticated update to clear versions
- Consider additional items that would look good inside the bag

27: Key Items S/S 19: Bags.
(WGSN, 2018)

However shall we come back to Chanel? Yes, because Karl might have left this world by giving us with one of his best collections, in my eyes. The Fall/Winter 2019/2020 was a winter wonderland and even though the transparent bag seemed to be trendy just for the warmer months. Lagerfeld changed our way of thinking. In fact, two clear handbags made it to the FW 19/20 runway this year. This time, innovative takes another meaning. Chanel shows us two bags inspired by the ski cabin, transporting us to a totally new world of designs for the PVC see-through bags. Karl Lagerfeld definitely knew how to make an old trend come back to life in the most modern yet also classic way possible.

Designers said yes to the trend, but what about the biggest form of promotion we are experiencing now? Well, influencers love it. As an example, Anna Dello Russo, famous influencer and editor in chief of Vogue Japan, was spotted holding a clear handbag. Aimee Song, influencer, used the most powerful promotional tool nowadays, Instagram, to show off her transparent handbag.

Designers said yes to the trend (...)

Pop star Ariana Grande made the trend even more global and accessible by selling clear handbags to all her fans coming to her tour this year. Certainly, this is mainly security related and this is the beauty of this transparency trend. Not only is it a fashionable accessory but it is also a good way of insuring that security processes go faster for any major event happening nowadays.



28: Chanel F/W 19/20 bag.
(Vogue, 2019)



29: Chanel F/W 19/20 bag.
(Vogue, 2019)



30: Anna Dello Russo with a clear bag.
(Purse blog, 2016)



31: Ariana Grande and a clear bag.
(Daily Mail, 2018)



songofstyle Who knew that the @evachen212 pose required so much upper body strength? P.S. yes I packed my raw bars in there. #evachenpose

Charger d'autres commentaires

sabrypa182 @maritz_vaz 🤔🤔🤔🤔

blanka_182 Lucky you

maythu.win Volvo 🙌

lu_xixi lit 🔥🔥

lifestylesandtrials Would love your feedback. Check out my page pls 🤔

ninatashaxoxo @nita_hu your bag 🤔

similanskin Hahahh 🗨️❤️

itslindanhan @hooerlonez can't we

👍🗨️👍👍👍👍

👤 Aimé par piolazepol et 84 337 autres personnes

25 FÉVRIER 2018

Ajouter un commentaire...

32: Aimee Song's Instagram picture.
(Instagram, 2018)

Not only is it a fashionable accessory but it is also a good way of insuring that security processes go faster (...)



33: Ariana Grande's online store; clear bags.
(Ariana Grande official store, 2019)

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the transparent handbag trend was a success in 1950 and is definitely back. Chanel was a pioneer in reviving the trend and various brands as well as promotional aspects makes it accessible to everyone, proving that the clear bag is currently at its peak. Personally, I shall say that I find this trend fascinating and extremely feminine. To bring back a 50s trend that Marilyn Monroe loved is truly what fashion should be about, in my eyes. However, with the trend being at such a peak and Chanel using it in the last two years, does it mean the decline of the trend will be soon upon us? How long can it last? It seems like clear bags will be useful for security purposes but the trendy side of it might suffer. Maybe it will once again revive after a break of 50 years... History repeats itself, right?

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