



Introducing  
Lauren  
Chan

The multi-hyphenate talent has a big goal: revolutionize the way that women feel about themselves in clothes

Photography by Evaan Kheraj



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Nadia Belerique, *HOLDINGS*  
Detail, 2020 – ongoing









# Blinding Light

Lauren Chan—plus-size model and visionary fashion editor—has spent her career advocating for size inclusion. But, as Chan explains, she didn't ditch her own body issues until she learned to make her own clothes

Photography by Evaan Kheraj

Picture this: I'm on set, carefully scooting a pair of Balenciaga jeans up my legs and over my hips, intentionally leaving the fly undone. I'm trying to avoid a hot-faced moment of self-loathing, worried that I won't be able to button the size L jeans across my size XXL waist. The stylist shoots me a commanding look. "Button them up—I don't want it to look like they don't fit. The whole 'plus-size model shoved into whatever too-small designer clothes are available' thing is very 10 years ago." On principle, I agreed with her, but I was mitigating risk: I know that designer denim is notoriously small, straight-cut and un-stretchy and that my body—which carries most of its weight in the mid-section—often doesn't fit into jeans without my belly spilling over the waistline. My move: "But it will look cool if we leave them undone."

Another look. A deep breath. And a rush of relief: button closed, no belly bulge in sight.

This may sound like some sort of sartorial triumph, but I assure you I was not proud of myself in the moment. I'm a plus-size model and self-proclaimed size inclusion advocate. Three years ago, I launched Henning, my own brand of plus-size clothing. I am not supposed to be susceptible to moments of bad body image at the hands (legs?) of a pair of jeans. I'm supposed to have healed from my 10,000 hours of work, both professionally and personally, on size acceptance. I'm supposed to be...unshakable. So, when I faltered during this photo shoot, I was disappointed in myself.

That said, I'm proud to report that the dip in self-esteem was fleeting—and that similar moments of self-doubt have become rare since I made a surprising discovery along my body image journey. The breakthrough: learning how clothes are made.

It may seem a little lackluster—usually when someone shares a how-to-love-yourself secret, it's an emotionally revolutionary idea (Say positive affirmations in the mirror! Spend time touching your least-loved parts!). But what this breakthrough lacks in warm-and-fuzzies, it makes up for in blow-your-mind. Ready for it? Clothes aren't made to fit us.

Let's break down the process. To bring garments to life, brands create a pattern, make a sample, fit the sample on a fit model, edit the pattern, grade it, then produce thousands of units of clothing, which end up in our closets. The kicker: Each brand tends to use one fit model. One. Single. Person. Which means that all of the clothes in our closets are built for one specific person's body shape. (Generally, fit models are around 5 foot 7, a size 4/6 for straight sizes and a size 18 for plus sizes, with bust-waist-hip ratio within a few inches of each other. The population, however, is, on average, 5 foot 4, a size 16, and carries proportionally more weight in either their mid-section or hips.) So even if you were the same size as a brand's fit model, it's unlikely that your proportions would be an exact match.

It gets worse. In order to produce sizes beyond the fit model's, brands "grade" their patterns up and down in increments of inches while attempting to keep their original shape and scale. But grading is often flawed, because it's done digitally by math and isn't cross-checked on fit models in all of the sizes. Plus, grading gets wonky after about three sizes up or down, totaling a typical sizing set of 7. (That's why we have a standard straight-size range of 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 and a standard plus-size range of 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24.) When we know all of this about the garment-making process, we should recognize that it's next to impossible that any garment would fit us well—and that we shouldn't be upset when they don't.

If I'm honest, I don't think we should be too upset with clothing brands, either. The costs of adding fit models, size ranges or different cuts/shapes of the same garment are all exponential and—let's be real—fashion is a business. Companies make clothes in the way they deem to be the most efficient and cost-effective. Unfortunately, big brands don't care enough about our feelings to add exponential costs to their bottom lines; little ones, like my brand, Henning, often don't have deep enough pockets. Allowing business shortcomings to affect our personal body image is futile and, in my humble opinion, our energy is better spent focusing on healing ourselves.

How, exactly? It might be as simple as reminding ourselves of the flawed clothing-making process the next time something doesn't fit. Find yourself in a fitting room, struggling with a zipper, fighting back tears? Been there. Or at home chucking a failed online order in the direction of the box it came in? Also been there. Or catch your self-image crumbling in a matter of seconds over a pair of jeans? See above! Remind yourself that it's not your body's fault—everyone except for people with the fit model's proportions will have some version of this experience.

Beyond that, I highly suggest having your clothes tailored more regularly. Think of it like this: Brands make black coffee and you need to customize your order to make it work for you. (My go-to coffee order: oat milk latte with an extra shot. My typical alterations: letting the waistline out and taking the hips in.) At Henning, we have a tailoring policy that refunds customers up to 10 per cent to cover alterations. So far, the feedback has been incredibly moving. One customer wrote to me about the power of her altered shirt: "It is not an exaggeration to say that every person I interacted with commented on how great I looked and how confidently I was acting." That confidence—the kind that radiates outward for others to see and makes our moods, our days, and then our lives better—is the exact feeling that no piece of clothing should be able to take away from us...even if it's Balenciaga.

STYLIST: KALEEN HAWORTH; MAKEUP: JOSEPH CARRELL; DRESS: EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS; HAIR: COREY TUTTLE/



## THE FIGHTER

Lauren Chan is a model, editor and founder of Henning, a contemporary plus-size fashion brand that has the chic of The Row and the soul of a fairy godmother. Born in Brantford, Ont., Chan conquered the New York fashion world first as an editor at *Glamour*, where she introduced smart, relevant plus-size fashion coverage, and then as a plus-size model. Henning combines her superb taste, her gift for knowing what women want and her belief that we all deserve better from our clothes. "I'm most proud of having a career that lets me connect with a community," says Chan. "The best part of all of my jobs has been representing, writing for, making clothes for and meeting people like me, who have felt marginalized by fashion but are keen to push for inclusion and foster a sense of belonging that can change our lives. I hope to make every single person who interacts with me and my work feel secure, proud and powerful."

THIS LOOK AND COVER: BLAZER, SWEATER, BALL CHAIN NECKLACE, STYLIST'S OWN; WARDROBE NYC TOP, \$140; WARDROBE NYC PANTS, SHOES, CHAN'S OWN; CAST NECKLACE (LARGE LINKS), \$19.115; CAST JEWELRY, COM FOUNDRAE NECKLACE (PENDANT), \$8.047; FOUNDRAE.COM; ABOVE: BLAZER, JEANS, STYLIST'S OWN; TIFFANY & CO. NECKLACE, \$3,900; TIFFANY.COM; PROENZA SCHOUER SHOES, \$1,140; NET-A-PORTER.COM



# Spring forward

Embrace the sunny season with these ace style picks



## THE TREND: TEXTURE PLAY

**IF YOU'RE USED** to living in neutral hue territory, there's a simple way to elevate (and animate) your spring wardrobe: adding some touchable texture. It's why we love LAMARQUE, a Montreal-based brand with a contemporary approach to leather. Try out this short-sleeved leather pant suit—done up in an effortlessly chic sesame colour—or sport the ultimate statement piece, a feathery cropped bustier with head-turning appeal. Sculptural extras, like a droplet-shaped pendant hanging from a liquid-like chain, tie the whole look together.

LEFT: LAMARQUE SHORT SLEEVE LEATHER JACKET, \$440, LEATHER PANT, \$595. BIKO NECKLACE, \$125, BANGLE, \$120, RING, \$95. RIGHT: LAMARQUE FEATHERED TOP, \$285

### THE BUY:



JUDITH & CHARLES JACKET, \$550, TSC.CA



L'INTERVALLE SANDALS, \$138, TSC.CA



### THE BUY:



BIKO EARRINGS, \$130, TSC.CA



CAT JANIGA BRACELET, \$174, TSC.CA

## THE TREND: GLEAMING GOLD

**WHEN IT COMES TO** all-gold jewellery, we're wielding the "more is more" style principle this season. Italian designer Stefano Oro's bold take on 14K yields sleek, entirely stackable pieces for everyday—a timeless croissant ring, elegant link necklace and squared-off, paper-clip-inspired drop earrings included. Pair your high-polish picks with this Hilary MacMillan wrap vest dress—available up to size 4x—which acts as the ideal backdrop for gold to really pop.

HILARY MACMILLAN VEST DRESS, \$350. STEFANO ORO 14K YELLOW GOLD EARRINGS, \$260, RING, \$400, RING, \$350

## THE TREND: KALEIDOSCOPIC COLOUR

### THE BUY:



BRASS & UNITY BRACELET, \$150, TSC.CA



POPPY FINCH EARRINGS, \$1205, TSC.CA



## THE TREND: LEMON ZEST

**NOTHING SAYS** "let the light in" like a dose of joy-filled yellow. The sunny hue can be a challenging one to adopt head to toe, which is why we're keen on these Canadian-made doses balanced with LAMARQUE's wear-anywhere leather romper. This petite top-handle bag by sustainable accessory brand ai Toronto Seoul comes embossed with faux croc for a sophisticated finish, while L'Intervalle's 2000s-era platform sandals—lemony on the strap, white on the sole—take you to new (comfortable) heights.

LAMARQUE ROMPER, \$675. AI BAG, \$150

### THE BUY:



L'INTERVALLE SHOES, \$168, TSC.CA



AI BAG, \$115, TSC.CA

Looking to refresh your wardrobe with mood-brightening pieces? Turn to TSC.ca, the 35-year-old Canadian retailer focused on helping consumers shop better, and a destination for highly curated fashion and accessories every season. Explore of-the-moment selections, including pieces from Canadian designers like Judith & Charles, Hilary MacMillan and Ron White, that make sustainability and body inclusivity core to their design ethos. Read on to discover the season's most covetable style picks.





# Leading the way

Alicia Keys calls her relationship with her body “a journey.” Now, she wants to help others on the path to self-love

Rising to fame in the heyday of headset mics and low-rise Lycra, Alicia Keys always stood out. She sat behind a piano and wrote her own songs. She bucked pressures to look girlier or sexier, and stood firm on what she would and would not wear. A few years ago, she began walking red carpets makeup-free.

“I think we’ve all been given a lot of programming that makes us feel like you have to look a certain way in order to be considered beautiful,” she says over Zoom.

Like many women, it’s programming she’s had to work to unlearn, especially when it comes to her feelings toward her body. “I’ve never been the super-skinny girl,” she says. “I’ve never been the one who can just eat everything and still be exactly whatever I want. But as I’ve come through my life, I’ve really come to respect the beauty of a woman’s body.”

That doesn’t mean insecurities don’t still creep up from time to time. “It’s a journey,” she says. But Keys, 41, chooses to approach self-love as a practice, combining mantras and affirmations—“I really believe that the thoughts we allow ourselves to think create our life”—with a more intuitive take on exercise.

She shares that she used to dread working out. Now, she actually looks forward to it. “The way I’ve fallen in love with being active is by making it more diverse and not feeling like I have to do one thing,” she says. “I’ve been able to find different things that I really enjoy.”

These days, that’s usually yoga, pilates or dance. If she’s feeling tired, she won’t force herself to do some long gruelling workout but will instead engage in something gentler for 20 or 30 minutes. “Even though I’m not breaking a huge sweat, I know that I’m giving my body something that it needs.”

It’s about being kind to the body instead of seeking to torture it, an intention Keys has woven through every piece of her new collaboration with fitness apparel brand Athleta. She selected fabrics that were soft to the touch, cuts that wouldn’t make anyone feel restricted. Everything is available in sizes XXS–3X and designed to give wearers the freedom to move around and breathe. “You put it on and you feel good,” she says.

The palette was also carefully considered, a warm, earthy medley of smoky chocolate, bright fuchsia and golden ochre. “I chose bold colours because I really wanted you to feel comfortable standing out and feeling like, ‘Here I am and I’m not shy about myself.’”

Keys test-drove the collection herself before launch, wearing it for school drop-offs, workouts and even breakfast meetings. “I can wear the same entire look and I’m cute all the way through!”

That even extends to sleeping, a key, yet oft-neglected component of wellness, she says. “We’ve been taught to work until we can’t stand anymore and whoever sleeps the least is the winner somehow, and it’s such a backwards mentality.”

That’s why Keys is just as mindful about her bedtime rituals as she is about her movement practices. Before slipping on the buttery sleep set she designed (“Wait until you put it on your body—it feels amazing!”), she likes to turn on some relaxing music and do some breathing exercises.

Some nights, she’ll pull out a journal and write down her wildest dreams. “A lot of times, I struggle with that because I limit myself or I feel embarrassed that I want this big huge thing, but it’s such a powerful way to go to sleep.”

It comes down, she says, to being “unafraid of your greatness,” something she wants to help other women do as well. As part of her partnership with Athleta, Keys will help select recipients for the brand’s Power of She Fund and serve as a mentor. The grant program aims to support “women and girls, businesses and organizations that are committed to making wellbeing accessible, specifically in the BIPOC community.”

“I really do believe that the more that you can tune in to what’s special about you, the more you can see that there isn’t just one way to be.” —*Katherine Lalancette*



ATHLETA X ALICIA KEYS TANK, \$69, ATHLETA, GAPCANADA.CA



ATHLETA X ALICIA KEYS JUMPSUIT, \$245, ATHLETA, GAPCANADA.CA



ATHLETA X ALICIA KEYS PANTS, \$159, ATHLETA, GAPCANADA.CA



Growing up, Joanie Pietracupa was enamoured by the glamour of the fashion world. But she never quite felt like fashion loved her back. Flipping through glossy magazines, it seemed like all of the pretty things on the pages were meant for other girls, ones who didn’t look like her. “Women’s magazines taught me this was all a big no-no for big girls,” she says. “Remember when fashion writers would give do’s and don’ts tips? Ew!”

It’s precisely the kind of messaging the Montrealer is now out to eradicate, leading change from the inside as the editor-in-chief of (get this) three Canadian women’s magazines. “I’ve been working in this industry for the past 13 years. I also happen to be queer and fat. Bringing diversity to the table is the main reason I do what I do. I’m a big advocate for inclusivity and body diversity, in my work and in my personal life.”

That push for visibility informs the way she dresses, too. Not one to fade into the background or follow dictates around “dressing for your shape,” Pietracupa has a penchant for vibrant colours, fun fabrics, dramatic details and figure-hugging cuts. “I also love to wear crop tops, oversized coats, knee-high boots (I buy those on Eloqui as they’re specifically made for bigger calves and are cheap and chic), super baggy jeans and tiny purses, all of which are supposed to be ‘unflattering’ for bigger bodies. But guess what? I really don’t care. As long as I love what I wear, I feel beautiful and confident.” —*Melissa Perdigao*

# What rules?

Joanie Pietracupa won’t let antiquated norms ruin her love of fashion



“I’m a huge fan of Montreal designer Eliza Faulkner. Almost all her pieces go up to an XXL now, which fits me perfectly. I have a couple of dresses and a denim jacket that I just adore and wear so often. Her pieces are impeccably cut and of amazing quality, and make me feel feminine and trendy.” ELIZA FAULKNER JACKET, \$310, ELIZAFALKNER.COM

“I love Copenhagen-based brand Ganni, its creative director Ditte Reffstrup and its amazing prints, stunning silhouettes (on all shapes and sizes) and cool, trend-setting pieces. Plus, the price point is accessible. This dress might just be my next purchase!” GANNI DRESS, \$325, IHONORE.COM

“I am obsessed with the Knix lounge collection, especially the Cozzzy crew top and Cozzzy track pant. It definitely is the most comfortable—while still flattering—clothing I’ve ever worn. Great for relaxing at home!” KNIX TOP, PANTS, \$74 EACH, KNIX.CA

## Sharing is caring

Size-inclusive brand recos courtesy of five Canadian style stars



BRITTNEE BLAIR, MODEL  
For fun fashion: Loud Bodies



RONY EARLE, TV PERSONALITY  
For cute swimwear: Unika Swim



HAYLEY ELSAESSER, DESIGNER  
For comfy jeans: Universal Standard



BRYNTA PONN, CONTENT CREATOR  
For sexy lingerie: Savage x Fenty



JEN MONFORTON, CONTENT CREATOR  
For sustainable pieces: Oge Agibe

“I’m just wild about how bright and beautiful this brand is. Everything is there, from the inclusive sizing (2XS to 10XL) to the eclectic selection. The badass female-owned business is also ethically and sustainably run.”

“Unika Swim is a local and sustainably sourced swim brand that makes custom swimsuits for women of all sizes. Size-inclusive swim can be frumpy, but I love how Unika focuses on fun and sexy cuts.”

“Their sizing is incredible (00 to 40) and I absolutely love their jeans because they have amazing stretch—I could literally do yoga in them—but they also offer support and don’t lose their shape.”

“This brand changed my perspective on how my body was worthy of being seen in romantic and personal moments. The clothes are shown on every body type so I know exactly how a bra is going to look on Rihanna *and* on me.”

“Oge Agibe is a fantastic indie Canadian gem—a Black-owned brand that creates clothing that’s vibrant, super practical and goes up to 5X. The founder focuses on sustainable practices and shares ultra-helpful styling videos.”

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALEXIS BELHUMEUR (PIETRACUPA)

## THE KIT X YSL

# Living loud

YSL’s tie to music comes to life at Beauty Records



### Black Opium Illicit Green Eau de Parfum

The scent’s signature floral coffee accord is infused with a shot of energizing freshness. That uplifting scent comes courtesy of sparkling green mandarin from Italy, which is greener than orange and sweeter than lemon, crisp and woody fig leaf and fig fresh accords with its green milky sweetness.



### NU Bare Look Tint

Designed with the next generation of beauty lovers in mind and available in 20 flexible shades, this barely-there skin tint combines skincare, makeup and sustainability in one hydrating, skin-enhancing formula.



### Rouge Volupté Candy Glaze

Inspired by Tangfuru, a popular candied fruit snack in China, this hydrating balm provides a high gloss finish and melt-on texture thanks to hyaluronic acid, vitamin E and soothing, cold-pressed mango oil.



### Lash Clash Extreme Volume Mascara

Thick and creamy, the ultra-buildable mascara delivers up to +200% more lash volume, while Iris Florentina extract harvested from YSL Beauty’s Ourika Community Gardens keeps lashes healthy and supple.

Few fashion Houses have a connection to music like YSL. It started with a pivotal moment in 1971 when Saint Laurent dressed both Mick and Bianca Jagger for their wedding where she broke with bridal tradition by wearing a bespoke ivory bias-cut skirt and matching Le Smoking jacket.

Decades later, YSL beauty continues its subversive, unapologetic vision of beauty with stars Dua Lipa and Lenny Kravitz serving as faces of the brand.

Building upon that alliance is Beauty Records, a record-store-inspired ‘retailtainment’ pop-up

that brings the YSL vision to life, with locations in eight Sephora stores across Canada: Montreal Ste. Catherine, Bloor, Toronto Eaton Centre, Yorkdale, Square One, West Edmonton, Chinook Centre and Pacific Centre. Visitors are invited to explore the interactive displays, discover products and learn application tips from on-site beauty experts while local DJs spin tunes.

Within this mini music world, four star products—including three can’t-miss platinum beauty launches for 2022—will be highlighted:

# Money moves

Three women entrepreneurs on having successful side hustles and the finance lessons that made it happen

Women across Canada are turning their dreams and passions into booming businesses by starting side hustles. And with all of us taking stock of our lives—both personal and professional—over the past couple of years, more and more women have (or are thinking about) getting their own side hustles off the ground.

But to tackle such a daunting task, you may need some help. Enter Simplii Financial, a digital banking provider that makes it quick and easy for women to access financial services (like no-fee chequing accounts and high-interest savings accounts). Whether you’re at the beginning of your journey or can feel your biggest goals within reach, Simplii has the tools to simplify your personal banking.

In honour of International Women’s Day, The Kit teamed up with Simplii to celebrate the success of three barrier-breaking women. Avery Francis, founder and CEO of workplace design consultant agency Bloom, Abby Albino, co-founder of Toronto’s women-focused sneaker boutique Makeway, and fitness coach and content creator Zehra Allibhai joined The Kit editor-in-chief Laura deCarufel to discuss how they found success, their relationships with money and the challenges they’ve faced in male-dominated industries.

Here, we share selected excerpts from their discussion.

### ON OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRIES

**AF:** “Of the Fortune 500 companies, less than 2 per cent of [CEOs] identify as Black women—there are more people named John who are CEOs. You can imagine the summits of bias taking place there. I’ve faced a lack of representation, not feeling included, not getting the type of support I needed to thrive within the workplace. And when I started my own business, I wanted to solve for that.”

**ZA:** “I worked in a lot of different gyms, and I was always the only one in a hijab. When I started sharing online, so many people were like, ‘I saw you in your hijab running, and that gave me confidence.’ In every fitness video, you see a sports bra and shorts—and I’m not saying there shouldn’t be space for that, but there should also be space for someone who’s fully covered. I didn’t set out to create this space, but I realized so many people were looking for someone they could identify with.”

### ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH MONEY

**AA:** “Growing up as the child of immigrant parents, I was taught to save. When I started to make my own money, it came fast. I didn’t have a chance to learn how to [handle] it. As I got older, I realized if I respected money, it would allow me to keep at the goals I wanted. Fast-forward many years, my business partner and I wanted to open the shop. Then I really had to respect the money I was making and not abuse it.”

**ZA:** “My whole life, all I’ve been doing is saving. When my career took off I had to learn that, to grow, I had to reinvest my money into the business and myself. It took me a while to get there, but it made a huge difference.”

### ON THE FINANCE ADVICE THEY’D GIVE TO ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS

**AA:** “I read an article about a ‘sinking fund.’ It sounds scary, but it’s not. Essentially, it’s the idea of strategically setting aside a small amount of money every month for that larger goal. It’s all about breaking it down into digestible pieces.”

**AF:** “If you don’t feel comfortable with money, get someone to help. Early on, I invested in some really fantastic tools to help simplify the work that I was doing from a financial perspective. If you have the ability to, invest back into your business or side-hustle and tools that will make your life easier.”



### Abby Albino

Abby is a natural leader, community connector and champion for the BIPOC experience. Her career in the fast-paced sports industry inspired her to co-found Rise Tribe, a charity focused on powering the next generation of Filipino-Canadian youth. Her love for sneakers lead her to her side hustle as the co-owner/founder of Makeway, a ‘for womxn, by womxn’ sneaker and streetwear boutique located in Toronto.



### Avery Francis

Avery is an award-winning HR leader, champion of diversity, inclusion and belonging. A successful Canadian entrepreneur and the founder and CEO of Bloom, Avery has spent her career helping leaders navigate the challenging world of talent, hiring, and building genuinely inclusive company cultures.



### Zehra Allibhai

Zehra is a kinesiologist, content creator and award-winning fitness trainer. As one of Canada’s leading fitness influencers, Zehra shares her passion for health and fitness with women around the world. Her passion for health has led to her successful side hustle, The Fitnest—a place for all of one’s wellness needs.



# Money bags



As price tags steadily soar, designer handbags slip further and further out of reach. Liz Guber gives up her quilted, chain-strapped fantasy

The first time I saw a Chanel bag out in the world was when I was a teenage Starbucks barista. It was a neighbourhood spot (as much as a Starbucks can be) and I had my regulars. One was a kind brunette who'd pull generous tips out of a pristine, classic double flap. The bag had a signature chain strap, quilted body and leather the colour of the mediocre soap-bubble cappuccinos I served her.

My eyes unfailingly locked with those double Cs, but I never felt envious. I really believed that with hard work, some diligent saving and a

bit of good fortune, I too could afford a Chanel by the time I reached my 30s. My very own symbol of womanly success and sophistication. Maybe it was my 17-year-old naivet , or maybe it was that 13 years ago, designer bags were just more attainable to the average fashion dreamer.

Of course, luxury handbags have always been just that—luxuries. (Except for the one per cent, for whom they are simply purchases. I once read a story about Manhattan elites who view The Row in the same way that an average person sees Uniqlo, and I've never been the same.) But

today, all us hopefuls looking to make the "investment" in a designer bag, be it a Fendi Peekaboo or Loewe Puzzle, are facing a sum that could buy anything from an '09 Corolla to a few years' worth of daily cappuccinos.

Now, a Chanel 2.55 is \$9,500; when it was introduced in 1955, it cost \$220—adjusted for inflation, that would be \$2,300. Alright, what about second-hand? Not so fast—these bags hold their value well. At Toronto consignment boutique VSP, Chanel bag prices start at just under \$2,000 for a quilted tote and go all the way up to \$9,000 for a maxi double flap. We're into used-Lexus territory now.

The top luxury brands have raised their prices consistently for years, with hikes ramping up during the pandemic. *WWD* reports that Louis Vuitton raised its prices at least twice from early 2021 to last month, with its petite monogram Pochette Accessoires bag rising from \$630 to \$1,050 in that time.

Some of these designer bag price increases can be attributed to changing production costs, an attempt to even out prices across continents and currencies, and presumably a desire to recoup pandemic losses. But it's hard not to wonder if luxury brands are also increasingly looking to court a different kind of consumer. Idealistic baristas need not apply.

At least with accessories, luxury houses are steadily moving away from selling aspirational goods to the upper-middle-class and toward outfitting the most moneyed customers across the globe. And it's not like they're hurting for clients. To keep up with demand, Herm s will open three new leather factories in France in the next two years, establish its first leather-working school and hire hundreds of craftspeople to add to its 4,300-strong workforce of Birkin-smiths.

That's a big part of what you pay for: unmatched craftsmanship and the finest materials, along with the allure of the brand name. And while a Zara tweed miniskirt "inspired" by the runway works just as well as the real article, a Zara flap bag just wouldn't satisfy in the same way.



I've also come to terms with the simple truth that a designer item, be it a bag, a pair of shoes or a coat, doesn't signal true style—at least not to me.

Still, it's a bit like watching house prices skyrocket to absurd levels and realizing you might need to make peace with renting forever. Amid elevated inflation levels, everything is starting to feel like a luxury—going out to dinner, filling a tank of gas, having a baby. Handbags, no matter the price, are still inherently practical objects meant to help you carry what you need for the day. I'm drawing the line at spending half of my RRSP on a piece of logo-stamped leather and metal, no matter how beguiling it is.

I've also come to terms with the simple truth that a designer item, be it a bag, a pair of shoes or a coat, doesn't signal true style—at least not to me. I have never seen a woman carrying an expensive purse and thought, "Wow, she's so stylish." My primary thought goes something like, "Wow, she's so rich." I'm loathe to throw truly ridiculous figures at a purchase just so another person can form false assumptions about my net worth. Is that admirable? Maybe. Maybe it's what I tell myself to soothe a yearning ego.

I don't see anything morally wrong with wanting beautiful, aspirational things—we're wired for it, and brands have done an excellent job at hiring beautiful, aspirational people to sell us on the dream. And truthfully, I haven't stopped wanting. But my attention has turned toward alter-

native It bags, like vintage styles that fly under the radar (at least, until the brands reissue them anew, at 1,000 per cent markup). I like to spend my downtime scouring second-hand shops for gems from Y2K, like a sweet little Prada with bohemian whip-stitching in a joyous marigold hue. I don't mind some wear and tear, be it a love-worn patch of suede or scratches from a past owner's nails. A designer logo, naturally, doesn't hurt. My Tom Ford-era Gucci bag, scored for \$99 at an antique store, fills me with pride about as much as a material possession can.

I didn't get a Chanel bag when I hit 30; that's life. But I did get something else: the luxury of not worrying about what some teenager—or anyone—thinks of the bag I carry.

## THE KIT

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## THE KIT X SHARK



# Level up

Shark's first foray into haircare is here. Three editors give their honest review

There's something about having a good hair day that can make you feel like you can take on anything. When our hair looks its best, we tend to feel our best. And when we feel our best, everything else seems to fall into place. So, when a tool comes along that makes achieving great hair days that much easier, we tend to take note.

Enter the Shark HyperAIR, a high-velocity smart hair dryer that delivers soft and shiny strands for all hair types while significantly cutting down on drying time and reducing damage. With a unique IQ 2-in-1 Concentrator, this dryer offers two modes: one for effortless pre-styling, and a second for precise smoothing and shaping. Ahead, we asked three editors to share their hair story and give their honest review of the new Shark HyperAIR.



SHARK HYPERAIR, \$229.99, SHARKCLEAN.CA



### ERICA NGAO

"What I liked the most was how quickly my hair dried. It cut my usual time by at least 10 minutes. The pre-styling mode was handy for a quick, all-over dry, while the precision styling mode helped concentrate the heat for a smooth finish. Flyaway strands are very noticeable with my straight hair and there was less of that. It was very easy to snap on the attachment and the sleek shape of the dryer was comfortable to hold."



### INGRIE WILLIAMS

"I liked how full my curls looked after using the dryer with the diffuser, and that there was still noticeable definition of my different curl patterns. What surprised me the most was how soft my hair felt afterwards, it was much softer to the touch compared to air drying. Suppleness is essential to curls to prevent breakage and gain length, so this is a big bonus for me. If I can save time on my styling routine and end up with healthier, longer hair, then it's a whole new ball game, folks!"



### LESA HANNAH

"I tried the dryer with the IQ Curl-Defining Diffuser attachment, which is ideal for preserving texture. After using the diffuser on the setting for long hair, my texture was even better and much of it remained for the next day. If you rely heavily on blow drying and heat styling, this is a worthy investment. It's got a lot in common with [a top competitor] but is half the cost."

## THE KIT X VALENTINO



Valentino Garavani for Valentino Beauty

# Red alert



### FEAST YOUR EYES

Delivering multi-tonal dimension, Twin Liner features a liquid ink tip and smooth gel colour in four dual shades for a look that lasts up to 16 hours.

**TWIN LINER EYELINER (\$52)**

A single stroke of Magnificent Mascara balances volume with weightlessness courtesy of its curled fiber brush, giving lashes an all day, feathery-light impact.

**MAGNIFICENT MASCARA (\$44)**

A multi-use creamy powder in 12 shades, Eye2Cheek can be worn on the eyes, the cheeks or both for an impactful draped runway look.

**EYE2CHEEK BLUSH AND EYESHADOW (\$65)**

Featuring a liquid ink micro-liner, shading pencil and brow brush, this triple-ended brow tool creates a multitude of brow shapes with ease.

**BROW TRIP EYEBROW LINER (\$52)**



### PUCKER UP

Built from an extensive colour palette of 50 shades from red to blue, Rosso Valentino is a refillable lipstick that features Roma-Light Complex, a colour booster to ensure luminosity and intensity. Designed to flatter all skin tones, Valentino Beauty has taken its undertone expertise to the next level by applying it to its shade range.

**ROSSO VALENTINO REFILLABLE LIPSTICK (\$73)**

Inspired by the runway and designed specifically for the lips, this rosy multi-use glitter has zero fall out and adds a bold finishing touch to any look.

**DREAMDUST HIGH IMPACT GLITTER (\$44)**



### FACE FORWARD

'Light Lasting' technology is used in this semi-matte foundation, making it a buildable, breathable and remarkably long-lasting formula. The secret is 'Floating Powder', a voluminous yet lightweight ingredient that can absorb up to three times its own weight.

**VERY VALENTINO 24 HOUR LIQUID FOUNDATION (\$80)**

A hyaluronic acid-infused highlighter, V-Lighter brings light and radiance to the skin whether worn alone, as a primer beneath foundation or as a highlighter over top.

**V-LIGHTER FACE BASE PRIMER AND HIGHLIGHTER (\$69)**

Available in five shades and a universal bronzer with a fine satin finish, the Go Clutch features both a powder and a lipstick and is made for collectors. The refillable compact features a chic removable crossbody chain, to carry in iconic Valentino fashion.

**GO CLUTCH REFILLABLE COMPACT POWDER (\$290)**



A full-page portrait of a woman with blonde hair and green eyes, looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a dark navy blue, structured coat with a wide notched lapel and a square neckline. The coat has visible stitching details. The background is a solid, warm beige color.

# MaxMara