

Sex and the City's newest accessory says a lot about how status symbols have changed over the past 20 years.

Date: July 20, 2021

From: The Business Insider

Publisher: Newstex LLC

Document Type: Article

Length: 627 words

Lexile Measure: 1290L

Full Text:

Carrie Bradshaw has swapped Fendi purses for WYNC tote bags in the " (<https://www.insider.com/younger-bold-type-ending-leaves-nyc-glam-television-hole-satc-2021-6>) Sex and the City" reboot.

It mirrors the (<https://www.businessinsider.com/how-discreet-wealth-status-symbols-affected-education-health-costs-2021-2>) rise of discreet wealth, in which the elite invest in less ostentatious status symbols.

By carrying a WNYC tote bag, Bradshaw is signaling her cultural capital to others.

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Production on the "Sex And The City" reboot is in full swing - and, just like that, Carrie Bradshaw's bags are making headlines yet again.

Her newest accessory isn't a Hermes or Fendi. It's a (<https://www.wmagazine.com/fashion/carrie-bradshaw-wnyc-tote-bags-satc>) local radio tote bag. Specifically, a WNYC tote bag. That's the city's local NPR affiliate, known for beloved mainstay Brian Lehrer and podcasts like 2 Dope Queens.

It may seem like a far cry from the buckled, buffed, and designer-name engraved bags of yore. This is, after all, a show that treated a main character moving to Brooklyn as akin to exile. But the times have changed since the early 2000's. Brooklyn is (<https://www.businessinsider.com/brooklyn-real-estate-demand-prices-statistics-coronavirus-recovery-2021-1>) hotter than Manhattan. Carrie's freelance rate of \$4 a word went from being absurdly high (but perhaps in reach for the biggest writer), to practically unheard of. Mr. Big probably needs reading glasses to figure out what Carrie's latest Instagram means (and why she's a #girlboss). The litterati of New York are tatted, Warby Parker-ed, and toting their laptops in WNYC or New Yorker tote bags.

We couldn't help but wonder: Does Bradshaw's tote bag truly mark the end of an era of conspicuous consumption?

The evolution of the 'it' bag mirrors the rise of discreet wealth

At the turn of the millennium, owning a Fendi Baguette bag or Gucci belt bag - both of which could be found in Bradshaw's unrealistic walk-in closet - were markers of elite status.

This kind of "conspicuous consumption" has been present (<https://www.businessinsider.com/wealth-versus-status-social-class-difference-2019-5>) since the Industrial Revolution, which birthed the new social class of the nouveau riche who used material items to signify their social status.

But showing off wealth is no longer the way to signify having wealth. The top 1% have been spending less on material goods since 2007, according to Elizabeth Currid-Halkett in her book " (<https://elizabethcurridhalkett.com/books/>) The Sum of Small Things: A Theory of an Aspirational Class." Instead, she wrote, they're turning to " (<https://www.businessinsider.com/discreet-wealth-new-status-symbol-rich-people-2018-11>) inconspicuous consumption," investing in intangible things that "signal their cultural capital" to each other.

"This new elite cements its status through prizing knowledge and building cultural capital, not to mention the spending habits that go with it," Currid-Halkett wrote, adding, "Eschewing an overt materialism, the rich are investing significantly more in education, retirement, and health - all of which are immaterial, yet cost many times more than any handbag a middle-income consumer might buy."

Bradshaw has stuck with the times, swapping out her designer handbags for tote bags that say less about money and more about knowledge. (To be sure, old habits die hard: Bradshaw has still (<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2021/07/10585301/carrie-bradshaw-fendi-baguette-reboot>) clung onto her Fendi Baguette, but even that signals her valuation of a vintage item, in line with today's nostalgic Y2K fashion trends.)

By walking around with a WNYC tote, Bradshaw is implying to her fellow elite that she both listens to WYNC and donates money to support a public media institution. The same could be said for sporting a New Yorker tote bag.

Displaying such knowledge, such as referring to New Yorker articles, expresses the elite's cultural capital, giving a person leverage to climb the social ladder and make connections, Currid-Halkett wrote.

"In short, inconspicuous consumption confers social mobility," she said.

In an age of (<https://www.businessinsider.com/pandemic-divergence-rich-and-poor-americans-inequality-k-shaped-recovery-2021-1>) widening inequality, a Birkin bag is out - and virtue-signaling your status as a public radio supporter is in.

Read the original article on (<https://www.businessinsider.com/satc-reboot-carrie-bradshaw-iconic-bags-status-symbol-discreet-wealth-2021-7>) Business Insider

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Source Citation (MLA 9th Edition)

"Sex and the City's newest accessory says a lot about how status symbols have changed over the past 20 years." *The Business Insider*, 20 July 2021, p. NA. *Gale Academic OneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A669100684/AONE?u=nysl_me_newyorku&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=40c41fd7. Accessed 29 Sept. 2024.

Gale Document Number: GALE|A669100684