



All about the lines

Claudine Sawan's bags are turning the world into a fantasia of colourful delights



What was the idea behind your latest collection?

I was looking at different structural techniques and patterns, and I decided to base it all on fire. When fire burns into the wood you end up with a scaly effect; you can see a lot of this pattern in the collection, but it's much more kind of fractal and sharper. The colour of the pieces are also very severe, either a really bright red or a black.

How do you come up with these ideas?

I keep it quite abstract so I don't really decide beforehand. The basic design sort of works itself out, and once that happens I go along with the flow. This season was quite more deliberate than others: I started with an idea and then worked from there. I think the first thing that I put down was the colour. I'm still into the same shapes so they move on quite quickly; the colours, which are pivotal to the pieces, I can change quite a lot.

What reaction do you usually get?

It's really weird because people always talk about art deco when they see the bags! And they go on a lot about architecture. People normally have quite a strong reaction to them, I think.

Tell us about the pattern.

I love lines; I'm essentially a drawer, have been since I was 16. The bags are a kind of an interpretation of these lines, an outlet of sorts, because all the patterns draw out the form, so they all follow the shape. It's essentially drawing on a three-dimensional objects.

Have you been to the Middle East?

No I haven't, and my dad is Lebanese! So let's just say not yet...

What about Mediterranean cuisine?

I was raised on it! We were brought up half in LA and half in London. When we were in LA we used to eat quite a lot of Lebanese food.

Who's your favourite designer?

Vivienne Westwood. She has a very different approach to clothes design; she never loses sight of the beauty side of it. I think there are a lot of designers who have really strong ideas, but it's really difficult for them to get those strong ideas across without losing the fact that the clothes are essentially meant to be beautiful when they're worn. And then of course you get the opposite, the people who makes clothes that are really beautiful, but don't really say much more than that, and so end up quite shallow. I think she has a really good balance.