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By Lynn Donn

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There's an unmistakable charm about a cigar box purse or handbag. Neat, petite and elegant, and decorated with romantic, quaint and quirky images from a bygone era, these design gems are becoming increasingly sought after fashion accessories. You can buy cigar box purses and handbags made from real cigar boxes, or they can be decorated with just about any image you can imagine, including classic movie stars, fashion photographs, dancers, animals, flowers or abstract designs. If you shop around online, you'll find a huge range of cigar box purses and handbags, many of them uniquely designed and sold by the artist who created them. You can even have a cigar box purse or handbag custom made using a favorite image of a pet, a special place, person or thing, or perhaps a cherished old photograph of a great aunt or grandmother taken in a bygone era. Any image is suitable, so long as it's your own, and there is no copyright existing in the photograph or artwork. Or if you're particularly creative, you could even make the purse or handbag yourself.

Making your own cigar box purse or handbag.

It's very simple to make a cigar box purse or handbag yourself, and you'll have the satisfaction of having something which is absolutely unique. A handbag or purse you've made yourself also makes a lovely gift for someone special. You can buy a simple wooden box, or a real cigar box if you can find one, some paint and lacquer, and the hinges, corners, handle and clasp from purse hardware suppliers which you'll find online. Of course, you'll also need a photograph or piece of artwork to use on the box. Choosing an image, a color scheme and purse hardware pieces which work together artistically is great fun, and very satisfying when it all comes together. It's a very simple job to paint the box, glue on the image, cover the whole thing with a few coats of lacquer, then attach all of the purse hardware components.

Lynn Donn is the webmaster for <http://www.unique-handbags-and-purses.com> Her website offers tips and information on all the latest trends in purses and handbags for the fashion enthusiast.

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Latest Fashion Trends In Unique Handbags And Purses

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If you're looking for something a little different, there are literally thousands of beautifully crafted unique handbags and purses available for purchase online. If you're tired of the mass-produced offerings you tend to find at the mall, the online handbag, purse and fashion accessory market is an exciting and exotic new world.

The variety of unique handbag and purse designs keeps getting bigger, better and more innovative all the time, but as with every kind of fashion accessory, interesting trends emerge with every new season. Here is a brief rundown of what's coming in unique purses and handbags in 2006.

Cloth Purses

Cloth purses are very casual fashion items, so colorful fabrics and whimsical patterns are the strongest trend. If you love bold colors and striking contrasts you'll have a great time shopping for cloth purses this season.

A cloth purse is mostly a spring/summer fashion accessory, so expect to see warm colors, and light breezy cotton or nylon fabrics. Fresh, summery patterned fabrics with flowers, fruits and ladybugs are always popular.

Also very fashionable is the clever and practical reversible cloth purse. You can literally turn the purse inside out to reveal the alternative fabric pattern, so you have two purses in one.

Monogrammed handbags

Monogrammed bags and purses never really go out of style, and this season we'll see a huge range of colors, shapes sizes and styles.

A strong upcoming trend is leather sling hipster handbags with elegantly embossed initials or a name. Soft leather is a beautiful fabric for handbags because it's durable, always very stylish, and it goes with everything. Sling handbags are very comfortable to carry, and perfect either for business or as a casual accessory.

Monogrammed tote bags

Tote bags are the most casual fashion accessory of all, and perfect for the beach, for picnics, or for a little shopping. Monogrammed tote bags are also great for kids to carry their school books or gym clothes, and having their initials or name printed on the bag means they won't lose it.

Soft cotton canvas is the classic fabric for tote bags, and we'll see an abundance of canvas tote bags this season.

The big trend for monogrammed tote bags will be big initials, printed across the whole side panel of the

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bag in big, bold colors. A single first initial of your first name as a monogram has a casual, whimsical kind of feel.

Dog purses

Everyone loves dogs, which is why the fashion for handbags, tote bags and purses decorated with a full panel photo of a gorgeous dachshund, poodle, beagle, yorkie or dalmatian just keeps getting stronger and stronger every year. Dog purses are a great gift idea for anyone whose best friend is their beloved hound.

Custom-made dog purses are also becoming more and more popular. You can have your own photograph of your dog printed onto a handbag, so your bag, like your dog, will be truly one of a kind.

Photo purses

Photo purses are simply ultra-cool, and the most individual and personal of fashion statements. You can have your own photo of anything you like printed onto a purse or handbag, like a special person in your life, your cat, dog or bird, or even your car.

A very trendy idea is to use a romantic old photograph of a relative as a model for your photo purse, so you can cherish their memory wherever you go.

Initial purses

Initial purses are a fashion accessory with a personal touch, and they make wonderful gifts. You can have just about any kind of purse printed, embroidered or embossed with a single initial or set of two or three initials in a wide variety of styles.

As for handbags, leather will be a big trend in the upcoming season for purses. We'll see lots of small leather purses with a comfortable sling shoulder strap, elegantly embossed with two or three initials.

Cigar box purses

Cigar box purses are another strong trend for the coming year. They're literally made from a wooden cigar box, fitted with a clasp and a handle, and embossed with an artistic or photographic image.

The most fashionable cigar box purses are decorated with advertising images from the glamorous 1920's and 30's. European advertising artwork from that period has a particularly elegant and alluring style, so we'll be seeing a lot of Cinzano, Cognac and French Perfume labels on cigar box purses.

Hobo purses

Hobo purses can be cool and casual for shopping, or groovy and glamorous to go with evening wear.

Casual style hobo purses come in suede or leather, and soft colors like pastel pinks, beige, cream and

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white are very much in vogue.

A new look for hobo purses which is on the way in is a small purse in a gold or silver mesh fabric, or even ultra-glamorous sequins and rhinestones. These purses are a new take on the traditional evening purse, and make an eye-catching alternative.

Clutch handbags

Clutch purses and handbags have an elegant, streamlined look, but they're the perfect size to carry all those little necessities.

The big look for clutch purses and clutch handbags in the coming year will be all glamour. Shiny metallic gold, silver, bronze and platinum shades will be the strong colors of the season, in soft suede leather.

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