

Loco for the Logo

CHARTING THE RISE AND FALL OF FASHION'S
ULTIMATE STATUS-SIGNIFIER

Words: Anna Solomon

In 1925, Coco Chanel did something that had never been done before. She took her initials, interlocked them in an immortal embrace, and put them on her clothes. Something about the monogram, like an artist's signature on a painting, imbued the garments with a kind of magic. So began the cult of the label.

Logomania was in full swing by the 1960s. Fendi's double-F insignia was conceived not long after Karl Lagerfeld took the helm in 1965, and Dior's Marc Bohan wasn't far behind, introducing the Oblique monogram in 1970. Valentino Garavani released pieces featuring inverted columns of Vs around the same time that Elizabeth Taylor and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis were photographed wearing Gucci's iconic GG.

In the United States, logo mania reached fever pitch in the 80s, driven almost single-handedly by one man: Harlem-based designer and haberdasher Daniel Day, aka Dapper Dan. Day began screen printing goods with designer logos, and dressed the likes of Mike Tyson, Big Daddy Kane, LL Cool J, Salt-N-Pepa, P. Diddy and Run-DMC in his monogram-heavy ensembles. He took rarefied labels away from their squeaky-clean European roots, making them desirable – and accessible – to a new audience.

Visible logos were no longer the preserve of Hollywood doyens and First Ladies – they were for platinum rappers and Upper East Side it-girls. Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie drowned in Dior; Louis Vuitton's Neverfull totes hung from arms everywhere; and Juicy Couture released its infamous diamante tracksuit. The logo reigned as a status symbol in an era of true monogram mania.

During the decade that followed the 2008 financial

crisis, the supremacy of the statement label waned. Flashing one's cash felt out of sync in a world where so many had lost so much. Austerity took over both in governments and in fashion, and the idea of monogramming became gauche.

But, as we've learned, trends are ephemeral. In 2017, Demna Gvasalia of Vetements launched a tongue-in-cheek collaboration with DHL – splashing the courier's mundane logo across tops and raincoats – and Christopher Bailey rebooted one of fashion's most recognisable motifs: the Burberry check, which had been all but abandoned after being hijacked by 'chavs' and football hooligans in the early 2000s.

Logomania had been reignited, and it shows no sign of slowing down. Alessandro Michele's maximalist revolution regularly features the interlocking Gs, often overlaid with motifs of flowers or animals. In 2021, Versace took inspiration from its Medusa monogram with a collection entitled 'La Greca'. Billie Eilish has been an ambassador for logomania – appearing on red carpets in head-to-toe Gucci, Chanel and LV – as has the Kardashian clan.

But what does the monogram mean today? When Eilish sports tiny coupled Gs on her fingernails, she isn't motivated by the same things as Paris Hilton – the woman who once wore a tank top saying 'Stop Being Poor' (OK, apparently that image was photoshopped, but the point still stands). Nowadays, sartorial subtlety is less of a status symbol and more a kind of irony.

At the root of it all is the fact that a good monogram works. It is the visual equivalent of a catchy song: succinct, appealing, timeless. Trends may fluctuate, but a designer logo is back in style. For now.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
VERSACE FW21 COLLECTION;
GUCCI ARIA COLLECTION;
BALMAIN; GUCCI ARIA
COLLECTION; BALMAIN

