



GLOVES, once de rigueur in EVERY woman's WARDROBE, were among THE MANY style CASUALTIES of the '60s Youthquake. NOW they're enjoying a RUNWAY and red-carpet RENAISSANCE

words TESS DE VIVIE DE RÉGIE

You're never fully dressed without a . . . pair of gloves? Or so it would seem. In February, Taylor Swift appeared at the 2024 Grammys in a strapless Schiaparelli gown and black opera gloves. In June, Nicola Coughlan channelled her *Bridgerton* character, Penelope Featherington, in a blush Rodarte dress and oxblood gloves at the show's Season 3, Part 2 premiere in London – a nod to the 'regencycore' style the series is credited as having inspired. Countless riffs on the glove trend – leather, velvet, sheer, colourful – have been cropping up on red carpets and runways, notably at recent collections by Miu Miu, Vivienne Westwood and Alaïa.

It's a phenomenon that Dublin-based glovemaker Paula Rowan – whose designs have been worn by Catherine, Princess of Wales and Taylor Swift – has noticed. "My business has been growing naturally over the years but the recent appearance of elbow-length gloves on the red carpet is playing a role in this growth," she reflects.

In part, she credits the formal and ladylike fashions seen in period dramas like *Downton Abbey*, *Bridgerton* and *The Crown* for the return of the accessory. "People see a glove as a piece to complete an outfit."

"Since the '60s we have seen a relentless trend from a formal to an informal world," says leather expert Mike Redwood, whose historical book *Gloves and Glove-making* was published in 2016. During the Youthquake, when Baby Boomers began to come of age and cast off the fashions of their parents' generation, gloves were collateral damage. Our lifestyles shifted, too. "In the '60s, more people used public transport and cars rarely had decent heaters," notes Redwood. But as cars became ubiquitous and airconditioned, the need for gloves diminished.

COUNTLESS RIFFS ON THE GLOVE TREND HAVE BEEN CROPPING UP ON RED CARPETS AND RUNWAYS

There was a marked uptick in glove sales – albeit disposable ones – during the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of May in 2020, the world's largest glove manufacturer, Malaysia-based Top Glove, had enjoyed a 365 per cent YOY jump in net profits during the preceding quarter, although this surge, unsurprisingly, has petered out post-pandemic.

Redwood guesses that Dents, established in 1777, can lay claim to the title of world's longest standing glovemaker; the British company notably crafted the gloves worn by Elizabeth II and her father, George VI, at their respective coronations. In 2012, Chanel acquired French firm Causse, which is part of the maison's Métiers d'art stable of artisans that champions specialist techniques and crafts. Causse created Karl Lagerfeld's trademark fingerless mittens, as well as the elegant opera gloves seen in Chanel's fall 2024 show. As to why gloves have made a comeback, Louise Larroque of Chanel's Métiers d'art offers: "We've noticed a return to classic style, with gloves seen as an elegant and refined accessory."

"It's a favourable season for leather accessories at David Jones, with both gloves and belts seeing double-digit growth in sales [in the first half of 2024]," observes the retailer's buyer manager of footwear & accessories, Liz Ormando, "This season we're also seeing customers opting for lighter shades of leather gloves across a neutral colour palette."

In 2023, the Italian Leather Research Institute organised its 'Glove School' exhibition – which headed to New York's Italian Cultural Institute in January 2024 – featuring demonstrations from 'glove masters' on leather cutting and creating a perfectly fitting glove. The tradition of glovemaking remains strong in Italy, represented by the likes of Sermoneta, founded in Rome in 1965, and Omega, which hails from Naples, regarded as the cradle of the country's glovemaking industry. Helmed by fifth-generation maître gantier Alberto Squillace, Omega regularly collaborates with Jean Paul Gaultier and Rick Owens and celebrated its centenary last year. Squillace notes that Omega's retail sales have almost doubled since 2018-2019.

"Despite modernisation, our product remains faithful to the savoir-faire born in Naples during the 17th century," says Squillace. "It is essential to keep up with the times, but important to never betray the authenticity of our product. Especially after the pandemic, consumers prefer to buy less but have a quality product, rich in history." A promising shift for the clutch of artisanal glovemakers still dotted across the globe. **HB**



OPPOSITE PAGE Miu Miu Fall 2024. THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: Yvette Guilbert: Linger, Longer, Loo by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec; Miu Miu Fall 2024; Max Mara Fall 2024.