

InStyle

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OF

FALL FASHION!

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InStyle



It's in the BAG

Up-and-coming accessories artists shine at the **Independent Handbag Designer Awards**, the Oscars of indie purses

It was a nail-biter at NYC's Parsons The New School for Design this past summer when a clutch of finalists—drawn from more than 900 applicants in 28 countries—vied for the top title in this competition hosted by InStyle and Handbag Designer 101. “We’re looking at the Kate Spade of tomorrow,” said Spade’s creative director Deborah Lloyd, who served on the judging panel and was honored with the Iconoclast Award. Project Runway’s Tim Gunn, a presenter, added, “There’s a tremendous pool of talent out there. I’m always eager to see who rises to the top.” Here, we take a look at those whose arm candy was judged the sweetest. —**GRACE LEE**

what's NOW!



BEST IN OVERALL STYLE AND DESIGN
CATHERINE MEYER FOR FOLUS

“The Laced Julia is a versatile, everyday bag, but the details lend a bit of edge,” says the 28-year-old NYC designer, who scored the opportunity to design a limited-edition bag for Kate Spade and a capsule collection for Saks. \$373 at Verve, 212-675-6693.

BEST GREEN
ANDREW KRUMHOLTZ FOR ESCAMA STUDIO



“Being sustainable means more than repurposing post-consumer materials,” says Krumholz, 43, of San Francisco, who used almost 900 recycled pop-tabs for this bag. “We’ve also provided work for many Brazilian artisans and their families.” \$90, escamastudio.com

BEST STUDENT MADE
SI KIM, RECENT GRADUATE OF LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION



“My background is not in fashion, but I’ve studied art and worked as a graphic designer for years,” says the 27-year-old South Korean native, who now lives in London. Kim applied a Japanese origami technique called Sonobe, as well as design software Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator, to create the polyhedral shapes on her winning entry. For more information on Kim’s designs, go to noj.usatabel.com/si.kim

MOST SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE
DALIA PASCAL FOR DALIA PASCAL



“Most of the textiles I used are Mayan, recycled from old dresses, capes and tablecloths,” says the 41-year-old Mexico City designer. “They’re collected by a community of women in the border area of southern Mexico, some of whom have been battered by spouses. They go from town to town gathering fabric, and they make a living doing it.” \$255, vogueit.com

what's NOW!

BEST HANDMADE
BRIANA SMITH FOR B. THALL



“Those are leather strands with hair still attached,” says Smith, 29, whose creations are made by hand in her Primrose Hill, London, studio. This bag took a whopping 50 hours to complete—and left Smith in a shaggy situation. “I looked like I’d been rolling around with cats!” \$2,600, bthall.com

MOST INNOVATIVE
Inspired by Mark
MICHELLE VALE FOR MICHELLE VALE



Awarded by Mark, the beauty company devoted to multifunctional, customizable goods, this honor went to an NYC designer with a complementary versatility. “The straps are convertible,” says Vale, 35, “and the removable hardware can be swapped out for silver or gold, depending on your mood.” \$165, \$40 for extra hardware set, michellevale.com

BEST USE OF CRYSTALLIZED SWAROVSKI ELEMENTS
AMIE KESTENBERG



Inspired by Australia's Blue Ring Octopus



“I love to push design to the limit,” said the 23-year-old Melbourne native, who was moved by one particularly brightly hued cephalopod to use 10 different colored Swarovski crystals in various sizes to embellish her outrageous, one-of-a-kind evening bag. \$1,000, 212-966-9344

InStyle FAN FAVORITE
VERONICA SUAREZ FOR ERIC HANDBAGS BY VERONICA



“My parents are jewelry designers, so I’ve been around art and fashion my whole life,” says the 21-year-old University of California, Los Angeles, student. (She received more than 65,000 votes on InStyle.com to earn her Fan Fave title.) “This bag has a lush, suede-like interior and comes with a removable gold-tone chain for wearing over the shoulder.” \$98, 714-427-2929

A Past Champ Soars

After scoring the first IHDA for Best in Overall Style and Design in 2012, **KATHERINE KWEE** has made a name for herself with her signature Chinese Eternity knot-inspired creations. “Winning not only helped me gain exposure,” says Kwei, “it gave me a confidence boost and validation that my designs weren’t crazy!” You can spot her knotty little bags on stars like Blake Lively and Jennifer Lopez, and on the shelves at Saks.



\$645
katherinekwei.com