

SIMPLE STYLE

GLOVES

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

During the nippier months, it's hard to imagine life without gloves. Sure, you can tug your sleeves over your hands like a disaffected teenager, but why would you when you can pull on a garment designed to keep each digit protected in its own envelope of warmth? And there are so many different types to tempt you – from tailored, leather ones that make you feel like a fully fledged grown-up, to jolly knitted ones in cheerful colours, to soft cashmere pairs that are a wrench to take off. There are even 'smart' gloves that allow you to use your phone while wearing them.

These days, gloves are mostly worn as a functional item; the last thing you pull on before stepping outside and facing whatever the weather is throwing at you. To see them merely as utilitarian, though, is to miss a trick. Gloves can provide an accent of colour, an eye-catching detail that enlivens an otherwise drab winter outfit.

Wearing gloves as a fashion statement started as early as the 13th century in Paris (glove makers or *gantiers* were recognised with their own guild) and reached its height in England in the 16th century. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, elaborate, embroidered and jewelled pairs



were worn as a signifier of wealth and status, and much favoured by the Queen herself. Over the next century, as sleeve lengths shortened, gloves gradually extended up the arm reaching the elbow and beyond.

Technical advances – particularly the invention of glove-making machine, the Gloving Donkey, in 1807 by James Winter – meant that gloves could be mass produced, and led to their democratisation.

Long, buttoned gloves – in three sizes depending on the length of the sleeve: to the wrist ('matinee'); elbow; and over the the elbow ('opera') – were worn widely with evening dress and came to epitomise elegance and sophistication.

Apart from a revival in the 1940 and 1950s – championed by Christian Dior as an integral part of his New Look when they were worn in a variety of lengths, in every colour – gloves lost their fashionable cachet over time. Which is a shame. Gloves are more than mere hand-warming additions to a winter coat. They are an opportunity to accessorise with panache, to introduce the final, stylish flourish. **S**

“Gloves provide an eye-catching detail that enlivens an otherwise drab outfit”

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THE UPDATE



THE CLASSIC

Lara leather panelled gloves | £45

Leather one side, shearling the other – for nimbleness and warmth.
frenchconnection.com



TWO GREAT TWISTS

Very Clever Gloves | £25

Made with smartphone-friendly yarn to keep you toasty while you text.
seasaltcornwall.co.uk



Wool & cashmere stripe gloves | £18

No danger of chilly wrists in these luxuriously long and snug beauties.
toa.st