

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Balenciaga faces lawsuit over allegedly stolen tote bag design

July 30, 2018



The two bags share a significant amount of design details. Image credit: Official complaint filing

By STAFF REPORTS

French fashion company Balenciaga is being sued by a New York-based souvenir company for allegedly copying a tote bag design.

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The lawsuit was brought by City Merchandise, Inc, a company that makes souvenir tote bags commonly seen in shops across New York. Balenciaga's designer Demna Gvasalia has been accused of similar acts of design theft in the past, giving the accusation some extra weight.

Design theft

Late on July 27, the lawsuit was brought against Balenciaga by City Merchandising over the design of a New York City tote bag.

The designs are remarkably similar, using the same color palette, font, overall design and similar dimensions.

This story was first reported by [Fashionista](#), which was actually named in the lawsuit. The publication's editor in chief humorously tweeted about the similarity between the two bags, which the plaintiff's legal team cites in their official complaint.

Alyssa Vingan, the editor-in-chief of Fashionista, also noted in her tweet that the original souvenir bag sells for about \$20 while the Balenciaga version is listed as nearly \$2,000.

Left: A souvenir NYC tote bag in the JFK airport gift shop. Right: The Balenciaga version that's retailing for \$1950 right now. Demna, you sly dog! pic.twitter.com/dWG2Q3R3pP

— Alyssa Vingan Klein (@alyssavingan) February 25, 2018

Big fashion houses are accustomed to knock-offs and cheap counterfeits floating around, but when the tables are

turned and designer labels are the ones accused of plagiarism, the issue becomes more complicated.

This was demonstrated in two recent high-profile instances of a big-name fashion brand being publicly accused of stealing designs from smaller and less-notable designers. First, Gucci was accused of stealing a design from New York designer Dapper Dan, and Balenciaga followed soon after with allegations that it had stolen designs from a Ruff Ryders shirt ([see story](#)).

Balenciaga will most likely fight this lawsuit. The label has previously been accused of copying from Ikea, but the Swedish home goods retailer responded with humor rather than legal action ([see story](#)).

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