

The New York Times  
**Sunday Styles**

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 1999



**ON THE STREET**

## Handbags That Hold A Bit of the Past

A designer handbag popularity sweepstakes has many contenders. Every top fashion designer, along with the traditional quality-leather-goods houses, has started a collection of bags, making this the year of the accessory. Now leading the race are Fendi and Gucci. Both have dipped into their archives

and revived softly unconstructed bags that fit snugly under the arm, an idea that came from Chanel earlier in the century to free women's hands. The Fendi bag (top row, except far right), which returned in 1997 in one fabric, took the lead last year after it started to use other materials too. This spring, its suprema-

cy is being challenged by Gucci's revival of a 1960's winner (bottom row), in both the original green-and-red-banded monogram model and in a bevy of new and flowery colors. A new contender may soon challenge the duo: an oversize bag by Louis Vuitton (top row, far right) is gaining status as a weekend carryall.