

MIDTOWN

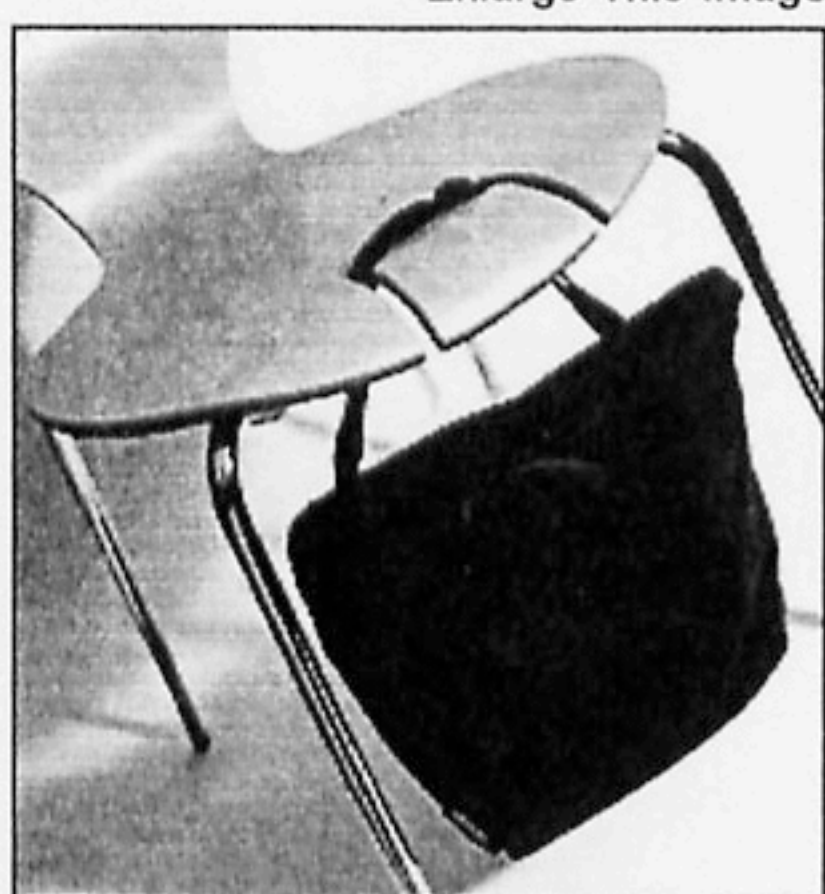
The Haute Design Approach to Foiling Urban Thieves

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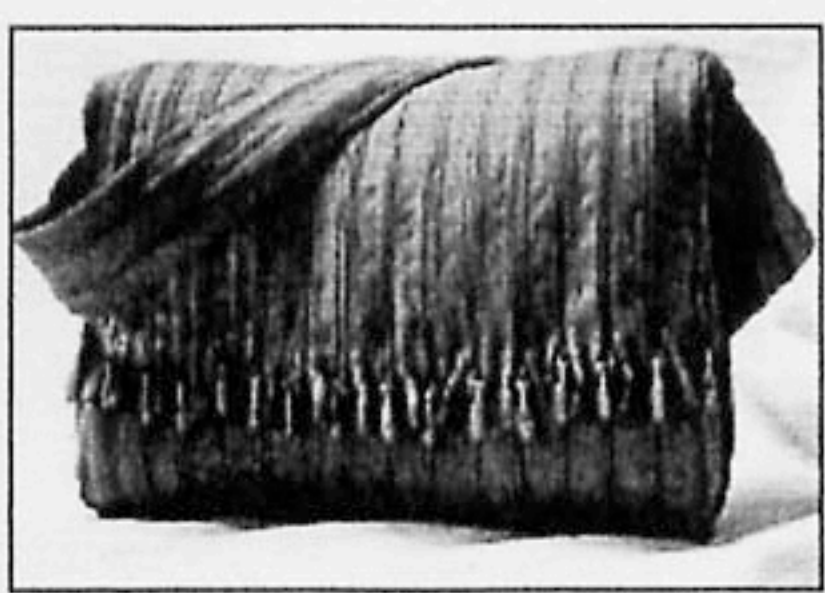
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Although formerly dicey neighborhoods like the meatpacking district have experienced both a sharp drop in crime and a proliferation of well-dressed cafe-goers, the city has yet to do away entirely with either purse snatchings or fashion victims.

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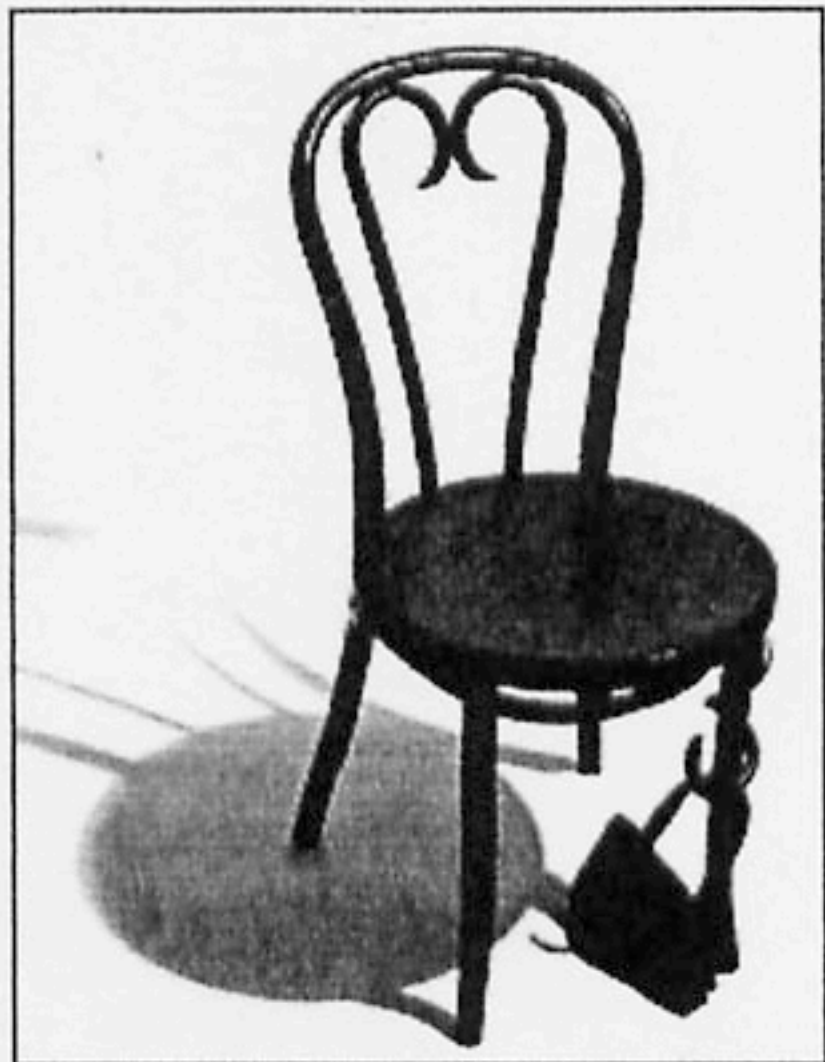
Design Against Crime

HANDS OFF Crime prevention with a Danish modern accent.

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Design Against Crime

ZIPPY A fringed handbag made entirely of zippers.



Design Against Crime

HOOKED UP An update on a classic cafe chair.

But if a group of scholars and designers in London has its way, a new wave of cleverly designed bags and cafe furniture will help foil the city's thieves while remaining easy on the eyes. In an era when many young women, unaware of the city's more sinister years, tend to be casual about

where they put their handbags, such items may fill an unexpected niche.

"Design doesn't have to look criminal," explained Lorraine Gamman, director of the Design Against Crime Research Center at the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. Several of the center's stylish thief-thwarting chairs and bags are included in "Safe: Design Takes On Risk," an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art through Jan. 2.

The two Design Against Crime chairs, both riffs on classic styles, are elegant in their simplicity. The Series 7 chair, a curvaceous Danish modern model executed in blond plywood, has two slots cut out at the front of the seat, on which a woman can safely loop the handle of her bag. The Thonet chair, an update of a classic 19th-century bent-wood design seen at cafes around the city, appears to have sprouted an extra vine, which entwines itself around one of the chair legs to provide a secure hook for the occupant's bag.

"Often it seems like there are cunning thieves out there outwitting us," Dr. Gamman said, explaining the genesis of the designs, "but really we usually just get distracted and put our bags down."

The chairs, which were created with comment from