

Something Vintage

by Gillian - Friday, January 23, 2015

<http://3storymagazine.com/vintage-gloves/>

Gloves. They don't just draw attention (thank you, Amal Clooney), they have a rich history. Vintage fashion expert [Claudine Villardito](#) explains.

Photo courtesy of Black Cat Vintage

Amal Clooney's wearing of white opera gloves to the Golden Globes incited [a curious backlash by some fashion critics](#), who felt their use was pretentious. So controversial was her choice, in fact, that the gloves rated their own Twitter account ([@msclooneygloves](#)), recalling a similar sartorial debate surrounding Angelina Jolie's bared leg at the 2012 Academy Awards ([@angelinajoliesleg](#)).

Photo courtesy of Black Cat Vintage

The Oscars ceremony on February 22nd will undoubtedly reveal the influence of Mrs. Clooney's choice on modern tastes (how many gloves will appear on the red carpet, we wonder?) Pop culture aside, history proves that gloves have been charged with emotional, social and cultural significance since about 1000 AD, when they were presented to new monarchs, bishops and church officials as tangible symbols of heightened status.

In the Middle Ages, noblemen received a glove when knighted, and incited duels by throwing down a gauntlet —literally “taking the gloves off” —to reveal a bare hand, a symbol of enmity. Later, court and government subordinates were known to gift their superiors with gloves of dog skin since canines were associated with extreme fidelity.

Photo courtesy of Black Cat Vintage

In the 1800s, propriety dictated that women of high social class should keep their hands covered at all times (including in bed) to denote purity. A century later, as illustrated in Season 4 of *Downton Abbey*, an ungloved woman risked more than her reputation if she was seen alone with a man who was not her spouse.

In a recent [PBS behind-the-scenes documentary about the show](#), actress Laura Carmichael revealed the significance of a scene where her character, Lady Edith, dines alone with a beau. Notably, Edith is gloveless. She's "practically naked," says Laura, whose character gets pregnant that evening. "She should have worn gloves," she laughs.

Who knew so much could be said by simply covering or uncovering one's hands? Now you do. And in the meantime, I'm keeping a very close eye on that Oscars red carpet. [Who knows what accessories it may bring?](#)

• **Claudine Villardito's store, Black Cat Vintage, has enough gloves to send a different message every day of the year. Open Saturdays 11 am – 4 pm through April 11, and by appointment. Or shop online at www.blackcatvintage.com**

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* **(Editor's note: Ordinarily we would tell you to tune in to your local PBS station for the current series of *Downton Abbey*, but since the PR peeps for the series won't allow us to publish even one image from the show, we're reluctant to. Oh but look.... I just did tell you to watch it. What a nice, generous person I am!)**

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