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Banker turns designer to mark Lehman 'death roll'

By Peter Aspden, Arts Correspondent

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It will be one of the more unusual items to mark the first anniversary of the global financial meltdown. But it could also become the cult accessory for all City workers who lost their job in the wake of the Lehman Brothers collapse: a luxurious, crocodile-skinned laptop bag, lined and branded with the bank's distinctive green logo.

"It is a little bit cathartic," said Caroline White, the designer of the "Luxury Death Roll", who was working on the bank's fund derivatives desk when it went under last September but has since made a radical career change to become a designer.

She is keeping the bag under wraps until its unveiling at the Maverik showroom in Shoreditch, east London, one of the centres of the capital's thriving contemporary art and design scene, on September 15, the first anniversary of the bank's collapse.

Ms White said that losing her job was a "huge shock" after 13 years in the sector - but it also made her re-assess her priorities.

"I didn't want to go into banking again," she said. "I sat back for a while and thought about what I really wanted to do, and one thing I have always been passionate about is fashion."

She decided to set up her own business, designing luxury goods under the brand name of Suki Shufu - and wanted to send a special message to former employees of the bank with her laptop case.

"It tells the story of someone who lived through the collapse and has come out of the other side." She said the bag used a crocodile exterior and a Lehman-branded interior - she plundered the lining from some of the bank's emergency packs she had taken away on her last day - "to represent the panic surrounding the horrific death roll that the bank spiralled into".

She has also commissioned an art work on the demise of Lehman Brothers.

The bag is being produced as a one-off piece, but Ms White is hoping to attract orders, "particularly from some of the bank's former senior managers".

But she will not be too unhappy if it does not sell. "It is still a great piece to have made," she said. "For all of those years I lived and breathed banking, and this shows that there are other directions out there."

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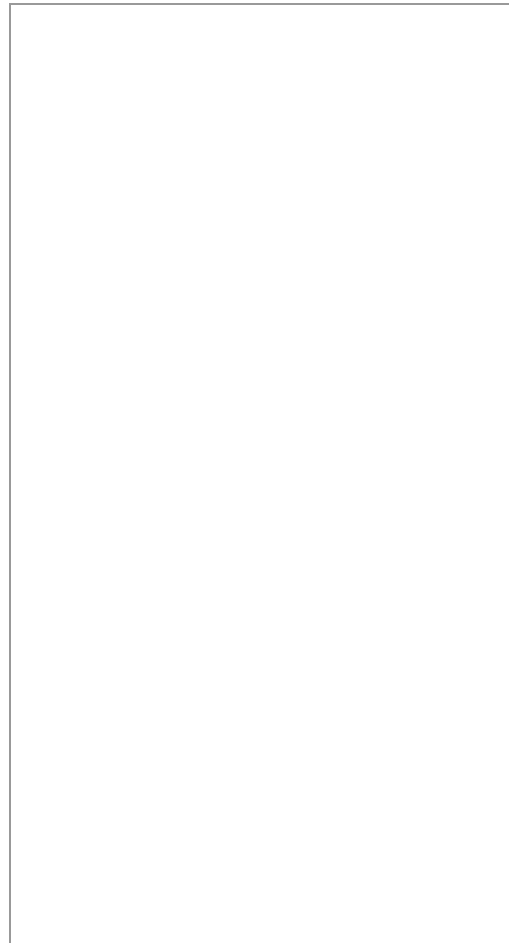
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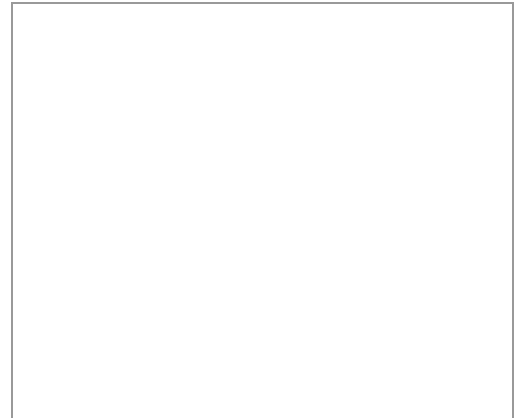
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