

SHOP TALK: 'Purse party' hostess sued by designers

New York designers sue over 'purse parties'

A Dublin woman arrested this year for selling alleged counterfeit purses at neighborhood parties is facing a counterfeiting lawsuit from four of the fashion world's biggest designers.

Kate Spade LLC, Gucci America Inc., Burberry Ltd. and Tiffany and Co., all based in New York, filed a trademark infringement lawsuit against Mary Curran on Sept. 28 in U.S. District Court in Columbus. Curran had no comment.

Curran was arrested in February by Dublin police after they executed a search warrant and found 602 allegedly counterfeit articles in her vehicle and a rented storage garage, the lawsuit says. Among the items seized by police were wallets and handbags that allegedly bore the trademarks of all four designers.

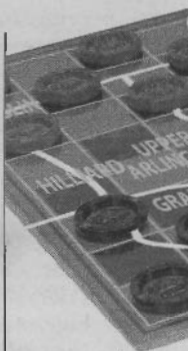
The designers are asking for \$1 million in damages for each trademark violated.

"This is theft," said Joseph R. Dreitler, a partner at Jones Day, the law firm in Columbus representing the designers.

"Clearly the intent was to make money off someone else's goodwill," he said.

Curran, the lawsuit said, was well-known in the Midwest for throwing "purse parties," where she allegedly sold counterfeit purses in people's homes. The lawsuit says that after the arrest, Curran avoided jail time by being placed in a diversion program. She also forfeited a 1999 Lexus SUV and more than \$3,000 in cash seized in the raid.

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