

The Dark Underbelly Of Counterfeit Handbags

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Reporting

(CBS 11 News) DALLAS Counterfeit designer handbags have become a popular new trend for label-conscious shoppers looking for a bargain. The lure of these bags is designer names without designer prices.

But experts are now warning that these bargains come at a price.

“It’s cheap for a reason,” warned Edward Kelly of Tilleke & Gibbins International, a lawfirm in southeast Asia that cracks down on counterfeiting. “It’s cheap because it’s probably been made by someone who’s exploited, indentured servant or even child labor.”

Kelly has seen the dark side firsthand, while on a raid in Thailand. “I saw 10 Chinese slave laborers chained to the machine to which they were working. They were being fed from dog bowls, being fed gruel and cabbage.” From that day, Kelly says he became passionate about educating the public on counterfeiting.

For the next few days, Kelly and other dignitaries will be lecturing at the International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition Conference at the Adams Mark Hotel.

“There’s really a dark underbelly to counterfeiting,” said International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition President Nils Montan. “The profits are used to support really terrible things.”

Experts say that, in some cases, it’s hard to tell a counterfeit bag from an actual designer bag. Even the labels look legit. However, experts say that consumers can tell the difference between a fake and the real thing by looking at the **p**lace it was purchased, the **p**ackaging, and the **p**rice (“The 3 Ps”). Watch for poor stitching and incorrectly spelled brand names or logos, and always consider where the product is being sold. Brand names are typically sold in stores or through official company websites.

Sandra Harbrecht of the International Anti-Counterfeit Coalition said, “If it looks too good to be true, the price is too good to be true, it’s probably not the genuine article.”

Although a good fake and a good bargain can be tempting, experts say that they hope consumers will consider the price to humanity.