

# About Those V. Stiviano Visors...



Katharine K. Zarrella

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It's a funny thing, the connection between protection and clothing. On the most basic level, jackets, trousers, glasses, hats, et al. defend us from the elements. But sometimes, it's the most superfluous accouterment that can make us feel invincible. Such is the case, to some extent, with V. Stiviano, the mistress of disgraced racist Clippers owner Donald Sterling, and her

iridescent visors. No doubt you've seen photographs of her donning the accessory out and about in L.A. following the scandal in which Sterling forbade her from publicizing her friendships with black people. In a recent interview with Barbara Walters, Stiviano conceded that the full-face visors, which she owns in a myriad of hues, make it "easier to mask the pain." Fair enough. And it's not as though she's the first visible public figure to hide behind headgear—you'd be hard-pressed to find a celebrity, mid-scandal or not, who hasn't shielded themselves from prying eyes via giant sunglasses, wide-brimmed hats, hooded sweatshirts, or the like. But visage-enveloping visors are indeed an extreme—second only, perhaps, to the deeply bizarre black mask Leonardo DiCaprio sported at last year's Venice Biennale. (Nothing says "under-the-radar" like channeling Darth Vader.)

"In the past, wearing things like visors or veils was more out of modesty, or maybe a sense of propriety," explained The Museum at FIT's associate curator of accessories, Colleen Hill. She cites the large-brimmed "poke" bonnets of the 1830s as an example. "In my opinion, they were an item of propriety. Not only did they shield the woman's face from the sun, but they also provided a sense of security," she told Style.com. "Today, [something like a visor], for celebrities in particular, acts as a psychological veil. Even if it's something that's transparent, it does create that little bit of a barrier. Making eye contact is such a personal thing, I think that is part of [face coverings'] appeal."



Thanks to her shield, Stiviano has essentially been hiding from swarms of paparazzi in plain sight. But what's funny is that while she's sporting these visors as an invisibility cloak of sorts, they only make her more conspicuous. To wit, she's more infamous now than before she broke out the accessory. And apparently, her Daft Punkian method of pseudo-protection has ignited somewhat of a visor boom. "We sold out this morning, and we're waiting on a new shipment," offered Gingie McLeod, the founder of Tribeca's [SaintChic](#) store and label, which produces and carries Stiviano's new staple, aptly dubbed the Paparazzi Visor. "They're actually designed for tennis and hiking—for function. But people have been calling nonstop asking if this is the V. Stiviano visor and if it will cover their whole face or if anyone will be able to see them." Before the craze began, McLeod had sold only four of the accessories.



Surely, Stiviano wasn't aiming to start a trend with her quasi-disguise (or heck, maybe she was, though I seriously considered shelving my Chanel 2.55 after seeing a photo of her carrying a similar style). And certainly, part of this newfound visor obsession is in jest. (McLeod told us she just got a call from someone throwing a Stiviano-themed party.) But in truth, this perplexing "don't look at me but do" mode of dressing has deep roots. Investigating visors alone, you might look back to Pierre Cardin or Paco Rabanne's futuristic plastic shields from the 1960s, featured in numerous fashion shoots. More recently, there was Nicolas Ghesquière for Balenciaga's giant Spring '12 visor (inspired by an archival 1967 Balenciaga wedding hat), which completely covered the face and eyes. However, those who wore it, like Anna Dello Russo, attracted hoards of street-style paps. Same goes for Alexander McQueen's mammoth Fall '12 shades. Maison Martin Margiela's couture masks should also be considered here: On the runway, they create a sense of uniform anonymity, yet on the street, they allow one to hide in style. But do MMM mask fans like Lady Gaga or Kanye West *really* want us to look away from their haute veils?

Unlikely, particularly since West often wears his onstage. More than a striking visual, it has been interpreted as his commentary on fame, and it seems apt for someone who is both more open and uncensored than most celebrities and yet also a man of mystery.

Perhaps the trend is a sign of the times—not unlike our social media avatars, these outré shields afford us the opportunity to put ourselves out there without any risk of full-frontal exposure. They're a superficial cushion—a buffer between the wearer and the outside world. Or maybe they're just an ever-so-slightly less obvious plea for attention than the selfie. If that's the case, let's hope for a total transition—I'd rather look at an off-the-wall mask than an ill-angled iPhone snap any day.

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