

# TONGUE IN CHIC

The way that my generation took and shared images was changing and that really intrigued me as a designer. I was thinking about what might capture people's attention through an image – what would make my product more “Instagrammable” than the next designer shoe?

This was what inspired my speech-bubble bag; I could imagine our customers taking them on a night out as a prop for a great selfie. The statement bags gave the brand a character with tongue-in-cheek sassy phrases that would resonate with like-minded followers.

We had some great moments with these bags, such as Cara Delevingne posing semi-nude for LOVE magazine, styled by Katie Grand, holding just the *Touch my Clutch* bag to spare her modesty, and Fergie wearing the *Say My Name* bag to her baby shower, as a tease for what she might name her new arrival.



# Taking Flight

As a brand I am known for the butterflies, but it wasn't until my third season in business that it took flight. Spring/Summer '14 pre-collection featured *Flutura*, an optimized version of my college laser-cut wing, and it was then the factory had to work out how to attach and industrialize the detail (to make it viable for production and safe for use). It was a real process of trial and error to get the stiffener the correct thickness so the wings looked sculptural and solid, not limp and floppy like all the *Chiara* replicas I see on the internet. But that's as far as I am going to go on how the wings are made. The stiffener formula, much like Colonel Sander's KFC recipe, is going to remain our secret!



I went all out with my wings for this collection - there was my laser-cut bootie *Electra*, hand-drawn prints inspired by caterpillars, and winged backpacks.

My famous *Chiara* (*Kee-ah-ra*) heel had her debut at the fashion week show in a sugary pastel pink colourway and another version in punchy neon green and purple. Shortly after the show the wings went viral on social media and fashion royalty like Anna Dello Russo asked to wear them at Paris Fashion Week. Since then, *Chiara* has featured in so many different ways. It's the most incredible blank canvas. I literally never run out of ideas for how to design *Chiara*.

When *Chiara* was first uploaded to the website it sold out in a matter of hours. Bobby got in contact with the factory immediately to discuss

a re-order. The minimum order quantities were ordinarily too much of a risk for us as a business, in case the design didn't sell and we were left out of pocket with excess stock to clear. We would rely heavily on our wholesale orders to make up the numbers. For *Chiara*, Bobby knew he had to take a risk and he re-ordered both colourways just for our own website. We sold out of all of our stock and again went on to place another re-order. Whenever we are moving into new territory and need to be brave, Bobby often references that order and how nervous he was, but you have to strike while the iron is hot, now we have sold tens of thousands of pairs of that shoe!



# A Flamboyance of Flamingoes



So, my favourite animal has to be my sassy, leggy babe of a being – the fabulous flamingo.

There isn't a huge amount of choice when it comes to pink participants of the animal kingdom, apart from the humble pig, but let's not get me started again on ham pink.

I like to find out the collective noun of an animal or insect as I think it says a lot about their nature. Some of my favourites are "a rhumba of rattlesnakes," "a smack of jellyfish," and "a loveliness of ladybirds."

The collective noun for a group of flamingos is a "flamboyance," which is perfectly apt.

## Flamingoes are sexy.

In fact when I first started drawing shoes for my line in 2012, I would often draw them on flamingo legs. From there they began to influence my designs and I often incorporated them into the collections in some capacity.

I would say that the butterfly is our emblem, but the flamingo is our mascot. The butterfly is graceful, beautiful, delicate, and free – she puts the spring in our step – but it is the flamingo who represents everything that is feisty and fun about the brand and brings the confidence to strut.

She's the hype woman, the bubbly friend with the happy, mischievous energy.

When *Porter* magazine – Net-a-Porter's global, glossy fashion magazine – launched in February 2014, they offered us an ad page for free. It was an opportunity we didn't want to miss but we only had a few days to turn around the ad. We had this habit back then of saying "yes" to pretty much everything and then worrying about how we would make it happen later. I did what I usually do; revert to drawing everything, including the flamingo boards that we used for the set. We couldn't afford to have a model's face in the campaign, so I turned the top half of the model's body into a flamingo and just focussed on the legs in different flamingo-esque positions.

