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BETTER U



BY PAT TONNEMA

Shop (Smart) 'Til You Drop

Seasons change and so should your wardrobe. As a Hollywood costume designer, now an Eastside Seattle personal shopper and wardrobe stylist, I have a few ideas to help you feel enthusiastic about getting dressed every day.

ENJOY COLOR

Find those that look best on you and intrinsically appeal to human eyes: the colors of nature, food and flowers. Here in the Northwest, deep rich shades work well. Leave gaudy tropical brights and pastels for accessories, for our brief summery days, or for Maui and Phoenix — except if certain fun colors complement your hair and eyes and you really love to wear them. There are no rules! Lively color recipes to consider are tomato+camel, eggplant+lilac, cinnamon+aqua, fuchsia+dill and peacock+rose. Always frame your face with color and nice neckline shapes because that's what others see most.

INCORPORATE WELL-MADE VINTAGE PIECES

like jewelry, handbags, jackets and dresses. They run the gamut from sassy to elegant and always add verve. Who doesn't yearn to emulate the sophisticated style of Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn or Sophia Loren? There are a number of lovely vintage/consignment/resale stores and antique malls in the area where you can find previously worn, beautifully made, timeless fashion for a fraction of department store prices. It is more time-consuming to shop this way (and not everyone has the diligence or the eye to seek out pieces here and there) but it can be worth it. Look forward to hearing, "Where did you get that?"

MAINTAIN YOUR CLOTHING

Hand wash and dry flat or on a rack or line to avoid stretching, or dry clean — abrasion and heat ruin fabrics. Condition your leather. Paste-polish your scruffy shoes, belts, handbags, even jackets. Fix sagging hems, split seams, pilled sweaters, or missing buttons.

BUY THE BEST QUALITY YOU CAN AFFORD

Fine fabrics drape and follow the line of your body, and hold up well. Pay attention to fit. If you're a bit heavier than you'd like to be, shapeless tents will only make you look like a large rectangle. If you're lean and toned, ill-fitting clothes will conceal your slender curves.

BEWARE: THE TRAP OF A DULL UNIFORM

Look at fashion magazines to see what might make your existing wardrobe more au courant or glamorous, but don't feel compelled to wear precisely the moment's silhouette head to toe. Embrace the classics and avoid super trends (need I mention the poncho, or recent maternity — like baby doll tops?). Today, there is a huge variety in skirt, dress, jacket and coat styles. Wear your most flattering favorite — although ankle-length coats, pleated pants and white sneakers just look dated. Fashion perennials always — and very much right now — include lace, animal prints, black and white graphics, soft muted plaids, dull metallics, beads and sequins, luscious textures, riding boots, trench coats, vests, jeans, leggings, silk scarves, pencil skirts, colored opaque tights, belted waists and fitted jackets.

SPREAD YOUR GLORIOUS WINGS

If you've always worn turtlenecks, fleece vests and jeans to run errands then throw something a little jazzier into the mix. If your standard office wear is black pants and a top, make that top truly dramatic or just plain gorgeous! Try silk or cashmere, faux fur, leopard print or polka-dot anything; a big bold piece of jewelry instead of those demure pearls and diamond studs; a bright exciting winter coat instead of the predictable down parka. Who cares if there are a few enviously raised eyebrow — there will be many more delighted smiles!

You can get more style advice from Pat Tonnema "The Wardrobe Genie" at 425.223.5421 or at wardrobe-genie.com.

Do you have a story or amazing tip to share that can help others? Tell us about it! You can be the next Better U guest writer! Write to editor@425magazine.com.