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Patrick – Off the Cuff

What a joy to see sun and spring flowers. What fun to see women blossoming into colour and new collections of pretty clothes! But we are not into sleeveless cottons quite yet.

I discovered a great investment piece for *between the seasons* in L K Bennett. It's a silk and cotton belted coat, with outsize collar



and with reverses, in a stunning shade of soft gold, with a silver finish. The quality is good which you would expect at £295.

The coat would look marvellous with either black or brown jewellery. You could also turn back the sleeves to create a big cuff, giving a three quarters' length. This can be extremely flattering, particularly if you have generous boobs. A long sleeve can make the body look top heavy.

Although this coat is one of the most attractive pieces around, beware if you are a smaller woman. My wife, who is 5' 3" tall, tried it and we realised that the proportions would be wrong if she shortened it. Even moving the belt loops higher would not have helped.

I recently took a client to find the perfect pair of jeans - always a challenge. My client was 5' 5" tall with an athletic build and a size 18. She has dark curly hair and blue-green eyes. I used her eye colour to coordinate her tops. Blues looked great on her, as did taupe shades and red. I advise everyone to break out of winter greys and blacks and look to their eyes for alternatives.

With this particular assignment I had researched the jean scene and I can now introduce you to NYDJ (which stands for Not Your Daughter's Jeans). Among their designs are jeans with a panel around the tummy to help flatten. They also have a good rise (the measurement between crotch and the waistband) which holds you in and permits you to bend forward without showing panties. The styles come in straight or bootleg. I recommend a bell bottom, if you are heavy on the hip, or a straight leg. Both of these will allow you to wear heels which will help you look 10 lbs lighter as well as lengthening your leg. Ensure heels are chunky or wedge.



My client opted for black jeans and we found her soft taupe suede cowboy boots. The cowboy theme is definitely around this summer. We topped out with a camisole and, as an alternative, a tank top and, added the third *magical ingredient*, in this case a cardigan from

Banana Republic. I'm fond of Banana Republic because they only have two stores so you won't see their garments everywhere. It's a US company, so sizes go up to 18, and it's very affordable. In case you cannot get to London, you can source online.

If you are not happy in jeans but need a smart casual outfit, NYDJ offer a straight denim skirt. I believe this is another important trend: long tube skirts for those of you who are shapely - see the River Island tube skirt at a modest £30 - and wide A-line skirts for the more boyish silhouettes. Again, go for platform, wedges or strappy sandals - reserve stilettos only for special occasions and evenings.

Now a little mystery: all the posters for the film, *A Single Man*, showed Colin Firth in vintage black framed glasses. I researched where to find a modern version. But although the film's director Tom Ford is a fashion icon and brilliant at



marketing (he turned around both Gucci and Prada before setting up his own company), I discovered that these wonderful glasses are not to be found. What a missed opportunity! May I recommend you try 36 Opticians www.36opticians.co.uk for a style that will be as close as you could wish as they are brilliant buyers of great frames.

Love you!

Patrick Swan

PS – Remember – 20% off for all returning shopping clients!