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### *Lifting out of winter!*

The skies may be leaden but I'm already seeing the first blossoms of colour in the shops and clearly more is to follow to offset the gloom of the economy. So, start to think vibrant and also pattern: prints on prints, stripes and animal prints. We will have more about this next month. A great example is this Animal Print, Savage Garden Jersey top which is perfect for a waited skirt or trouser by, Antipodium for £80.00 at Liberty's.



In the meantime, Mary Portas' new series on Channel 4 is right after my own heart as she focuses on poor customer service in this country. I agree entirely with her views, and it confirms how I can really make the difference to your shopping dilemmas. I know what works *and* where to find it!

I spotted Cynthia Rowley early in the 80s in New York's Soho district when she started out as a designer of adorable dresses and fabulous handbags. I have followed her career with fascination ever since. Here is some advice from Cynthia Rowley on lifting a winter wardrobe:



Don't shy away from bright colours during winter. She likes to inject deep purple, fuchsia or striking bright blues into an outfit. It gives the wardrobe more liveliness and texture, she says. Another great investment piece can be a trench in a bright red such as Hobbs Frome Trench at £149.00 shown here.

When wearing a colour more usual in summer, make sure it's in a season-appropriate fabric such as a stiffer satin or heavy lace. It doesn't convey the airiness of summer but it does provide a more exuberant silhouette, she says.



For women averse to bold shades, Cynthia encourages breaking up the black. For instance: Wear a camel suede or grey leather boot with a black-on-black look, or break it up with an earthy brown belt. All of a sudden your whole ensemble will feel lighter. I love these Camel Shoe Boots by Miss KG and they're on sale now at £35.00.

Glittery or patterned accessories add punch to a winter outfit. Using shiny or glazed materials in your ensemble - particularly your shoes - adds a bit of interest and uniqueness. She sometimes wears leggings or stockings with colourful patterns or interesting details. She has a pair of black "studded tights" that are covered with little shiny black baubles, for example. Whenever you move your legs, there's a reflectiveness that's both elegant and edgy.

The flash of a metallic belt on an all-black ensemble can bring the outfit into sharp focus, she says. And, the right piece of statement jewellery can transform an otherwise nondescript or dark outfit. Such as this Silver Tone Stud Cuff by Nicholas King priced at £175.00 at Liberty's.



Despite her penchant for some flash in winter, Ms. Rowley believes people can go too far. Generally, she doesn't mix more than two different patterns within an outfit. "Adding colours is not about putting on the whole rainbow. I think it's more about just finding the right palette combination - a steel grey offset by a peppermint [green], or a purple with a deep orange jewellery accent."

The designer avoids wearing summery dresses made of gauzy fabrics - even with dark-colour tights. Gauzes and light crepes can be worn as blouses, she says, but in dresses, these fabrics "are kind of wrong for winter."

Still, Ms. Rowley admits she isn't always the most practical of dressers. I've been known to brave the snow in stilettos, she says. I never sacrifice style.

Love you!

*Patrick Swan*

*PS - Remember - 20% off for all returning shopping clients!*