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Making a do of fashion!

It's Lent so we should give something up. Me, I'm giving up stress. It does nothing for your looks! And when Lent ends, we will be into weddings, including the big one of course, and the start of the Season of super smart race days and glitzy events.

For those of you shopping for a special occasion, I suggest popping into LK Bennett if you are on a medium budget and Amanda Wakeley for the more expensive wedding and evening outfits. I see that there is a lot of lace around at the moment but this really only looks fabulous on the young. I saw a photo of Madonna recently and even she cannot wear it. I suggest that chiffon or tulle are more flattering since they give a clean line, yet skim the body. If you are older, concentrate on your décolletage but cover the arms. Helen Mirren is a great role model here.



Be sure to get the shoes right. If you have a simple dress, you can afford striking shoes and handbag. But with a patterned dress, opt for something simpler.



I've just been to the shows flagging up what we will be wearing for the autumn. Boots up to and over the knee are continuing trends. So are slightly mannish trousers. You need to match them, not with a brogue, but with a pretty shoe, perhaps a kitten heel with a pointed toe. This turns the look from masculine to Audrey Hepburn.

The key trend to follow is the oversized coat or cardigan that envelopes the body. Team this over a narrow to slim silhouette. As always, it is proportion that counts. The magic third piece, as I always call it, should always finish at the widest part of your body if you are short, and to the knee or just above it if you are taller. If you are over 5'7'' try a full length coat like this one by Martin Grant.



Right now, the fab look for smart casual is the maxi dress. I found a perfect example in Anthropologie in colours such as Whispering Forest or Mantle Dynamics which is highly flattering if you are a bit soft around the middle and don't want to show too much leg or your upper arm. If you are height-challenged, team with a wedge.

For men, I am delighted to see the super colourful selection of spring tops from John Smedley, one of my favourite men's wear purveyors. Look at for the short sleeve Isis or longer sleeve Bobby, both of which look good under a jacket, especially on those dress-down Fridays and smart casual occasions which so many men struggle with. A John Smedley skinny blue silk tie is perfect to perk up a white shirt and light coloured suiting will be key to updating your look this summer. Dr.



Martins is continuing the revival of such styles as Adrian and the new Dainty Docs in colours such as white, mint, lilac and pink arrived in store at the beginning of March.

Lastly, please come and join me on 5th, 6th, 7th or 8th April if you live anywhere near Reading. You will find me as compere at the four day fashion spectacular at The Oracle, when we will be looking at spring and summer trends, with themes such as Garden Party, Back to the 70s, White Wash, Animal Magic and Pretty Ballerina.

Love you!

Patrick Swan

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