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Create A Brand New You!

This is a great time of the year for revamping, rejuvenating and taking stock of your own presentation. Particularly, if you are in the workplace, growing a business or seeking new horizons. Dressing successfully and enhancing your own brand brings success of its own. What is even cleverer is if you can make that literal dress for success work in other areas of your life too.



I have just been out and about researching on behalf of a client with whom I shall be shopping next week. She works with major companies and needs to stay and look on top of her game. She is a larger lady so I have been looking



for ways to give her a waist. I headed for one of my favourite shops, Wolford, which as you may know is not just about tights. I was interested to meet an assistant in the South Molton Street branch who is a size 18, and wearing a number of Wolford pieces. My find was the Fatal Belt, an opaque seamless knitted band in velvet fabric that can be worn in several ways. You can drape it over the hips, turn any dress into a waisted dress, or even wear it in your hair.

On behalf of my lady, I have also noted that in March, Evans is launching a collaboration with Clements Ribeiro. This husband and wife design duo is famously known for their femininity and bold use of print and wool. The Swan collection as it will be called (how appropriate) is print based and with Adele as their muse, I'm sure this collection will not disappoint.

I also understand that Chanel is starting a large size line on the luxury end of the scale and another favourite is Anna Scholz who has in her spring offering this Double Silk Deep Pleat dress at £375 which boasts a perfect flattering print.



Dresses are everywhere this season and I see no reason why they cannot be worn in the workplace as relief from the endless trouser suits or jackets and skirts. Get it right and that same outfit can go on into the evening or for special weekend events.

Understanding your personal brand and what you are all about is and can be reflected in your dress sense. So if you are a more creative type, I am excited to see that fashion designer Mary Katrantzou, whose fabulous dresses

normally come in around the £700 mark, is bringing a range to the High Street in fact to Topshop. The collection is out on 17 February, priced from £40 to £350. I anticipate lots of colour and amazing prints as well as wear-ability.

Behind this initiative is Kate Phelan, who recently left her role as fashion director of Vogue to become creative director at Topshop. What I found interesting is the that Kate talks about the way Katrantzou captures a femininity through her sense of colour and that she first saw her work through the British Fashion Council's Newgen panel that went on to sponsor her for six seasons.



I'd never seen anything like it before "I was amazed by her passion and new ideas for print" Kate said. Mary's collection for Topshop defines how her intricate prints can so easily translate from a couture dress to very simple shapes and make them must-haves for your summer wardrobe. Here is one example that has creative type written all over it.

Be it £40 or £400 or more, the right dress can make a worthwhile investment piece for your wardrobe. Getting the silhouette right is key, and understanding where the emphasis should be - either the empire, the waist or the hip depends on your proportion and height. Thankfully a heel can help! Also look for fabrics with stretch as it is all about creating your best silhouette; what makes a huge difference in a top is the neckline, sleeve length and how the garment is shaped. Similarly with a skirt or dress shape, the length, and the line are critical. Clever nips and tucks skilfully placed can be what makes a top, skirt or dress powerful. If it is not a wrap dress style, it could be a shirt-dress style or a sheath. The key focus is fabric and that is what makes clothes modern and what I continue to see emerge in the marketplace.

I love researching for clients as it makes going around the shops even more exciting. That's me though. I know that not everyone loves to shop. I hear it all the time... If the silhouette makes the best of your figure, and the colour and style is not too extreme, you can get a long life out of it. Another note is play with your accessories to ring the changes.

In fact, if your budget is very restricted, remember you can update your look by changing your shoes. If the outfit colour is a little safe, have an exciting shoe. I see lots of patent arriving for spring and summer, in beige and in soft tones. Also I am seeing more pointed toe shoes emerging...maybe a signal that boom times are ahead! A few shoe styles and colours I see coming through are like these from L K Bennett.



FOR MEN:

Men should give thought to the style of their suit, the trouser shape and cut of the shirt and collar, not to mention the width of the tie and toe of the shoe. All these details can set you aside, and make you either noticeable to the leaders in your company or more of a leader yourself when pitching for new work or a new position. Women understand this but it is a well-known fact that men too must put as much effort into their style as their CV.



If you are time-poor, go to the internet to get some ideas. However, I can save you even more time by looking for you, knowing just what will suit you and your lifestyle. I will also steer you to lesser known brands, and shops such as Anthropologie and Liberty's which promote new designers, rather than the ranges from the departmental stores that you will see everywhere. After all, the brand that is you is a one off, unique and very special!

Fashion Note: At the BAFTA's this year Meryl Streep and Christine Hendricks both wore Vivienne Westwood, Gillian Anderson wore vintage while Michelle William was wearing a dress from H&M ...it is interesting how the price points and styles reflect different ends of the market without compromising style.

My 20% discount for returning clients is uncompromising good value!

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