



Chapter Twelve
the beauty of accessories



Ahhh, accessories. How I warm to this subject! My inner artist is jumping up and down with excitement. Accessories are deliciously inspiring additions to your wardrobe. After the hard work of shopping, we now get to turn your closet into a playground. Yippee!



PULLING IT TOGETHER

After a shopping trip you will want to regroup, to look at your purchases with a fresh eye. Expect some revision. It is impossible to be totally accurate on a buying trip.

I often meet with clients for a follow-up appointment where we look over what we have purchased in natural light and see what is needed to complete each ensemble. Each item is tried on with proper undergarments, and we check to see if alterations are necessary. Then we start to play; adding, subtracting, trying on a necklace here, a unique belt there. With every change we stand back to get the complete view in order to discern what works the best.

Looking at yourself fully clothed and accessorized is your opportunity to make sure the eye travels fluidly from your head to your feet and back to your face again. A successful painting has a focal point, and the eye moves around the canvas, never going off the edge of the canvas or getting stuck in one spot. In this case your face is the focal point, and we also want the viewer to take pleasure in the length of you, taking in all the beauty before it happily returns to your face.

JEWELRY

My favorite accessories are great jewelry and a fabulous lipstick. These two things never fail to lift my spirits when I look in the mirror. I love jewelry for the way it makes the wearer more beautiful and expressive. Even if I am mucking about I can still wear all the sparkles I want. Great personal jewelry makes a statement. Jewelry helps you to show up. It introduces you to everyone you come into contact with. Women comment on each others earrings as a way of saying hello. As jewelry designer Simma Chester says, "*The perfect piece of jewelry that is right for you looks good with a ball gown or with jeans.*"

Jewelry can be interesting, dramatic or distinctive in its own right, but my preference is for pieces that enhance the individuality and attractiveness of the wearer. Color, shape and design echo and enhance your coloring and features, repeating and reinforcing your assets. Colored stones bring out eyes, lips and cheeks. Creamy pearls glow against the skin. Earrings enhance the structure of your face, flattering your jawline and showing off the length of your neck. Both bracelets and earrings add movement and sparkle.

Jewelry can take a simple garment and give it presence, turning the ordinary into the extraordinary. If you have always chosen jewelry that is understated and classic and would like to branch out and try something more expressive, you can begin by connecting with your Spirit Terms. Pearls and semiprecious stones are *luminous*,

elegant, natural, warm, cool and refined. Stones that are faceted have more *sparkle*, but in their natural state they can be *rich* and *earthy*. The design of a piece of jewelry can be *sensuous, delicate, fluid and gypsy-like*. If you're drawn to shape more than color, metals can be *clean, bold, edgy or dramatic*. Glass beads, buttons, charms and bright plastic shapes can be *playful, fresh and winsome*. An artful piece of jewelry often has a mix of elements not unlike the yin/yang qualities of the spirit.

Notice what styles of jewelry appeal to you. Ask someone wearing a piece you admire for the name of the artist who created it. Fashion magazines often lead you to the Web sites of the jewelers they feature. Smaller clothing boutiques have jewelry and accessories that suit their clothing, and occasionally they will host jewelry trunk shows for visiting artists. There are galleries that specialize in art to wear, including jewelry and other artful accessories, like hats and scarves. One of my clients attends the annual professional artisan craft fair at San Francisco's Ft. Mason. She says, "Every year I spend the day there with a couple of my friends. We encourage each other to try something new and lend support. I always end up with a treasure I love."

The price for one of a kind, handmade pieces varies. If you fall in love with something but the price makes you gasp, keep in mind that you will be wearing it for years to come, long after the outfit you are coordinating it with is gone. Remind yourself what you spent on a single pair of shoes. If purchasing a piece of wearable art isn't appropriate



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for you, you can find great “faux-art” pieces at department stores and smaller chain stores like Chico’s to spice up your outfits.

A great way to start experimenting is with a long necklace. Often called “Opera” length and approximately 44 to 50 inches long, this length is especially versatile. Worn long it is easy and relaxed, and when doubled it makes a more classic statement. In the chapter on fit I talked about the down vest I chose for petite Ellie. The vest had a sheen to it, and to complete her outfit of vest, plaid slacks and a sweater I added a long “rope” of freshwater pearls mixed with gold and silver beads. The luminous color of the pearls tied all the elements together, and the vertical line they created was visually lengthening. Worn long, the necklace gave Ellie the “dressy casual” feeling she was after. Ellie could also double the same necklace and pair it with a suit jacket and blouse for a more professional look.

Even if a piece of jewelry isn’t the centerpiece of the outfit, you can use it to direct the eye to where you want it to go. I favor necklines that are either scooped or v-shaped, and if the top is dark and has long sleeves, my chest area looks too blank. As much as I love my cleavage, I don’t want my bare upper chest to be the focal point of my outfit. Just as a painter would use a brushstroke of color to blend an area that has too much contrast, a necklace of either silver or blue-gray pearls will break up the blank space and allow the eye to follow the line of the necklace back to my face where the color and sheen connects with my eyes and hair. If

you are wearing a solid color and the contrast with your skin is too stark, use jewelry to lighten up the look and bring in some needed animation.

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Michelle wears a size 2 petite, but she has high cheekbones and striking features. She favors pieces that are chunky and dramatic. Connie is a larger woman (size 16) and enjoys intricately beaded pieces that are delicate and sensual.

What makes each piece work for these two women is that the size, or scale, of each piece suits their bone structure and stature. I wish there was an easy rule of thumb to help you decide what scale of jewelry is just right for you, but with practice (or some good advice) you will know it when you see it. With jewelry there is always an “ah-ha” or “ooh-ah” moment. If you own a piece of jewelry and like the materials but have never enjoyed wearing it, the scale might be the problem. See if a designer can suggest a way to



remake it so you feel more excited about it.

Think of your jewelry as an ensemble cast, players that enhance and support each other. If your necklace makes a bold statement, keep your earrings simple. Choose a component of the necklace and repeat it in the earring. If your earrings are interesting, just add a bracelet or two. There is no need to match exactly; in fact, the art is always in the mix. Stand back and look in your full-length mirror, making sure you have chosen a focal point and harmonizing backdrop. The ideal is for the eye to move easily from one element to the next, always returning to your face.

I enjoy spending time creating a balance between all the ingredients in my outfits, and the way I wear my jewelry reflects my personal sensibility. Your style may be totally different. Pile it on if that's what suits you! I see other women loaded with layers of necklaces and bracelets and they look fabulous. And not everyone is drawn to jewelry. I once met the esteemed designer Eileen Fisher, and told her how I loved to use her clothing as a backdrop or canvas for jewelry. She demurred, telling me that she preferred the Zen simplicity of her designs worn simply and unadorned. You might prefer jewelry that is classic and understated, sleek and simple, chunky and dramatic. Honor whatever feels right as an expression of your spirit.

SHOES

There are two kinds of women: Those who love shoes and buy too many, and the rest of us who struggle to find something comfortable. Searching for shoes that

are both stylish and wearable is an important part of my business. Shoes are the article of clothing most fundamental to your well-being. Uncomfortable shoes suck the joy right out of my day. The bottom line for comfort-loving women is that if the shoes aren't comfy, you won't wear the outfit.

If clothes are easier to find than shoes, set aside shopping sessions where shoes are the only focus. Ask for recommendations, go to favorite locations, and enlist good sales help. I think it is important to be able to take your new shoes home and walk around the house for an hour to be certain they fit comfortably, so consider the return policy when making your purchase.

Shoes are also a fabulous way to add personality to an outfit. A colorful or print shoe pops. Be discerning if your outfit has other interesting features. The following are a couple of examples that will help determine if a novelty shoe adds or detracts from the overall look.

When going through Barbara's closet, we both loved her animal print flats. We tried them on with her most playful outfit, a pair of brown cropped pants and matching cropped sweater paired with a contrasting lacy peach top. The shoes were the perfect shape and color, but when she looked in the mirror she said, "*It looks like I am trying too hard.*" Because of the color and pattern on the top, multiple elements were vying for attention simultaneously, and the result was not the elegant but playful chic Barbara was looking for. When we substituted a simple shell in a coordinating warm toast color, the shoes were perfect, adding just the right accent.

Connie was accenting a white linen ensemble with luscious red coral jewelry for an upcoming cruise. Her red sandals didn't work, and neither did her coral red handbag. The dramatic color and style of the jewelry asked for a simple, uncluttered background and the red shoes were too much competition, moving the eyes away from Connie's pretty face. Better to stick with a neutral shoe that didn't draw attention. Or, switch to jewelry with just a touch of red, say in the earrings, and let the red shoes be the bright pop of color.

I'd feel dishonest if I didn't add this one last comment on shoes: When it comes to comfort, do as I say, not as I always do. I must admit to occasionally succumbing to the siren song of a beautiful shoe. If they are at all bearable, I'll navigate the parking lot as I walk from the car to the restaurant. These special shoes make me feel happy for some reason and not guilty that I only walk in them for minutes and not hours.

HANDBAGS, BELTS, SCARVES, HATS AND MORE!

Scarves, shawls, hats, fun socks and hosiery, whimsical hair clips, anything at all (including tiaras and crowns), are all ways to add interest to your outfit and express your personality. Knitting is currently all the rage and I can see why. Getting lost among the multicolored skeins of yarn at a knitting store is nirvana. Fabric and craft stores are another avenue to explore if you are handy with your hands. I am in awe of people who sew. Even if you are not an experienced seamstress you can still create

something simple. Have fun wandering the aisles, touching the bolts of fabric, daydreaming about all the beautiful things that could be made.

When completing your outfit be sure to attend to all the obvious details. If your skirt or pants have visible belt loops, then a coordinating belt is a must. Belts can also add shape and distinction to a garment, and can serve as an eye catching focal point. When you look in your full-length mirror, notice the role the metal belt buckle plays in your overall look. Either play it up with other metallic accents, or if it is too distracting, exchange it for a belt with a covered buckle. If you wear a stunning belt, don't create two centers of interest by wearing a necklace. The eye will bounce between one element and the other, and you want to keep it moving fluidly. The best bet is to keep the rest of your jewelry simple, adding only earrings or perhaps a bracelet.

Your handbag is an integral part of your overall look. Seeing a worn-out bag with a knot in the shoulder strap literally makes me cringe. Look in a full-length mirror to assess if the shape of the bag relates to your structure and form. The bag should curve where you curve, and sit comfortably next to your body. Pay attention to scale and avoid anything too large or too small. Keep trying until you feel satisfied that you have created a balanced proportion.

Deciding what type of bag to carry is of course a matter of personal preference. I like clean looking classic shapes, not too big, and I also carry a good looking tote to lug water, snacks and client files. I always keep an eye out for a gorgeous color that



will coordinate with my wardrobe, and I love finding something unexpected and playful to use during the summer months. As much as I love a beautiful bag, my personal preference is to put my serious money into jackets, shoes and jewelry. An expensive status “It” bag doesn’t excite me.

Playing with accessories is less of a skill and more of an art, a way to exercise your creativity. Think of it as an adventure, with you always on a safari for something unique and special. A great purse can turn up in a luggage store or at a beachwear kiosk. Gardening centers are full of nifty gloves and waterproof boots. I could probably find something while waiting for my husband as he looked for car

parts. Hey, where do you think the inspiration for purses made from seat belts came from?

GOING THE DISTANCE

Go the distance with your wardrobe and finish up what you have started. If you wish to be beautifully dressed, you need to pay attention to the subtle details. Alterations to your clothing so they fit properly are an absolute must. Ask a nicely-dressed neighbor for a referral, or see which seamstresses the boutiques in your area use. Save time by having your garments altered at the department store where you purchased them. Your local cleaners should do a respectable job on pant hems.

When I do a follow-up appointment in someone's closet I bring my camera along to photograph the finished outfits. My clients find it's invaluable to be able to refer back to the photos. Take some notes for yourself, or better yet, lay your outfits on the bed and take a photograph. Then hang your treasures in plain sight so you can mix and match and reinvent combinations whenever you feel like it. I try not to play when I am getting ready for work, but if I have a few extra minutes I can't resist experimenting, looking for different ways to adorn the canvas of my outfit. If I am undecided, I put my lipstick on, just to get the full effect of the addition of that last punch of color. And then I smile at myself. Wow!

"I've been feeling a little pale and yucky lately and in need of a lift. I decided to get out my knitting needles but didn't have any yarn on hand that was really grabbing me, so I went to a yarn store – equipped with my color palette of course!!! It took me about five minutes to find the most beautiful yarn with all the blues and greens in my colors. Then I made the scarf in about two hours – using these huge salad tosser needles that I decided to try. I'm all about fast projects right now with the kids being little and no time to sit and knit. Anyway, I LOVE the scarf. When I wrapped it around my neck and looked in the mirror I saw that it looked awesome – even with my dark circles." Julie

