

Dress for Success

LIVING A LIFE OF BALANCE



“CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN,” or so the saying goes. They also make the woman. But how many of us who dress for success fall into the trap of dressing the way others expect us to? Women realtors often look efficient and prosperous; female lawyers project business and power; women journalists and writers often appear bookish or tailored. And of course, art dealers wear black—the answer to all fashion dilemmas, or when in doubt.

If these fashion stereotypes sound familiar it's because they are; clothing for women from thirty to sixty often denies our true individuality, yet professional credibility can rise or fall on how well we look the part. “It just isn't so,” says Brooks, noted Denver fashion designer

and couturier. Brooks has been dressing Colorado women for 35 years from her various retail locations in Cherry Creek and now, in her exclusive atelier in lower downtown, by appointment. Here women of every age are fitted for major events and everyday life as well.

“I specialize in brides and mothers-of-the bride,” said Brooks, who offered to help prove that women don't have to hide behind fashion stereotypes. “No matter what their figure type or problem, if women take the time to find what's best for their proportions, and invest in timeless, comfortable clothes made of fabrics that flatter, they can have a wardrobe that works for them all day long. It's all about the fabric, fit and color; what really counts if they choose wisely. After that, just add accessories.”

During a Sunday morning makeover held recently at the Denver Woman's Press Club (DWPC), three members of the club offered to let Brooks create a basic look for them and provide several ways to enhance or vary it. The DWPC, a professional organization for women who write, was founded in 1898 and is open to women of all ages. Many events

NOTED FASHION

DESIGNER BROOKS

GATHERS WITH WOMEN

AT THE HISTORIC

DENVER WOMAN'S

PRESS CLUB TO

DISPEL FASHION

STEREOTYPES

are open to the public, while others are for members only. The initial idea that writers might consider their fashion image important seemed incongruous at first. After all, journalists should focus on their subject, not compete with them for attention. But at the same time, looking professional is part of doing the job well. But just what does a successful writer look like, especially when it's her turn to be in the spotlight? The answer for most writers today is simply to look pulled together and at ease in whatever becomes you most.

DWPC Member Elizabeth Cook, an archivist at Regis College, stands tall and statuesque, but admits she had turned to the convenience of catalog orders

STORY: **CORINNE JOY BROWN**
 PHOTOGRAPHY: **LISA CARR**
 MAKEUP: **MARY WOLFGANG**



for work and home. Kimberly Field, a freelance magazine writer, author and sometime archaeologist, usually wore form-fitting pants and casual tops with a clean, uncluttered look for her small, fit frame. Hilary De Polo, a poet and playwright and also an art consultant, always looked dramatic and artistic, but often wore long jackets that overwhelmed instead of enhanced.

Each volunteer had a personal fitting that inspired Brooks to design a series of separates that worked with basic black or white. For Cook, the offering included a flowing red and black rose-printed sheer top worn with relaxed wide-leg white pants; a hip-length jacket in slate blue, elegant enough for a party; a black silk shantung fitted blouson shown with various belts, changing the look each time, and a flounced-sleeve pink and grey striped Italian cotton jacket for summer. The addition of color to her persona was electric; the various hues transformed her.

“I feel like the celebrity author of my own best seller!” said Cook. “Fifty shades of grey, pink and blue!”

DePolo emerged more vivid and defined; first in purple, then in brilliant periwinkle, and finally, in a black silk sheer cocktail tail jacket with multi-color ribboned florals down the back. The designs lent presence and impact while showing off her figure.

For Field, the basic was a stunning beige silk-like sleeveless sheath, the kind of dress few can wear, but many wish they could. First came a matching jacket, then a sheer striped pullover tunic; next a textured rose colored cocktail jacket, and finally a peplum zip-up top made of sheer black Alecon lace—scintillating. “I’ve always dreamed of interviewing Mick Jagger or the Pope,” said Field. “I feel as if I could do both in this dress.”

By the end of the event, it was clear that no one is doomed to wear black as



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1 KIMBERLY FIELD, ELIZABETH COOK, BROOKS AND HILARY DEPOLO **2** FIELD MODELS A SLEEVELESS SHEATH DRESS **3** FIELD TRIES THE SAME DRESS WITH A LACE PEPLUM TOP **4** DEPOLO AND BROOKS



the solution to the question, “What do I wear?” By taking the step to individualize your clothing, a woman can develop a wardrobe that lasts for years, one investment at a time. Brooks summed it up this way, “Fashion is for now, but style is forever.”

Field comments further on the day, saying, “The best thing about this event is that it inspired me to look in my closet and actually pull out some of the beautiful clothes I have. Jewelry too. I hope it inspired others to do the same. I think a ladylike, more pulled together fashion is having a moment.” **CE**

Corinne Joy Brown is a Denver-based writer focused on design and the West and the author of four books to date. As the 2012-2013 president of the DWPC, she knows all about the writer's wardrobe; jammies and slippers most of the time. This fashion event changed her life. Now she hopes to wear designer jammies.