

POV is the New Black

Early observations from writing in *black and white*.



Pull It Together

While we dream of appearing as pulled together as Jenna Lyons on the regular – how can she marry such prints and uptown/downtown looks simultaneously can be challenging even if you have loads of time – parenthood has usurped most of our ability, and let's face it...desire...to get out of yoga pants. Whether your "uniform" is clean or not (note our girl crush Jenna called the notion of a uniform a "slow, painful death") it's the notion that you have begun your day vs. being an extension of another sleep-deprived night.

While I don't have a husband who tracks my apparel, I can vouch for the fact that this is about me and how I feel about myself anyway. I simply perform better on the days I find it within myself to go beyond the Lululemon. And when gym clothes are just that – clothes for the gym. And isn't it fun to find a bit of your former single self in those leather pants or cool t-shirts? What is your version of the "I" on an outfit? Hey, you might say, I run around hard with my 2.5 kids and need comfort – well, you are in luck. With brands like Kit & Ace, ADay, and Tracksmith, 'gym clothes' are cooler than ever. Technical, washable fabrics that breath as you push the swings, run alongside your little cyclist who is learning to pedal, or sit in the sandbox. It may look like Athleisure, but there's nothing leisurely about what you're doing.

But don't be afraid to throw on an easy dress. Use your fingers as a comb. Regardless of your day, or the number of children you have, you can go places.

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What Not to Wear

In these recessionary times, companies seem to be testing employees to determine what they are willing to do for their jobs. The latest attempt -- Clothing harassment.

The Bank of England is fighting Britain's worst financial crisis since the Depression, yet is incredibly preoccupied with how female employees dress. At their recent Dress for Success Day, a memo outlined strict guidelines including: "Look professional, not fashionable" as well as "Always wear a heel of some sort -- maximum 2 inches" and my favorite, "Shoes and skirt must be the same color." There were perfume and cosmetics cautions as well as a list of "no-no's" about overstuffed handbags, multiple rings and double ear piercing. There is no doubt uniformity is important to the bank's image, but they have gone too far.

But not as far as the Berlin police.

Berlin officers have been banned from wearing 10 apparel labels deemed to be popular among neo-Nazis with right-wing extremist views. Despite the fashion brands' attempt to distance themselves from such ideologies, the officers will face disciplinary action if the apparel is worn on duty.

As for me, having worked for a minimalist fashion house, where wearing color was as off-putting as having a perm, I had no trouble wearing "the uniform" -- black and white (unless anthracite was big that season), clean lines, spectacular shoes. If I didn't buy into this, I would not have chosen to work there. I represented the brand -- not generic equities such as money or the law.

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Color Shy

Growing up I was among the many who would slather baby oil on and lay on tin foil (strategically wrapped around a record album) for a golden tan. While I have securely replaced baby oil with whitening cream, to eliminate any brown spots/signs of sun damage, I struggle with SPF. We all question how much is enough? How critical is it in the winter? Does it count if it is in my moisturizer or do I also need it in my foundation? What we fail to think while analyzing our skin texture in the magnifying mirror is what am I losing (other than that relaxation that beats down on you via warmth) by not being in the sun? The answer -- Vitamin D.

We have a serious vitamin D deficiency in America. More than half of Americans (more for those with darker complexions and older age groups) do not get enough Vitamin D, wrecking havoc on immune systems and leading to chronic illness and bone demineralization. And doctors admit it is hard to get enough Vitamin D strictly through diet alone. It is that black and white -- we need sunlight to survive.

So while you could take supplements or drink cod oil, you could also take a walk. A few times a week for fifteen minutes. But forgo the sunscreen as it defeats the purpose -- SPF 15 reduces the body's ability to make Vitamin D by 99%.

In time, maybe we can all realize the sun, like everything else, is good in moderation.

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Money Talks

Several years ago, I thought nothing of using credit cards to buy what I needed - yes, a Chloe dress and Sigerson boots (which I still have, mind you) were necessities. I was a big fan of consoling breakups with shopping. In fact, I have always thought ex-boyfriends should be charged "galimony" for purchases made the first four weeks following a breakup; longer payment if the relationship surpassed the year mark and included discussion about marriage.

Despite my ease with plastic back then, I never admitted to have debt. It was embarrassing at best, particularly in light of my career success. Blowjobs? Fine to discuss. Financial woes? No way.

The new economy has changed this attitude. With movies like "Shopaholic" in theaters, and companies explaining their financial crises in hopes of getting bailed out, the taboo of being in debt has been eradicated; talk of struggling financially commonplace.

Despite this openness, I do not feel at ease hearing about luxury companies, such as such as eyewear manufacturer Safilo, who acquire debts as large as the 30-year World Bank loan to Niger. Being in the vision category, it seems Safilo should have seen its decline long before it reached \$745 million.

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Hallelujah Haircuts

Just 90 days after getting married, I did the unthinkable. I cut my long hair.

My husband is now in mourning as my waist-length wavy blonde hair, which he coined "12-year old surfer's hair," has been replaced by a more reasonable length and a less high-maintenance shade of caramel.

I am not alone in the post-marriage haircut. It has become a trend, much to the chagrin of new husbands nationwide. Unlike the "heartbreak haircut" - the drastic cut of newly single women - this shorn situation is entered into with feelings of joy, rather than despair. The mental aftereffects of this, the Hallelujah haircut, are the same however, and newlyweds should cut with caution. Upon seeing locks on the floor, there is panic. Fear. Regret. You must be certain you are emotionally ready. Think about it, even Gisele Bundchen once went into hiding for six months, to allow her hair to grow back, after chopping hers off.

My stylist, Chuck, believes many women cut following "I do" because they grew hair out for the big day; Others believe many women finally feel empowered to cut because they have a secure, loving relationship. And, they are at the start of letting themselves go.

I fall into neither camp. My hair grows fast, and I opted to experiment with a cut rather than try a new lipstick.

Besides, I wear chapstick.

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To Smell The Truth

I have been "anti-aging" since I saw my first facial line at 17. I am as fervently committed to the external approaches - botox, chemical peels, skin whiteners - as internal - good nutrition, no smoking, limited alcohol. Ok, maybe that's not entirely true...I can't say no to French fries; I would never forgo botox. When haircare entered the arena, I took pause. Then ran to CVS. They had a point. Why didn't my hair have SPF all these years?

But even I think things have gone too far with the launch of an anti-aging perfume.

Ageless, a women's fragrance launched by Ageless Fantasy, boasts its ability to neutralize body odors, brought on by diet, illness and age, which cause a perceived smell of a chronologically older woman. They claim you can smell three to eight years younger with the scent that men and women associate with youth. In this case, a citrus blend of pink grapefruit, mango, pomegranate, apple, among other childlike aromas.

If that's the case, maybe I can achieve the same effect by dabbing some grapefruit juice behind my ears tomorrow morning. I will be sticky. But, according to Ageless, younger.

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Quench

I am like a camel. I can be found drinking the same Venti latte (hot in the winter; iced remainder of the year) from the time of purchase in the morning, until the time I leave the office in the evening. It has always fascinated co-workers. Rather than take pleasure in the fact that I am not contributing to the decline of our environment, forgoing the plastic bottles that take 1,000 years to biodegrade, I lay awake at night fearing that I am wrecking havoc on my skin.

Exploration into this subject, to either feel better about my choice or to cajole me to alter my behavior, has shown that while the 8-glasses of water daily myth continues to be debated, the facts are very black and white. The medical and beauty community seem to be saying the same thing - water is essential to health; dehydration can be harmful - just in different context.

For instance, Dr. Murad's "The Water Principle," the "revolutionary theory" which is the basis of much of his healthy skincare programs, supposes that when our cells are not fully hydrated they cannot function at their optimal level. This, in turn, leads to much of the tissue damage causing aging. Rather than suggest drinking more water, Dr. Murad is fixated on cell health, to ensure that cells can retain the water you do drink. Similarly, science simply states that the moisture level of skin is not determined by internal factors. Instead, it is external factors such as skin cleansing, the environment, the number of oil glands, and the functioning of these oil-producing glands that determines how dry the skin is or will become. The water that is consumed internally will not reach the epidermis. Unless you are severely dehydrated, drinking large quantities of water will not prevent dry skin. There is no debate.

My own aesthetician concurs, and seems to best capture the thought succinctly. -- Water has so many organs to assist, that our skin becomes last priority. Water is required by every cell in the body for nourishment and waste removal, so being dehydrated compromises your kidney and liver much sooner than your visage.

The way I now see it, it won't matter if I have dry aging skin. I will be too preoccupied by the inability to overcome the constipation, nose bleeds, repeated urinary tract infections, dry and unproductive coughs, constant sneezing, sinus pressure and headaches brought on by not drinking enough water.

Maybe marketers have been right all along about making water a vanity statement.