

Sensory Delights



Get Real

by

Brooke Bessesen



Fall fashions have hipsters talking shop

I'm no Fashion Queen. As a modern American trend-setter, I rank just above Bart Simpson. Like him, my look is fairly consistent and undeniably casual. But at least I have more than one outfit.

When I traded in my four-inch stilettos for a pair of Merrells, I swore I never would go back and, at this point, I suspect comfort is as much a habit as a choice.

While designer mood swings seem distant as the moon for many adults, we are still influenced by their lunar pull and subsequent tides of change.

Whether it's the cut of jeans or the hottest fabrics, teenagers always ride onto Style Beach atop the biggest waves, hooting and hollering.

The rest of us may wash up months later, waterlogged and barely breathing, but we do arrive.

One might presume people follow fads just to appear savvy. But I believe a chemical alteration in the human brain causes us eventually to accept the emerging styles no matter how ridiculous they initially appear.

I developed my hypothesis in seventh grade following a transition from long-strapped purses to small clasp handbags. I remember seeing those little clutches for the first time and being disgusted.

I thought the new designs were so horrific – so ugly, inconvenient and tasteless – I seriously feared for the life of anyone foolish enough to carry one.

Don't chortle. Perhaps you forget that committing a fashion faux-pas was punishable by execution in accordance with Junior High Law A6-924.

Onemightfacethe Guillotine of Excommunication, the Electric Chair of Criticism or a more discreet but equally lethal injection of Behind-the-Back Gossip.

No matter the means, socially you were dead meat.

Much to my shock and chagrin, those tiny satchels became all the rage. And, here's the really weird part, I soon found myself liking them, too.

No ... loving them!

Thus, only months after swearing my allegiance to long-strapped purses, I ditched my clumsy old shoulder sack

for a fabulous brown leather clutch with an oh-so-stylish bamboo handle.

Since then, I have gathered years of analogous data to support my Theory of Chemically Driven Fashion Compliance, which also states, "The speed that any given individual transitions to the latest trends is in correlation with how much time they spend shopping."

Alas, that is the crux of my problem. I don't shop much anymore.

Years ago, my best friend and I spent hours perusing stores. Our weekends were defined by vagrant days in the mall, soft pretzels smothered in cheese and hours of scintillating conversation between dressing rooms.

Given our young age and concentrated exposure to mutating marketing rays we were, by magazine standards, stylin' – adopting outfits that best suited our tastes and experimenting with designs *au courant* to create chic get-ups all our own.

Then life got more hectic, jobs more demanding. Discretionary days became

scarce and ultimately our shopping era ended.

Somewhere between then and now, the mall went from fun to functional, and so did my clothing.

Like a collage of assorted catalog clippings glued haphazardly together, my wardrobe is now a veritable hodge-podge of styles, a funky mix of Vickie Secret, REI and Classic Lauren.

It's not that I don't want to be hip. Apparel just isn't as important to me as other necessities of life. Like food, for example, or sleep. If only it were easier to deck-out in fabulous attire.

I need Garanimals for grown-ups. I'd give good money to turn my closet into a virtual Noah's Ark, having apparel color-coordinated in clever pairs of hippos, tigers and giraffes.

My bohemian girlfriend says Garanimals strangle individuality, but I say they give little non-conformists endless opportunities to thumb their noses at The Establishment.

A socially charged six-year-old can simply wear a platypus

with a polar bear. Ha! Take that, stuffy traditionalists!

Perhaps upscale adult lines like Bebe, Max Mara and Cache could match up their chichi outfits by luxury cars or wines. *Put any two merlots together for a perfect evening ensemble.*

I'm telling you, it's a goldmine!

Until then, I seem destined to flounder amidst the shifting sands of the vogue landscape – to ride the caboose on the Fashion Train.

That, or make time for some serious shopping. Perhaps a mindless day at the mall would do me good ... eating soft pretzels covered in cheese and sharing council with my old friend.

Just so long as I can wear my Merrells.

Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen is the author and illustrator of the children's book Look Who Lives in the Desert!, a humorous-but-educational look at desert wildlife. It's available at all book retailers, including Gridleys of Fountain Hills.

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