



your Health

Unlocking that beautiful you

New spirit of beauty honors every woman, expert says

By Joanne Griffith Domingue
Town Crier Staff Writer

Helen Villa Connor is not your typical beauty. She's never won a beauty contest. She's short. She's 50 years old. She says she has a "little bit of a tum," and her legs aren't long.

But Connor has Presence. With a capital "P". And she knows about beauty.

"I redefine beauty for women and show them how beautiful they are through the elements of art," Connor said to the women of St. Simon's parish life group recently in Mac's Tea Room in Los Altos.

A froth of dark hair frames her café au lait skin. Her marigold-yellow jacket shines like sunlight above her slim black skirt as she turns to differ-

ent women in her audience.

"If Dr. Ruth can talk about sex, I can talk about beauty."

And she does. "There's beauty in every kind of body," Connor said. "Instead of saying thick or plump, think curves." A curved line is totally different than a straight line. One is not better than the other, she said.

"That would be like saying an oak tree is better than a pine tree."

Connor is a personal design consultant, a teacher and co-author of "The Triumph of Individual Style" with Carla Mason Mathis.

"We tend to blame our bodies not our clothes when something doesn't work." But, Connor says, "there's nothing wrong with your body. It's the clothes. When the beauty of the body is repeated in the clothes, there's harmony."

Take eyebrows, for instance. They are straight or curved, she said. With curved brows, using lace can carry on the curve of the brow.

Each body needs fabric that continues the special expression

unique to that person.

"A skeletal frame needs taut fabric," she said. "Thin, filmy fabric would make the woman look like a refugee."

Connor brings a guest to the front of the room who has her blouse buttoned to her chin. Connor shows how, by repeating the gentle V-line of the woman's jaw in the neckline of her dress, by unbuttoning the top buttons so there is a V look, that the clothes take on an elegant harmony.

Connor's book also offers tips on how to reflect the art of each body, whatever the age, shape, color or size.

On page 81 are suggestions for "tummy: large."

Renoir paintings of voluptuous women illustrate the section. Connor gives two ways to deal with large stomachs.

To camouflage, "bypass the tummy with a full-shouldered top or dress that narrows below the tummy."

To highlight, "place a dramatic ornament at the top of the tummy. Then loosely drape fabric over the tummy in a large sweep of fabric."

Denise Welsh of Los Altos, who organized the luncheon, said she feels Connor's message is that "you are all beautiful."

Welsh describes Connor's words as poignant, "that we need to accept our body and treat every feature as an asset. This is the beginning of self-esteem."

She said Connor's view could be especially important to teens,

"all those girls we are losing to anorexia." If they could hear Connor, they would hear someone saying, "you look great the way you are," Welsh said.

"Diversity isn't just politically correct," Connor said. "It's humanly correct."



Helen Villa Conner, right, talks with Jeanette Loretz, center, about her derriere, what Conner calls a "body particular."



Personal style consultant Helen Villa Conner, left, talks to Judy Gordon about the proportion of her face and how this beauty can be reflected in other areas.

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