

Personal Style with Substance *(Part 2)*

PHOTO BY ROCHELLE RICHARDS



BY HELEN VILLA CONNOR

Beauty is an art.

I love the visual arts. I also love music- performing classical piano was my first love. I often dream of filling my home with the finest artwork I can find from around the world, but I am rich only in my passion and appreciation for such beauty. I do have my grand piano, but the only works of art that enter my home these days are from the hands of my children. I view their "masterpieces" with the love of a mother's eyes; they are as beautiful to me as those found in any museum. My dreams aside, I am content to bring the ART SPIRIT into my life, and into my work as a personal design consultant. I once wrote: "If you have only one original work of art in your life, let it be YOU!" This is the essence of this column's lessons on creating your personal style with substance.

Line and shape in the face

The more you listen to your body's unique language of beauty (your body's Design Pattern), the finer your instincts will become for selecting your clothing, and the more excited you'll be in setting your own standard of beauty based on YOU.

Line + Shape + Proportion + Body Particulars + Scale + Color + Texture = Your Body's Design Pattern



brows and eyes, full curved lips and soft curls in your hair, then you might highlight this curvy pattern with a floral print of curved petals and leaves, or simply with an abstract print of meandering curves as shown in the photo at left.

Seeing is believing in your design pattern.

Learning to "see" is an important part of developing a personal style. I believe training your aesthetic eye will help you to know on a conscious level what you already likely see and select on a subconscious level. This in turn will fine tune your instincts, while it teaches you the "whys" of your choices. In the example

seen opposite, let's look more closely at how this striking geometric print is in beautiful harmony with the model's facial features:

This model has both curve and straight lines in her facial features.

1. First, notice that both the curve at the top of her hairstyle and the curve of her hairline are repeated in the round curved neckline of the dress.

2. Next, notice that the V-neckline of the long vest repeats the line of her jaw which angles and tapers to a narrow chin.

3. Also, do your eyes see that there are heart-shaped figures in the print (most are lying on their sides or are upside down)? Do you see that they, too, repeat the general

shape of her face which is quite a bit wider at the temples than at the chin? Notice, even her top lip has that double curve found at the top of a heart shape.

4. Finally, look for the straight line pattern in her face. Do you see slightly diagonal or angled ones in her eyebrows and at the left side of her face? Now notice there are horizontal straight lines at the bottom part of the eyes. The print in her vest is predominantly both straight and horizontal straight lines in its design, effectively repeating this line pattern in her face.

We are all drawn instinctively to things that repeat and have similar design patterns to our own, and this is not limited to line and shape. All the elements of art have a voice depending on how you orchestrate them. For instance, large lustrous pearl earrings can bring out the depth of dark-colored eyes through

We learned before how to see line in the body, and how that tells us about the type of fabric drape we select in our clothes. In art, we know that:

- line movement is either straight or curved.
- all lines, whether straight or curved, move in one of three directions: horizontal, vertical, or diagonal.
- when lines turn and meet themselves, they create shapes.

Let's continue this lesson to include the line pattern in the face. Knowing the line pattern and shapes found in your facial features can help you choose necklines, collars, prints, accessories, and decorative details that bring out the beauty and expressiveness of your face. For example:

If you have well defined eyebrows that are straight and horizontal, then you could easily wear plaids and other straight line patterns in a print.

If you have paisley shaped eyes, wearing a paisley print in a scarf or a paisley shaped earring would repeat and emphasize your eyes.

If you have curved lines in your



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contrast, especially if the whites of the eyes really show and sparkle. Or if you have highly textured hair, a tiny pattern densely repeated in a print, or a necklace with tiny intricate beading can highlight the texture of your hair. Creative repetition of any element strikes a kind of rhythm that moves the eye through the whole visual presentation (body and clothes combined), similar to what happens when we view a work of art that uses the same technique of repetition.

Dressing different expressions of your design.

When painting a portrait, an artist sees that the way your body is put together creates an exciting design pattern of the elements of art, and that this design pattern is alive with your unique expressive qualities. The artist would say:

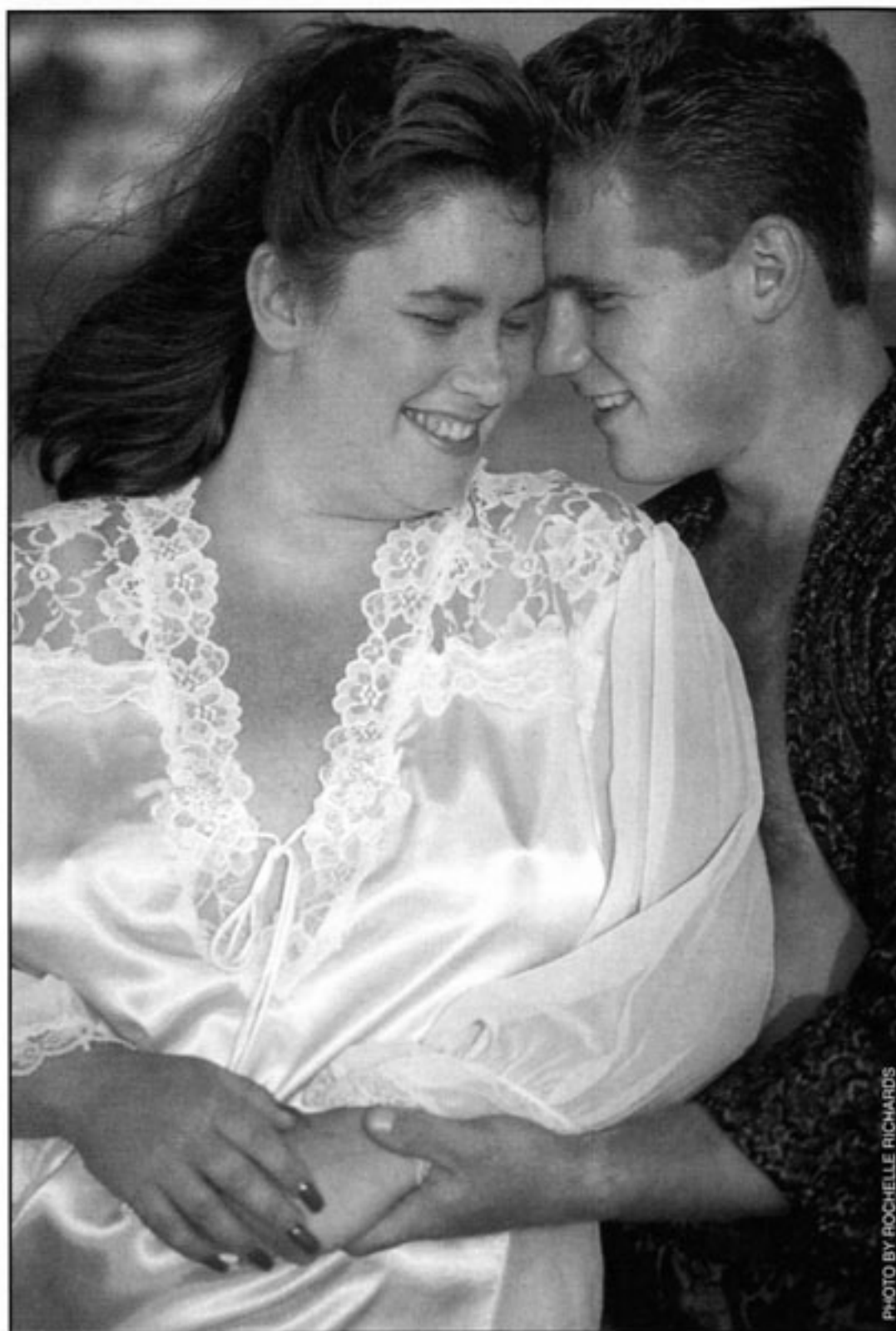
"It will not be so much a question of painting that nose as it will be painting the expression of that nose."

—Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit*

In other words, to an artist, there is a special expression found in every feature of your body, and in the colors and textures found in your skin, hair, or eyes. The artist tries to capture those expressions in his art; you will learn to capture them in the art of dressing.

As an example, for a face with a nose that is prominent and angled outward with pride as seen on the previous page, highlighting this expression comes naturally through diagonal straight lines repeated over and over in bold strokes. Even in lounge wear, the strong impression this model also projects in her stance and bearing is supported in the garment's design.

In the photo at top right, another nose which is wavy and round at the tip and nostril, is within a face that is full of small wavy curves. Notice the hairline at the side, the wavy brow, and the curvy line of the smiling upper lip. Do you begin to see the pattern? It is especially clear if you notice how the floral lace of her gown has a similar undulating quality



that not only supports the romantic mood but captures the feminine and playful expression of her design pattern.

Of course, not only physical appearance, but personality also comes into play in our wardrobe choices, but that is another discussion.

A face to launch a thousand creative impulses.

The face is the most compelling image to the human species. Brain research shows that part of the cerebral cortex is dedicated specifically to the recognition of faces. Scientists believe this evolved because the recognition of people as individuals is a vital component of our highly social human nature. By the age of 2 weeks, babies prefer the image of a human face over other images. And

true to the studies on infants, when my children were 3 or 4 months old, not only did they prefer my face, they usually smiled in response to it.

With our faces, we establish our identities, the essence of which remain in our facial features throughout our lives. Throughout this New Year, I hope you will continue to celebrate the beauty that is in your one-of-a-kind face through your creative one-of-a-kind personal style.

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