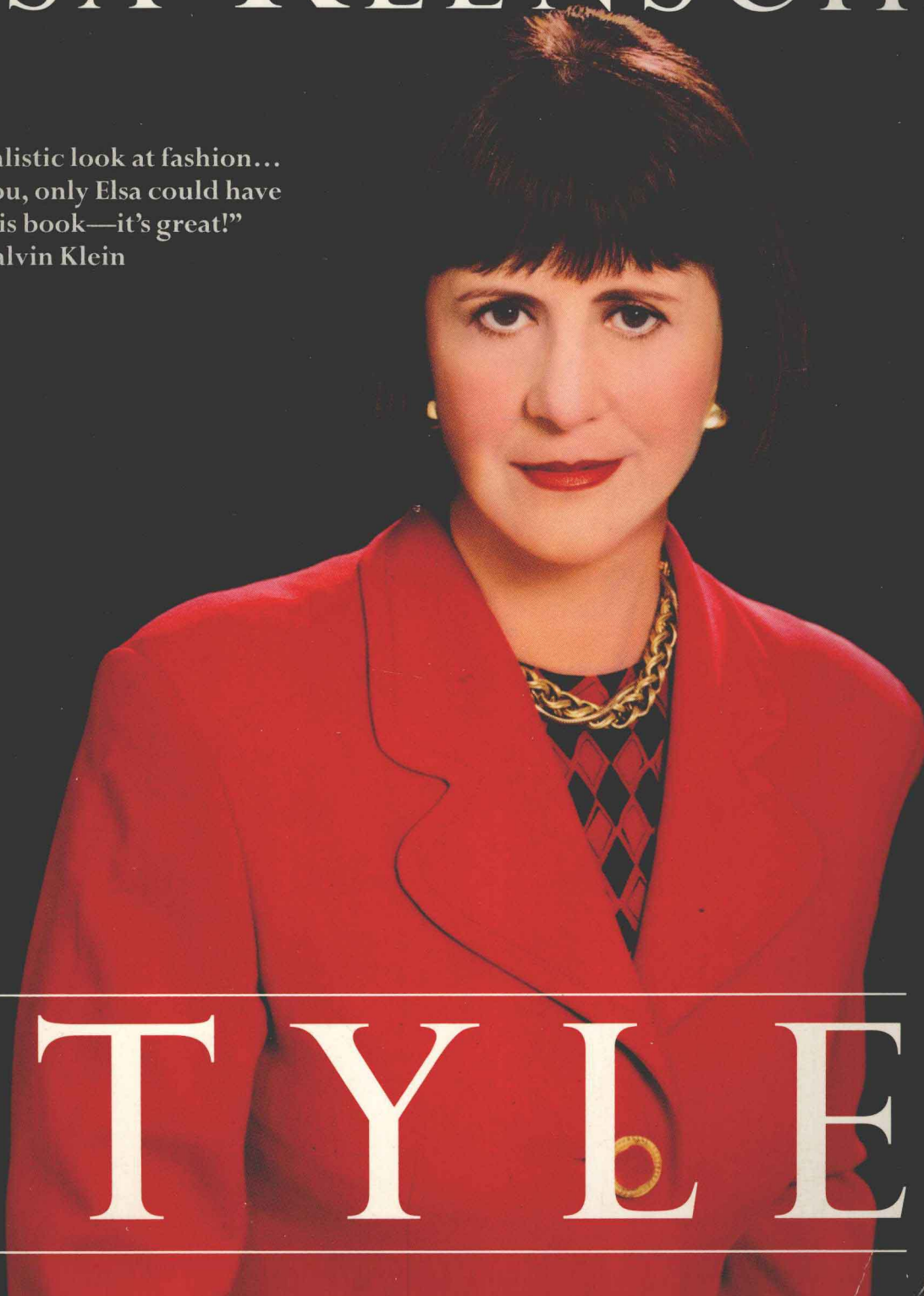


ELSA KLENSCH

"A stylish, realistic look at fashion...
I have to tell you, only Elsa could have
written this book—it's great!"

—Calvin Klein

A portrait of Elsa Klensch, a woman with dark hair and bangs, wearing a red blazer over a patterned top and a gold chain necklace. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

STYLE



STYLE

by Elsa Klensch

with Beryl Meyer

Illustrations by David Croland

Photographs by Randy Brooke

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STYLE

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A special thank-you to those whose photographs appear in the book.

Lastly, to my good friends Patricia, Chuck and Jerry.

Foreword

Style is a powerful thing. Style commands attention and respect, even when a woman is not beautiful. A stylish woman can go anywhere and achieve anything. A stylish woman gets the best table in a restaurant, has the taxi stop for her on a rainy day, and receives better service in department stores and from her own hairdresser.

During nearly twenty-five years in the fashion world, I've seen beautiful women come and go while the stylish ones stay on, building their careers.

Style is not about beauty, wealth, or even fashion. Style is rooted in a woman's knowing herself well enough to develop a consistent image, and then having the courage to project that image.



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1

How This Style Expert Developed Her Own Style

Long before I joined CNN and long before my work at *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, I was aware of the importance of style, and the pleasure to be had developing it. I must have been five or six when my mother bought me the first piece of clothing I vividly remember—a simple smock with a matching belt. Standing in front of the mirror, I tried it first with the sash

on and then with it off, deciding which suited me better. I was first becoming aware of my style and the different looks I could create for myself.

Today I wouldn't hesitate. The sash would go. Over time, I learned that simple shapes suit me best.

Much as I love clothes, I've always been practical about them. Owning too many confuses me and I find I end up wearing the same wisely chosen outfits over and over again.

So when I left my hometown of Sydney, Australia, to seek my fortune as a journalist in London, my luggage was light. My one big splurge was a black suit by the French designer Jacques Fath that I'd bought on sale at David Jones department store. I can still remember standing in the fitting room looking at myself from all angles and worrying about whether I should buy it.

The suit cost more than I'd planned, but it fit in well with my black, grey, red, and white wardrobe. And it proved to be money very well spent. The cut was unmistakably French, and it gave me great style. I found when I wore it I felt confident and comfortable at cocktail and dinner parties. What's more, when the editor of the paper where I eventually got a job saw me in it, he decided I should go to Paris to cover the couture collections.

My French suit got me my first trip to Paris. It also taught me a lot about the value of well-designed



clothes. They give confidence. They open doors. They can create an illusion of power which can help you get whatever it is you want.

I always wanted a successful career. And I built my style with that in mind. I dress to suit my career, but also to allow my personality to show through and, most importantly, to please myself.

I enjoy well-made clothes in good fabrics, whether they are traditional like wool or cotton or the latest stretch blend like nylon/Lycra or viscose. And I enjoy trying clothes on—something I believe is most important. Trying clothes on is the only way to get the feel of the fabric, to evaluate the ease of the cut, and to see the effect of the color on the skin.

On several occasions, when a designer has suggested I try on a jacket or a coat, I've done so out of politeness—never suspecting I would like it. Then, to my amazement, I discovered it made me look terrific. It's a good lesson to remember. No one's eye, or experience, for that matter, is infallible.

My pursuit of style continued in London. I was starting to recognize what was—and wasn't—"me." In those early years when I was in my twenties, I was never interested in owning a ball gown. What fascinated me were those great day clothes. They were wonderfully fitting and so well-pulled-together with accessories. And the quality was unparalleled.

When it came to evening I chose separates because



they could create many different moods, unlike a ball gown. For evening was the time to be feminine, not grand, rich, or even luxurious.

My writing career soon took me to Hong Kong. While I was there, I met my American journalist husband, married him in wartime Saigon, and then came to live in New York City.

Manhattan terrified me at first, but after landing a job as a fashion editor at *Women's Wear Daily*, I quickly discovered that New York was the fashion capital of America, if not of the world.

Exciting things were happening in New York in the seventies. American designers Calvin Klein, Bill Blass, Anne Klein, and Ralph Lauren were beginning to climb the ladder to international fame. I was there to follow every fashion and every fad.

Of course, my own style changed over the years. Who could resist the fun of that fashion explosion that took place in the seventies? But certain things remained constant: the quality of the clothes I bought and my favorite basic colors.

I also changed jobs during the mid-seventies, working as a fashion editor at *Vogue* and then as senior fashion editor at *Harper's Bazaar*. Then, in 1980, I got the chance to put fashion where I had always thought it belonged—on television.

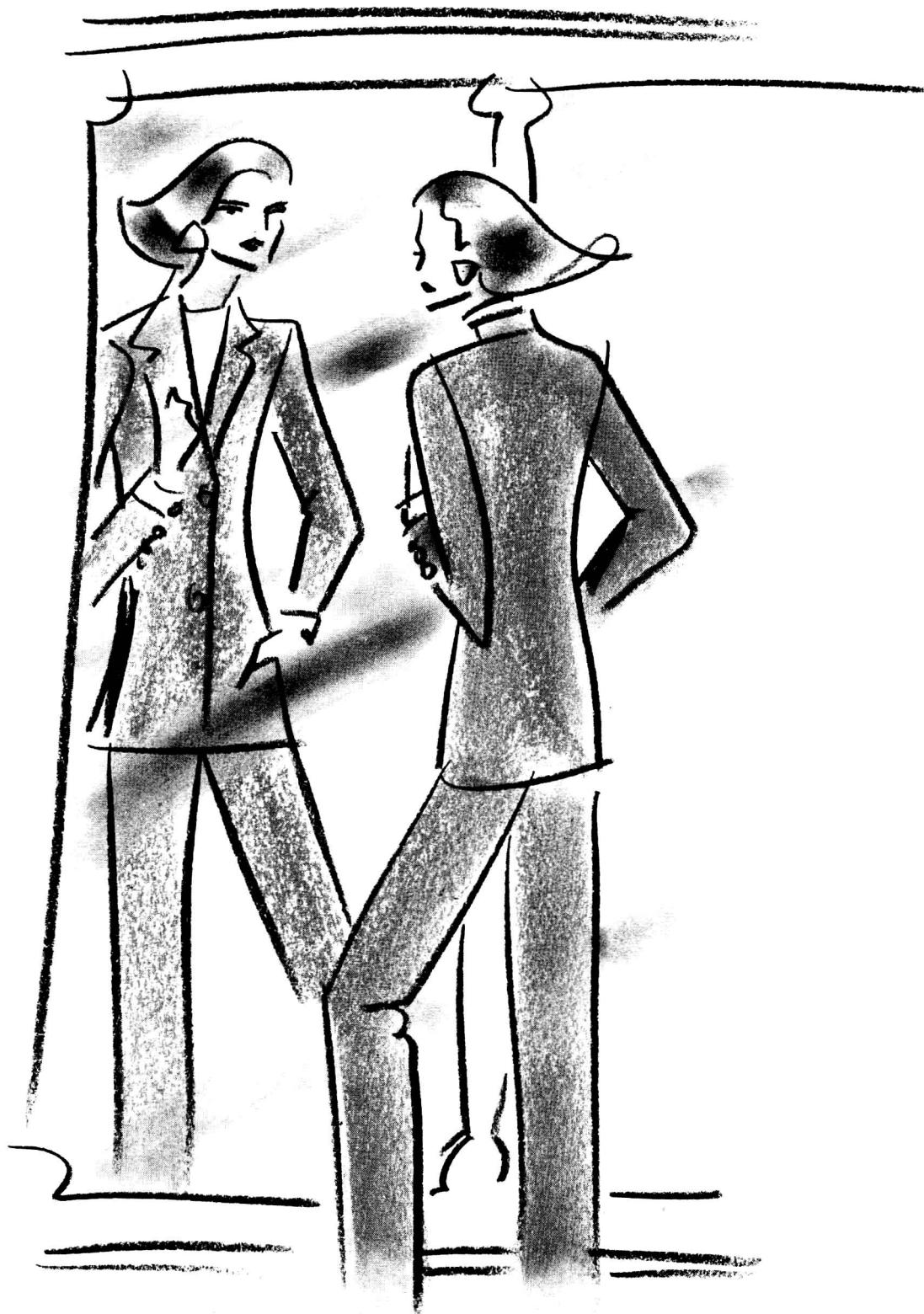
Having my own show at CNN has been the greatest experience of my career. Interviewing design-



ers, stylists, models, hairdressers, and makeup artists has taught me more about fashion and style than I could ever have learned anywhere else.

It certainly reinforced my belief that style is important to every one of us. And that's what this book is all about. It should help you find the path that works for you. It should show you how to choose clothes that are timeless, and looks that bring out your best features. No matter where you live, no matter what your budget is—you can have great style.





2

How to Cultivate Your Style

Any woman can have style. The challenge is developing it. Going into the best shops and buying expensive clothes won't necessarily help. It takes a different type of investment—one that requires less money, but a lot of time and effort.

Style comes with understanding your needs and lifestyle and, even more importantly, it comes with respecting

and enjoying yourself as a unique person, an individual. By that, I mean learning to accept what you can't change, and focusing, more positively, on your assets.

There's a freedom that comes with saying to yourself: "This is all I can ever be, but I can and will make the most of it."

Be as attractive as you possibly can—the *best you* possible. Package yourself so you can be happy in your skin and content with the impression you make in all the various aspects of your life.

All the stylish women I know make effective use of three key personal preferences to achieve their distinctive looks:

Hairstyle—Well-groomed hair cut in proportion to your figure attracts immediate attention and establishes you as a person who cares about her appearance.

Color—It draws attention to your face, and it can make you appear taller, slimmer, more vibrant, and more confident.

Accessories—More than any other element, they indicate the sort of person you are—quiet and discreet, or strong and forceful. For work, your accessories should always be the best quality you can



afford. You can make a cheap outfit look expensive with quality accessories, but cheap accessories will ruin the most expensive dress.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

The first step in developing style often entails moving out of your mother's shadow (no matter how old you are) and nurturing your spirit.

It takes conviction and work; it's easy to get lost when you try to be too many things to too many people. When you don't concentrate on yourself, style suffers. It becomes erratic, diluted, unfocused.

Don't be surprised if family and friends try to dissuade you when they see you developing style. They'll question your preference for pants, or a particular color. Most likely they're feeling intimidated; someone who has style has identity and power. Because they are insecure, they might try to convince you to dress as they do. *Don't* be swayed by them. What looks great on your best friend can be disastrous on you.

Remember, the worst reason in the world to buy something is because it looks good on a friend or a TV actress. Don't let glamour blind you.

Zero in on the style of the most important person in your life—*you*.



FIRST STEPS

Style starts with being realistic about your body. Genes can't be ignored: If your ancestors had characteristically big chests, as my solidly built Swiss forebears did, the fact is, you'll never have a slender upper body. On the other hand, you may have enviably slim hips.

You have to find a balance. I wear dark tops (to make my bust look smaller) with a bright or a pale bottom (to show off my legs).

Study your proportions—whether you're short, tall, thin, or round—until you know everything about your figure. Then you can begin to understand which proportions work for you.

Just as essential in developing your style is finding the colors that are most flattering to your skin tone. You'll do best when you make the colors that flatter you the basis of your wardrobe—for work and play, for day and night—and stick to them.

I learned most about style while taking part in the editorial “run-throughs” at *Vogue*. At these meetings the fashion editors pull in the best clothes in the market and dissect them in terms of success or failure. From these sessions I developed a sense of proportion and color. I also became adept at analyzing why one particular outfit worked while another didn't.

