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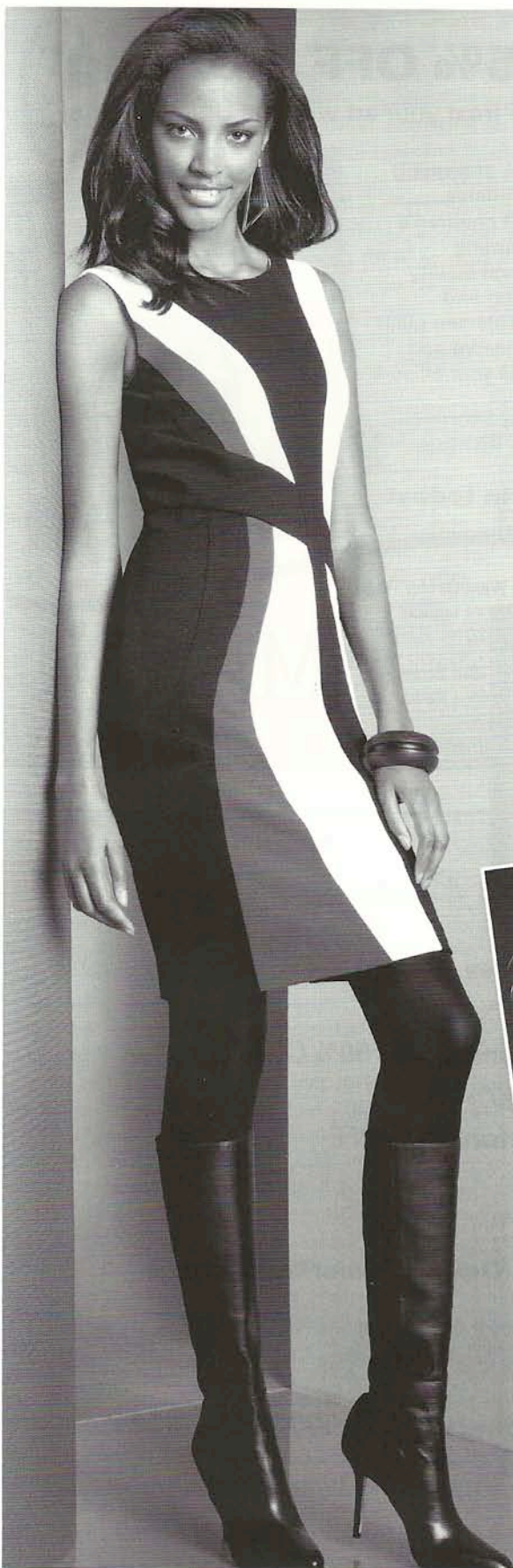
By Holly Bell

As fall drifts toward winter, we crave fabrics that have weight and substance. We want to feel cozy softness next to our skin and see and feel interesting textures that interplay with the season's newest trends. Fall 2011 is a fascinating juxtaposition of femininity, retro, and classic. By purchasing a few of fall's new trends, we can freshen and liven up our existing fall wardrobe.

On the top of my list is a piece in a new bright fall hue. Every woman deserves a little color in her closet! A couple of times a week say to yourself, "Today, I am not wearing black." Cooler weather no longer means drab and dark. It can also mean a delightfully mad and colorful palette of sunshiny mustard, brilliant peacock blue, a leafy pop of yellow-green, a vibrant concord purple, or a fresh slate blue. Wearing these colors is sure to brighten our spirits even on the grayest of days. This broad spectrum of color also sheds some new light on our classic neutrals that we already own. Don't be afraid of mixing colors and prints. For instance, a solid blazer with a punch of color underneath adds an unexpected twist to a black and white-printed skirt.

Powerful red in all its magnificent hues plays an important role this fall—besides adding a flattering blush to our complexions. There is nothing more dramatic than a solid red coat or a black and white graphic print reinvented with a swash of red. Red is

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both lively and provocative, which is exactly what we need on cold wintry days.

Vibrant hues need a conservative silhouette to add a touch of sophistication. Ladylike shapes are the counterpoint to today's fresh colors and feminine detailing. Channeling Jackie O or Britain's Kate, we enjoy cuts that are demure but have an edge. Softly sculpted, these are yoked and pleated with flattering seaming that slim and skim the body and add comfort and appeal to all ages and sizes. We enjoy a plethora of pant cuts, from skinny jeans to a fresh new take on the flare leg. And skirt lengths are all over the place!

For daytime or eveningwear, a skirt that skims the floor or a mini skirt with leggings; you can dress to fit your personality, body shape, and lifestyle. The skirt length or pant style no longer dictates whether the outfit is dressy or casual. It is more about the top half. A chunky sweater or a chunky sweater vest worn over a fresh white shirt can dress down a long skirt, whereas a silky, softly draping top with statement jewelry can dress up a skinny jean.

It is fun to take everything out of your closet and try on combinations that you have never put together before. Don't obey any fashion rules. Use your imagination, and be artsy and innovative and discover new outfits to wear in your own closet or to put with those dramatic new fall pieces you have thoughtfully purchased. The only rule of thumb to keep in mind is that you need to balance an oversized or bulky piece with a slim-fitted one. If you have a full skirt in a wild pattern, it would have to be balanced with a slim-fitted top. Two bulky textures together, and you could look like the Abominable Snowman!

Your closet should be a mix of vintage and new, splurge pieces and low-end bargains, and feminine and tailored pieces that can work together or not, depending on your mood. Experiment and dress with a positive vibe that reflects who you are.

Above all, fashion is fun. Some of the detailing you will find this year will make you smile. It's all about frills to thrill this fall, with both wide and narrow ruffles edging everything from jackets, sweaters, and tops, to belts and handbags. Some other wild-at-heart embellishments are reptilian-patterned prints, faux fur trims, and leather or faux leather jackets. You will find these exotic details on shoes, vests, oversized collars, coats, and gloves.

As a counterpoint to all this luxe glamour and detail, a touch of military double-breasted looks trimmed with gold buttons walked the fall runway shows. Along with this, some androgynous styling was shown, all the way down to the oxford shoe. Texture on texture, print on print, tweed on tweed. Don't shy away from putting patterns and textures together. As long as they are



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in the same color family and in the same sized print, it works and looks so fashion-forward. Just be careful to mix it up only with simple classic shapes that do not have added embellishments such as ruffles or statement buttons.

Thinking in layers works so well for our climate. You never know when you will need to wrap that fluffy scarf warmly around your neck or when you will need to take off that coat and open up your jacket. Dressing like this actually gives us some fun opportunities to put some interesting looks together. There is nothing more alluring than something softly feminine paired with something tailored and masculine. That dichotomy is fashion-forward yet approachable.

So take that blustery day and stay inside to play in your closet and enjoy a feeling of accomplishment when you are finished organizing. And as the cold wind blows outside and we snuggle up in our warm substantial fabrics to brace ourselves for the winter ahead, we feel we are women of substance loving the seasons of substance.

Editor's Note: Holly has been in the fashion industry for over 30 years as a buyer, boutique store owner, visual merchandiser, and fashion show producer. She is currently the owner of a modeling agency. Holly regularly appears on local TV doing fashion segments.

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