

Hunt for transition apparel



KAREN DASKAS

With three more months of winter remaining, it's time to make your cold-weather wardrobe look fresh with smart pieces that will work as transition items for spring.

When searching for those special items, select apparel that makes you look smart and chic without bypassing the current season.

How can you achieve that? Begins at the sales racks. January is the month for great sales, so now is the time to visit your local clothing stores for merchandise to get you through the rest of winter.

The key is to find a good salesperson who is willing to assist you in selecting the best items of clothing. If you brave it on your own, you may end up standing in the middle of the store wondering how you'll ever escape from the sea of clothes. Sales associates are there to help you and will know how to find good items and smart investment pieces.

Still not sure where to start? The lady-like look continues to reign, so take a vintage shirt and mix it with a tailored skirt or pant.

Geometric prints and feminine elements will remain strong throughout winter and into spring.

And cashmere sweaters with half-sleeves look great with knee-length skirts and boots.

(Had enough of salt-stained footwear? Purchase a couple new pairs of boots and take your old ones in for a facelift. After all, you can always tell a person by their shoes.)

While you may feel compelled to comb the racks for basic black, the transition season calls for splashes of color. The trick is to integrate color into your existing wardrobe.

While we've enjoyed unseasonably warm weather during the past few winters, we're experiencing those good old Michigan cold snaps once again. And, though it may be a while before we can break out the cotton-candy pink tank tops and turquoise flip-flops, you can add splashes of spring color now and still dress appropriately.

When searching for a new color wardrobe piece for winter-to-spring transition, select a thinner ply that works as a layering piece for colder months or alone when warmer weather arrives. A lightweight cashmere sweater in tangerine is stylish under a suit but will keep you warm in cold weather.

Think of color as something to layer into your wardrobe.

A basic black dress looks fresh with cayenne leather boots and a multi-colored beaded bag. A bright ruffled top with a geometric print can be paired with a camel-colored suit and snakeskin pumps.

Find a light-colored pant to mix with black in your transition to spring, or give outer wear a boost with colorful gloves and scarves accented with beads and stitched detailing.

Whether it's a new sweater, scarf or coat, just adding a simple pop of color brings a little sunshine to a snowy, Michigan overcast day.

Everywhere you turn, you'll see colored leather, and it's an ideal transition fabric.

Gone are the days when only rebels like James Dean and Marlon Brando sported black leather jackets. In the past year, leather has become more mainstream, showing up on trendy and sophisticated fashion followers looking to bring a little edge to their wardrobe. Leather has become as universal as the Razor scooter, and fits any lifestyle.

Leather's texture has been transformed, too. It's more supple and luxurious. Stretch leather is revolutionary, being lightweight and having a fabric-like quality and remarkable shape recovery. Many clothing stores are offering great sales on leather apparel, so have your salesperson suggest a jacket, pant, top or great boot that works with your wardrobe.

Most important during the transition season, shed the bulky fabrics and dark, dreary hues and embrace the warm colors and lighter fabrics. And, while you're out searching for bargains, dress smart and warm!

Karen Daskas is co-owner of Tender women's clothing boutique at 271 West Maple in downtown Birmingham. Every season, Karen travels to Milan, Paris and London to see the latest trends in ready-to-wear and accessories. Call Karen with your questions at Tender at (248) 259-0912.

Hudson's shoppers won't fret name change

By NICOLE STAFFORD
SPECIAL EDITOR

Local Hudson's devotees have survived worse — the closing of their beloved downtown Detroit store in 1993 followed by the building's razing in the late 1990s. They'll likely survive a name change.

The Minneapolis-based retailer announced Friday that Hudson's and Dayton's stores would assume the Marshall Field's name. All three department stores are part of the Target Corporation and together generate annual revenues of \$3 billion.

Hudson's has 21 locations in Michigan including stores at the Somerset Collection and Oakland Mall in Troy, Northland Center in Southfield, Summit Place Mall in Waterford and the Westland Shopping Center.

"I'm a 'Hudsonian,' but I understand," said Fred Marx, a former Hudson's senior vice president and retail consultant at the Marx Layne marketing and public relations firm in Farmington Hills. "There's always going to be a sense of nostalgia. But I think people are going to be OK."

Hudson's Department Store was founded in 1881 by Joseph Lowthian Hudson in the old Detroit Opera House. Within 10 years, the retailer built its eight-story, full-line downtown department store, becoming a dominant retail force in Michigan. Hudson's merged with Dayton's in 1984, and that company bought Marshall Field's in 1990.

Brenda Green, 51, of Westland, has been shopping at Hudson's for 40 years, but the name change seems irrelevant after the previous changes, she said.

Green was about 11 years old when she first explored the retailer's massive Detroit store on Woodward Avenue.

"I loved all of the display windows on the street," she said. "And I loved the old elevators with the attendants."

Years later, Green shared the magical Hudson's store with her three daughters by taking them on all-day shopping sprees once a year at Christmas time.

"The store downtown was the best," she said. "To me, when they closed that store, that's when Hudson's kind of

died. So, the name change really doesn't matter, as long as they keep the inside of the stores the same."

That is exactly what the department store company plans to do. Not only will merchandise, store operations and employees be unaffected by the change, all local community commitments and traditions will continue, said Lynne Galin, Hudson's spokesperson in Minneapolis.

"We feel very fortunate that we've had a strong emotional connection with our guests, and we're not taking that away. We're not changing what we do or who we are."

Events like Fash Bash, the downtown July 4 fireworks and First Fridays at the Detroit Institute of Arts will continue, she said. The company has not yet announced when the name change will be implemented.

Though it won't come as good news to all Hudson's customers, the Marshall Field's name may increase the retailer's draw and bring new shoppers to local malls.

"I think it's going to be great, actually," said James Gerety, Somerset Collection general manager. "Our Hud-

son's customers will see no appreciable change, but our out-of-town guests will recognize the Marshall Field's name plate. The change will just broaden the recognition of what has already been an outstanding department store."

The change may have a similar effect at Westland Shopping Center, said Kellie Heppner, the mall's marketing coordinator. Regular Hudson's shoppers will continue to patronize the store, she said, "but I think some shoppers may see (Marshall Field's) as being more upscale than Hudson's and that might bring a different demographic to the mall."

The name change is a strategy for increasing the company's national recognition, and by most accounts makes good business sense.

"Marshall Field's has a remarkable name here and all over the country," said Marx. "It is one of the strongest in terms of recognition in the nation ... It does give them the platform to expand, a growth vehicle, if that's what's on their minds."

— Staff writer Stacy Jenkins contributed to this story

Retailing women

Vision and commitment behind small store



STAFF PHOTO BY STEVE CANTRELL

Taking stock: Ann Stevenson sits beside merchandise in her Clarkston retail store and cafe, the Union General.

Story by Nicole Stafford

For the second in a three-part series about local women in the retail industry, we talked with Ann Stevenson, owner of the Union General, a small boutique and cafe at 50 S. Main Street in downtown Clarkston.

Stevenson, 33, opened the Union General just over three years ago in Clarkston's downtown shopping district where she and her husband live. As a graduate of Bennington College in Vermont and working artist, Stevenson never imagined she would open and run her own boutique, let alone work in the retail industry.

"It wasn't a lifelong dream of mine. It wasn't something that I had considered before," she said.

But when the opportunity presented itself, the Minnesota native jumped aboard, a process she describes as "scary" in terms of learning to run a business but easy when it came to developing and carrying out her vision.

"Actually, I think I would have been more fearful, if I had known more," said Stevenson. On the other hand, she said, another local merchant recently commented, "You know, Ann, I think you've really come into your own."

Q: What's involved in running your own retail business?
S: The buying of merchandise. Most of my day-to-day is dealing with customers. Marketing. Finance. Doing the books ... I do travel a lot, and I'm always looking for ideas. I want to keep things fresh. I'm always looking, keeping my eyes open, looking through magazines.

Q: As an independent retailer, what do you do to compete with larger retailers and shopping centers?
S: I buy small amounts and I buy often. And I buy from mostly from small companies, and that, I think, has a lot to do with the feel of the store. And I try to keep it always changing ... I've gotten to know a lot of my customers very well. People who come in every day or every other day for cappuccino — I feel like I have relationships with people.

Q: Let's talk about the image of women in retail. In the past, when a woman opened up a store or boutique, it was almost considered a diversion, rather than a job. Has that changed?
S: Retail, style and special store events are listed in this calendar. Please send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. By fax, (248) 644-1314. E-mail, nstafford@oe.homecomm.net. Deadline for publication is two weeks in advance.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16

CHILDREN'S ATTIRE FOR SPRING
Jacobson's hosts the Posies Spring 2001 Collection for children at their stores in Rochester Hills, 3-6 p.m., and Livonia (Laurel Park Place), 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Children's department. For information, call the Rochester Hills store at (248) 651-6000 and the Livonia store at (734) 591-7696.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

WHERE'S YOUR MUSTACHE?
Cookiee & Milk at the Golden Gate Shopping Center, 8515 Lillie, South of Joy Road, in Canton, holds a "milk mustache" photo opportunity for kids. Cookies & Milk is an indoor playground for children through age 4. For additional information, call (734) 207-1655.

MONDAY, JANUARY 22

TRUNK SHOW

Badgley Mischka's spring 2001 special order trunk show collection visits Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy through Jan. 23 with informal modeling slated 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Designer Salon, second floor. For more information, call (248) 614-3393.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25

FASHION SHOW
Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy, presents Ellen Tracy's spring collection at a breakfast fashion show to benefit the Lighthouse Path Magic & Mayhem event, 9:30 a.m. breakfast, 10 a.m. show. Tickets are \$15 and \$25, Designer Salon, Sportswear, second floor. To purchase tickets, call (248) 614-3317.