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Design Your Own

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CHIC is a word that can't be explained in a mere sentence. How can a dress or suit advance from the homemade to the handmade level? For college girls who sew "You made it yourself?" has no doubt been the query for the past 15 years. In that time it has probably changed from a "Well I don't wonder!" to a "not bad!" inflection.

When you design for yourself, an outfit should be exclusively yours in color, design, fit and style. Fit is important. Will you look as if your dress belongs to you or your condescending big sister? Is the color just right? Does it make your naturally drab hair look almost golden? By long experiment and experience, color can maintain balance between a sordid outfit and a breath-taking picture.

Everyone should know his own faults, and figure faults are no exception. The average woman isn't a Venus de Milo but it's surprising how well she can camouflage wide hips, winged scapula or a hollow chest. The most difficult task seems to be admitting it.

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Everyone should know his own faults, and figure faults are no exception. The average woman isn't a Venus de Milo but it's surprising how well she can camouflage wide hips, winged scapula or a hollow chest. The most difficult task seems to be admitting it. If you know your legs are serviceable for walking but inches too short for style, and if you are fully aware that a boxy top coat makes you appear shorter, admit it.

A large-boned, lithe girl can look stupid in profuse ruffles. Likewise a tiny delicate girl may look buried under long Grecian folds. Study your type until you know it; then find great joy in dressing yourself well.

After designing your new costume to suit your personality, try executing the plan. There's no denying the thrill of new material. When you step into a yardage department does your imagination run wild? On all those dozens of bolts are both ultra smart costumes and gaudy tasteless outfits. It all depends on you, Miss Combination-Designer-and-Seamstress.

You walk down the aisles. Your hand reaches out to feel some material which is luscious to your eye. It's an intriguing game to shrewdly distinguish fiber or at least to believe you can. Trade names come to be respected by those who have discerned their quality through usage. Most everyone is acquainted with value behind "sanforized and preshrunk" labels. Usually one knows all the fabrics names as she knows the names of close friends.

What was the inspiration for your last creation? Perhaps you adapted it from Vogue or from the store window; maybe that bolt of cloth shouted to you as you passed the counter; or did you sit down very systematically to plan your new wardrobe?

It's grand fun to build a complete outfit around an apparently insignificant item, to dress it up, to feature it. Start with a beautiful piece of plaid, a clever sleeve cut, a piece of costume jewelry or an unusual color combination. The problem has then become that of featuring some detail, simply, smartly and with finesse.

One can learn much from working on an old garment, particularly if the garment has been of good quality. In ripping it, finishing details can be studied as to style and execution. It is interesting to notice the places where wear is shown.

Weave and quality of textiles are more apparent in old garments. Cut and design can be studied in the ripped up places. Perhaps the greatest challenge is acknowledging the old design in trying to cut something new and interesting. A cape may become sleeves. Some fabrics might be turned wrong side out. A narrow skirt may boast pleats snitched from long sleeves. Old materials can be combined with new.

Made-overs develop one's initiative. When wearing your own handiwork, it's consoling to know you won't meet yourself on the street. Keeping thrift in view, the pleasure of creation also replaces the added strain ready-made clothes exert on the purse.

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