



find your
style,
find yourself

Getting dressed is so much more than simply the clothes you put on each day. It's a tool for defining your most authentic self. We found five real women, from their thirties to their fifties, who have discovered the true power of personal style. Each has a unique approach that helps her consistently feel and look her best. You'll find inspiration in the stories and wisdom of these everyday fashion heroes.

BY JILL RUSSELL PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN DOLAN

From the Inside Out

Joanne Heyman, 47
philanthropist

As executive director for Donna Karan's philanthropic Urban Zen Foundation, Joanne Heyman finds that style plays a key role in her professional and personal life. To her, clothing not only illustrates identity, it also expresses values. "By choosing particular designs or fabrics, we demonstrate our interests in cultures, sensibilities, and even feelings about the environment," she says, adding that she gravitates toward natural fabrics such as cashmere, silk, and soft cotton. Heyman cultivated her look slowly over time, in the same way she developed her sense of self. "Style grows organically. I've added pieces and looks as I've progressed as a person, drawing inspiration from my travels, family, and life experiences." She also believes strongly in authenticity—and that includes "dressing my age"—and wants her wardrobe to inherently reflect who she is as an individual. "Each one of us is unique," she says, "so our styles should be as well." According to Heyman, this doesn't mean you can't borrow a look or piece you see and admire on someone else. "If it suits you, adapt it. Don't just adopt it."

» jacket, \$995, and skirt, \$595, by Urban Zen, 212-206-3999, urbanzen.org; organic cotton tunic, \$160, by Stewart + Brown, stewartbrown.com; oxidized silver shell earrings, \$260, by Raquel Moreno, 501-223-2514; "Plumage" pump, \$860, by David Wyatt, gregmillsld.com. Shot on location at the Urban Zen Foundation.



“I won’t wear anything that detracts from the self I want to present to the world.”

Majora Carter



Flair for the '40s

Majora Carter, 42

economic revitalization strategist

Throughout college, Majora Carter lived in flannel shirts and black sweatpants—which was a constant source of regret for her late mother, an “ultra-feminine Southern woman.” But when Carter decided to run for city council in her early thirties, her mentors reminded her that appearance—and clothing—mattered. “People see your clothes before they see you, and create all sorts of judgments based on that,” she says. Strapped for cash, she went to a local used-clothing store and spent \$45 on three fitted suits. Since then, she hasn’t looked back—in career or style. When she founded Sustainable South Bronx in 2001, Carter stepped up her wardrobe, drawing inspiration from the tailor-fitted silhouettes of the 1940s and adopting one overarching edict: classic trumps trendy. Now president of Majora Carter Group, a green economic consulting company, she has little time to follow fashion trends. Yet she’s that enviable type of woman who knows exactly what works for her: “I won’t wear anything that detracts from the self I want to present to the world.”

<< skirt, \$168, by Eileen Fisher, eileenfisher.com; top, \$565, by Maria Pinto, [Takashimaya, takashimaya-ny.com](http://Takashimaya.com); 18k-gold, tourmaline, and diamond earrings, \$2,450, and 18k-gold, ruby, emerald, and diamond bangles, \$875 each, by GD, garadanielle.com.



Trendy with a Modern Twist

Carrie Hess, 32

fashion account executive

Working for luxury designer Chloe doesn’t stop Carrie Hess from staying true to herself. If she could wear only one outfit for the rest of her life? “A bathing suit and flip-flops,” she says. “I’m a beach bum in spirit.” The dichotomy between that laid-back attitude and Hess’s fashion-forward clothes perfectly encompasses her approach to style. She first discovered her fashion sense back in seventh grade, when she spotted an outfit she “just had to have” in a J. Crew

catalog. Her parents didn’t okay the purchase, so she took matters into her own hands—and learned to shop on a budget. During high school, Hess learned to mix a few pricier staples with more affordable—but equally cool—finds (the resulting look earning her the “best dressed” title in her senior yearbook). Today, she still combines high- and low-end pieces. “At work, I’m fortunate to have access to amazing clothes, and I’m not afraid to splurge occasionally,” she says. But Hess shops at Target, too. What’s changed is the way she adapts current styles. “I’ve gone from taking trends too literally,” she says, “to interpreting them so that they fit both my body and my personality.”

>> “Saxophone” top, \$198, by Wundervoll, [Journelle, 212-255-7800](http://Journelle.com); “Vernice” scallop collar top, \$322, by Trovata, [Barneys NY, 212-826-8900](http://BarneysNY.com); shrug jacket, \$725, by Ports 1961 by Tia Cibani, [Ports 1961 NYC Boutique, 917-475-1022](http://Ports1961NYCBoutique.com); jeans, \$39.99, by Converse One Star, [Target, target.com](http://Target.com); bracelet, \$460, by Raquel Moreno, 501-223-2514; “Heloise” bag, \$995, by Chloe, [Saks Fifth Avenue, 877-551-7257](http://SaksFifthAvenue.com).

A Fusion of Cultures

Beverly DeCer, 56
nonprofit founder

Whether attending a show on behalf of her organization in Moscow, visiting her daughter in Philadelphia, or shopping the streets of Paris, Beverly DeCer knows that clothes amount to much more than functional garments. "Style is my calling card to the world," says DeCer, who founded *Legendary Performances*, a nonprofit that supports Russian music and dance. "It expresses joy, my love of beauty, and the way I feel about myself." A California native, DeCer now calls "the

world" her home, and describes her style as a blend of "Paris chic, Moscow mystery, New York hip." Recalling early influences, DeCer remembers the impression Jackie Kennedy made on her as a girl. "Her grace and simple elegance really struck a chord with me," she says, pointing to her penchant for crisp, equestrian-inspired pieces as proof. With an active, global lifestyle as her guide, DeCer has learned that smart outfits command respect. Case in point? She wore flat boots, britches, and a black jacket while passing through the Russian embassy in Paris. "I looked authoritative, which I believe enabled me to break several rules while obtaining my visa," she jokes. "The guards even rescued the iPod I'd left behind."



Casual as an Art Form

Ulla Florholmen, 40, graphic designer

As a young artist, Swedish-born Ulla Florholmen saw herself as a canvas—something to adorn and decorate. "I used to dress provocatively. Latex, heavy jewelry, gold-patterned dresses, you name it," she says. She aimed to stay one step ahead of the fashion curve and took care to stand out from the masses. But as she grew older and became a mother to seven-year-old Jonah, Florholmen started to separate herself from her art. "Now I prefer simplicity over extravagance, comfort over making a statement," she says. She's grown into her own casual look, and feels totally at ease with herself. "I just wear what I like, and I don't mind if I look like other women or not." Though Florholmen thrives when dressed comfortably in easy dresses or jeans and her beloved Adidas sneakers, she hasn't lost her penchant for the dramatic, expressing her love for ethnic art through accessories—such as ornate earrings and bracelets or a bold print blouse. "I don't dress for others. I dress for myself. When I wear clothes I'm happy with, it brightens my mood."

>> On Ulla: T-shirt, \$395, by VPL, *Creatures of Comfort*, creaturesofcomfort.us; sweater, \$190, and sneakers, \$180, by Adidas SLVR, SLVRstore.adidas.com; jeans, \$69.50, by Levi's Eco, us.levi.com; necklace, \$1,675, by Lucia Odescalchi, *Barneys NY*, 212-826-8900. On Jonah: T-shirt, \$32, by Appaman, *Small Concept*, smallconcept.com; vest, \$74, by *Petit Bateau*, petit-bateau.us; jeans, \$19.50, by Gap, gap.com; hat, \$48, by Oeuf, oeufnyc.com; sneakers, \$25, by Converse, *Macy's*, converse.com.

<< cardigan, \$415, by *Trovata*, *Barneys NY*, 212-826-8900; shirt, \$69, and belt, \$39, by *Talbots*, talbots.com; *jodhpurs*, \$260, by *General Idea*, *Takashimaya*, takashimaya-ny.com; bracelet, \$148, by *Coach*, coach.com; earrings, \$215, by *Ginette_NY*, ginette-ny.com; boots, \$575, by *Stuart Weitzman*, stuartweitzman.com; (on chair) jacket, \$258, by *Hessnatur*, hessnatur.com. Shot on location at *Trestle on Tenth*.

styling by *Sabine Feuilloley*, hair and makeup by *Sara Johnson*, produced by *Erika Preuss*

Special thanks to *ABC Carpet + Home*, 212-473-3000, abchome.com.

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Ulla Florholmen

