

Wardrobe Wizards

**STORY BY ANNE CLARKE, COURTESY OF WAIKATO TIMES,
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Most mere mortals have an average appreciation for fashion, with a deeper obsession for designer shoes or bags we will never be able to afford.

However, fashion trends are followed by all and sundry, many of whom do not stop to think whether the particular style suits them - or alternatively, bending three weeks after passionately stating, "I will NEVER wear shoulder pads!"

There is hope, though! Television stylists, such as the terrifying but ultimately God-like Trinny and Susannah, are trying to teach women that to look good, you need to dress correctly for your body shape.

"The industry had a lull for about 10 years, and then we had a surge of programmes about extreme makeovers, and stylists such as Trinny and Susannah," says Ceeann Martinsen of Simply Style.

The impression that personal stylists are something for the rich and famous is changing. "It is not like that these days - I style regular men and women here in the Waikato," Ceeann says.

"People are so time-pressed these days, it is helpful for them to be able to go to their wardrobe and have the confidence to put outfits together that look good, and suit them."

Ceeann says that having a personal stylist means avoiding costly mistakes (most of us have at least one item of clothing that we have never worn) as well as helping along the few of us who do not enjoy a good shop.

"Believe it or not, there are women out there who do not like shopping. They are overwhelmed with constantly changing fashion trends, and they just lack confidence in knowing what looks good," she says.

When styling a client, Ceeann and her industry-mates take much more into consideration, including their individual personality, their overall body shape, colouring, and lifestyle requirements.

"We get to know the client in the first instance, and what their needs are," Ceeann said.

A personal stylist will first endeavor to find out why the client is there - what do they need help with? "Generally, they want help to find clothes that flatter them," Ceeann says.

"A concern for many women is that they may be dressing too old, or too young. 50-60-year-olds no longer wear crocheted cardigans - they are a younger generation now."

"I also work with a lot of people who have recently lost a lot of weight, and need help dressing their new shape."

A typical consultation involves a shape and colour analysis, wardrobe audit and shopping trip.

"We have a false sense of reality from pictures in magazines. We have unrealistic expectations about our bodies, and therefore cannot self assess," Ceeann says.

Clients can take part in lessons on how to put an outfit together, finishing touches, finding harmony in an outfit, finding focal points, and the very popular wardrobe audit.

"Contrary to some of the shows we see on television, a wardrobe audit is fun and is not about throwing everything you own out; it is about getting the most out of the clothes you already have in there," Ceeann says.

"It's about finding different ways to wear existing clothes, identifying 'gaps' in your wardrobe and creating capsules of clothes that offer versatility and coordinated outfits."

A highlight of the process for many clients is the shopping trip, which is centred around the clients' budget and personal preferences.

A good personal stylist will also confidently refer you to other image professionals, such as a good hairdresser, dentist, and seamstress.

Ceeann says image plays a big part in having a competitive edge over counterparts. "Styling gives clients extra confidence to self-promote and teaches clients how to best represent themselves through their appearance. I am passing on tools to the client to have control over their own image and wardrobe."