

The close-up

Interview by
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Bronwyn Cosgrave Author and broadcaster

What are you wearing today?

The dress and jacket are from Moschino. I've worn their clothes through every phase of my fashion career. They're really cheerful and feminine. They capture something that's in the fashion air without hitting you over the head with it. What I love about this dress is that it's got this wonderful satin sheen on top and then a knit skirt bottom. I always say that Moschino cuts a better Chanel skirt-suit than Chanel. They always include a Chanel-style jacket, but they're groovier. My shoes are Marc Jacobs. I love a nude shoe and this heel is do-able – it's not some colossal, vertiginous thing. I can't wear those.

Where is your jewellery from?

The earrings and necklace are by Julia Muggenburg who designs Belmacz. She has a tremendous vision and the quality is Fifth Avenue level but with an edge – quite biker-princess. The ring is by Luigi Scia Inng, who is more like an artist than a jeweller. He lives in Rome and everything he designs is one-off, which is my ideal of fashion and luxury – one-offs are just yours.

The clutch bag – where did you get it?

Sergio Rossi. I've always carried clutch bags because I just find it really unfeminine carrying those massive handbags. I just think they're a big con. They cost so much money. Why do you have to display your wealth on your shoulder?

How often do you get your hair done?

At John Frieda at least once a week. I moved to London from Canada 17 years ago, and discovered things I have just stuck with. When I turned 40, my stylist Giles cut it to look more modern. Hair is the most important fashion accessory.

Have you always been interested in clothes?

Yes. From when I was four and my mother took me shopping. She always let me pick out one

thing. My mother had a defined fashion sense – she probably watched a lot of Hollywood movies. The old costume designers, Edith Head and Helen Rose, informed her fashion sense even though she didn't know it. Also my two best friends' mothers were the best-dressed women in Toronto, so even in 1979 I was looking at Chanel, Gucci, Krizia.

Do you dress differently since you left Vogue?

At Vogue I was a suit girl. I dressed up at Vogue because I could. You had every designer inviting you to a sample sale. Problem is that when I left Vogue, it was really hard to mix the suits with casual things. When you write books or work on a radio series you are working in unglamorous conditions, such as archives, which are really dusty.

Is your wardrobe organised?

Yes. Because I work long hours and do a lot of public speaking, I have to be ready in an instant. I would say my style outlook is also organised. I wear dresses. I just find dresses the easiest because you just slip it on, with shoes, put a coat over it and it looks feminine. It almost translates as if you have made more of an effort.

What about a worst fashion moment?

I once wore a shocking Schiaparelli pink Kenzo two-piece to a Royal College of Art dinner in the early 90s. Everyone else was in black. People really looked at me, like "what is your problem?" It was definitely a mother-of-the-bride ensemble in the midst of this Japanese deconstructed era.

Whose personal style do you admire?

Movie star Monica Vitti, possibly because of her great hair. I studied film and it's where I always turn for fashion inspiration. The costume designer for the film Shampoo, Anthea Sylbert, is amazing. That film is perfection. And I love Dietrich in Stage Fright. Christian Dior dressed her. Really that was the first fashion/movie star collaboration.

What would you never wear?

Anything that Victoria Beckham has ever worn.

Tell me a fashion secret.

Go to the Harrods sale on the last day and buy whatever is left. You'll always find that one individual thing. Examine young London designers such as Christopher Kane and Erdem. What they are doing now will become collector's pieces ●

London Fashion Spectacular is on BBC Radio 4, September 9 and 16, at 11.30am.

