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Meet Anna Berkeley. She could just be the best £300 you ever spend



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've been intrigued by Anna Berkeley ever since fashion colleagues raved about her nononsense advice and precise instructions.

You see Berkeley, who spent 23 years merchandising and buying for high street and designer brands, from Wallis to Prada, knows about outfit building. Amazingly, that's not always a given at design houses or even swish multi-brand boutiques, which is why trying to find a top that works flawlessly with a bottom, or the right coat for that suit even in a big department store, can be a hair-tearing exercise. Online browsers are even more susceptible to impulsive, random buys. "It's all about that dopamine hit, isn't it?" she says.

Not that 46-yearold Berkeley is unsympathetic to the head-rushy allure of fashion. When we meet she's wearing a damson patent straight skirt from The French tuck Tibi, with black slims waist and Stuart Weitzman hips. Skirt, knee boots. £29.99, and shirt, It's her broad £25.99 (zara.com) picture overview, combined with forensic observations that reel me in. So, during a brief stopover between Milan and Paris fashion shows, I board a train to St Margarets, to her studio in west London.

I've returned the questionnaire she emailed – an enjoyable, thoughtprovoking half an hour that's already illuminated some issues. One of the questions is about the s impression I'd like to leave at a party. Most women apparently say they want to look effortless. It's interesting how Hoing some methodical

spade work can produce that desired "effortlessness

Berkeley will winnow your wardrobe, provide a personal colour analysis and go shopping with you (she's excellent on the high street as well as designers). She sees clients who can't get to her studio via Skype and

FaceTime. But I wanted face-to-facetime, because what sets her apart from other personal stylists is a service she calls body-mapping. This involves her drawing around you on a large piece of brown paper. She then makes dozens of squiggles that prove to be Very

Style-setters include below. second left, Karen Wazen Bakhazi; and bottom right, Carolina Herrera and, second right.



An unbuttoned coat creates a slimming vertical. Raincoat, £135 (cosstores.com)

of helpful notes for you to take away - not just about areas that have been troubling you for aeons (according to Berkeley, for most women that's tummies and upper arms) but the bits you'd never considered, like the ear-toear measurement of your jawline or the length of your arms.

It turns out that what makes you look your best isn't "long legs" or a teeny Scarlett Johansson waist, but creating a harmonious sense of balance. Having spent the best part of a morning raiding Berkeley's brain, I wouldn't be surprised if Johansson simply dresses brilliantly to create the illusion she has a Johansson waist.

I won't detain you with all the details I gleaned about myself. Suffice to say the highlight was discovering I have long legs in comparison with my torso. That said, apparently long legs are not the non-fattening, chocolatecoated blessing I'd always assumed if they're out of whack with the rest of you. Dressing well is about yin and yang: balance, both in proportions and fabrics. This means hefty thighs aren't the roadblock you might imagine to looking elegant, provided you counterbalance them with wider hem lines, flared trousers and jackets that skim past them and end at your narrowest point.

Soft curves look best in soft fabric. Angular body types are better in structured. Like many women,

and shoes

elongate

I'm a bit of both: tailored looks good above my waist, Toning tights fluidity below. There are seven main body types, says Berkeley, but most of us are a blend of several. The low point? Being presented with empirical evidence that my neck is short: bye, Audrey. Ploys to mitigate a short neck include avoiding chokers and wearing your hair up or shorter. The style you choose will

depend on your face shape - she'll tell you that, as well as the most flattering earrings. Opt for elongating necklines

 crew necks that sit just below the collarbones, V-necks, strapless... "No funnel necks?" I ask wistfully. The catwalks are full of delectable highnecked knitwear. More to the point, I'm wearing one - a gorgeous, Big Investment one.

Berkelev smiles with the patience of someone who's had similar conversations a thousand times. "Ideally not," she says. But she knows that sometimes fashion trumps, in which case, she suggests compensatory tactics - in the case of my short neck that would be my short bob, and the ladder of earrings that draw the eye up my face. I show her a high-necked



GIf your arms are especially long, Ocreate balance by wearing chunky bangles or watches (in proportion with your frame). Choose shirts with deep cuffs or roll-up sleeves. To ascertain your arms' length, stand sideways to a mirror with your arms by your sides. Your knuckles should sit alongside the crease where your bum meets the tops of your thighs. Vertical stripes make you look / taller. But you can also create the same illusion with columns of buttons. A plain coat worn open, or semi buttoned to reveal a panel of plain dress or tonal jumper and trousers will do a similar job. Crease-front trousers do a similar trick, elongating legs. Also look to details such as socks, Otights, heels – keep them all in the same colour as your outfit for maximum streamlining. Keep hair neat and hat brims no wider than your shoulders.

Disproportionately wide shoulders? Avoid epaulettes, unless they sit flat. You can still do shoulder details, but look for puffs, ruffles and other statements that begin below your shoulder line. Avoid exaggerated shoulder pads. Go for jackets that follow your natural shoulder line, or with sleeves that are slightly inset.

OHorizontal stripes make you look wider. But that can be helpful if you want to balance things out. For instance, you can make your bottom half look slimmer by wearing a dark colour below your waist and toning stripes above. A horizontal striped jacket or coat exaggerates size and looks untidy. All patterns look neater when they're framed by a plain border.

Diagonals are invaluable not just for adding interest but minimising features. An asymmetric neckline can slim broad shoulders. Cleverly placed







Patterns divert

the eye from

a big bust



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oatmeal cashmere Joseph poncho I've been eyeing up and she shakes her head gently. "Apart from the neck, it's square and you'll look like a box. It cuts your legs at the wrong point." That's £500 saved already.



14 tips to try now

To calm the giddiness of buying new, keep your purchase in its bag for two days. If you still have the same intense rush when you open it, great. If not, return it.

O Think about why you don't wear \angle certain loved pieces. That great tweed skirt may be underemployed because you don't have the footwear. Instead of buying another skirt, focus on the kind of boots - knee-length, soft suede, a versatile colour - that would breathe life into moribund parts of your wardrobe.

O Correctly placed, the slogan on a JT-shirt, or come to that, a logo or a pattern, can optically lift your bust (or sink it if wrongly positioned), so approach with caution. In case you were wondering, your bust should sit half way between elbow tip and shoulder edge. Don't scrimp on bras. It's a false economy. Buy quality from somewhere such as Rigby & Peller, says Berkeley. Also, be fussy about

Precision styling: Anna Berkeley

seaming or a tie detail can shave centimetres off waists, tummies and thighs. Try the French tuck with a blouse. An asymmetric piece like the JW Anderson shirt, below left is both avant garde and flattering, slimming heavy thighs and creating an illusion of length when worn over dark trousers.

tunics, loosely tucked in blouses and boxy jumpers or jumpers with side slits. Don't be afraid of control wear -Heist is excellent (£55, heist-studios. com).

2 Thought pencil skirts were just Ofor the slender? Wrong. Again, it's about balance. Full bodies can look amazing in all kinds of bodycon, provided the fabric is top quality (no snagging or sagging), the cut is good and the points at which the dress or skirt hits your waist and legs are right for you. Ensure the hem circumference is wide enough to walk comfortably in.

14"Contrary to most advice, you can't magic a waist where there isn't one," says Berkeley. Instead, create what she calls "adjacent volume". A peplum accentuates hips, thereby optically slimming your waist.

A two-and-a-half-hour body-mapping session with Anna usually costs £335 but *Telegraph* readers who book before the end of March (the appointment can be any time this year) will receive a special price of £295. Email anna@annaberkeley. com. For regular tips, follow her on Instagram: annaberkeleystyling



Asymmetric shirt,

£135, JW Anderson

(net-a-porter.com)

