

Grab Some Gray On A Cold Day

by Sharon Mosley

When those gray days of fall and winter approach, it's hard not to wrap ourselves up in that neutral color and blend into the background of stormy clouds and darkening horizons.

But gray doesn't have to be dull and dreary, according to Leatrice Eiseman, color expert and director of the Pantone Color Institute. It can be very dependable.

"It's like a very solid color in this age of anxiety," says the color consultant, "and if you are going to invest in a bigger ticket item of clothing, like a beautiful cashmere sweater or a suit, gray always has a good shelf-life (so) that you can retire for a while when you get a bit tired of it and recycle it in the future."

This fashion season, designers are spotlighting the middle to deeper tones of gray. Neutral gray is an excellent "blender," according to Eiseman, who compares the lighter tone of gray to an overcast sky. The charcoal grays, which move closer to their black cousins, are more important "power" colors this fall and winter.

"There has really been movement back to neutrals," says Eiseman, who admits that after a long bout of bright tones popping up in fashion apparel, "gray relieves the eye." But it is also a great "practical" color for our wardrobes, too, she says.

"It is the perfect neutral background shade for so many other colors," Eiseman says. "You can combine your brights or light colors with gray as the background, integrating what you already own with ever-dependable gray."

Gray is also a great way to lighten up the always-popular black; it is reappearing on fashion's radar screen this year. The classic gray flannel pants, gray plaid suit or gray cardigan sweater are sophisticated ways to tone down the starkness of black.

And how do you glitz up gray? Go with a streak of silver. A touch of a sparkling rhinestone brooch, a pair of shimmering crystal drops or a wide cuff of sterling -- the metallic is one of the best ways to give gray a holiday on ice.

Here are a few other ways to perk up those gray days ahead:- Victoria's Secret heather gray sweat shirt shrug hoodie and crop pant (VictoriasSecret.com)- Anything from Peter Som's fall 2006 collection (www.petersom.com)- Urban Outfitters' leather ruched boot (www.urbanoutfitters.com)- Lauren by Ralph Lauren herringbone shawl collared jacket (www.macys.com)- Bloomingdale's cashmere gray cardigan and turtleneck. (www.bloomingdales.com)- Nicole Miller's stretch satin silver slipdress (www.nordstrom.com)- Mikimoto's long lariat of Tahitian pearls (www.mikimotoamerica.com)- Rodo's silver metal box purse with

Swarovski crystals (www.net-a-porter.com)- Burberry's men's wool flannel sport coat in a gray windowpane weave with gray flat-front trousers (www.neimanmarcus.com)- And the ultimate way to perk up a gray fashion day? A gray mink shawl (Cassini at 212-564-0946). Sharon Mosley is a former fashion editor of the Arkansas Gazette in Little Rock and executive director of the Fashion Editors and Reporters Association. © Copley News Service

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