

New sexier you for the new year

by Sharon Mosley

When a new year creeps up on us, it's a time when most of us resolve to get serious about losing weight, working out and improving our looks. So now would be a perfect time to take a new approach and pick up the new book by fashion designer Bradley Bayou: "The Science of Sexy: Dress to Fit Your Unique Figure With the Style System that Works for Every Shape and Size" (Gotham Books, \$35).

But this is not just another fashion book that tries to fit every woman into a celebrity-style world and make them the next top model. Yes, Bayou has dressed the stars, such as Halle Berry, Oprah Winfrey, Salma Hayek and Eva Longoria. But he is a realist when it comes to dressing the average American woman, who is a size 14 and bears no resemblance to a typical runway model.

GET YOUR V-NECK ON - Whether you're short, average or tall, slender or medium or plus-size, a V-Neck cut looks good on every woman. CNS Photo courtesy of Banana Republic. Bayou gets into specifics: encouraging readers to understand their body shapes and sizes and then get advice in fitting rooms for their individual fashion blessings and curses. Then he tells you what to wear and what not to wear. This is one of the most complete how-to fashion books I've seen in a long time.

But my favorite part of the whole book is Bayou's take on his 10 "Dress Sexy" commandments. "There are some rules that apply to every woman, all the time, no matter what your height, weight, or silhouette," he says. "Heed them well."

One - Thou shalt choose the right undergarments. "Make the effort to get this part right, and the rest of your outfit will benefit," Bayou says.

Two - Thou shalt choose the highest quality fabrics thou can afford. "Buying cheap is like buying disposable clothing," he says. "Yes, it might hurt to hand over the money for quality items, but over time, it will ultimately save you money by eliminating the constant need for new things. You and your credit card will never have to 'pay' for your mistakes again."

Three - Thou shalt not force your figure into every style. "All styles do not work for all women," Bayou says. "In fact, certain styles will never look good on you. Period." After that good news, however, Bayou does specifically explain in 48 different chapters what does look good on each individual body type.

Four - Thou shalt use your skin to your advantage. "If you were blessed with gorgeous legs, you can get away with a slightly shorter hemline. If you have a slender neck and a pretty collarbone, expose some skin there. If you have nice cleavage, wear a V-neck or U-neck that instantly attracts attention to one of your best features.

Five - Thou shalt not buy big-ticket trendy items. "Don't waste your money," Bayou says. "If you look at something and have to ask yourself, 'Do I really think this will look good in two years?' it probably won't."

Six - Thou shalt select skinny fabrics and cuts. "Not all fabrics are created to make your body look the same," the designer says, "and no matter what your body shape, some fabrics and cuts will make you look heavier, and some will help you look thinner. Your goal is to find the ones that drape over your body the way you need them to, to best accent your silhouette."

Seven - Thou shalt ignore clothing tags - the fit is the thing. "The number on the little tag on the back of your pants or jacket is not important," warns the designer. "Ignore it! Who even sees what size you're wearing, anyway?" he adds. "Nobody. What people notice is how your clothes fit."

Eight - Thou shalt hail accessories. There are five main reasons for paying attention to the accessories you wear according to Bayou: They can change your outfit from formal to casual (and vice versa) in just a few seconds. They're more affordable than clothes. They can play up your sexiest assets. They're a great diversion from your flaws. And they can add a trendy touch to your neutral basics.

Nine - The prints and accessories must be in scale with the body. Large floral prints don't look good on petite women, Bayou says, nor do huge handbags and oversized coats and sweaters. "Put simply," he says, "little things on big people look ridiculous. And big things on little people look ridiculous. The more the items balance with the size of your figure, the better you will look."

Ten - Thou shalt wear the V-neck shape - it looks good on every woman. "Draw attention to the center of your body and away from your trouble spots and create a slimming effect," Bayou advises. "By angling down toward your waist from both shoulders and meeting at a point in the middle of your chest, it mimics your torso. This will create the illusion of a slimmer, skinnier waist."

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