

THE KIT

-  [THEKIT.CA](#)
-  [@THEKIT](#)
-  [@THEKITCA](#)
-  [THEKITCA](#)



Power player

Your coat is definitely the MVP of your fall wardrobe. We’ve rounded up the most stylish scores of the season, including this dreamy topper worn by powerhouse Toronto curator Gaëtane Verna **PAGE 6**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUIS MORA



Move over, K-beauty
J-beauty is officially the next must-try regimen **PAGE 3**



Skincare, decoded
The ingredients that will score you a “just back from Tulum” glow **PAGE 6**



Best foot forward
Why one cancer survivor always wore high heels to the hospital **PAGE 7**

1. P448, DAVIDS

16. JUDITH
& CHARLES2. Beulah
Style,
HONEY15. Helmut
Lang, TNT
THE NEW
TREND

melissa's musts

BV STYLE DIRECTOR
MELISSA EVANS-LEE
PRE-SELECTS THE "IT" FACTORS FOR FALL
THAT YOU WILL LOVE AND LIVE IN ALL SEASON.

14. Valentino,
DAVIDS

3. PINK TARTAN

4. PINK
TARTAN

CENTER: I am wearing: Michael Kors heels, BROWNS; Red Valentino blouse, ANDREWS and Main Strip skirt, HONEY
1. The au courant "Dad's sneakers" but with a hit of pink and gold. Sign me up! **2.** Embroidery meets sequins for showstopping effect. **3.** Mandatory, as far as I'm concerned. **4.** High waisted with a flared fit in a classic pattern. AIIIII good. **5.** Neon sequins?! I mean . . . does it get more perfect than this? **6.** Oui, oui all the way home, says this little fashionista. **7.** Keeping it visually interesting at all times. **8.** These culottes with a pair of white booties = outfit perfection. **9.** Trust me, it's that pop of colour that's going to make the outfit.

13. STUART
WEITZMAN12. Lucy Paris,
MENDOCINO

5. BROWNS

10. I'm always on the hunt for something different than anything I already own. Seems obvious but think about how many times you've purchased essentially the same thing over and over again. I doubt this will be the case here plus . . . bonus . . . so on trend. **11.** Meat ragu, mozzarella, basil and . . . only 12 orders daily. Nonna's Ten Layer Lasagna is an absolute MUST (not to mention, a "must act fast"!). **12.** This LBD is going places. As in, everywhere. With stilettos for a dinner date, a leather jacket for the office, a sweater for a day at the market, etc., etc. **13.** There are really not enough words for how much I love these. The perfect pairing for all the pretty "prairie" dresses we're seeing this Fall. **14.** Glam bag, lady! **15.** The very last thing I want to be wearing in the dead of Winter is another black coat. I feel happy just looking at this. **16.** As always, the delightful is in the details.
BOTTOM LEFT: I am wearing: Essue blouse, HONEY; Beulah Style skirt, LEMOR; Necklace, HONEY and Juice, ELXR Juice Lab

6. BANANA
REPUBLIC11. PARCHEGGIO
RISTORANTE

“
I run at a very high rev
fuelled by Starbuck's coffee
and green juice from
ELXR Juice Lab.”

8. Unique,
MENDOCINO7. Smythe,
ANDREWS10. Isabel
Marant Étoile,
TNT THE NEW
TREND9. STUART
WEITZMANSEE MORE...BAYVIEWVILLAGESHOPS.COM/MELISSASMUSTSFORFALL2018

Bayview Village

BAYVIEW AVE + SHEPPARD AVE
416.226.0404

All in the details

In our Two of Us series, we spotlight inspiring pairs. This week: Megan Cassidy and Jane Son, best friends and entrepreneurs

BY JILLIAN VIEIRA | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUIS MORA

On their first day of architecture school at the University of Toronto, Megan Cassidy and Jane Son clicked instantly: “We probably liked each other’s shoes or something, but we joke and say it was love at first sight.” Now, more than two decades later, the best friends and working architects, both 41, are thriving after launching their curated hardware e-store, Casson, last year. “The company was born out of years of frustration as architects attempting to source distinctive quality products for projects. We wanted to deliver a new design-forward vision of hardware to the marketplace,” Cassidy explains. The two admit that it’s rare for women to take on this niche industry, but are approaching their curation with a fresh lens. “Our motto is *multum in parvo*—much in little. The fine details make the biggest statement,” says Son. The pair’s relish-the-small-moments philosophy is genuine. “We love being spontaneous,” says Son. “Many years ago, we were both several months pregnant when we decided to hop the fence and sneak into a public pool one hot summer. It was a pretty funny sight.”

Mutual admiration

Cassidy: “Jane is really driven; nothing scares her, and she’s so determined. It rubs off on me when I’m around her, and I like that.”
Son: “Meg is really good at problem solving and so clever at learning new things. She learned how to code building our website!”

Sticking it out

Son: “A long-term friendship works when you don’t harp on the little things.”
Cassidy: “And not taking anything too personally. [Working together] can get stressful, but we always come back to the most meaningful part of us: We are friends who are family, first and foremost.”

Post-work plans

Son: “Camping and canoe trips are some of our favourite things to do together. You wouldn’t necessarily know that about us, since we are major urbanites, but we can rough it with the best of them.”
Cassidy: “We’re great at having drinks together! [laughs] But really, we have dates together with our wwboys: dinner, movies, the zoo, everywhere.”



“We joke and say it was love at first sight.”



Your Japanese beauty primer

Everyone is buzzing about J-beauty, so **Renée Tse** asked Tatcha founder Vicky Tsai to break down everything you need to know about the next must-try skincare routine



ICONS

“The original muses of J-beauty are geisha, whose skincare rituals and beauty practices have been passed along for centuries.”

SKIN GOAL

“*Mochi hada*, which translates to ‘rice cake skin,’ essentially describes the soft, smooth and bouncy quality of a baby’s skin.”

KEYWORDS

Puru-puru: “A word that refers to the light, plump quality of healthy skin.”

Asayake: “Translated as ‘morning glow,’ this type of massage is performed after palms are chilled with cold water to tighten and awaken the skin.”

Wabi-sabi: “A concept that describes the beauty of what is imperfect, imper-

manent, and incomplete—and serves as a reminder that unique traits help tell our life stories.”

ROUTINE

“Typically, daily Japanese beauty routines consist of three to four steps. In the classic J-beauty ritual, the first step is a cleansing oil to purify, followed by a very gentle exfoliation—traditionally with rice enzyme—to polish, then an essence to plump and, finally, a moisturizer or beauty oil to nourish and seal in the other ingredients. Protecting the skin from UV damage with a sunscreen and protective accessories, like a hat or parasol, are also daily essentials.”

TABOOS

“Going to sleep with makeup on! Cleansing is a cornerstone of a classical Japanese ritual.”

SUPER INGREDIENTS

Camellia oil “Geishas cleanse away their makeup with this type of oil. It is rich in oleic acid, along with vitamins A, B, D and E, and contains anti-inflammatory, skin-softening omega-3 fatty acids that promote the barrier function of your skin.”
Rice bran “This dietary staple also effectively removes impurities, while providing skin-nourishing oils. A natural enzyme exfoliant, rice bran boasts potent antioxidants and nourishing moisturizers. Women traditionally used the leftover water from rinsing rice in their baths to score soft and smooth skin.”
Seaweed “It contains natural polysaccharides, which replenish your skin’s natural water reservoir and increase its capability to retain moisture.”

Silk

“This protein-and-amino-acid-fortified structure closely mirrors the composition of our skin. With a fluctuating pH, it can also keep you warm or cool.”

Pearl

“It acts as a potent antioxidant, boosting the body’s own enzymes and reducing cell damage.”

Indigo

“Its active ingredients provide powerful anti-inflammatory relief, helping to soothe symptoms of irritation from conditions like dermatitis, rosacea, psoriasis and eczema.”

Red algae

“This ingredient contains incredible moisture-retaining properties. It can replenish the skin’s moisture reservoir for a plump, glowing complexion.”



Power player

Face time with Sarah Rafferty, *Suits* star, Meghan Markle bestie and honorary Canadian

BY LAURA deCARUFEL

Sarah Rafferty knows how to rouse a room. “Growing up, when I turned on the TV, the women I saw were not as complex, diverse or flawed as any of the women I knew in real life,” Rafferty told a packed crowd recently at the Toronto International Film Festival’s party for Share Her Journey, an advocacy organization for women in film. “Women were the objects in the story, not the subject.” As Donna Paulsen on *Suits*, Rafferty has created a character whose arc—from secretary to “formidable, badass COO” sates what Rafferty calls “the audience’s appetite to see a professional woman’s journey to the top of her field.” Speaking of the top, Rafferty is riding high on her TV work (she’s also started producing), and her new ambassadorship with Marc Cain, the global fashion brand. She’s well-placed to understand the symbolism of style. “Clothes can do much work in a scene,” says Rafferty. “What we wear speaks volumes about who we are and what we want.” We sat down with the star to talk about the fascinating relationship between fashion and power.

What was the first fashion piece that made you feel confident? “When I moved to London for a year in college, I splurged and bought myself a black leather motorcycle jacket. It was very much out of my wheelhouse because I grew up in Connecticut—I had a conservative, L.L. Bean kind of style. But when I saw [the jacket], I just knew I had to have it. It made me feel artsy, like a theatre rat. It was risky—I didn’t know if my parents would like it.”

You’ve played Donna on *Suits* for eight years. What have you learned about style and self-expression? “Since I come from a theatre background, the idea that fashion says so much about our character doesn’t surprise me. Much of the time, Donna’s wardrobe is a power dress, not a power suit. I loved that choice, which we made very early on, that Donna would basically always be in a dress because she believes that her femininity is her power.”

What is your favourite fashion moment on the show? “In season three, Donna had a love interest. For one scene when [the guy] was picking her up for a date, she was wearing this really bright green lace Burberry trench. The look had this whole freshness, budding kind of thing—it was chosen for that specific reason. Then, because the guy knew how to woo her, he was going to take her to the theatre, and Donna decided to just change into Gucci look number 17. Like she can just dial up Gucci look number 17! I loved that.”

You’re an ambassador for Marc Cain. What are the top power pieces on your fall shopping list? “I stocked up on boots! Their boots are really comfortable—I love these over-the-knee ones that you can wear up, or you slouch them down. I also love their sweaters—the sweaters don’t have seams, so they’re really beautiful to look at and wear. I’m loving petal-y pinks these days.”

What advice do you have for young women who are looking to own their own power? “You don’t need to look around at everybody else and be overwhelmed at how amazing they are. Focus on what you have to offer—recognize that you have a unique superpower.”

SARAH’S POWER PICK

MARC CAIN BOOTS, \$940, MARC-CAIN.COM



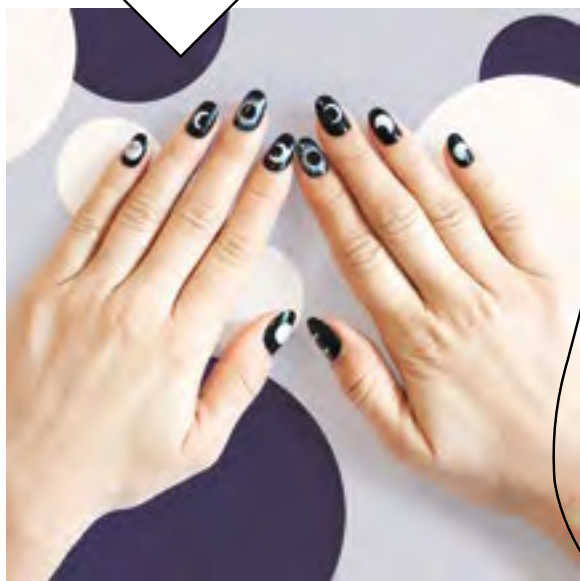
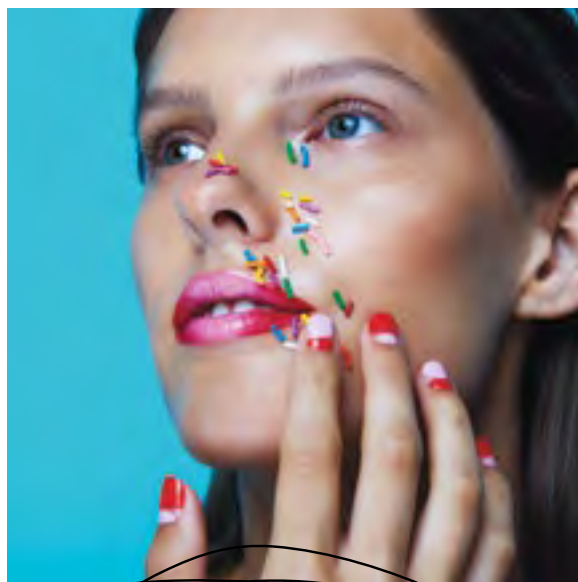
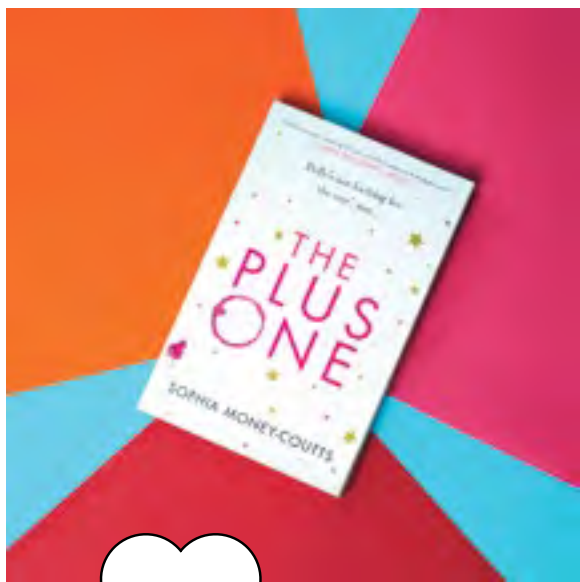
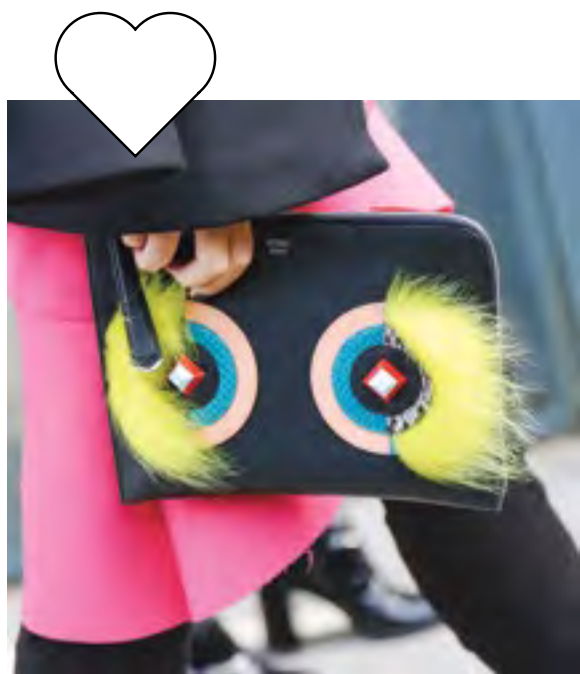
J-BEAUTY TOOL KIT

FROM LEFT: **DIOR** INSTANT GENTLE CLEANSING OIL, \$48, SEPHORA.CA; **TATCHA** THE RICE POLISH IN DEEP, \$78, SEPHORA.CA; **CHANEL** SUBLIMAGE L’ESSENCE FONDAMENTALE, \$675, CHANEL.CA; **CAUDALIE** VINO-PURE SKIN PERFECTING SERUM, \$59, CAUDALIE.CA; **TATCHA** THE INDIGO CREAM, \$85, TATCHA.COM; **SHISEIDO** FUTURE SOLUTION LX REPLENISHING TREATMENT OIL, \$200, SHOPPERS-DRUGMART.CA; **CLÉ DE PEAU** UV PROTECTIVE CREAM SPF 50, \$168, HOLT RENFREW





Love it?



THE KIT

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL



Bold moves

With creative genius Gaëtane Verna as muse, we highlight the eye-catching must-have coats of the season

BY JILLIAN VIEIRA | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUIS MORA

As the director of the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto, Gaëtane Verna is well versed in the individual power behind selecting art, wearable or otherwise. “Fashion is an essential part of my daily routine,” says the Congo-born, Montreal-raised curator. She terms this particularly boss Max Mara coat—a light-as-air teddy with a voluminous, enveloping quality—“elegant and timeless,” both qualities she herself exudes effortlessly. “Fashion is a personal statement that allows me to strive to be singular and authentic,” says Verna, who looks for a similar sense of purpose in her professional life: “Sharing values with a team and stewarding a group effort in order to impact individuals’ lives as well as a community is when I feel that my contribution is the most meaningful.”

ANYTHING-BUT-BROWN TEDDY COATS

It’s the closest thing to a wearable blanket when the temperatures dip, so we expect the teddy coat to return as an outerwear staple. Consider breaking out of the expected brown palette this season in favour of sweet, softer hues, like muted raspberry and ultra-luxe ivory.

1. **JOSEPH**, \$4,285, JOSEPH-FASHION.COM. 2. **MAX MARA**, \$4,150, (416) 928-1884. 3. **STAND**, \$590, FARFETCH.COM



MAX MARA COAT, \$4,150, TOP, \$745, MAX MARA BLOOR STREET, TORONTO. **COS** NECKLACE, \$89, COS. **ANNE-MARIE** CHAGNON EARRINGS, \$44, ANNEMARIECHAGNON.COM



CROPPED LEOPARD COAT

A sea of animal print flooded the runways this season, but the leopard coat remains the most approachable way to go wild. With a slew of designers getting on board with faux fur, these chubbies are both ethical and forever chic.

1. **SHRIMPS**, \$885, SHRIMPS.STORE. 2. **STELLA MCCARTNEY**, \$2,060, STELLAMCCARTNEY.COM. 3. **ZADIG & VOLTAIRE**, \$580, ZADIG-ET-VOLTAIRE.COM



OVERSIZED PUFFER
Oversized—and over-the-top—is where the ever-practical puffer is headed for fall. Boxier shapes read bold over tapered jeans, while flashier finishes—think rich velvets and glossy coatings—add a street-style element for those looking to double-down on the fashion-forward parading.

1. **SANDRO**, \$1,020, SANDRO.FR. 2. **THE NORTH FACE**, \$350, THENORTHFACE.COM. 3. **CHEN PENG**, \$2,050, FARFETCH.COM



MICHAEL KORS



THE ARCHITECTURAL PLAID

The official pattern of fall, checks—in all their woolly, muted glory—offer a more personality-plus alternative to the trench. Look for a longer silhouette with structural swagger: sharp shoulders, voluminous hip detailing and cool cut-outs will do the trick.

1. **CLUB MONACO**, \$530, CLUBMONACO.CA. 2. **BALENCIAGA**, \$4,805, BALENCIAGA.COM. 3. **MAISON MARGIELA**, \$3,470, MAISONMARGIELA.COM

3.1 PHILLIP LIM

ERDEM

EIGHT INFLUENCERS TOOK THE ESTÉE LAUDER #DOUBLEWEARONOTHING CHALLENGE

FIND OUT WHY IT'S THEIR NEW GO-TO
FOUNDATION FOR LONG DAYS AND
LONGER NIGHTS



CHRISTINA HANNA
@BUUPSAY
SHADE: 4W1

How do you feel when your skin looks flawless?
When my skin is flawless I simply feel confident, and it definitely makes my day lighter and brighter. It also encourages me to play and experiment more with makeup.

How would you describe the relationship between beauty and confidence?
When I look in the mirror it's like there's a switch in my brain that releases a confidence boost when I see that I'm having a good skin day. Beauty for me is a way to invest in myself and cultivate a healthy type of confidence.



What do you love about this foundation? Hands down the lightness and the wear. This foundation DOES. NOT. BUDGE and does not cake up. It stays put and matte all day, and doesn't make me look oily, even after 11 hours of wear!



FATIMA CASER
@FATIMACASER
SHADE: 7W1

How do you feel when your skin looks flawless?
For me, skin is the most important step in my makeup routine. It sets the tone for the overall look I'm trying to achieve, so choosing the right foundation is essential. When I have a flawless base, I feel confident and ready to take on my day!

How did it feel to find your perfect foundation match with Estée Lauder?
It felt amazing finding my perfect match and I love that there are 56 shades. Looking back, it was always so difficult finding a perfect match. My options were so limited. I'm 7w1 Deep Spice so the warm/golden undertone looks great on my skin tone and doesn't look grey!



How would you describe the relationship between beauty and confidence?
I believe that inner and outer beauty are very important when it comes to building self confidence. Taking care of myself from the inside out, whether it be my skin, my health or my mind, all play a big role in my overall confidence.



LIV TSAI
@LIV.TSAI
SHADE: 2W2

How do you feel when your skin looks flawless?
When my complexion is flawless and lasting all day I have a new found confidence going into any events or meetings that I have. It's such an amazing feeling!

How did it feel to find your perfect foundation match with Estée Lauder?
I generally have a very golden undertone and find myself constantly mixing different foundations and concealers. Now that I have my exact shade it's my go-to, for travel especially!



What do you love about this foundation?
My favourite feature of this foundation is that it doesn't fade or break up throughout the day. I work hours 10+ hours a day sometimes, but I can really count on this to stay put. I love it!

KRISH THAVA
@KRISHKREATIONS
SHADE: 5W1

How do you feel when your skin looks flawless?
My main focus when applying makeup is my skin, regardless of what look I'm going for. My skin is the essential part of my makeup glam. Without a radiant, flawless base, the rest of your makeup is not complete. I feel beautiful inside and out, comfortable and confident when my skin looks flawless.



How did it feel to find your perfect foundation match with Estée Lauder?
It was no surprise—I have always found that my perfect shade is easy to find with Estée Lauder due to their wide shade range. I love that they've been inclusive since the beginning, now offering more than 50 shades! Plus, it has a smooth and velvety texture that's light yet gives skin seamless, flawless full coverage.

How would you describe the relationship between beauty and confidence?
You're the most beautiful when you *feel* the most beautiful, which comes with confidence. Doing things that make you happy and the best version of yourself is what beauty means to me.



MIKAYLA GREENWOOD
@MISSMIKAYLAG
SHADE: 1N2

How do you feel when your skin looks flawless?
When my skin looks flawless I feel super confident and put together. I'm a dancer, so whenever my makeup is on point I feel like I'm ready for the stage. In my everyday life that stage is anywhere I go, any video I'm filming or picture I'm taking. I truly feel like I can accomplish anything when my skin is flawless and I don't have to worry about my complexion.

How did it feel to find your perfect foundation match with Estee Lauder?
It felt like I finally knew what I was doing when it came to makeup! My whole life people tried to match me to the wrong undertones because of how pale my natural skin tone is. When I found the correct shade within the Estée Lauder line I was so happy that I can find my perfect match without having to mix foundations every day! I personally love how full coverage it is. Its my go-to foundation for when I want that super long-lasting flawless movie star look



How would you describe the relationship between beauty and confidence?
In my opinion beauty and confidence go hand in hand. Both start from within, but it's also something that can be enhanced with makeup. You're beautiful when you're confident, and you're confident when you feel beautiful. The relationship between the two can be very empowering.



CHLOE DUMONT
@CHLOEDUMONT
SHADE: 1W2

How do you feel when your skin looks flawless?
I'm the kind of girl who likes to have a natural look. As a mom, I don't have time to do a whole face of makeup in the morning. So when my skin looks flawless, I feel more confident and beautiful when I see my natural face.



How did it feel to find your perfect foundation match with Estée Lauder?
It always been a struggle for me to find the perfect match with a foundation, because I'm a redhead with a light tone, but also kind of yellow, not too pinkish. In the past, I used to mixed a few colours together and I finally stopped wearing foundation until I found a good one. I think it's one of the first time I found MY colour—no joke!

How would you describe the relationship between beauty and confidence?
I think they come together. Because when you feel pretty, you feel confident, and when you're confident, you find yourself pretty.



JESSICA MANN
@THEBLONDEMANN
SHADE: 1N0



How do you feel when your skin looks flawless?
Flawless skin brings an overall boost in my confidence, personality and self-esteem. I can take on any challenge with a positive mindset when I'm feeling and looking my best!

What do you love about this foundation?
For years, friends and family have been calling this their holy grail and now I see why! I love the natural matte finish and the ability to build my coverage to fit my needs depending on the day. The best feature is the 24-hour wear, I never have to worry about it coming off before I want it to and that's really important when you are always on the go!

How would you describe the relationship between beauty and confidence?
I am not ashamed to say that makeup helps me on my journey of self love and confidence. If there's one thing I appreciate the most about putting on makeup, it's that my inner beauty shines best when I feel my most confident. Sometimes that confidence is with a full face of makeup, and sometimes it's with nothing at all. Makeup is a great contributor on the days I need more of a boost.



JACLYN FORBES
@JACLYNFORBES
SHADE: 2W1

How do you feel when your skin looks flawless?
Having healthy skin has always been a priority for me. I've struggled with acne throughout my life, and my confidence was really affected by it. I always used to feel so vain for letting my skin affect my mood and self confidence so drastically, but it did. When my skin looks flawless, I definitely have a new found level of confidence. It makes me enjoy wearing makeup more.

What do you love about this foundation?
I love that it offers me enough coverage without feeling cakey. It not only looks amazing on camera, it looks flawless in real life too. Sometimes finding that balance can be hard. It's really long lasting, which is important because with long shoot days and running around the city, the last thing I want to do is worry about touching up my makeup. There's a reason it's been a staple in makeup artists' kits for years.



Clockwise from top left: At the clinic in an Aquazzura skirt and Dries van Noten heels; brightening up the hospital room with Kenneth Jay Lane earrings; Manolo Blahnik pumps.



In sickness, health and heels

How **Aya McMillan** battled breast cancer with the help of high fashion

Karl Lagerfeld, the tart-tongued creative director of Chanel, Fendi and his own eponymous label, famously once said, “Sweatpants are a sign of defeat. You lost control of your life, so you bought some sweatpants.” That quote crossed my mind when, in March of 2017, at 39, I learned I had breast cancer. At the clinic, meeting a team of doctors who handed down the diagnosis, I did not wear sweatpants. I wore Manolo Blahniks.

When I walked out of the appointment and into the elevator, a gaggle of nurses snapped me out of my shell-shocked state. “Cute shoes!” they cooed. As a fashion writer and editor for more than 15 years, I’m used to strangers commenting on my clothes so I mustered a polite thank-you and a smile. It was a moment of levity after

the traumatic news I’d just received. But it was also a reminder of the strong, stylish and self-possessed woman I was before being diagnosed with this crappy disease—and who I was going to be after I was done kicking its ass. Preferably in killer heels.

A flurry of medical appointments followed over the next six weeks and I put my best foot forward for each of them. Valentino’s Rockstud kitten pumps brought the bad-assery to my MRI-led double biopsy; oxblood-hued block-heeled boots by Celine (a brand that has always embodied effortlessness and singular female strength) offered just the right level of support for the first meeting with my surgeon and Christian Louboutin’s scarlet soles saw me through an excruciatingly long and uncomfortable CT-scan.

And after an egg-sized chunk was removed from my chest, and I lay in a hospital bed, sick to my stomach from the general anaesthetic and pumped full of blue nuclear dye that made me pee green (for days!), I still brought the glam. The surgical ban on cosmetics, nail polish and jewellery compounded the humiliation of the partial-mastectomy, but my silver and gold jacquard backless Gucci loafers and my grandmother’s mink scarf made up for it. While cancer may not be a choice, both style and attitude are.

By the time radiation treatment rolled around that summer—which meant lugging myself to the basement of Toronto’s Odette Cancer Centre every single weekday for six long weeks to get zapped—my entire world centred on my sartorial game.

With work temporarily on hold, I filled my off-treatment time with stop-ins at Sephora and curating my closet. I carefully pulled together pretty sundresses, luxe tailoring, statement earrings and flashy footwear—always accented with a glossy blowout, swirl of blush and slick of nude polish. Hospital wear—but make it fashion.

I know what you’re thinking: “I can’t believe you did all of this. I can’t believe you cared so much about how you looked when you were battling for your life.”

Well, breast cancer is a take-no-prisoners stylist. It has the ability to take not just your boobs, but your hair, your ovaries (and any hope of reproduction), your estrogen, your metabolism, your finances, your family life, your energy, your libido (buh-bye sex and self-lubrication!), and ultimately, your self-esteem and self-worth. All that remains are the scars, the hot flashes, the mood swings, the ongoing physical pain, the extra pounds—and a constant reign of terror that the cancer will return.

My body had betrayed me and, surrounded by so much uncertainty, I was determined to take back creative control of my life and my look. When I was almost too sore, too sick, too damn

tired, and it would have been easier to resign myself to sweats, I knew that was simply not who I was. Cloaking myself in ostentatious finery—even something as simple as silk pajamas or a swipe of lipstick—was a way of refuting anyone’s doubts about my worth, especially my own. It wasn’t vanity, it was an affirmation of my existence. Clothing isn’t just what I use to cover my body. It is a proclamation of who I am at my core. It is truth.

Fashion, I learned, also creates connection. Women leaving chemo appointments would stop me to admire my sundresses. A few elderly gentlemen undergoing prostrate treatment would playfully pat my heavily bejewelled hands, and another took notice of my grandmother’s vintage fur, telling me how much it reminded him of his recently lost love. The clicking of my stilettos commanded the attention of knitting family members (knitting, if you didn’t know, is kind of the thing to do in waiting rooms), sparking wide smiles. Even my two radiotherapy technicians (shout-out to Unit 10!) who were relegated to crocs and scrubs, often made shoe contact before eye contact.

People in the cancer ward yearned for beauty. A cheerful frock, a bit of red lipstick and paillette-embellished sandals were links to a life that seemed to be slipping away. I like to think that my attention to appearance was an acknowledgement that living entails more than breathing, eating and sleeping. The basics sustain life—the extras allow us to live fully.

After being sliced, diced and pumped with poison, I am now cancer-free. I still have ongoing oncology appointments, semi-annual scans and, for the next 10 years, am forced to take a hormone-inhibiting treatment that causes countless side effects. It sucks. Badly. But I still plan on dressing up for every hospital visit. I even have a new pair of velvet Rochas pumps with crystalline heels at the ready.

Adventures in couples’ therapy

I called in reinforcements to keep from calling it quits

BY JENNIFER BERRY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUIS MORA

Have you ever sat at the hairdresser’s getting your colour done without makeup on (quite sure only psychopaths wear a full face of makeup to get highlights) and felt like your face gets just a tiny bit uglier the more you stare at it in the big mirror? Maybe it’s the reams of flowing black fabric of the standard-issue cape tied tight under your chin, or the way the salon light hits your under-eye bags for hours on end while the dye/gloss/conditioning treatments process, but I swear I age a decade with every dye job.

That’s what I find therapy to be like—you’re totally exposed, and it’s not always pretty. And when you add a partner to that equation, the sense of being fully, uncomfortably seen in a big unforgiving mirror magnifies tenfold.

Yet I sit, week after week, with Dustin, my boyfriend of 11 years, in a six-by-six office with our therapist, Dr. Sheckman, staring into the proverbial mirror together as we try to undo the patterns that have kept us stuck in a loop for the last couple of years. It’s not the kind of ménage à trois I imagined.

The decision to try therapy was relatively easy. We both knew that something had to change and that, despite fighting like we were both experts in all fields, we needed an actual expert to give us the tools to do it properly. How we got to a place of crisis was equally easy to track—a relationship gets real adult, real quick when one or both of the people in it is, interchangeably, broke, stuck in a toxic job, overweight and hating themselves, caring for a dying parent, depressed, drinking to excess, changing jobs, moving to a new province, going back to school at 30 and grieving the loss of that parent. Somewhere along the line we stopped communicating and started fighting—I have a wicked temper, and he’ll play ball when provoked—and just couldn’t stop.

There was a heavy sense of defeat for me in admitting that our relationship needed help. Despite putting in work in every other area of our lives without hesitation to do so or shame about sharing the quest for self-improvement with the world—feeling a little paunchy? Wild Rose detox it is! Dealing with anxiety? Try meditation!—it was



infinitely harder to acknowledge that our relationship needed the same kind of attention. I marinated in every romance trope out there. “Love was supposed to be easy, wasn’t it?” I asked myself. If you needed therapy, weren’t you just admitting that your relationship sucked? And wasn’t couples’ therapy just the last stop on the road to a breakup?

I’m here to tell you that’s all clichéd crap. Sure, every relationship is different, and some people just aren’t the fighting types. Bless those people! And of course, some couples throw the therapy Hail Mary when it’s too late, and the sessions end up being about how to dissolve the relationship amicably rather than repair it. But deciding that we loved each other and the life we’d built enough to fight for our future actually felt really brave when we finally sat our stubborn asses in Sheckman’s leather club chairs. Suddenly the ideals I relentlessly clung to for years just didn’t matter anymore.

Early on in our weekly sessions, Sheckman said something that gave me boundless hope. “Listen guys, I can tell when a couple walks in here, usually within the first few minutes, if one or both members of the relationship want it to work,” she said. “I know that you both do.” She wasn’t trying to appease us or give us false hope; that simply wasn’t Sheckman’s matter of fact, no-b.s. style. And honestly, I was so elated, I could have made that session a literal ménage à trois—someone believed in us at a time when it wasn’t always easy to believe in ourselves. But instead of making a move on the good doctor, I simultaneously

laughed and cried tears of joy.


Because even more than fighting, laughing has always been something Dustin and I are good at. When we got together, all we did was laugh or make out. And I lived for the sound of him laughing at my silly jokes. The rant about my fruit cup being chockablock with dreaded “filler melon”—cantaloupe and honeydew, obviously—that made him howl during our very first breakfast out together. The way I giggled incessantly at his long emails during those first six months we dated long-distance. When we’d re-watch *Seinfeld* DVDs, finding something new to laugh at in each vintage episode. Laughter was the shared language of our love.

And even during some of the most frustrating arguments, Dust is usually still able to make a little joke. Sometimes I crack, other times my stubbornness gets the best of me and I won’t let my guard down. Our work with Sheckman is making it easier for me to let him in.

It was sad when the laughing turned to yelling and it felt like all we did was fight. I had to grieve the loss of the relationship we had in those early days and mourn the fantasy that our relationship was strong enough on its own to overcome the challenges we’d faced. But for all the fighting we do, therapy has reinforced that there’s always been one thing we’re both willing to fight for—us.

The thing about therapy with your partner is you’re forced to stare at each other—and yourself. You have to sit with your flaws and your mistakes, and it can be excruciating. But it really is in those moments of utter discomfort that you grow. You look at yourself in the mirror and don’t look so ugly anymore because goddamn it, you’re trying and that’s pretty beautiful. Because there is at least one relationship cliché that turns out to be true—love is worth fighting for.

THE KIT

- Editor-in-Chief**
Laura deCarufel
- Creative Director**
Jessica Hotson (on leave)
- Art Director**
Celia Di Minno
- Executive Editor**
Kathryn Hudson
- Beauty Director**
Rani Sheen (on leave)
- Katherine Lalancette
- Fashion Director**
Jillian Vieira
- Digital Director**
Caitlin Kenny
- Managing Editor**
Eden Boileau
- Digital Editor**
Jennifer Berry
- Associate Art Director**
Kristy Wright
- Assistant Art Director**
Poonam Chauhan
- Photographer**
Luis Mora
- Publisher, The Kit**
Giorgina Bigioni
- Project Director, Digital Media**
Kelly Matthews
- Direct advertising inquiries to:
Collab Director
Evie Begy, eb@thekit.ca
- Collab Coordinator**
Sarah Chan
- Marketing Coordinator**
Lara Buchar
- Collab Designer**
Oana Cazan
- 
- (c) 2018, The Kit, a division of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited.
- President and CEO, Torstar, and Publisher, Toronto Star**
John Boynton
- Editor, Toronto Star**
Irene Gentle

CHANEL



ROUGE ALLURE VELVET EXTRÊME

THE NEW INTENSE MATTE LIPSTICK

CHANEL.COM

©CHANEL, Inc. CHANEL ® CHANEL S. de R.L.