Trending Women

Instagram-savvy seniors offer style lessons for all ages

By Leah Finkelshteyn

Ziporah Salomon proudly recalls being the best-dressed schoolgirl as a 9-year-old in Netanya, Israel—largely thanks to elaborate, hand-sewn clothing made for her by her father, a professional tailor, and a mother who embroidered, knitted and crocheted.

The ensembles instilled in the young girl an understanding of fabric, proportion, texture and silhouette. These are lessons that stayed with Salomon, 68, who today lives in New York City. She uses her discerning eye to carefully coordinate and model unique outfits for her popular Instagram feed (@tziporahsalamon). Style, to her, is a riot of necklaces and whimsical rings in neon bright outfits overlaid with statement headwear as having “#hattitude”; and jewelry maker Sue Kreitzman, 77, whose seed (@suekreitzman) is a riot of bright outfits overlaid with statement necklaces and whimsical rings in neon yellow, royal blue and bright red.

These Jewish style bloggers are just a few among the dozens of women 60 and older—and men, too (check out @fashiongrandpas)—proudly displaying their sartorial splendor online. Some attribute the start of the trend to photographer Ari Seth Cohen. About 10 years ago, he began photographing older women for his blog, Advanced Style (advanced.style). His work helped draw public attention to Rapoport and Kreitzman as well as icons like interior designer Iris Apfel, 96, who is active on Instagram (@irispafel) and is styling two Barbie dolls for Mattel, slated to be released this fall.

Older women are using social media to assert their presence, to state that “we are tired of being ignored,” noted Jacobson. And, she added, these Instagrammers have “a large number of young followers, because we show you that you don’t have to fear aging. You can be a stylish, sexy woman in your 80s.” Scrolling through Jacobson’s Instagram feed and her Senior Style Bible site (seniorstylebibli.com), it’s easy to see the appeal of her sophisticated ensembles. The octogenarian from Las Vegas with short, spiky hair and oversized sunglasses even poses, tastefully, in a black teddy to “encourage women to embrace their bodies at every age,” she wrote in a post.

Senior Style Bible aims to combat ageism in fashion—and in American culture. “There are women in their 70s starting businesses today,” Jacobson said. “We are a force. We want clothing that is modern but adaptable to bodies changed by age. And we don’t want to only be defined by how many grandchildren or great-grandchildren we have.” Forget about dressing “age appropriate,” she says to her followers. “Style is a personal thing.” Salomon, a striking figure traveling around Manhattan on her pink bicycle, says that teaching women of all ages the fundamentals of design, whether through Instagram or in person through her Art of Dressing Salons (@ziporahsalomon), is nikkura clam. Putting an outfit together is “my art,” she said, and her posts prove it. One, for example, shows her in iridescent silk harem pants paired with a short purple jacket heavy with gold embroidery. Her eccentric look drew the attention of late New York Times photographer Bill Cunningham and helped her become a model for French fashion house Lanvin—at the age of 62. Cunningham’s pictures of Salomon are on display at a retrospective of his celebrated work at The New-York Historical Society through September 9 (nyhistory.org)—an acknowledgement not only of her creative ensembles but also, perhaps, another sign of a larger social acceptance of the beauty and relevance of older women.

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