



ANTHROPOLOGIE IN THE NATICK COLLECTION OFFERS A VARIETY OF FASHION-CONSCIOUS OUTERWEAR, FROM SCALLOPED SCARVES AND KNIT HATS TO EMBELLISHED COATS (LEFT). BELOW, WINTER WEAR IS REDEFINED AT LOEHMANN'S IN NATICK, WHERE YOU MAY FIND FUNKY FAUX FUR VESTS AND MILITARY-INSPIRED COATS.



BY ALISON O'LEARY MURRAY

Warm up to winter fashion

IT'S HARD TO
BE STYLISH
WHEN THE
SNOW FLIES,
BUT IT'S NOT
IMPOSSIBLE

You don't have to wear Jimmy Choo's black - leather motorcycle boots to be fashionable this winter, but you might if you're a fan of Gretchen "Gretta" Monahan, the fashionista owner of spas and boutiques that stretch from Wellesley to Manhattan. Paired with Gretta's own brand of colorful scarves, the fur-lined boots make a statement, and they offer some warmth. But Needham-based image consultant Mary Lou Andre warns that the rest of us – Jimmy Choos or not – might be making the wrong kind of statement when we bundle up for winter.

"Because winter outerwear is often an afterthought, a lot of people give up fit, function, and flair" by wearing big shapeless coats and unappealing accessories, says Andre. "Winter is a very long season here, so you don't want to make that mistake. You have to have that third piece that adds signature style."

And this author of "Ready to Wear: An Expert's Guide to Choosing and Using Your Wardrobe" (Perigree Trade, 2004) has a one-size-fits-all tip to looking good: organization.

Clients of Andre's Organization By Design image consulting business are coached to pare down their wardrobes to the fundamentally functional and fashionable pieces, then to take the additional step of organizing those items so they don't get lost in an overstuffed closet, or separated from important accessories.

"The coat closet is usually a disaster," Andre says. "You need to know what you need, have a place to store it, and be organized so you're not a maniac in the morning."

For the boss, coats are a staple. Andre says she has about a dozen coats, from a casual corduroy

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jacket to wear to her sons' soccer games to vintage fitted coats for evenings out and a longer black cashmere coat to wear over business suits. She also has a signature coat – in animal print – that can be dressed up or down with scarves and jeans or chunky necklaces and black trousers.

Each piece must pass a simple test, Andre says: “Get rid of those items that don’t make you feel awesome.”

“It’s fun for me to see people let go of stuff that doesn’t work for them,” she says. “The most stylish people have fewer clothes. Nobody has time to be a slave to fashion anymore.”

At Natick’s Loehmann’s discount designer store, the company’s national spokeswoman, Mara Kelly, suggests approaching winter outerwear with style in mind.

“Outerwear is like frosting on a cake. It completes your look,” Kelly says. “From glamorous faux fur, colorful wool trench coats, military-inspired jackets to cashmere or chunky sweaters, there are lots of options to express many styles. Is your style polished? Try a fitted faux vest over a short, neutral skirt, or, if your style is more casual, a faux fur vest with toggle closures over a pair of jeans. Add color, comfort and classy style to whatever you’re wearing with the season’s must-have piece, a scarf, wrapped loose and carefree or knotted neatly.”

And bring accessories out from under those bulky coats for more personalization, say both Andre and Kelly. “Cinch the waist with a belt of contrasting color; add faux fur or cuddly cable texture with a scarf, hat or gloves; and pull it all together with terrific leather boots in almost any style,” suggests Kelly.

Monahan, owner of Gretta Luxe boutique in Wellesley, says daytime outerwear makes an important first impression.

“I always remind my Boston clients that their fall/winter coat gets a lot of play as the cold temps can hang on through April, so your daytime coat is a great investment piece,” she says. “Choose a classic shape that will still be current next season, like a navy blue Stella McCartney pea coat.”

Among Monahan’s favorites are a tweed bomber from



WARMTH DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN SHAPELESS, BULKY COATS. LOEHMANN'S SPOKESWOMAN SUGGESTS BLENDING FUN LAYERS AND ACCESSORIES, LIKE THESE VEST ENSEMBLES.

Proenza Schouler, and for fun, she may rock the biker trend with a leather jacket.

Boots? This season they’re getting a thumbs-up from everyone as an important companion to any coat you own.

“The average fashionista has at least three or four pairs of boots in her closet for winter,” says Monahan. “My top two staples are a flat boot for daytime and a high bootie for night.”

Kelly says the rule is to feel good about your fashion choices. “Thigh-high boots are fabulous with the current legging trend, with short skirts or dresses, with skinny jeans or even shorts. Wearing clothes that make you feel good about yourself is always in style.”

November to March is a long time to hide under shapeless, unfashionable layers.

“Weather happens here,” says Andre. “The reality is that you’re wearing this stuff more than you think.” ■

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