

Q Dear Marylou: What do you consider the most—or one of the most—creative ideas in today's fashion? ___H.H., Denver, CO.



Dear H.H.: Reversibility. And I'm not just talking about clothes made of double-face fabrics or coats that are rainproof on the outside, fur on the inside. What strikes me as truly original, not to mention practical, are the reversible clothes in KaufmanFranco's spring collection. The dynamic design duo of **Ken Kaufman and Isaac Franco** have outed the inside of their jackets, both literally and figuratively, since they opened their firm in 2004. For example: The split-personality pantsuit illustrated here features, on one side, an uptown tailored jacket and matching pants sedate enough for the boardroom. The inside story is a downtown rock 'n roll salute to bikers and rebels without causes achieved with a pigment-printed skull and crossbones image signed with the word Rebel. The mesh midriff has parachute detailing.

In explaining their fascination with **dichotomous clothes**, Kaufman and Franco say it's because "every woman has more than one side." In this case, both sides are made of a lightweight silk and cotton pinstripe piped in black charmeuse. For store information, write to **KaufmanFranco**, 145 W. 57th st., 12th floor, New York, NY 10019.

Q Dear Marylou: Is retro as big an influence in men's clothes as it is in women's? Please give examples. __U.I., Baltimore, MD.

Dear U.I.: Yes, only now it's called "referencing" rather than retro. One of the hottest lookback trends for the trendy is rock 'n roll, especially **rock 'n roll, '70s style. Skinny ties and skinny pants** with skinny suspenders worn with the kind of pointy-toed, two-toned shoes Mick once wore are major in spring menswear, especially with such influential designers as **Hedi Slimane** of Dior Homme and **Rei Kawakubo** of Comme des Garçons. Some of Kawakubo's shirts, for example, are printed with the signature lips-and-tongue logo of the Rolling Stones. Others are printed with autographs of band members and lyrics from their songs.

Q Dear Marylou: As a child, I recall admiring winter coats with wool on the outside and thick fur linings. Now that I'm an adult with a long walk to work in the winter, I am interested in finding such a coat for myself. Any recommendations? __L.M.G., Amherst, OH.

Dear L.M.G.: You didn't mention price, but any furrier worth his pelts would be happy to show you coats with fur linings or create one for you. At the designer level, **Ralph Rucci** is known for his **reversible sable-to-silk** masterpieces, and **Carmen Marc Valvo** has created a noteworthy Swakara broadtail wrap coat that reverses to cashmere.

In the fake fur category, **Fabulous Furs** (800-848-4650) has several coats that might interest you. One is a reversible raincoat (\$119) with faux fisher on one side and water-repellent microfiber on the other. Another **reversible raincoat** (\$139) is black water-repellent polyester that reverses to fake leopard. It's machine wash and machine dry. Another fake fur-lined coat-jacket (\$79) is a water-repellent metallic copper lined with synthetic leopard. This style is machine wash/line dry.

Q Dear Marylou: Which is the more fashionable neutral right now: Gray or beige? For clothes? For accessories? __A.K., Boston, MA.

Dear A.K.: They're both **classic neutrals**, but **beige**, aka **nude** and **sand**, is the more popular for spring, both in clothes and accessories. Color experts see it as solid and enduring. Nude got its biggest boost for spring from **John Galliano** at Dior, where even the program was printed in nude, and the headlines inside proclaimed "Dior Nude Black, Dior Nude Lace, Dior Nude Layering, Dior Nude Degrade."

(Marylou welcomes questions for use in this column, but regrets she cannot answer questions personally. Send your questions to info@fgi.org.)

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