



OFF DUTY



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PLAYING DRESS-DOWN

Blazers with ball gowns? T-shirts with couture? All the better to drink Champagne with, my dear



CASUAL EVENING EXPERTS From left: Lou Doillon, Lauren Santo Domingo, Jenna Lyons, Sienna Miller, Agyness Deyn, Kate Moss, Gwyneth Paltrow, Torrie Goodman, Tory Burch, Alexa Chung

Illustration by Stephen Kocouber for The Wall Street Journal

BY ALEXA BRAZILIAN

THERE'S SOMETHING INTOXICATING about casual clothes worn with impossibly elegant ones. Picture it now: a heavy wool Shetland with a trumpet skirt and emeralds. A delicate gown with wind-whipped hair and a coarse Harris tweed. When it comes to evening dress codes, breaking them could be the most fun you'll have all night.

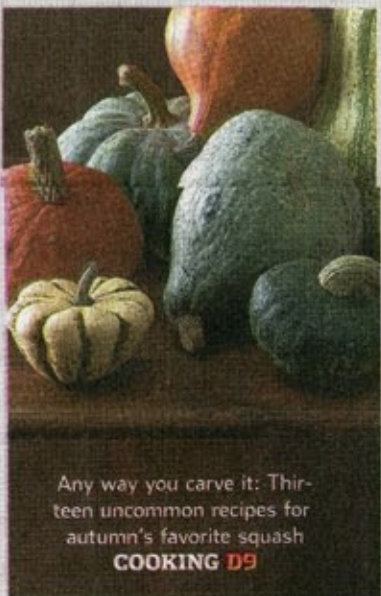
During the Great Depression, Singer sewing-machine heiress and French Harper's Bazaar editor Daisy Fellowes stunned and inspired Parisian society with her irreverently informal tastes. Whether she was ditching her diamonds for a necklace of champagne corks or singing the praises of cotton dresses instead of couture, her sartorial rhythm was in sync with the very pulse of her time.

In the spirit of Ms. Fellowes's rule-breaking style, in not so different a time in history, designers and tastemakers are now lightheartedly dressing-down dressing up. In his fall collection, Marc Jacobs showed a heavy oatmeal fisherman's sweater with a to-the-floor velvet evening skirt. The model's hair was mussed, her expression nonchalant. The perfect ensemble for a wild soiree in some English rock star's drafty country castle. Phoebe Philo daringly wrapped a woven cotton blanket over a full-length red dress with a gold Cleopatra choker in her resort collection for Céline. How delicious the look would be for an extravagant fiesta amongst the bougainvillea in Cartagena! And one can imagine turning heads at an opulent winter gala in New York City in Richard Chai's black and blue grandfather cardigan layered over his slinky caramel gown.

But this playful juxtaposition of evening and everyday is not just a runway fantasy. The trend is inherently down-to-earth (not to mention accessible), and is rendering the virtually unattainable red carpet look obsolete. "Evening dressing is traditionally dictated by Hollywood, which is all about the perfect hair, the perfect jewelry and the perfect dress. Being too coiffed and matchy-matchy isn't interesting," said J. Crew's president and executive creative director, Jenna Lyons. "I'm just dying to mess up their hair and cinch their dresses with a men's leather belt!" In the company's November catalogue, Marissa Webb, suggest a white button-down with a crystal-encrusted collar and skirt

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Fun-to-drive is what Mazda does—so what happened here?
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The Anti-Depressive Home

Colors zig and patterns zag in the irrepressibly happy home of designer Jonathan Adler
DESIGN D7

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DESIGN & DECORATING

HOUSE TOUR

THE ANTI-DEPRESSIVE APARTMENT

In designer Jonathan Adler's kaleidoscopic New York digs, it's pretty hard not to feel happy

SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER SELLING a cache of striped pots to his first retail account in 1993, Jonathan Adler wondered why he never got paid—until, that is, the buyer informed him that he never sent in an invoice.

Mr. Adler's response: "What's an invoice?" Now founder and creative director of an eponymous home-décor empire, Mr. Adler, 44 years old, refers to himself as an "accidental entrepreneur." His privately held company now has 12 boutiques and expects to see a 50% increase in revenue this year. "It is all completely unexpected and it took a lot of work," he says.

Known for his modern home accents (a giraffe-shaped ceramic lamp) and ironic approach to design (a needlepoint pillow emblazoned with the word "anger"), Mr. Adler has expanded his offerings in recent years to include furniture, bedding and wallpaper. This month he launched a more ac-

cessible line called "Happy Chic," on the HSN network, and earlier this year he created a small fashion collection for the denim-based brand 7 for All Mankind. For the 50th anniversary of Barbie last year, he designed a doll and a life-sized dream house.

Sitting in his living room in a vintage acid-green Joe Colombo Elda chair adjacent to an orange velvet sofa, Mr. Adler inveighed against those with a deep-seated aversion to color. "When you are on your deathbed about to snuff it, you want to look back and remember your persimmon sofa, not beige on beige," he said.

Mr. Adler's overall approach to design is "maximalist," he said, which is apparent upon entering the approximately 2,500-square-foot New York duplex he shares with his husband, Barneys New York creative director Simon Doonan. The apartment, in the Greenwich Village neighborhood, consists of

two units that the couple combined and renovated two years ago. With curved, molded ceilings and large windows, the space is decorated with boldly-upholstered furniture, antiques and whimsical art—a mix of flea market finds and well-known artists' work—offset by off-white walls with geometric moldings. "It's just totally quirky and personal and ever-changing," said Mr. Adler of his residence.

In his first book, entitled "My Prescription for Anti-Depressive Living" (Harper Collins, 2005), Mr. Adler elaborated on his design manifesto, which consists of a list of rules like "tchotchkes are life enhancing" and "colors can't clash." On the occasion of the Nov. 2 simultaneous release of two more books—one about color, the other about accessorizing one's home—Mr. Adler walked a reporter through his home.

—Rachel Dodes



◀ DEN/TV ROOM The space is anchored by a large marble coffee table on which sits one of Mr. Adler's orange lacquer trays. The centerpiece is a rotating cluster of accessories. On the day of our visit: In addition to the two ceramic dog sculptures there was a canister with a high-relief marijuana leaf and what appeared to be a gun. "That's a mantique from the 1970s, a men's perfume flask," Mr. Adler said. "It's hard to say no to a gun-shaped perfume flask, I always say." The foyer, below, is accented with one of Mr. Adler's bright orange lacquer console tables, which provides shade for two festive garden gnomes that live underneath it.



▶ LIVING ROOM "I think formal living rooms are a thing of the past," said Mr. Adler, standing in this bright space, which has 18-foot-high curved ceilings. The centerpiece of the room is a red-and-black paisley wallpapered ping-pong table constructed out of two Saarinen table bases with a plywood top. The table sits upon a zig-zag print rug that's accented with a ceramic zebra sculpture.

Mr. Adler said he never really used the room until he re-jiggered it for sporting purposes. Now, he and Mr. Doonan play ping pong every night when they come home from work. (First, they must move the bust of Michael Jackson, which is usually on the table.)

Anifty trick: Mr. Adler hung two paintings—abstract eyes by artist Jonin Pauli Rinne—in front of a window with a less-than-stellar view of a brick wall.



▲ DINING ROOM The dining room was originally part of the first apartment, owned by Mr. Doonan for the past 16 years. The wooden table is a mid-century modern George Nelson design, which Mr. Adler said, was once owned by Mr. Nelson himself. ("At least that's what the man in the shop said, so we'll go with it," Mr. Adler said.) Around the table are vintage Richard Schultz chairs that were reupholstered in a graphic black-and-white fabric.

The mantel is brightened by a row of 1950s American and Italian glass head sculptures, which look like anthropomorphic light bulbs. Messrs. Doonan and Adler previously owned a collection of the sculptures, but sold them, and then regretted it. "We spent the last 10 years buying them back on eBay for 10 times the price," Mr. Adler said.



▲ BEDROOM The graphic blue carpeting continues up from the stairs (right) into the bedroom, where it contrasts with Hermès orange accents and rich brown walls, giving the space a warm, cozy vibe.



◀ LIBRARY The small library leads up to the master bedroom via a secret pocket door. Decorated with a mural of a tobacco pipe by an artist friend, Don Carney, the door doubles as a piece of artwork.

"A house should always have a sense of fun," said Mr. Adler. Opening the door, he revealed a staircase carpeted in a blue hexagonal pattern with matching wallpaper, both by David Hicks. Mr. Hicks, along with Alexander Girard and Bonnie Cashin, are Mr. Adler's "trio of muses," he said. "They all had singular and eccentric design styles that are unimpeachably chic."

▶ See more photos of Jonathan Adler's house at WSJ.com/Homes.