

anna akbari closet catharsis

by May Wang



Anna Akbari walks into a small diner on 47th street wearing a black Nao Takekoshi peacoat with cream buttons, dark skinny jeans, and grey lace up high heel boots. Her hair is long, brown, and wavy, framing a petite sunglass-clad face. She's here to tell me about her personal style consultation service. Needless to say, she is not your typical NYU professor.

Akbari teaches at NYU Steinhardt's department of Media, Culture, and Communication, where her curriculum focuses on the beauty and fashion industry. She teaches three seminars to MCC students: Media and Identity, Fashion and Power, and Beauty and the Body, which, according to Akbari, are all "very demanding classes with very sexy titles."

"They are very theoretical and very academic," says Akbari. "One thing I say to the students first is that this is not a fashion history class, this is not a celebration of couture. This is a very serious class and we read a lot of very heavy sociological texts."

But the seriousness of the classes shouldn't be all that's surprising, considering that Akbari graduated from The New School with a PHD in visual sociology, with a focus on "visual self presentation and identity construction." That pretty much means she's actually a fashion expert. Oh yeah, and not only is she taking her expertise to the classroom and teaching it to her students, she's also using it as the keystone to her new fashion consulting service, Closet Catharsis.

Though Akbari started Closet Catharsis a few years ago, she has only started to expand and market the service in the recent year. Closet Catharsis is a personal fashion consulting service that focuses on "taking a look at the way

that [people] themselves perceived by audiences," says helping them can strategically more effective image."

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are presenting and are being their various Akbari, and then "[assess] how they cally project a

For \$890, Akbari will make you take her through your closet and tell her about yourself, then compile a hefty personal style report for you including tips and the clothes she thinks are right for you. After that, she'll actually take you shopping! Her end goal, she says, is to help her clients feel empowered by the wardrobe decisions they make: "It's really about tapping into who they are and who they like to be." She adds, "my clients come to me instead of more traditional fashion stylists or image consultants because they like that there's a more holistic approach to it."

Akbari admits that the service is a bit of an investment, but it's a better deal than buying expensive clothes that don't fit you well and that you'll regret later. "It's not about getting a bargain," she stresses. "It's about investing in something that's sustainable. And that's very different than a quick fix." Akbari has a myriad of clients, but says she loves working with people "who are in some sort of transition" the most. Say, for example, NYU students. She says she wants to help graduating seniors learn how to project a more professional identity and understand fashion from an empowerment perspective. She even recently gave a talk on business attire at an NYU Fashion Business Association meeting.

As for Akbari's personal style, she says it's "constantly evolving." Overall, she likes neutral colors, soft textures, and classic, feminine pieces. Yet she admits there's also something about wearing all black (remnants of her college days) that is very appealing to her. "I don't like conservative, I like sort of an overall glam. I like working with the body." She tells me about the pieces from indie designers she's acquired during her work and her travels, noting the Nao Takekoshi peacoat.

As she sips on her green tea, I'm thinking: this is one professor I wouldn't mind asking for style advice.

www.closetcatharsis.com