

CONFESSIONS

OF AN **accessories**

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ADDICT

I confess. I'm addicted to accessories. While I've always been drawn to accoutrements of all kinds, my so-called condition has truly just come to light thanks to a recent move, when I was forced to take inventory of my countless baubles, and dozens of scarves, hats, and handbags, previously categorized by color and season. In packing for what was undoubtedly an exciting change in an upward direction, my nights were sleepless with worry over storage issues, accessibility, and what would become of my collections. My sensitive but nevertheless fashionably challenged boyfriend urged me to take a look at the source of my stress. Could my accessories be taking over my life?

In order to responsibly assess, I had to take a solid step back. The seed for dependence was planted, I'm guessing, in high school, when the ever-changing fashion faux pas of the 1980's were consistently going out (and then even farther out) of style, but only to make room for those more offensive. From Madonna's rubber bracelets, to fluorescent leg warmers, those were the days when there was nowhere to hide from the shifting disasters of the day (let's face it, you could spot those brazen '80's hues a mile away). A keen, style-savvy eye was mandatory to avoid outcast status, and though trends today are much more forgiving, this binge and purge fashion instinct was permanently ingrained in my fad-conscious psyche. As an adult, I was never the one who needed to

I would find them, I'd foam at the mouth with dual envy and desire. There was a need to seek and know these women in an on-going quest to justify my addiction. As I asked about her means of boxing and labeling her shoes she'd sometimes hiss, "I have to do this," pointing to the Polaroid pictures affixed to the front, "I have [gasp] sixty pairs of shoes!" That would be the moment I would mouth a silent "wow", and breathe a sigh of quiet relief that my shoe count nearly tripled hers. I'd ride the cab home that evening remembering the scene in slow motion sepia, with an accompanying swell of pride and a smile.

It's rare to find ample closet space in a New York City apartment, but before my most recent move, I was blessed with not one, but two wall closets—all to myself—and another walk-in in my bedroom. I've spend years constructing the perfect boxed storage bed that rest upon dozens upon dozens of shoes, all arranged by category. But perhaps the most ingenious (and now, telling) decision was when I turned my food pantry into a repository for my beloved handbags, the intended stock shelving proving the perfect showcase for each darling little purse, my favorites displayed up front. Any sensible person would agree that closet limitations were not good enough reason to pass up home ownership, which I'd been awaiting for as long as I could remember. My new house would be ideal except for that one thing,

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own the newest of the new, but that didn't mean I didn't gobble and hoard everything I liked. There's an impulse for those of my disposition which prevents us from simply admiring something we might find befitting. Ownership is a must. When I recognized the impulse buyer in myself I tried all the recommended remedies—waiting three days before purchasing, limiting buys by the month—only to find myself obsessed day and night with a pair of unique pearl earrings, or fine leather gloves, which, if not still available when I journeyed back to the store, would only cause severe and lasting heartache. Willpower only seemed to create more work and distraction. For sure I had an issue, but still...was collecting fine accessories considered an official problem?

I've met plenty of women who have their own splurge-filled dressing rooms, and when

The closets weren't just small, they were non-existent. And the open floor plan did not allow for wardrobes on every wall; there were no walls between rooms. This meant that not only was I going to have to find a creative way of storing my clothes, but there was just no getting around it—my accessories, and thus, my addiction, were going to have to come out of the closet.

The weeks following moving day proved to be an all time accessories low. My aforementioned boyfriend, who's been wearing the same pair of jeans for the last 10 years, was actually angered when boxes of bags and boots lay orphaned around the house. "Can't you just get rid of this stuff?" he begged, and after much debate, I told him I would try. Thus, I was forced to take a full inventory, and see what I could live without. After a first tabulation garner no change,



a sterner second was deemed necessary. I resolved to only keep those items that served one of three categories: 1. Functionality (the large black power beads I throw on every time I have an important meeting); 2. Necessity (the collection of my best clutch purses, some of which were my grandmother's), and; 3. Sentimentality (my favorite black pumps, or those great flats I bought in Rome). It was hard to do, but anything which had suffered a slight scuff, tear, or fading was passed along to charity; items worse for wear were thrown in the garbage. I managed to pitch three large garbage bags of purses, five shopping bags of shoes, and a small but significant bag of trinkets.

My new (relatively) low numbers opened my creative valves for new and improved storage concepts. For my remaining handbags, I designed and built my own storage benches, measuring and picking out the wood to my own liking, and assuring that they would be snug and safe, and still out of sight. (I even built one additional for my winter warming items.) My shoes proved to be the least of my problems, and I'm embarrassed to say that I don't remember the ones I've given away. The jewelry, while considerably less, remains in excess, but is now organized inside my armoire door with neat little hooks, earrings hung two-by-two in snug organizers.

Coco Chanel once said, "Fashion is architecture, it's a matter of proportions." I've learned that by pairing down my proportions, I've made my daily fashion more accessible. And it's not just my fashion style that's considerably more sound, it's my lifestyle as well. I can't kid you, I still have more than most. But I've decided to hold strong to a personal sustainability. Gone are the cold sweats when I pass a cute bangle, passed are the obsessions with sample sales. With my accessories addiction now under control, I just have one question: Is it possible for accessories addicts to be enabled by dozens of little black dresses, aligning her closet in eager anticipation of adornment? Just asking.