

The Futile Fashionista Pants On Fire: Sexy Lies of Fashion



Here's reason 1,248 why you feel so bad about yourself: You don't have a sexy lifestyle. Sure, you have a life (you are technically alive), you may even execute your existence with a little style (your fly is zipped), and there's a chance you're sexy (possessing male or female genitalia), but a *lifestyle* is something so all-encompassing that whole magazines are dedicated to its complex rules.

Whether it's *Vogue's* pretense that everyone is buying new wardrobes with each season, *Nylon's* belief that it is possible to maintain a perfectly modern geometric haircut, or *Jane's* giggly pro-sex feminist perspective that fun-lovin' ladies are infused with feisty originality at all times, the glossy world of magazines does not leave room for *sweat-pant-down-time*.

If you're a *Maxim* "reader", that sounds like a sensual encounter where one sweats and pants while getting down. Actually, I'm referring to slogging around the house in a pair of Packers sweatpants ruing black hole hours in the day when you are not at your best. You may be perspiring and panting, but it's not from your sexy lifestyle. You're having an anxiety attack.

Crouch down and put your head between your knees. Relax, you can move with swift agility in your loose sweats. Imagine how hard that would have been in confining leather slacks. Now breathe and block out the images that tormented you while flipping through *Vanity Fair*.

You are not a New York socialite who's been caught with your ascot askew in the Hamptons. You have not made a dating faux-pas revoking your *King* magazine "playa's card." Oprah will never know that you wrote "@#&!" in your *O* magazine tear-out "Joy Journal" under the section entitled "Count Your Blessings." No one caught you peeing in the grotto at the Playboy mansion, because, you see, you are not Hugh Hefner lounging about in silken pajamas with a jaunty pipe and an incontinence issue. You are a lovely,

slightly maudlin individual who didn't "get your act together" this weekend because you spent another Sunday afternoon rotting around in sweatpants.

Tired media critiques documenting the effects glossy periodicals have on the reader's sense of self like to identify victims and villains. You are the victim, a sad-sack sitting before the pages of *Esquire* bombarded with airbrushed images and slick advertising, stupefied by the intricate mores of a seductively unattainable magazine world. Your only hope is to restructure your entire lousy life or just give up and spend tons of money on a celebrity scent ("I'm not a loser. I smell like Usher!")

The villains can be vague: the fashion industry, modern culture, or the dorkiest of all murky evils, "the dominant paradigm." However, evil often has a face and that face is sometimes Martha Stewart. With her magazine *Living* (an obviously symbolic title in the context of this discussion) the homemaking billionaireess promotes perfectionism in extremis. She does bonkers stuff like feed homegrown grains to exotic fowl in order to harvest her own eggs which she mixes with goose liver pate to create a foie gras omelet she serves to her champion Chow dogs, which makes them so classy they poop truffles and bark in French.

The problem with hating Martha Stewart is that her lifestyle comes at such a cost, it hardly qualifies as the type of misery-inducing sexy lifestyle pushed by less compulsive gurus. Martha has foregone sex and love to build her Amazonian empire. A warm coterie of spunky-gal crafters and gay florists embellish her ideal universe but Martha is a neuter in their midst. She dictates and orchestrates and sometimes unclenches her jaw enough to allow trusted professionals to carry out their duties without minutia-management, but she is ultimately in charge of the final product.

She has sacrificed a loving marriage or long term relationship for her lifestyle, ceasing to be Martha Stewart the living woman, and becoming Martha Stewart Living, the brand. I imagine her slipping into crisp, cool, Macy's sheets alone and the lover's cry she hears in dreams is the crow of one of her rare Buff Orphington roosters at the window.

What do I know, she probably gets laid constantly, but my supposition is that if you press yourself into a perfect mold, you must give up essential life pleasures. Worse yet, if you pursue the sexy lifestyle championed in *Cosmopolitan*, not only will your clothes fit beautifully, your hair float triumphantly, and your sex life sizzle, you will lose a little bit of your core humanity. You may be too busy jet-setting to notice, but that essential element of who you are, the empathetic person who emerges on a lost Sunday resplendent in sweatpants, will be gone.

TRIED: I'm wearing perfume every day to be more mysterious and fetching. Due to a deviated septum, I have to huff a fragrance to experience its aroma. Here is a lightheaded recommendation from my scent arsenal: Dior Addict. It smells feverish, artificial, and a little like copy machine toner. I think it's called Addict because you get addicted to the product and not because it smells like addicts (that scent being a mix of Ripple, weed, the chemical hint of meth, and the unmistakable fecund waft of dead tooth stump).

Fragrance is expensive, so I suggest leafing through a sexy lifestyle magazine and swiping your wrist along the sample perfume advertisements. Put the magazine back and enjoy the feeling of wearing a hundred dollar perfume for free.

TRUE: Diamonds! Materialistic, check. Fraught with conflict due to abusive mining practices, check. Creepy suburban lady mini-van cultural iconography, check. Me likee, check, check, check!

TIRED: Hello Kitty accessories on grown women make me sad (see Betty Davis film *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*). Your inner child should be coddled and loved, but your outer child, as represented by tiny-tot wear on the adult body, should be smothered.

TRENDY: Basic human frailty is a wardrobe staple.