

DC style profile: Ada Polla of Alchimie Forever

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Ada Polla of Alchimie Forever debuting her new Betsy Fisher faux-wrap dress.
Photo: Kristina Hopper www.kristinahopper.com

If beauty is skin deep, then Ada Polla, co-creator of the Swiss antioxidant skin care line Alchimie Forever, knows better than anyone what you put on your skin is as important as what you put over your skin. Alchimie started with her parents in Switzerland in 1997 – her father was the first doctor in Europe to use lasers for cosmetic use, and her mother is a research specialist in cellular aging. Their family medspa grew and products were used all over Europe.

Ada came to work for their Washington, DC spa in 2002 after graduating from Georgetown University's business school. Ada's influence is not only seen in the walls of their salon and spa located in the heart of Georgetown, but in the dozens of beauty and fashion magazines that Alchimie has appeared in.

So with a lifetime spent in the beauty industry and an upbringing in Switzerland, how does Ada's style factor in to her international business lifestyle?

On a steamy afternoon in Georgetown, Ada is dressed coolly in a wrap dress she purchased from favorite DC boutique, Betsy Fisher. The dress is a warm gray with a band of orange and reds around the waist, giving her petite figure an hourglass figure the likes of Marilyn Monroe would be jealous of. This simple yet dynamic dress is indicative of Ada's personal style and professional attitude.

“I love dresses. They are the absolute easiest,” she said. “I consider my style to be ...” she mulls over the proper translation from her native French into English, “Classical. Not super trendy, or funky, but I also don’t like boring.”

The dress she purchased directly from Betsy herself is more about allegiance to her personal friendship and business relationship with the chic boutique-owner than it is about the fashion. For Ada, her fashion ideology is a conscious decision to patronize women-owned businesses she admires.

“I’m super loyal if I’m buying from a girlfriend,” Ada said. “I love women in business. I have personal relationships [with them], so I want to cater to local boutiques.”

In addition to only shopping at a store where the fashion is second to learning from another woman business owner, she firmly states, “I don’t shop at malls,” as they can be too impersonal. “Saks doesn’t need my money,” countering that local boutiques are grateful for the business she provides them.

Yet Ada does acknowledge that style is both important and fun, and therefore embraces a philosophy that seems to be a trend among the most savvy fashionistas.

“I’m all about quality over quantity. I have a skirt I wear that belonged to my great-grandmother. I can’t pass down H&M, you know?”

And as a savvy patron of fashion, she also knows that quality is not necessarily synonymous with a major designer label. “I don’t care about who designed what. My core pieces are made with good fabrics.”

Her quest for quality style in her wardrobe is shared by her meticulous attention to fit. At five-foot-three-inches tall, anything that will make her look longer and leaner is a plus, so she always visits a tailor after making a new clothing purchase. But even Ada knows that a tailored suit or a great dress is only going to do so much to make her look taller.

Admitting that she “used to never care about shoes,” she firmly states, “I only wear heels.”

Ada credits a visit to [Simply Soles](#) owner Kassie Rempel for her newfound affection for heels. Kassie’s line, Little Bee, is a personal favorite. Now when Ada wears a heel it always has color, from her gold Louboutin and silver Jimmy Choo’s, to the red Dalmain round toe

heel and her favorite Betty Mullers. With the added benefit of having a diminutive shoe size of 6 ½, Ada is the proud owner of 25 pairs of exotic heels.

Ada chooses colorful shoes with tall heels in part because they act as an accessory without being obvious. When Ada does wear jewelry and accessories, it is “understated because of my size, [though] I always have on earrings.”

As a businesswoman with a wardrobe of high heels, dresses and two well-tailored suits, her casual looks are equally thoughtful and appropriate for any occasion. A fitted tee, blazer and her prized Rockin’ Republic jeans are a simple yet put-together weekend ensemble that she credits to her Swiss upbringing.

“[In Switzerland] I very rarely feel overdressed. Nobody goes to the grocery store in yoga pants. You don’t do that in Europe.” She follows that up quickly saying, “No judgment, [we just] understand what the clothes are for. I could run into a client, ex-boyfriend ... who do I know who I might see?”

With that, Ada brings up the very important truth that clothes, and therefore personal style, do in fact make a difference in how you are perceived. Before a word is uttered or regardless of what it says on your resume, one’s appearance makes the first impression. And with that philosophy, Ada considers her style to be thoughtful and classic – which is just like her.



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