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# Naturally, they find, you buy

The Boston Globe

From fashion tips to themed shopping trips, these wardrobe consultants cater to all tastes: hip, frugal, even eco-friendly



Wardrobe consultants Maria Vasilevsky (left) and Alice Miles check out Greenward, an eco-friendly clothing and accessories store in Cambridge. (John Blanding/Globe Staff)

By Erin Byers Murray  
Globe Correspondent / November 15, 2007

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With celebrity stylists like Rachel Zoe making as many headlines as the celebantes they dress, wardrobe consultants have hit the mainstream.

The latest twist comes from Stilista Boston. Maria Vasilevsky and Alice Miles not only do the usual wardrobe analyses and overhauls, but they'll go so far as to assess what someone should wear on a hot date. They'll also accompany would-be fashionistas on themed shopping trips: for cool vintage pieces, hip maternity garb, budget chic, even eco-friendly fashions.

Vasilevsky, 26, and Miles, 27, grew up in Brookline after emigrating from Russia with their families. After college, Vasilevsky went into marketing and Miles into retail. Both were not-so-secretly pining to own a fashion business. They brainstormed and launched Stilista in July.

I checked out their eco-friendly fashion package to learn how to shop for all-natural clothing. The \$100-an-hour service includes a basic evaluation and a shopping session. Here's how it went.

**The evaluation:** A 25-minute phone interview covered everything from my marriage status (yes) to the celebrity whose style I most admire (Kate Hudson).

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They also asked about the importance I put on eco-friendly items (Fair Trade vs. vegan), my knowledge of eco-friendly fabrics (very little), and, most important, my budget (minimal).

**Shopping:** Our itinerary included Envi and The Hempest on Newbury Street and Greenward and Nomad in Cambridge. I arrived at Envi, a boutique dedicated to carrying eco-conscious lines. My stylists, dressed in bell-sleeve tops, black vests, and jeans, had a short shopping list: designer jeans, knit tops, a going-out bag or clutch, a casual dress. We chatted with co-owner Ursula Stahl and the girls got to work picking items and asking questions: Had I heard of Tencel, a fabric made from wood fiber? What are my favorite colors? Did I know what to look for when shopping for eco-friendly materials?

"A lot of brands that are organic are going to put it out there," said Vasilevsky, pointing to a label that read 100 percent organic cotton. Like food, said Stahl, "in order to call it 'organic' it has to be approved" by the USDA. Watch for terms like "all-natural," which really could mean anything. Vasilevsky called out brands like Stewart + Brown and Edun that are purely organic.

I hit the dressing room where they'd organized their picks into outfits. Some were things I would have chosen, most weren't. As I paraded out, they quickly spotted the hits and misses. Deep V-necks are good (they make up for my "diminutive stature," Miles said), below-the-knee skirts, bad (my legs aren't long). They tell me how to belt a skirt to define my waist. I put a few pieces on hold. They recommend this for all purchases before doling out tons of cash.

Next, we visited The Hempest, an all-hemp clothing store. "They're not as fashion forward as a place like Envi," said Vasilevsky, "but they have a good selection of basics." We found a hoodie, soft T-shirts and tanks, one very funky blazer, and a flattering boat neck sweater.

On to Cambridge. At Greenward, a new eco-friendly housewares shop, we were on the lookout for handbags by Helen & Riegle (made from organic cotton and faux leather), Vinylux cuff bracelets made from recycled records, and earrings by Rhode Island design team BtheNV. "When you can't find organic or recycled, your next best option is local," says Vasilevsky. Smaller carbon footprint and all.

Our last stop was Nomad, which carries an eclectic mix of clothes and shoes - some organic, some not. They picked out a pair of Melissa Shoe flats, a jacket by Filly, and a sweater coat from Stewart + Brown. I quickly deemed it my favorite for its soft merino fabric.

**The results:** I walked away with loads of advice on how to shop for clothing that's gentle on the planet, and I got some much-needed perspective on how to dress for my body type. Who says someone who's "diminutive" can't be fashionable? ■

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