



Image

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True colours

Deborah Turner and Karen MacPhee promise to bring out the best in everybody, and one consultation with Kent's very own style gurus can literally change your life

There can be few women who wouldn't jump at the chance of a colour and image consultation, so it was with great anticipation - tinged, I'll admit, with some nervousness - that I welcomed Deborah Turner and Karen MacPhee into my home.

The bubbly pair are the faces behind Hamlyn Nash, Kent's first image consultancy partnership, offering affordable, professional advice on personal image. They met 12 years ago when they were working for Kent County Council, Deborah as a chartered surveyor and Karen in human resources, but both felt they could do something a bit different with their careers.

"We had our colours done with a group of friends two years ago and absolutely loved it," recalls Deborah. "It was life changing for us and we took on the advice we were given with a passion.

"So when we started talking about what we really wanted to do and what we both liked, we remembered how much we'd both enjoyed the experience."

The duo made two further important decisions last January: that they wanted to be independent, and that they wanted the best.

So began their training with leading London-based image consultancy Aston+ Hayes and Business Link Kent, and the launch of Hamlyn Nash in September 2006 on a part-time basis while still working a two and a half-day week in their old jobs.

The plan is to be full time by April and, ultimately, to have their own premises so that they can offer private clients a complete makeover service, involving clothes

to try on and the services of a hair stylist, and even help to shop for a new wardrobe.

"For 2007 we'll be focusing on the corporate market as well as our private clients," explains Deborah. "This means looking at branding and corporate image, how to dress for success. It will be like a management training package, but taking it one step further."

But what about our shy and retiring other halves?

"We would like to break into the male market," admits Karen, "but Kent men haven't really embraced the concept yet - maybe City types will.

"After all, it only takes one brave man to start it off and break down the barriers."

Karen and Deborah started out practicing on family and friends before moving onto paying clients, mainly visiting them in their own homes, and word of mouth and media coverage has given them a great start.

They have been extremely proactive, too, doing 7am promotional leaflet drops at key stations such as Sevenoaks, Whitstable and Tunbridge Wells, and giving themselves plenty of networking opportunities by becoming Members of the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

They are also Members of the Federation of Image Consultants and would like to become Masters so that in the future they could train other people: "We would like to be a part of the industry, this is definitely not a hobby for us," says Deborah firmly.

Their contrasting physical styles also help their cause: Karen is 6ft and Deborah just 5ft 1ins, and both





have very different body shapes and colouring. The Trinny and Susanna comparisons are inevitable, too, and while this can be helpful in terms of client awareness, Deborah is quick to point out that their TV counterparts haven't been formally trained and actually use the services of stylists for tips on their shows.

Deborah and Karen are also two of the most engaging women you'll meet, passionate about what they're doing, articulate, informed - and great fun; it quickly becomes like a girly thing around the kitchen table with your two mates. I could hardly wait.

Karen pops me in front of a full-length mirror, bare faced and with my hair pushed back in a band so that my colour characteristics can be assessed without the distraction of make up, and dangles various coloured fabric swatches under my chin.

She explains: "Fabrics can be either dark or light, while with people we talk about hair, skin and eye colour. Then there's clarity - either bright or muted - which with people is characterised by contrasts, for example dark eyes and hair but pale skin.

"We also need to decide whether you are warm or cool, which is nothing to do with paleness or the colour of your skin, it's all about the undertones. For example, if have cool skin, you'll have pink undertones, if it's warm, your undertones are yellowy."

The effect of the colour swatches on my skin is remarkable: some bring out my skin tone and features, others cast a nasty reflective glow under my chin and are definitely to be avoided as being either too light or too bright and draining all my natural colour.

Karen and Deborah work on the seasonal system of colours, without being slaves to it, and quickly establish that, with my pale skin and dark hair and

eyebrows, I'm a classic winter with bright, cool and deep characteristics, which means creating contrasts rather than softly blending.

Karen starts to apply my make up, first of all tactfully pointing out that I've been wearing the wrong shade of foundation and have been trying to warm up my naturally winter-pale skin with a honey-beige base.

"Foundation shouldn't change the colour of your skin, it's just about evening out skin tones," she tells me, swapping to a tinted moisturiser with a cool rose base. "We don't profess to be make-up artists, we're just demonstrating the colours and how they can work for you."

You can reflect your scale in everything from your choice of fabric to your jewellery

A light translucent powder, silver steel eyeshadow, black mascara and a grey eye pencil and we're almost there, with a quite dramatic burgundy lipstick completing the look. With my hair shaken out of its band, we can get down to the serious business of creating a personal colour swatch wallet filled with all my favourite winter shades.

The swatches are duly held up again and Deborah uses a star system to reveal my 'Oscar carpet' looks, with double stars against some colours I would perhaps not have considered: these include a deep sapphire blue, icy green, fuschia, and a charcoal grey I fall in love with.

I'm also delighted to know that my favourite black, brilliant white and red get big ticks and that I am among only 30 per cent of the population who can really wear

LEFT TO RIGHT: Deborah Turner; Karen and Sarah discover the joys of charcoal; Karen MacPhee



Left to right:
Colour swatches; (inset) Loving this shade; Sarah in signature black and white with her style gurus



black, but will definitely bear in mind some of the icy neutrals in my range that are a good alternative to white.

The guidelines also apply to jewellery, and Karen holds up a gold and a silver bangle against my face and one of my colour swatches: the cool silver immediately works, while the warm gold just looks plain wrong.

That's the colour consultation done, now it's time to work through the five steps of the style analysis: personality, proportions, body lines, scale and face shape. "We don't want to clone people, it's all about being individual and getting to know what you need to wear, in terms of your job and lifestyle, and also what you like to wear," explains Karen, as we discuss the different demands of my current wardrobe. We ascertain my dominant style preference is "timeless, elegant and classic," so let's hope I can live up to it.

Next up is to determine my body type and proportions, which Deborah does by tying a ribbon around my natural waistline, then using another ribbon to measure how long my legs are.

Tape measures are avoided: "We use ribbon because we don't need to give out numbers, it's all about proportion," explains Deborah.

We establish that my top body and waist are long and my shoulders broad, but that my legs are proportionately shorter - so we need to elongate them by creating vertical lines, adding heels and avoiding any horizontal lines. No, not hooped trousers - cropped pants and shoes with ankle straps would both shorten my legs.

Now I need to know about my body lines so that I can dress to reflect them. Since I am angular on my top and bottom halves, I should wear stiffer, straighter fabrics (a shirt rather than a blouse, say) boxy or semi-fitted cuts, and finishes that are geometric rather than curved.

Face shape is also important, and my overall impact is assessed as angular and the shape as oblong, with strong features, which goes with my angular body shape. I need to maintain that balance and ideally, I should have an angular cut, but as my

hair is naturally wavy I get away with my choppy curls and a soft but straightish fringe.

Finally, it's all about scale, which means frame and height rather than weight, and the girls line up with me in the middle to get a better look. While six-footer Karen is large to medium and Deborah is small to medium, I've got height and, apparently, a body frame that's quite small (I love these girls!), which means I'm a true medium.

"You can reflect your scale in everything from your choice of fabric to your jewellery, buttons, fastenings, handbags, pockets and shoes," says Deborah. "You can't put tiny polka dots on a big girl, for instance, it'll just make her look bigger - if she's big, put her in big spots."

It's been a fantastic morning and while I have been encouraged about the colours I love to wear already, I've also picked up some excellent advice. I make a mental note to look out for bigger-scale, more contoured jewellery, geometric patterns, square buttons and pockets (maybe on a suit in that fab charcoal grey), to change my foundation - and to ditch the floaty summer skirts and dresses in favour of A-line, pencil or (top tip) a shirt dress.

So what's the best bit for the girls? "For me, it's really rewarding when people are a bit lost and say they only ever wear three colours and then you see them open up to the world of colour," beams Karen. "We've had customers describe it as a life-changing experience, and that's lovely."

WIN

Hamlyn Nash is offering one lucky reader a chance to win exclusive expert advice on how to look and feel fabulous for the rest of your life. The winner will receive a joint colour and style consultation, including a personalised colour swatch wallet and handbag-sized style file, your indispensable shopping tools! Just answer the following question and send it in on a postcard to: the editor, *Kent Life*, 25a Pudding Lane, Maidstone ME14 1PA or by email to: editor@kent-life.co.uk

Q: What month did Hamlyn Nash first launch?

No multiple entries please and only one entry per household will be considered. Closing date: 30 March

