

**FASHION DIARY**

Guy Trebay



Christopher Smith for The New York Times

**ASK STARSKY AND COX** The authors of "Sextrology" are spending Fashion Week giving astrology readings in the window of a Marc Jacobs store.

## The Next Great Look Is Written in the Stars

You know the prospects for the coming fashion season are dicey when the body-mind-spirit people seem to be calling the shots. Reliance on psychics, soothsayers, palmists and astrologers is nothing new in fashion, of course, a business with a tradition of giving wide latitude to what constitutes sound business practice.

Designers from Dior on have used the occult to tap into inspiration, to market consciousness and the past. Dior maintained a virtual psychic hot line to his adored late mother. At one point in Yves Saint Laurent's career he was an astrology paralytic, unable to move without consulting his stellar adviser.

Even by Day 1 of the twice yearly sideshow in Bryant Park a certain overall tentativeness had begun to assert itself, a kind of style wobble suggesting that no one was quite sure which way the season might go. With the exception of Francisco Costa's showing at Calvin Klein last season, a critical if not yet a proven commercial success, New York has been left aching for a breakout.

Cox (Capricorn), the book's other author, during a Boston University junior year abroad program in Grenoble, France, in 1983. Back then they were headed for careers in French and economics and were still known as Lynne Corbett and William Leone.

Now, several career incarnations later (Mr. Cox has worked as an actor and journalist and Ms. Starsky as a fashion director for labels like Dries van Noten), they have rejiggered themselves, invented modish pseudonyms and dress in vintage Azzedine Alaïa (hers) and gold boots from the French cobbler Pierre Hardy (his) to promote their unexpected best seller (100,000 copies to date, in eight languages) ceaselessly, although often in stores not known for stocking books.

"We're the bible du jour at Colette," Mr. Cox said, referring to the Right Bank shop that practically outdraws the Louvre. Both Sarah and Colette Lerfel, the mother and daughter owners of Colette, keep "Sextrology" by their beds, Mr. Cox asserted.

The wunderkinder of recent note continue to bat their eyelashes and ply their considerable charms. But as Jack McCullough of Proenza Schouler pointed out to me last fall in Paris, Vogue pages don't automatically equate with black ink in the ledger, and the commercial future of the talented pair of designers behind that label is hardly secure.

This may help explain the sudden rush to consult fortunetellers, people like the psychic Justine Kenzer, who has taken her prognostications to The Daily, a fashion-focused giveaway distributed in the tents. As Ms. Kenzer sees it, Donna Karan is in for the career moment she's been waiting for all of her lives, plural intentional.

Ms. Kenzer ([www.psychicgirl.com](http://www.psychicgirl.com)) also divines inspiration arriving for Michael Kors from faraway places (perhaps from Phuket, where he traditionally spends Christmas on the beach) and a banner show season for Diane von Furstenberg, who will need one to erase the memory of last year's debacle at her Greenwich Village studio, where a light bank tipped over and conked a bunch of fashion people on the head.

The designer Vivienne Tam was tapped by The Daily to deliver a Daily Zodiaction, her pronouncement on the portents to watch for in the Chinese Year of the Dog. (Trouble ahead for people born in the Year of the Dragon, Ms. Tam says. Good news coming for Year of the Monkey people, who — what do you know? — compose her entire design team.)

Similarly, a woman with the vaudevillian moniker of the Astounding Velma was recruited by The Daily to attest to a powerful career-line grooving Amy Sacco's palm (one can hardly call that interpretation a challenge); a sketchy grid of love lines in the palm of the model and heiress Lydia Hearst-Shaw; and a plump Mount of Venus on the designer Alice Temperley, which should keep her busy in the boudoir for quite a long time. Velma foresees a life span for Ms. Temperley of 100 years.

"People are hungry right now for meaning, for symbols and archetypes," explained Stella Starsky, an author of "Sextrology" (HarperCollins, 2004) a loopy tome of stargazing, Jungian theory, grab-bag post-modern interpretations of classical mythology and the kind of arcane cross-diagrams one can achieve easily now that a birth date plugged into a computer program instantly reveals what house Uranus was in at the moment of one's nativity.

Ms. Starsky (Libra) met Quinn

So do Marc Jacobs and his business partner, Robert Duffy, which helps explain why it is that the two authors will spend the rest of Fashion Week ensconced against a red velvet heart background in the window of Mr. Jacobs's Bleecker Street store, where anyone who wants to can walk in and get a reading from them.

It will probably be a fashion reading. "Something wrong has happened here," Mr. Cox said, referring to New York, where safety is now the fashion watchword and where people like a certain influential and inflexibly chic magazine editor whom Mr. Cox calls "cellblock lady" stand guard over ever-narrowing boundaries of taste. "On a physical and on a sociological level the culture is becoming fear-based," Mr. Cox said. "That includes fashion."

What Ms. Starsky referred to as "a sea of sameness" unquestionably describes how stylishness is constituted in this town. It can barely be remembered that there was a time when Edie Sedgwick was cutting her

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**Tentativeness in the tents opens the flaps to palmists, astrologers and soothsayers.**

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bleached hair with nail scissors and wore three pairs of fake eyelashes at once; when Viva, the gorgeously angular (and unstoppably garrulous) Factory muse, went around town in Indian cotton bedspreads and a mass of pre-Raphaelite hair; or when the poet Marianne Moore could be seen walking around the Village in a tricorne hat; or when the homeless soul Moondog, whose mournful image formed the core of "After Moondog," an underrated 1992 novel by Jane Shapiro, stood for decades outside the CBS building pining nobly in Viking cloak and a helmet with authentic horns.

"We're just sort of telling people to use astrology to embrace their archetypes," Mr. Cox said. "Use it as a window into your individualism. We want to deprogram people so they can lose the pretty pretty dresses and stop looking like terrified escapees from the pages of last month's Vogue."