

FALL FASHION ISSUE

Town & Country

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TORY?

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WHAT'S NEXT,
TORY?

On a weekend stopover between trips to Seoul and Machu Picchu, fashion designer, philanthropist and devoted mother **TORY BURCH** talks trends and the future with *William Norwich*.

With one of her best friends, Rupert, an English springer spaniel, in the Perry Guillot-designed garden of the house Tory Burch recently bought in the Hamptons. She wears a Tory Burch silk-jacquard Virginia dress (\$350) and multistrand shell necklace (price on request). Her own cuffs and Balenciaga shoes.



WN: It's been over two years since you were last on the cover of *Town & Country*, and much has happened. According to one figure I read, since it began in 2004, your business has grown 750 percent. Perhaps that is hyperbole, but regardless. You've embraced the Internet big-time, especially your own e-commerce Web site, Facebook and Twitter; you've launched the Tory Burch Foundation to help microfinance women's businesses throughout the United States; and at last count, you have twenty-nine free-standing boutiques, including Japan and Korea, and there are some 450 department stores worldwide selling Tory Burch. What's next? The moon?

TB: Well, we're opening a boutique in Rome in late October and one in London in November. And I've just returned from a two-week trip to England, France and Italy, learning about our business overseas, what is working and what isn't, from the stores' and the customers' perspectives. From Europe we went to Seoul to open our first boutique there. I got back last night, and tomorrow, Sunday, I...

You rest?

Actually, I'm flying to Peru with my three sons. I'm so excited to be with them on vacation. It is a very active trip, which we love, white-water rafting, going up to Machu Picchu, things like that.

You've two nights home between trips, spending them at your new house in Southampton. But you've been so busy since closing on this property about six months ago, how many nights have you actually slept here?

Maybe ten? We're still moving furniture in, and we haven't even begun to decorate. I'm looking forward to getting the house ready so my family can come here on weekends this fall and winter.

What else is next for you this fall?

Having our New York Fashion Week presentation during its inaugural season at Lincoln Center is very exciting. And Fashion's Night Out on September 10 will

be fantastic. We're doing a barbecue on the street outside our boutique in the Meatpacking District. DJ Cassidy is spinning, and Shake Shack is catering. Then next month to Rome. Daniel Romualdez, who designs our stores, took as his inspiration a wonderful sculpture by Donald Judd. For Christmas probably I will take my boys somewhere in Asia.

You love to travel?

I do. But I'm not the best flier. If I were, I'd travel more than I do.

This bumptious economy certainly has been tricky for the fashion world. How has it affected Tory Burch?

It is still a tough time for everyone, and we're not excluded. We try to be very strategic—what we need to do now versus what we don't have to do right now. We've always been pretty lean, though.

Has concern for the economy influenced your style and design?

In general, there is a more minimal point of view, a whole utilitarian trend that works for us, but not too minimal because I still love pattern and color.

Do you find that in terms of how your friends live now, there is also a paring down, a slowing down?

I think that has been going on for a while.

Picture it: a message pops up on your Facebook page from one of your 50,000-plus friends. "Dear Tory, What trends should I wear this fall?" Your answer?

One thing I always talk to women about, and what I've learned from all the "don'ts" I've had on my body, is to figure out what works on your body regardless of trends. As you grow in age, keep it somewhat simple, but also be a little experimental, and take that risk you might be debating, and learn from it.

Is utilitarian chic what inspired your fall collection?

The idea was a girl working in a gallery, experimenting with utilitarian glamour. A pretty work boot on a heel, and mixing this shoe with a skirt of feathers and a leather jacket, and some monochromatic

dressing as well... tomboy chic, you might call it. I was thinking of a younger woman—not necessarily chronological age but an attitude.

What are some of your product categories, new or on the immediate horizon?

Overall, what's next is moving toward a more global point of view, having a third of our business in the United States, a third in Asia and another third in Europe. Very strategically, and very carefully, we're growing our handbag business, costume jewelry, footwear, more types of ready-to-wear clothing, little girls' clothing, eyewear, swimwear and jeans. And, of course, our Internet site has become very important for us.

Is it selling lots of clothes, or is it more a fan site? There is a lot of interesting editorial content.

It's been e-commerce from the beginning. We look at our Web site not just as a store, but our biggest store.

Tory Burch Denim.... Knowing the sort of perfectionist you are, I imagine you agonized over this collection?

Denim is a hard business. You have to understand it and realize there are companies devoted exclusively to denim and people who love these brands. So we wanted to be careful. We're beginning with printed denim, different washes, different silhouettes. One thing I am proud of is our fit. Making a woman feel slim is the key.

What everyone wants, but how?

The positioning of the pocket versus the amount of hardware, the washes, the stretch used, things like that.

Were you a jeans person or a skirt person growing up?

I was completely a tomboy. I wore jeans all the time. I was very into riding.

The last time you were on a horse?

Too long ago—at least two years.

Aren't you developing a perfume?

We're talking very seriously about it.

In the meanwhile, what do you wear?

Guerlain Vetiver.

Channeling Britt Ekland with a dash of Babe Paley, the designing woman wears a Tory Burch washed-silk Petula dress (\$550), printed merino Liesa cardigan (\$275) and Sequin Fringe earrings (\$150). Her own cuffs and Sevan ring.



Mixing different looks from different designers "is a good way of expressing yourself," says Burch. Oscar de la Renta embroidered silk-taffeta jacket (\$2,790). Tory Burch cotton-jersey Hedda top (\$125), denim leggings (\$185) and nylon-and-leather Ty boots (\$425). Her own necklaces and ring. For shopping information, see page 188.

Hair by Jessica Gillin, using T3 products. Makeup by Berta Camal for Jed Root.



You never hesitate to wear designer clothing other than your own. Does this surprise people?

Yes, some people think I should be in head-to-toe Tory Burch, but mixing it up with other designers or vintage or different price points is a good way of being creative and expressing yourself. **Would you say that also describes your social life and how you live now? The message is the mix?**

Very much so.

This certainly seemed plenty evident when, not long ago, you gave a fiftieth birthday party for your beau, Lyor Cohen, the music-industry genius. Look in one direction and there were Beyoncé and Jay-Z. Turn around and say hello to Gigi and Averell Mortimer. That's when people started describing you as the ultimate modern social swan, Babe Paley on her way to a rock concert, or the new Mica Ertegun.

I've never heard any of that. If it really was ever said, then I am very complimented. But I think that there is the perception and then the reality. I'm more interested in sports and my family and being down-to-earth than being that couture person.

Tell me about the Tory Burch Foundation, launched in 2008.

We've partnered with Accion USA, one of the nation's leading microfinance providers, and we're focusing on providing economic opportunities for women and their families in the United States. Essentially, what happened is that I found out that it was easier for a woman in most developing countries to get a microloan than it was in the United States, and that was the start of the foundation.

Among the ways you are funding the foundation is with products, such as beach towels and key rings, available at your stores and on your Web site, with a sunflower-logo pendant. What is the significance of this logo?

My father, Buddy Robinson, who died in

2007, designed the sunflower pendant for his mother, and then he handed it down to me. Sunflowers are symbolic in my family.

You've three young sons and three stepdaughters, to whom you are also devoted. Would you like your children to come into your business someday?

Absolutely. I'd love that.

Let me ask you some quick questions, the kind the London Times made famous in the style quizzes they used to do. What is luxury?

Time.

A typical day for you begins with?

Waking up at six and trying to get to the gym.... It doesn't always happen.

Last book read?

Danielle Ganek's *The Summer We Read Gatsby*.

Next book to read?

Jessica Kirwin Jenkins's *Encyclopedia of the Exquisite: An Anecdotal History of Elegant Delights*. It is an amazing, charming compendium of stylishly living well but not necessarily expensively.

You love music. Who is new on your iPod?

Melanie Fiona, just wonderful.

What is your idea of a perfect holiday?

With my children at my family's farm in Valley Forge.

Your favorite flower?

Orange poppies.

What do you wear at home?

Yoga clothes. Or the outfit I wore to work but without the heels.

How high is too high a heel?

There is none.

What favorite things are in your closet?

My sunflower pendant. A pair of Levis from high school. A vintage Saint Laurent smoking jacket.

It is a hot-date night. What do you wear?

A tight black dress and stilettos.

You're the fashion police for the day.

What do you ban?

Culottes.

How old is too old for a mini?

Thirty-five.

If you could live in any period of time for its fashion, what would it be?

The seventies.

What was your most recent fashion purchase?

A Céline handbag and a Dries Van Noten beaded necklace.

What do you admire most in a person?

Compassion.

Can you judge a book by its cover?

No.

What is your greatest extravagance?

Massage.

What is your guilty pleasure?

Butterscotch ice cream.

What are your bad habits?

Not getting enough sleep.

Do you sleep in the nude?

No. Well, it depends.

What is the best advice you were ever given?

To treat everyone the same and always be appreciative.

What are you least proud of?

I worry too much.

Whom would you like to be reincarnated as?

Edith Wharton.

What would you eat for your last supper?

A huge Italian feast.

If you could meet anyone from history, who would it be?

Matisse.

Yes or no to a nip and a tuck?

Yes, when needed.

What part of your body would you like to change?

I'd like to be six feet tall. Okay, maybe not six feet. Five eleven.

What would you like to achieve before you die?

I'd like to build an enormous charitable foundation.

How would you like to be remembered?

As funny and kind.

If dreams were real, what would you dream tonight?

I'd probably dream of my dad. ❖