

fashion

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ROSE IN BLOOM

Actress ROSE BYRNE on shopping, sales and strategies for avoiding the Marc Jacobs store.

By JOHANNA LENANDER

Rose Byrne needs to enter shopping rehab. “I have so many clothes—it’s ridiculous!” exclaims the 29-year-old Australian actress, who stars as Glenn Close’s exceptionally well-dressed nemesis on the award-winning TV series *Damages*. It’s a frigid winter day in Manhattan, and Byrne and I are on our way to Opening Ceremony, New York’s one-stop shop for the kind of cool indie designers she favours. Like her lawyer character Ellen, Byrne is whip smart and articulate, and her sense of style reflects her fashion savviness. No frilly minis and oversized sunglasses for her—instead you’re likely to see her in clean-lined but subtly conceptual clothes, such as the simple and slightly architectural »

*Photographed by KEVIN O'BRIEN.
Styled by TAMMY ECKENSWILLER.*

Calvin Klein gowns she favours for the red carpet. (She's also Francisco Costa's actress muse du jour and was his date for the CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund awards.)

Being a gorgeous and talented starlet may seem like a fantasy existence, but Byrne seems intent on keeping it real. She almost manages to convince me that her life is pretty ordinary—she claims she doesn't go to cocktail parties much, plus she's facing a real-world problem that most of us can relate to: She's trying to downsize her sartorial spending this year. "I only use about 30 per cent of my clothes!" she laments. So our shopping trip ends up being a very sensible exercise. Welcome to Rose Byrne's guide to less-is-more shopping:

Run, don't walk! Since New York has a spotty public transportation system, its inhabitants spend a lot of time on foot. "Since I moved to N.Y.C., I have never shopped so much in my life. I think it's because I'm walking around more and passing shops that are really nice," Byrne reflects. "I live near the Marc Jacobs store, which is deadly, and I try to avoid it but occasionally I'll get sucked in." She now tries to walk past it briskly, which is also good exercise.

Unplug your computer. So what do actresses do when they have a slow hour at work? Same thing you do: They look up their favourite online stores. "In between takes, I'll start trawling through the internet," confesses Byrne. "It's dreadful! And it's only gotten worse since Topshop went online. That's my staple; I have Topshop clothes that I've worn for 10 years." Another temptation is the online luxury retailer net-a-porter.com, which Byrne laments is "really expensive." Luckily, she only has one more week before filming of the second season of *Damages* wraps, which means a lot less downtime in her trailer.

Know your style. As we walk around Opening Ceremony, Byrne patiently goes through every rack while squealing "Mmm!" and "Cute!" at whimsical Tsumori Chisato dresses and rubber shoes by Vivienne Westwood in collaboration with Melissa. But it's the sleeker garments with interesting details, such as a fine-spun black sweater with white dress-shirt sleeves from Hiromi Tsuyoshi, that really attract her. "I've been wearing a lot of black lately, black turtlenecks and black fitted dresses. You can't go wrong with that," she says wisely.

Wait for the sales. "I love Chloé, but it's really expensive," says Byrne. However, she will splurge if there's a sale. Case in point: the gorgeous wedge shoes with lots of strappy buckles that she's wearing. "I bought them on sale at Barneys two years ago. They were reduced from \$600 to \$200," she recalls. "Finding bargains definitely helps me justify my purchases." In fact, she avoids things that are seriously pricey. She decides to try on a black, short-sleeved shift dress with broken glass beading by Marios Schwab, but insists that the 50-per-cent price reduction is the reason she picked it up off the rack. "I would never look at it for \$3,000 [the original price]," she says.

Try it on, then: Walk. Away. Byrne picks out two items to try on; the aforementioned Marios Schwab dress and a sequined top with cape detail by Kate Moss for Topshop. The dress has a slightly awkward cut and is passed over. The top, however, she's clearly smitten with. "I think it's so pretty—I'm just worried I won't wear it," she frets. Instead of making a rash decision, she decides to mull it over. "If I really want something, I'll think about it for the rest of the day and then I'll come back later."

Beg for freebies (this may not apply to non-starlets). Byrne is very involved in the wardrobe choices for her *Damages* character. "We're in a real dialogue. If I don't like something, I'll tell them straight away," she says, adding that her character's wardrobe—which looks better suited for the Condé Nast building than a law office—is a fashion inspiration in real life. "This season, she has a real armour about her. She wears beautiful Bottega Veneta, Narciso Rodriguez and Givenchy dresses, she's very sophisticated and all about not being vulnerable, and I love that," she says. It's not surprising then that Byrne works hard on the wardrobe people to give her the costumes. "I beg them, and they say 'no.' And then I beg some more, and they say 'no.' And then I beg some more, and they say 'yes,'" she says, laughing.

If all else fails, be generous. If, in spite of all your attempted restraint, you still end up with superfluous clothing, there's a great way to make it useful again. "I usually give things away to my girlfriends or people at work," says Byrne. "All my friends have my hand-me-downs, so when I see them, they're usually wearing something of mine." She even posts garments to her friends in London and Australia. "It's the least I can do. Everyone's so broke, and it's always nice getting a little package in the mail," she says. Sounds like the ultimate less-is-more solution. □

Season two of Damages airs Sundays on Showcase at 10 p.m. ET/PT.

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