

Basics, but never boring

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You know how fashion experts always say that every woman needs only "10 easy pieces" in her wardrobe? The crisp white shirt, the perfectly tailored blazer, the great black pants, blah, blah, blah? Not that that advice isn't perfectly legitimate, it's just that when we're shopping, it's not the black pants and white shirts that grab the eye now, is it?

Somehow, though, designer Charles Nolan continues to perfectly bridge that line between the classic and the eye-catching, with beautifully tailored separates that flatter a woman's body - women of all ages and shapes. His fabrics are generally sumptuous, and they're what sets him apart from the usual glut of monotony that makes up most mid-tier womenswear.

For fall '08, Nolan was inspired by the costumes he's making for a production by the American Ballet Theater, saying "It's all about moving forward mindful of the past," in his show notes. There was a certain Edwardian charm to much of the collection, but only in the intricate construction of bodices, seams and tiny puff-shouldered jackets - do not forget that these are modern clothes for modern women.

There may be flashier clothes, but it's doubtful there are more wearable, flattering clothes with a touch of artsy playfulness. And that's what 10 easy pieces should be all about.



Another great thing about Charles Nolan? He always recruits a handful of "real" women to walk with the models in his shows, proving that his clothes are for all women - including the tiniest of us, such as his darling niece, Mari."