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Virginia Postrel

Photo Credit: Courtesy Of The Author

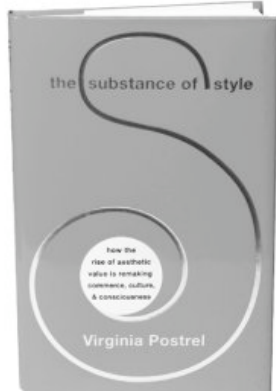


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## Style's Postrel Girl

By Alesandra Dubin

NEW YORK — “Some people would be appalled by the choices I make,” says financial reporter Virginia Postrel, whose latest book, “The Substance of Style,” in stores Sept. 5, celebrates the abundance of aesthetic choices in today’s marketplace. For instance, this self-described Giorgio Armani freak opted to buy a cheap car so she could spend the extra \$5,000 on her wardrobe. “I really like clothes, and I buy the ones that are probably too expensive and too aesthetic for what my lifestyle requires,” admits the 43-year-old. But according to her tome, appreciation of design and style is not only instinctual, it fulfills a deep human need.

Form matters as much as function in today’s “age of look and feel,” she argues. Great design isn’t just an excuse to splurge at a shoe sale or a way for iMac’s advertisers to separate you from your money. It’s essential for the creativity and growth of society.

“You write a book like this and you find yourself becoming obsessed,” says Postrel. “You spend all day writing about aesthetics, and then all you want to do is go out and look at great clothes or hire an expensive designer.”

Postrel’s controversial social theories have earned her an array of important enemies, including Pat Buchanan, whom she fingered as standing in the way of social and economic progress in her last book. Despite such foes, she has no intention of backing down.

As a woman, Postrel is a rarity in the field of financial journalism. The self-proclaimed “nerd” and Princeton graduate in English has held her own among her predominantly male peers, writing extensive articles for Inc., Forbes and the Wall Street Journal, among others. She served as an editor of Reason — a politics, news and ideas magazine with a 90 percent male readership — for more than a decade and writes a monthly economics column for the New York Times.

If anything, Postrel sees her role as a bridge between typically male and female schools of thought, bringing both parties to the table for a more compelling discussion. With a chuckle, she says, “The most popular editorial I ever wrote was about how you can understand the whole economy by looking at nail salons.”