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# Payton Bridewell: The Window Shopper

## Q+A WITH FAYETTEVILLE FASHION BLOGGER

The eloquently spoken, strikingly beautiful and dressed-to-not-impress Payton Bridewell caught my fashion-loving attention since our first meeting. When I discovered she had a fashion blog, my mind began to illustrate all of the amazing outfits she created. Surprisingly enough, her blog *The Window Shopper* ([thewindowshopper.org](http://thewindowshopper.org)) didn't start as a fashion blog at all. She said it started as a "hodgepodge of a journal, an inspiration board and a place to pull from if I needed a sample of my writing." But when planning her wedding in 2011, she simply started taking photos of her outfits in her office's bathroom and posting them to her blog. The response was overwhelmingly positive and so continued the upload of noteworthy ensembles. The exceptionally dressed woman shared tips on expressing one's inner fashionista, and what her husband thinks of her unique creations.



**CitiScapes Magazine:** Has your love of fashion been a lifetime relationship or did it come with age and awareness?

**Payton Bridewell:** I've always been into clothes/shoes/jewels/makeup, but my sense of fashion has definitely developed in the last few years. Dressing up or playing dress-up was a priority for me early on. My grandma, who was a gifted seamstress, would come up with enchanting disguises for me: Little Red's hooded cape, a miniature wedding dress, etc. I insisted on wearing dresses until I was about 5, partly because pants felt restrictive but also because dresses were just prettier. When I was younger my mom was a news anchor, and I loved watching her get ready so I got the impression that you sort of "got beautiful" before you started your day or work. A turning point in my attitude toward my aesthetic happened at age 16. I found a \$15 vintage, Spanish-style dress to wear to prom. I was thrilled, but my friends were slightly horrified and genuinely concerned that I would get stares and ridicule if I wore it. Their reaction surprised me, but I decided to wear the dress anyway. I got a few stares...but in a very good way! Since then, I've continued to dress for myself despite the risk.

**CM:** Describe a day of shopping with you. Where do you go and what do you shop for?

**PB:** I never really plan a day of shopping, but am constantly popping into places like Cheap Thrills, Goodwill, Potter's House Thrift, Grey Dog Vintage Boutique, etc. Recently I've been on the lookout for neck scarves, brooches, round sunglasses and printed pants. But I'll usually see something fun and try to ask myself if I can live without it before I buy. I'm not hard to convince. I'm always on the lookout for a great dress, a solid piece of luggage or a clutch. I really try to shop only local; for example, when I look for jewelry, I always check in Mae's Heirlooms. I appreciate the trends in the boutiques, but I am a treasure hunter.

**CM:** What are some of your most amazing finds?

**PB:** I have gobs of what I consider amazing finds, but most notably vintage reptile purses, a rabbit fur bomber jacket, a vintage Halston blouse with the tags still attached, a polka dot Christian Lacroix dress, a large gold lightning bolt pin, a tailored pinstripe gray suit for my husband (that happened to fit him perfectly) and an immense number of hats. Not too long ago I stopped in one of my favorite thrift stores and picked up a leather bucket bag for \$4. When I got home, I looked more closely...it's Chanel.





**CM:** Since you're a person who bravely experiments with fashion, what advice do you have for people who are looking to step outside their own fashion comfort zone?

**PB:** Thank you! I occasionally get "complisults." A perfect example is, "Only you could pull that off." But mostly people just don't think they can wear anything they want and are amazed that I do. A gentleman once told me I had mastered the art of calculated flamboyance. I just never stopped playing dress-up, and expressing myself through experimenting with fashion makes me happy. I think some are wary of change because they worry what people will think. If that's the case, I recommend starting small. Try making a statement with accessories or shoes. Try one new thing and have fun with it. If experimenting with fashion is not your thing, that's ok too. If you're dying to try something, just go for it. What's the worst that could happen? You might get a few second looks but isn't that part of the fun?



**CM:** What does your husband think of your style?

**PB:** I would say he's graciously tolerant of my wardrobe/style/hobby, whatever it is. He will occasionally warn me about a particular accessory, but he almost always comes around. When dressing to go somewhere together I tell him that we should look like we're going to the same place. We don't have to match, but if he looks like he's about to tee off and I look like I'm attending a ball, something has gone awry. Either way, he's my best accessory. ■



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A close-up of a young girl with dark hair, smiling broadly. She is wearing a white tinsel headband. The background is blurred.

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