

In the closet with Hilary Devey

The Dragons' Den star likes to invest in vintage gems and designer classics

Words by Tricia Welch



“My mother said you can never overdress. It’s better to stand out and make a statement”

Hilary, 54, is an award-winning businesswoman, millionaire and founder of Pall-Ex, a freight distribution company. The latest member of the *Dragons' Den* panel, she is married to property developer Philip Childs. They have homes in London, Staffordshire, Morocco and Spain and two miniature terriers, Mixie and Dixie.

How do you describe your style? Flamboyant.

What colours, shapes and styles suit you best? I suit fitted clothes, but I also like bold brights and draped styles in black, white and gold.

Who is your style icon? I've never had one. I like to look like me.

Do you have a beauty secret? I use La Prairie moisturiser, and cleanse and tone before I go to bed.

How do you dress on “fat” days? I don't have them.

Is there anything about your body that you dislike? I don't like my legs – they're too thin. And I haven't got a bum.

How long does it take you to get ready in the morning? I can get ready in half an hour if I'm not going to meetings or doing a TV show.

Do you have a stylist? No. I prefer to dress myself.

Is there an “old favourite” that you turn to in a wardrobe crisis? Not really, I have so many clothes.

What is the oldest item in your wardrobe? A vintage Galliano suit and an 80s Chanel suit.

Do you clear out your wardrobe each season? Yes,

I give away lots.

Have you ever made a fashion faux pas? No.

My mother said you can never overdress but you can underdress.

It's better to stand out and make a statement.

What is the most crushing remark anyone has made about your clothes? Nothing about my fashion sense would crush me.

What is your most successful party outfit? It depends on the party and my mood at the time.

Do you own more day wear than evening wear? Half and half. I do a lot of evening functions so I need an extensive wardrobe.

How much of your wardrobe is black? About 20 per cent.

Do you have a favourite LBD? I can't pick just one – I have so many.

Do you own anything vintage? A Chanel belt and my Galliano suit. Both are exquisite and cost a small fortune.

What is your favourite designer? I love Matthew Williamson, Diane von Furstenberg, Versace and Alexander McQueen.

What is your favourite high-street shop? Reiss. Also Whistles and Zara.

What is the most expensive item in your wardrobe? An Alexander McQueen mink coat.

What is your best fashion bargain? A Primark jacket I wore over a McQueen dress for a presentation.

I was with Jonathan Ross who admired my jacket. I told him it was “Primani” but he misheard and said, “I knew it was Armani.”

Is your underwear frilly or sporty, matching or mismatched? Always lace and usually matching.

Do you wear silver or gold jewellery? Both.

Do you wear diamonds? Yes, but pearls are my passion. My favourite piece is a chocolate pearl necklace with a diamond pendant which once belonged to the Tsar of Russia.

Do you have a fashion address book secret? After Dark in London.

What article of clothing would you save from a burning house? My mother's jewellery. 

Dragons' Den is on BBC2 tonight at 9pm. See www.hilarydevey.com.



Facing page: Hilary looks the business in this thoroughly modern work outfit. "I'd never play safe in standard black and white – there has to be a twist." She bought this black jacket in Italy, while both the black and cream skirt and matching shoes are from Reiss. The cream lace top is from Morocco and the belt is Versace

This page, clockwise from top left: A fan of fitted styles, Hilary has plenty of waist-cinching belts. The leather Versace one is a favourite. The snakeskin bow design is Alexander McQueen and she found the triple-buckle black and gold belt in a New York boutique

Hilary has sensitive eyes so she needs plenty of pairs of protective sunglasses, which she wears throughout the year. These ones are by Chanel, Gucci, Bulgari, Fendi, Ferragamo and Alek Paul

The *Dragons' Den* star wears a white shirt with black lace panels by Stella McCartney. Her black tailored trousers are from Marks & Spencer and the belt is Dolce & Gabbana

"I'm always flamboyant, even at work," says Hilary. "I like gold interspersed with bolder brights." This multicoloured dress, from Alexander McQueen's latest collection, is perfectly suited to the entrepreneur's extravagant streak

Designer handbags are one of Hilary's passions. The white quilted one is by Chanel, the black and gold design is Versace, and the gold evening bag is by Dolce & Gabbana

Hilary is a self-confessed magpie when it comes to jewellery. These are some of her favourite dress rings, seen here with some glittering Swarovski necklaces

A selection of Hilary's favourite statement shoes, these striking designs are by Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen, Supertrash, Dsquared and Gianvito Rossi