

In the closet with

Frances O'Connor

The *Mr Selfridge* star opens her wardrobe – but her fashion budget is a closely guarded secret Words and styling by Tricia Welch

Frances, 46, plays Rose in ITV's *Mr Selfridge* and has starred in films including *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Mansfield Park* and *AI Artificial Intelligence*. Frances lives in London and Los Angeles with her husband, actor Gerald Lepkowski, and their eight-year-old son Luka.

How would you describe your style? It varies, depending on my mood, from casual and preppy to classic but modern. I've got some great pieces I've collected over the years, and like to be creative and mix them with new things.

Which colours and shapes suit you best? My current favourites are blues, greys and jewel tones. Shape-wise I go for skinny jeans, flared skirts and fitted dresses.

What is your favourite fashion era? The 1920s *Brideshead Revisited* style. The fashion and fabrics were so elegant.

What will Rose be wearing this series? For the first series she wore a lot of white and pastels, but this time she is a more confident person and her wardrobe reflects that, with more colour. It's still very elegant and understated, but the shapes are softer

and the hats are smaller, as fashion has moved on.

You are no stranger to a corset – is it as uncomfortable as it looks? You get used to wearing one and it helps ease you into character as it dictates your posture, making you more upright. But it's always a relief to take it off.

Is it true that you modelled Rose on Hillary Clinton? No, I was misquoted – their personalities couldn't be further apart. I said that women behind men of power are usually very interesting and help to make the man a success, and gave Hillary as an example. But she's a major politician and player in her own right, whereas Rose is still searching for her own identity.

Do you have a favourite among all the period costumes you've worn? The costumes for *Madame Bovary* were amazing, with massive skirts made out of silk taffeta, which makes the most amazing rustling sound when you move.

Who is your favourite designer?

For daytime, Diane von Furstenberg – her dresses are so good to wear. Other favourites are Isabel Marant and Collette Dinnigan.

Do you have a style icon?

Tilda Swinton – her choices are always so brave.

What is the best piece of fashion advice you have ever been given?

It was from Patricia Field, the costume designer for *Sex and the City*. She told me you should never try to squeeze yourself into a smaller size. It might make you feel better but it will look cheap if it's too tight.

What is your best beauty secret? Products help, but taking care of yourself – getting enough sleep, eating healthily and doing enough exercise – matters more.

Is there an old favourite that you turn to in a wardrobe crisis? My Diane von Furstenberg dresses. They are really comfortable and fit so well. I always feel confident when I'm wearing one of those.

How much do you spend on clothes each month? If I'm busy with work, very little. But when I've more time or I've got something to promote, I'll blow a lot more – say a couple of grand. Just don't tell my husband.

Frances wears a chic blue dress by Diane von Furstenberg and Gucci peep-toe heels

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