



WEARING WELL

Stories of the clothes we love
MY SILK SCARVES

by **MADÉVI DAILLY**



I'd never really given silk scarves a minute's thought until, aged just 18, I started working as a sales girl at Hermès. Suddenly they were everywhere: folded neatly around the soft brioche necks of the powdered dowagers who haunted the Faubourg Saint Honoré store where I worked, worn as belts by Jane Birkin wannabes, or holding back punk hairstyles on Japanese tourists.

It was the month before Christmas and Parisians of all stripes would line up 12 deep behind the well-worn wooden counter. I couldn't quite understand the fervour with which they pawed at the scarves, elbowing other customers and umm-ing and ah-ing at the rows of different designs on offer. After the worst of the stampede, I would scoop up a huge armful of the carrés (large squares of twill silk in kaleidoscopic designs) and carry them to a back room to be folded. It was a moment of calm in long, manic days. The scarves weighed nothing, a cloud of silk warps and wefts that smelled faintly of perfume, of windswept car rides down the winding roads of the



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Riviera, of cigarette smoke and the wet pavement under café terraces.

For years afterwards I kept the few scarves I'd bought in the staff sales. I had a mustard-coloured one called Pearls of Africa, featuring a circle of proud and imposing Maasai warriors.

I'd been taught how to fold it properly by my fellow shop girls: on the diagonal so the length formed attractive tips, rather than a blocky edge. If you were skilled, you could unfold the scarf to show off the swirls of pattern and colours, then fold it again in seconds to form belts, necklaces or head coverings – a magician's trick. I wore the Maasai to my first proper job interview, feeling grown-up and put together. Of course I was just play-acting, like a teenager sneaking something out of her mother's closet. When I went back to my studies I eventually sold the scarves on eBay. I had rent to pay, after all.

I'd never shell out for that orange box these days, though my head was turned by the painterly Furoshiki scarves in the recent Uniqlo x Marni collaboration. Instead, I've a growing collection of secondhand silk scarves, picked up from charity and vintage shops. I look for that tell-tale lure and rustle, and a plump, hand-finished roulotté edge that's the sign of good craftsmanship. Hand-washed and expertly folded, they look just as luxurious. Eighteen-year-old me would certainly approve. **S**