



Cinderella story

From stylist to street-style star, to designer of dream shoes, Ada Kokosar is living in a fashion fairy tale. Grace Cain enters her world

Photographer VICTORIA ADAMSON / Fashion Stylist CHLOE STEWART

Feet are the most famous fetish in the world," says Ada Kokosar, her low voice unfurling in an Italian-accented purr. I must confess, this isn't the answer I expected when (in all my innocence) I asked for her theory on why so many people are obsessed with shoes. "The shoe you choose reveals a lot about your psychology," she continues. If that's the case, what can we infer about the mind of someone who wears Kokosar's brand, Midnight 00? "They are romantic," she says. "For them, it's important to feel original, special."

'Original' is an apt descriptor for Midnight 00. The distinctive shoes engulf the foot in ruffles of satin, tulle and PVC, often candy coloured and finished with sparkling jewels. Imagine if Cinderella were an Instagram influencer on a night out at the court of Marie Antoinette: that's the essence of Midnight 00.

Kokosar describes her career as a stylist-turned-influencer-turned-designer as a fairy tale – a phrase she drops into everyday conversation more than most adults. "It's a fascinating story," she

murmurs. We'll start at the beginning... Once upon a time, a young Ada dreamed of studying psychology (which explains the Freudian views on footwear). When her mother encouraged her to pursue her creative talents instead, fashion felt like the natural choice. "I was always into clothes," says Kokosar (who grew up in a village just outside the sartorial epicentre, Milan). "My grandmother was a dressmaker, and she used to make tiny outfits for my Barbie dolls. I remember being captivated by the way she could turn the fabric around the mannequin." As a teenager, Kokosar spent her free time combing through local flea markets, searching for anything she could use in her pursuit of a signature style. "I didn't dress like my friends," she says. "I changed my look all the time. I went from being goth to punk to pretty to preppy."

Kokosar studied fashion at Milan's Istituto di Moda, working as a stylist for Italian MTV on the side and going on to consult for ad campaigns and style shoots for magazines such as Italian *Glamour* and Russian *Vogue*. But when she started out, she didn't anticipate that she would become better known for >



This page, Ada wears ZIMMERMANN dress £1,350; CHLOÉ earrings from a selection; MIDNIGHT 00 shoes from a selection; shoes (from top) MIDNIGHT 00 £830, £925, £935 and £725. Opposite page CHANEL top £3,935, trousers £5,235, necklace £1,790 and bracelet £1,035; MIDNIGHT 00 boots £795

“I work directly on the foot, like a tailor dressing a mannequin”

her wardrobe than her work. It was the dawn of the street-style era, and her messy blonde hair and sleek outfits soon became a familiar sight on best-dressed listicles.

Today, I have to quietly restrain my envy of Kokosar’s clothing collection. A quick scroll through her Instagram feed (which is peppered with snaps of her legs, outstretched and punctuated by the latest Midnight 00 creations) reveals an effortlessly chic and sometimes quirky aesthetic, finished with a hint of old-school dance-floor glam. “My style evolves constantly,” she tells me. “To me, style is the way you wake up, how you feel, how you want to present yourself; and on top of that, there’s an intuition.” I wonder if location has an effect – Kokosar has recently returned to Milan after a few years of living in New York. “Totally,” she nods. “New York is business-orientated and sexy, while Milan is conceptual and comfortable. Paris brings out the romantic in me. And London is a free spirit; people are very creative and always willing to explore new things.”

In recent years, Kokosar has amended her strategy for getting dressed in the morning. Whereas she used to base her outfits around a particular colour, she now builds every look from the feet up. “Shoes give you attitude,” she declares. Although she was always interested in footwear – she wrote her thesis on the psychological significance of shoes – Kokosar never seriously considered designing a pair until she was invited to create a capsule collection for Italian footwear brand Cesare Paciotti. Her approach to design was (and still is) informed by her experiences as a stylist. “I don’t sketch,” she explains, leaning forward and gift-wrapping my ankles in invisible paper. “I work directly on the foot, like a tailor dressing a mannequin. The intention is always to flatter the legs and feet.”

Today, the brand that Kokosar built on the back of that initial capsule collection feels like an extension of both her personal style and her life philosophy. “I suppose it all comes from the same source: me!” she laughs. She tells me that the name Midnight 00 is inspired by “all the different facets of the night”. First, of course, is the fairy-tale moment when the clock strikes 12 for Cinderella. “Second, the night is when we are most vulnerable, when we have access to a more dream-like world,” she says. “Finally, it is the time to go out, have fun and forget yourself.”

When Kokosar sets out to enjoy herself, her go-to outfit is “something shining, feminine and light”. Valentino would be her first choice for a red-carpet event; she talks about creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli with the reverence of a disciple. “I love what he does, because it’s not only about the clothes, it’s about the woman who wears them. He works in a profound way, pulling the entire history of Valentino into one amazing vision.” She also has a sentimental attachment to the house; one of the most special items in her wardrobe is a Valentino dress. “It was the first piece I spent a lot of money on, so I felt it belonged to me,” she says wistfully.



ADA'S STYLE TIPS

Stick to a monochrome palette
For an interesting look, play with different textures instead of going kaleidoscopic.

Own these three shoes:
A super-feminine mule, a heeled pump, and a moccasin for day-to-day life.

When you're on the road:
Pack lightweight, comfortable cashmere pieces that can be layered for day or night.

When you're on a dance floor:
It's important to feel confident, so always emphasise your best characteristics.

Don't take yourself too seriously!
Express yourself in what you wear. We all have so many dimensions – explore them.

Ada wears BALMAIN dress £3,355; CHLOÉ earrings £400 and ring from a selection; MIDNIGHT 00 shoes £725

Womenswear, First Floor; Harrods Shoe Heaven, Fifth Floor; and harrods.com

Hair and Make-up
SALINA THIND
Photographer's Assistant
RORY JAMES

Once the sun comes up, Kokosar gravitates towards an unfussy uniform. “I look for conceptual pieces with a focus on silhouette, and then I’ll mix and match according to how I feel. I love the simplicity of a brand like Lemaire.” For accessories she turns to Dior and Chanel, and she cites Bulgari as her favourite jeweller. “I have a lot of pieces from the Serpenti collection,” she says.

At this point, the conversation descends into an exchange whereby I subtly attempt to glean style advice, and Kokosar answers as though I’ve asked her how to breathe. “It’s easy to create an elevated look if you blend the right colours,” she says. “I’ve always been a fan of monochrome, but it can also be fun to play with similar tones.” How do you know which shades will look good together? “That’s why I’m telling

you to stick to the same colour!” she insists. “It means you can’t make mistakes. Play with textures instead.”

Despite her love for fashion, Kokosar argues that true luxury cannot be found in logos or this season’s must-haves. I’d normally dismiss such a statement as trite sentiment, but Kokosar manages to sell it with her free-spirited air of chic. “I saw a post on Instagram this morning; a photo of a five-star hotel, followed by a tent set beneath thousands of stars. Which is the luxury here? Five stars, or thousands? It’s all in the way you perceive the experience.” □