

The Schmooze Stories with a Yiddish Twist

A YIDDISH GUIDE TO FLAMBOYANT*
IRIS APFEL

*The Yiddish word for “flamboyant” is “oysgeputst.”
Some other terms:

- “shnit” - fashion
- “inlendish dizeyner” - interior designer
- “shnit bildl” - fashion icon
- “floy mark” - flea market
- WWID - What Would Iris [Apfel] Do
These initials were used on
theCoyeteur.com.

by
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Syosset, New York

IRIS APFEL is a 94-year-old American businesswoman, interior designer and fashion icon. She believes that “more is more and less is a BORE.”

According to Burt Schleier, “Iris Apfel is not your bubbie's bubbe...She mixed charity goods from flea markets with designer clothes to create looks that made her a fashion goddess.” (Note: The Yiddish word for “goddess” is “getin.”)

The documentary “Iris” pairs the late filmmaker, Albert Maysles,

with Iris Apfel. Apfel is the quick-witted, flamboyantly dressed style maven who has an outsized presence on the New York fashion scene for decades.

The documentary is now on DVD, Blu-Ray and Digital Download. Check it out!

Shown below is a Yiddish Guide to Iris Apfel:

Born: Aug. 29, 1921 in Astoria, New York. She's a "geriatric starlet."

Spouse: Carl Apfel (1948-2015)

"khinukh" (education): New York University

"tate-mame" (parents): Sadye Battel and Samuel Barrel. Sadye was Russian-born and owned a fashion boutique. Samuel owned a glass-and-mirror business. Both were Jewish.

"tsheyldlas" (childless)

Apfel said that she and her husband, Carl, traveled constantly, and it is for this reason, they did not have children. "I don't believe in a child having a nanny, so it wasn't what we were going to do, but also having children is like protocol. You're expected to. And I don't like to be pigeonholed." (quote)

"textil" (textile)

In 1950 Carl and Iris launched the textile firm "Old World Weavers" and ran it until they retired in 1992.

"arumforn" (travel)

The Apfel's traveled all over the world (di velt"). Iris began buying pieces of non-Western, artisanal clothes. She wore them to clients' high-society parties.

"ponim" (face)

Iris was the face of Australian brand blue illusion.

“Vays Hoyz” (White House)

Apfel worked with the wives of 9 presidents on the White House—from Truman to Clinton.

“alemen andersh” (everyone else)

“When you don’t dress like everyone else you don’t have to think like everyone else.” (quote)

“elter” (older)

“Getting older ain’t for sissies, I’ll tell you. It’s very funny. I have dear friends whose mother’s gone, but she was very funny.” (quote)

“blekhene heyzn” (jeans/work pants)

“I was probably th first woman to wear jeans.” (quote)

“grayz” (mistake)

“If you make a mistake in what you put together, the fashion police are not going to haul you into jail.” (quote)

“kneytsh aoyf pnim” (or punim) - wrinkle on face

“I don’t see anything so wrong with a wrinkle. It’s kind of a badge of courage.” (quote)

“inspiratsye” (inspiration)

“I don’t expect to find inspiration. It just sort of comes. Sometimes you step on a bug and you get inspired.” (quote)

“regn-mantl” (raincoat)

“To lead the good life in New York, the two most important things for a woman are a chauffeur and a fur-lined raincoat.” (quote)

“stil” (style)

“Fashion you can buy, but style you possess.” (quote)

“bakumen avek mit epes” (get away with anything)

“If your hair is done properly and you’re wearing good shoes, you can get away with anything.” (quote)

“veg mape” (road map)

“There’s no How-to road map to style. It’s about self-expression and, above all, attitude.” (quote)

“nesie” (trip)

“You have to try it. You only have one trip. You’ve got to remember that.” (quote)

“zikh” (myself)

“I don’t dress to be stared at. I dress for myself.” (quote)

“interesant” (interesting)

“If you’re not interested, you’re not interesting.” (quote)

“floy mark” (flea market)

“I’m a bargain hunter. Yesterday I bought four bags in a flea market and came back with change from \$50.” (quote)

“(oys) lernen zikh” (learn, to acquire knowledge)

“I don’t think you can learn style—I think it’s in your DNA. You have to work at it.” (quote)

“koyfn” (to buy)

“If you like something, buy it.” (quote)

“lipnshtift” (lipstick)

“My favorite shade of lipstick? Very, very, bright, bright, bright red.” (quote)

“alt” (old)

“A woman is as old as she looks, but a man’s never old until he

stops looking.” (Apfel’s grandfather—zaideh—gave her this advice)

“briln” (eyeglasses)

Apfel wears gigantic owlsh glasses.

“apparel” (wardrobe)

Apfel is known to have one of the best wardrobes of costume jewelry in the U. S.

“operatsye” (operation)

“di lend” means “the hip.”

Apfel tripped over the hem of an Oscar de la Renta dress at a fashion shoot in Paris. She subsequently had two hip operations.

“tetshnologi” (technology)

“People are so tied up in the worst part of technology these days. They live a life pressing buttons. They don’t use their imaginations.” (quote)

“profesor” (professor)

At age 90, in 2002, Apfel was a visiting professor at the Univ. of Texas at Austin.

What does MARJORIE WOLFE wish for Iris Apfel?

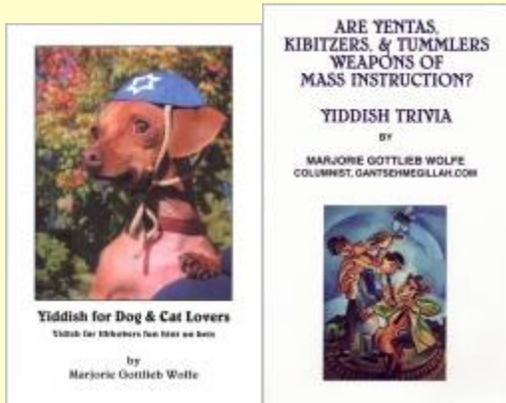
“Gezunt zolst du zayn!” (May you be healthy.) And,

“”Biz hundert un tsvantsik yor!”

(A hundred and twenty years.)

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**Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of
two books:**



**"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and
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