

YIDDISH GUIDE TO OSCAR DE LA RENTA

By



Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe

The late Joan Rivers wrote, “New York is the fashion center of America... if someone drops dead of a heart attack in Saks Fifth Avenue, the salespeople are trained to move the body out of the way so that it doesn’t impact the customer flow or purchase points.”

(“I Hate Everyone Starting With Me”)

The legendary designer, Oscar de la Renta, passed away in October of 2014. He was 82 years of age. For more than a half century, he dressed first ladies and ladies who lunch and just about every “aktrise” (actress) who ever walked the red carpet. Hillary Clinton said, “This man [Oscar de la Renta] has been working for more than 20 years to turn me into a fashion icon.”

He has dressed Barbara Walters, Nancy Kissinger, Mica Ertegun, Jennifer Lawrence, Audrey Hepburn, Nicole Kidman, and Jessica Parker. He has said, “Since Eve, there has never been a woman as exciting to dress as the professional woman.”

Oscar didn’t work only for the elites. In 1980, he redesigned the Boy Scout uniform.

Shown below is a Yiddish Guide to de la Renta--a man who never designed “opgekrocheneh schoireh”/”shlak vareh” (shoddy merchandise).

“tsutroy” (confidence)

“frayndlekhkayt” (kindness)

“The qualities I most admire in women are confidence and kindness.”

(Oscar de la Renta quote)

“royt” (red)

Nancy Reagan, who accepted her 1989 CFDA Lifetime Achievement Award wore a de la Renta. She was particularly fond of the designer’s

work in shades of red, which she called her “picker-upper.”

“kolor” (color)

“I like light, color, luminosity. I like things full of color and vibrant.”
quote

“parfum” (perfume)

Oscar’s global empire sold perfume, accessories, furniture and, above all, elegant clothing.

“umruik” (restless)

“I’m a very restless person. I’m always doing something. The creative process never stops.”
quote

“di velt” (the world)

“goyri” (destiny)

“We live in an era of globalization and the era of the woman. Never in the history of the world have women been more in control of their destiny.”
quote

“fraynd” (friend)

Anna Wintour--in a Vogue tribute--called de la Renta “Everything you could want in a friend to be.”

“zun” (son)

In 1984, Mr. de la Renta was moved by the story of an abandoned infant (“oyfele”) being cared for at the orphanage he supported in the Dominican Republic. He adopted the boy, Moises.

“tayer” (expensive)

“Back in the ‘60s when I started designing clothes, you could always mention eight or 10 ladies and say these are the icons...[But] today the most important consumer really is a professional woman--obviously in my case, because my clothes are expensive...”
quote

“foroys” (forward)

“The great thing about fashion is that it always looks forward.”

“zikh” (yourself)

“Fashion is about dressing according to what’s fashionable. Style is

more about being yourself.”

quote

“banket” (banquet)

Princess Diana wore a Oscar de la Renta creation to a Hungarian state banquet in 1990.

“amerikanish” (American)

When Jackie Kennedy was first lady, she consciously wore only American designers. (de la Renta was Paris-based when she began acquiring his clothes, so her aids would sew the labels of New York-based Oleg Cassini into de la Renta’s regal designs.)

“vaybleks” (feminine)

“There is no sound more feminine than a woman in a taffeta dress.”

quote

“bazukhn” (visit/to go to view)

Laura Bush loved de la Renta and would often make visits to his Seventh Avenue atelier to preview his stunning creations, such as the shimmery white gown worn to her husband’s inauguration celebration in 2005.

“internets” (internet)

“I am fascinated by developments on the Internet.”

quote

“zhurnal” (magazine)

Hillary Clinton appeared on the Dec. 1998 cover of Vogue magazine in an Oscar \$4,000 velvet (“samet” gown).

“khasene” (wedding)

Oscar de la Renta dressed Amal Clooney for the latest wedding of the century.

“bashafn” (to create)

“We’re dealing with sophisticated customers. What’s most important to these women is individuality. I have to create things she’ll want to wear, no matter who she is.”

quote

“glaykhgiltik” (casual)

“I don’t really know how to do casual clothes.”

quote

“oyfshteln” (to establish)

“If you want to establish an international presence you can’t do it from New York. You need the consecration of Paris.”

quote

“shane”/”sheyn” (beautiful)

“I am not interested in shock tactics. I just want to make beautiful clothes.”

quote

“kindhayt” (childhood)

“I was surrounded by sisters. My childhood was all women.”

“hut” (hat)

“I always design my own hats to complete my fashion thought...I like them slightly mad, like this huge poppy. Right now I left the bosom high on coats and dresses...I am using so many high curved belts.”

“ersht tokhter” (first daughter)

Mr. de la Renta designed first daughter, Jenna Bush’s wedding gown, as well as Laura Bush’s turquoise mother-of-the-bride.

“der skhar” (reward)

Oscar de la Renta touted Nancy Reagan as a “model-size” political wife who “knew what looked good on her and had a true sense of fashion. She rewarded him with many invitations to the White House.

“gut oder shlekht” (good or bad)

“Regardless of how good or bad a collection might be, it’s a letdown after the show is over. It’s done. Something you’ve worked on for months is just over.”

quote

“naket” (naked)

Oscar said, “...You have to be well naked before being well dressed.

“matsliakhdik” (successful)

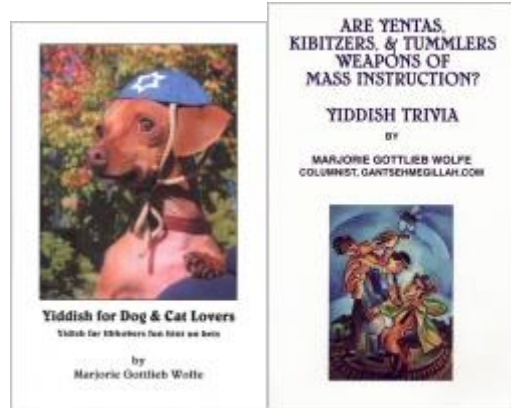
“My customers are successful working women.”

“vunderlekh” (marvelous)

Throughout his life, Oscar de la Renta emanated a joie de vivre that made him seem as if he had it all. “If life were to end now, I would have no regrets,” he said on his 40th birthday. I’ve lived every day to the fullest, and I’ve had a marvelous time. I’ve tried to be nice to people I care about and ignore the ones I don’t. I enjoy what I’ve done.”

Quote

Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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