



Shaldon Kopman with Thabisile Khumalo

### FLAIR PLAY: THABISILE KHUMALO AND SHALDON KOPMAN

Shaldon Kopman started his career as a freelance stylist in New York, working for celebrity stylist June Ambrose. This was followed by several years of fashion editing for magazines including *Elle*, *Y-Mag* and *Tribute*. “There was always a particular style and feel I was after. It gave me a bit of a reputation,” he says.

He’s now opened his own fashion consultancy, Naked Ape Style, which includes an elite tailoring business with a made-to-measure shirting division of which he’s particularly proud.

“My client base includes celebrities and non-celebrities – both men and women – who were constantly asking where they could access styles that weren’t readily available. So I set up the tailoring business to make certain garments for them, particularly exquisite shirts. People generally have a problem finding the right shirt and, if they do, it comes at an exorbitant price.”

Thabisile Khumalo, a brand strategy consultant, greatly appreciates Shaldon’s focus on shirts. “I’m the type of person who’ll buy a shirt to find happiness. Other people eat chocolate!” she laughs.

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They met four years ago and found an “instant rapport” which developed into a close friendship. Kopman’s been her stylist ever since.

“He helps me with a once-off shop every season. It’s great to get some guidance in choosing particular pieces and putting things together.” But Kopman’s most important assistance to Khumalo was persuading her to look beyond mundane beige, black and white suits.

“People in the corporate world need reminding that it’s okay to have a bit of flair and take your personality into the workplace,” she says. “Shaldon helps me take risks. He urges me to step out of my comfort zone a little and use interesting colours,” she explains. “You can’t hire a stylist to enhance your personality, but you can use one to enhance traits that might have been hidden. Once you have the confidence to get out of the box, it’s amazing what can emerge from your personality,” she says.

Kopman says a stylist is essential for anyone attempting to “get ahead” or seeking the confidence to make a fresh image start. “There’s a kind of stigma attached to having a stylist, but people should understand that you need a certain amount of vanity to exist. Truly loving yourself includes taking pride in your appearance.

“It puts a smile on my face to see other people feeling good by looking good.”

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