



WOMEN'S FASHION FALL 2004
Kate Winslet

Posterior Modern

TAKING THE GLUTEUS
TO THE MAXIMUS.
MARY TANNEN BULKS UP.

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HIS WOMAN is walking down the street ahead of me, ordinary looking, but as she passes, every male head swivels. I can almost see dotted lines streaming from popping eyes to bobbing cheeks. And then I think, Of course, buttocks are the new breasts. Every culture and every time has its template for the ideal female form. Here in the United States, after more than 50 years of breast fixation, the bottom has come into its own. Jennifer Lopez's generous seat may be driving the trend, or it may just embody, so to speak, the current ideal. It doesn't take a degree in anthropology to tie the new silhouette to the ascendance of African-American and Hispanic influence in entertainment (e.g., that hip-hop classic "Baby Got Back").

Tight jeans, long a favorite on the street, are going high end, as it were. Stretch denims from designers like Seven for All Mankind are cut mercilessly close and embellished with pockets and stitching to accentuate the afterdeck. So, too, the tight new skirts lovingly cup the curve.

Does this mean that women are at last maturing into greater acceptance of their bod-

In fashion, the buttocks are the new breasts. Myla lace panties with satin bow. Makeup by Regina Harris for Shu Uemura at L'Atelier NYC. Model: Yana R.

ies? Will that classic swivel and squint at the rear take its place in the Museum of Lost Gestures alongside the medieval pose of hands folded over the abdomen? In a word, no.

Gluteus Lopez comes easily only to the young and genetically favored. While the preferred breast, a large globular fat deposit carried high on an otherwise slender body, rarely occurs in nature, it is a snap to fake compared to the buttock of choice — a round, firm but supple muscle-and-fat combination carried high on an otherwise slender body. The breast, pliable and floating, is easily molded. The buttock is not.

The last time fashion favored this silhouette it gave us the bustle. This time the posterior is meant to be seen naked, or nearly, and unless you are willing to go for padded underpants, you will not be able to buy your seat off the rack.

In Los Angeles, Burr Diehl, a former Lotte Berk enthusiast, has been bottom feeding, so to speak. Her Bar Method workouts are so effective that the term “bar butt” is entering the local dialect. Comfort is not in the equation, or so I discover in a prone position, raising a leg straight up and back to the relentless count of Shawn McCormack, the Core Fusion coach at the Ex-hale spa on Madison Avenue. Core Fusion is a one-hour class devised by two former Lotte Berk instructors. As in the Lotte Berk method, emphasis is on alignment, core strength and precise targeting of muscles that shape.

After class, McCormack — whose own posterior is inspirational — explains that it is important to work the gluteus maximus to achieve roundness and height. The slightest turnout of leg shifts the load onto smaller, deep, side muscles that are easier to feel working but will take you only so far. Just as crucial are the equally excruciating stretches we do after. (Sitting with knee on ankle and ankle on knee and folding torso over this knot — need I say more?) “You have to find the middle path between tone and flexibility,” McCormack explains, relaxing cross-legged with the ease of a yogi. At \$30 a class, or 10 for \$235, building a pert posterior is a hefty investment. And yet it is very difficult to do these exercises on your own. Twice McCormack puts her hand on my upper back, where I am clenching harder than in my glutes. If I tried this at home, I could wind up a humpback.

anyone can have a small, round butt with indentations if they work at it,” says David Barton, the gym impresario, who employs more than 100 personal trainers to help clients attain the David Barton goal: “Look better naked.” With his bleached-blond tips and custom T-shirt that shows off his biceps and pecs, he may look a little singular lunching at the swank restaurant

Eleven Madison Park on Madison Avenue, but both chef and owner come over to check on how he is enjoying his salmon.

Barton has the beatific smile of a cat lapping cream, for he is making his fortune helping the sedentary look athletic. He pities runners he sees in the park. “Their butts are jiggling and sagging to their knees,” he says. “They are running on their hip flexors.” The problem is that we sit too much. The gluteals stretch and weaken. Hip flexors tighten and shorten; the lower back tightens; the waist loosens. “We have to relearn how to fire up those muscles,” Barton says. A personal trainer at his gym will show you how for \$65 to \$175 a session.

So much work! So much money! Why not go to a good surgeon who will mold a perfect posterior and be done with it? In 2003, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, we as a nation

spent more than \$8.5 million on surgically lifting buttocks, \$711 million on liposuction to remove fat and God knows how much on gluteal-augmentation procedures.

Gluteal implants “really began in South America, where they go for smaller breasts and bigger” posteriors, says Dr. Leroy Young, who practices in St. Louis and does about one augmentation a month. He predicts that it will become more popular as more surgeons perfect the technique. Right now there is so little training available that surgeons are operating by the seat of their pants, as it were. The implant is made from silicone elastomer. To minimize displacement and interior scarring, Young uses one that is textured. He inserts it on top of the muscle but under the layer of fibrous tissues that surrounds it so as not to irritate the sciatic nerve. Patients cannot sit or bend for two weeks after the procedure. The cost ranges from \$8,000 to \$12,000.

Some doctors won't perform gluteal implants because of the high rate of infection, and because these implants tend to move around and form scar tissue. For example, Dr. Michael Olding, the chief of plastic

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surgery at George Washington University, creates a high, round cheek by removing fat through liposuction from above and below and reinjecting it into the buttocks. Patients often have to return several times because not all of the fat takes.

Once you have reached the perfect shape, you can then proceed to tight jeans. Or so the logic goes. However, if you want to wag your bottom at the beach, you have to address the cellulite issue. While Rubens delighted in the play of light and shadow, modern aesthetics require a surface similar to that of plastic. What to do? First, throw away your underwear, says the bicoastal Dr. Lionel Bissoon. Noticing that patients who wear thongs or nothing have no dimpling, he has concluded that constriction from elastic causes this problem. Bissoon offers two forms of mesotherapy. The first is a surgical procedure of small incisions that release fibrous bands of tissue, costing \$2,500 to \$5,000. The other is a series of injections of homeopathic and traditional medications. There may be as many as 500 injections during a 10-to-15-minute session, at \$500 to \$750 a session.

But if you lack the faith, the nerve or that kind of cash, there is a one-hour “butt facial” at Spa Secret in Brooklyn: microdermabrasion to exfoliate, a massage with tightening gel and then a lifting mask containing collagen, ginseng and vitamin C swirled on like cake icing. It heats, cools and dries. Wash it off, and presto! Smoother, tighter, smaller. All for \$250.

Want coffee with your cream? Some of the newest anticellulite products have caffeine to temporarily eliminate water. Others have fragrances like grapefruit that promote fat-burning. (Don't forget to inhale.) There are those with forskolin, which helps to break down and shrink fat cells. Still others soften and hydrate; some strengthen. All require extra steps in daily grooming.

I plan to invest in the most expensive; that way I'll feel guilty if I don't stay the course. And until creams deliver the required high-gloss sheen, I will favor boy shorts instead of bikini bottoms. In the meantime, I'm taking up salsa dancing to learn how to shake that thing. ■