



*Advanced  
Style*

ARI SETH COHEN

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# **ADVANCED STYLE**

**By Ari Seth Cohen**

Introduction by Maira Kalman

Contribution by Dita Von Teese

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# Advanced Style

ARI SETH COHEN

FOREWORD BY MAIRA KALMAN  
INTERVIEW BY DITA VON TEESE

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## Introduction

**“I can’t imagine going without a hat. The only romantic thing left in life is a hat.”**

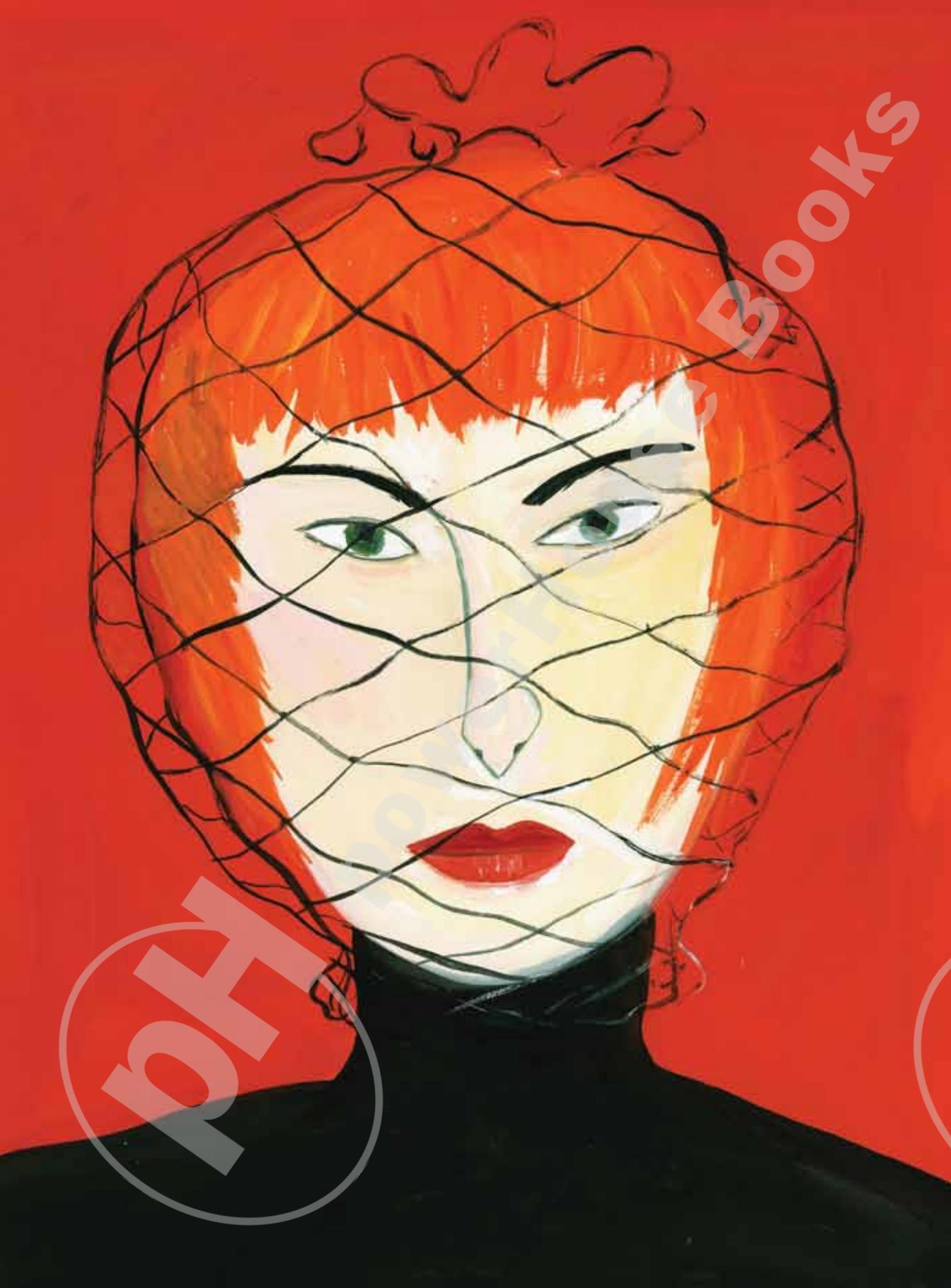
—Mimi Weddell

Ever since I can remember, I have been captivated by amazing older women. My grandma, Bluma, was my best friend. We would spend hours in each other’s company, watching classic films, taking trips to the library, and drawing cartoons. My tastes were largely shaped through excavations of her dresser drawers filled with dazzling vintage jewels and old photographs. I was struck by images of the elegant and glamorous past—a time when men and women wore hats and gloves and dressed up because it was the thing to do. My other grandmother, Nana Helen, embodied this manner of graceful dressing. She had an impeccable fashion sense and the confidence to match.

One of my first art projects as a child was making drawings of well-dressed grande dames; I filled more than one sketchbook with these colorful ladies. When I moved to New York as an adult, inspired by Grandma Bluma’s promise that “everything creative is happening there,” I saw my drawings come to life on the streets of this marvelous city. I found ladies and gentleman who still wear hats and gloves and who express a sense of style all their own. I was inspired to start a blog that would capture images of an oft-overlooked yet strikingly fashionable segment of society—one that would pay homage to my grandmothers’ style and spirit.

I have never considered “old” a bad word. To be old is to be experienced, wise, and advanced. The ladies I photograph challenge stereotypical views on age and aging. They are youthful in mind and spirit and express themselves through personal style and individual creativity. The soul of *Advanced Style* is not bound to age, or even to style, but rather to the celebration of life. The fashion these women display is merely a reflection of the care and thought they put into every aspect of their lives. These photos offer proof that the secret to remaining vital in our later years is to never stop being curious, never stop creating, and never stop having fun.

**Ari Seth Cohen**  
New York City, 2011



## About People Who are Older and How They Look

My piano teacher, Mrs. Danziger, well into her 80s, always wore an elegant dress, sheer stockings, and high heels. She had a braid wrapped around her head with a powder blue ribbon running through it. My mother, Sara Berman, always wore white. Sometimes a dark tie with a white coat, blouse, vest, and pants. She looked like a combination of Colette and Marlene Dietrich.

Albert Einstein sailed his boat wearing a ratty sweatshirt. Frumpy pants. His hair disheveled. He always looked incredible. Who else? Louise Bourgeois. Duke Ellington. Isak Dinesen. Picasso. Gandhi. Isadora Duncan. My neighbor Beth Levine, the shoe designer. She walked out of the elevator, at 92 years old in a pencil skirt and heels, into our lobby, the chicest person in town. So what is it about style. What makes someone beautiful, no matter what the age? No matter the wealth?

What makes you turn your head as you walk down the street and think, "There goes a great looking person"? It is easier to define when you are looking at someone young. But if someone is in their 70s or 80s or 90s, or 100s(!), it is more elusive. More challenging.

Ari Seth Cohen has done something very important. He has looked at our grand population and singled out the people that, in a way, are most invisible and have the most to offer.

We are lucky when any older person crosses our path. Our lives are enriched just by proximity. The wisdom. The spirit. The saying exactly what they think. The dispensing of advice. The courage. The humor. The crankiness. The kindness. Or the iconoclasm. All of these come from people who have lived a long life. And the fashion. Well that doesn't hurt. It might be some bobby pins in the hair and a pair of blue sneakers. Or a perfectly tailored tweed skirt and jacket. Or a splendid hat. Or none of the above. It does not need to be high fashion. But it is high humanity. So here are people that we should take note of and tip our hats to.

And we should tip our hats to Ari. Not only is he looking at what people LOOK like, he is also looking at their soul. And we are better for it.

**Maira Kalman**

The elegant and refined **Rose** believes, “If everyone is wearing it, then it’s not for me.” Over the past 100 years, she has developed a keen eye for fashion. For her, no outfit is complete without an eye-catching belt or elegant strand of beads. Rose’s words of wisdom should be requisite reading for anyone wondering how to live life to its utmost.





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## **Carol Markel & Richard Cramer**

are both artists whose celebratory spirit and love of color inhabit every aspect of their lives. Harmonious combinations of patterns and brilliant hues make this show-stopping duo a sight for sore eyes. For Richard and Carol, creativity is a priority—style is a vehicle for creative expression.









When I first saw **Ilona Royce Smithkin** and her amazing eyelashes, I realized immediately that I was in the presence of someone very special. Known primarily for her talent as an artist and more recently as a cabaret performer, Ilona's spirit and artistic nature shine through her wild and wonderful costumes. Whether magically transforming old scarves into beautiful dresses, or fashioning capes out of discarded umbrellas, Ilona constantly proves she is a true original.

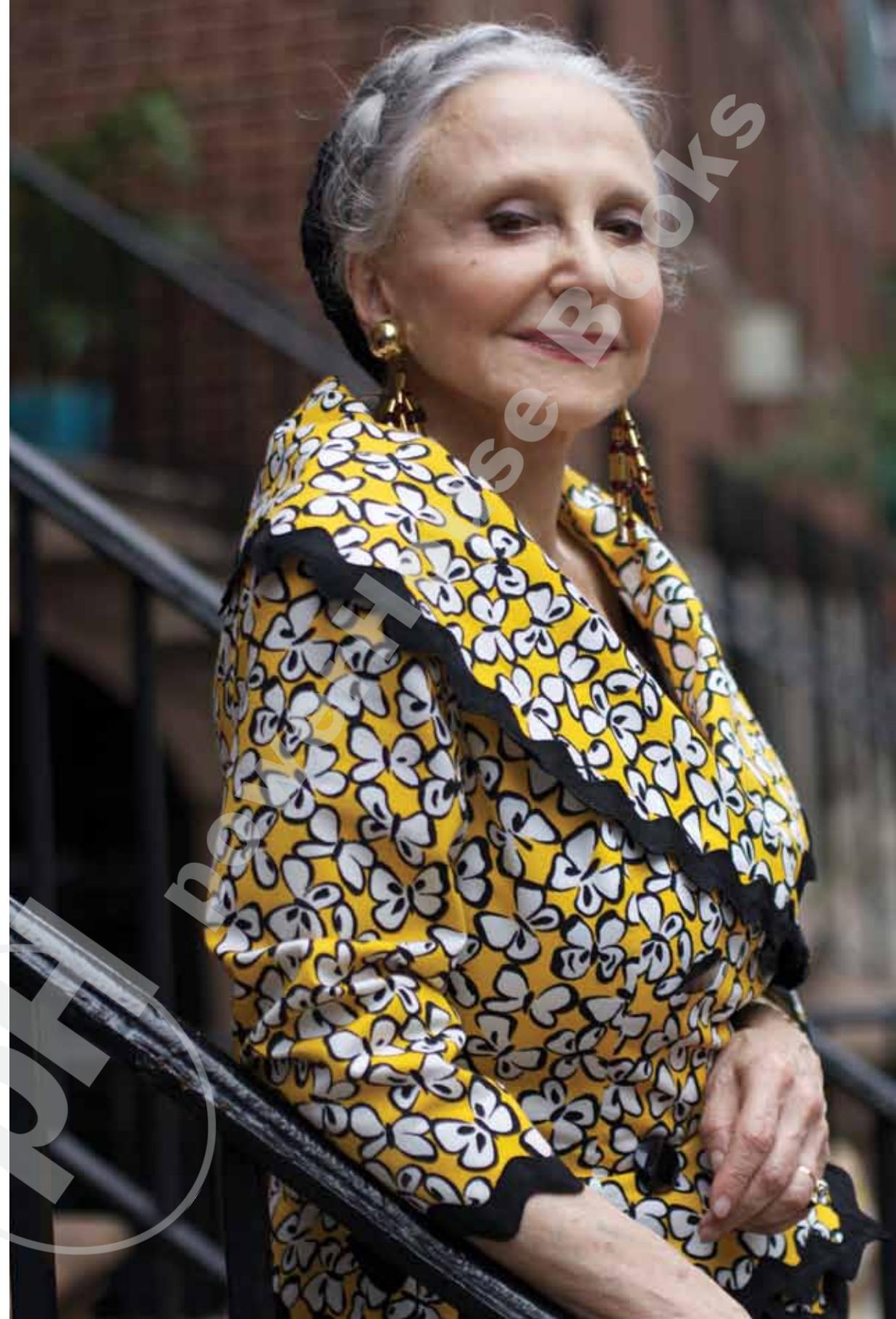


My first sighting of artist and writer **Beatrix Ost** in Central Park stopped me dead in my tracks. Her dark lipstick, elegant black hat, and hint of blue hair against her pale complexion made for a stunning combination. Beatrix believes that great style starts with good food. She scribbled the words “food and love is art enough” on her kitchen wall to remind herself that feeling good is the first step towards looking good.

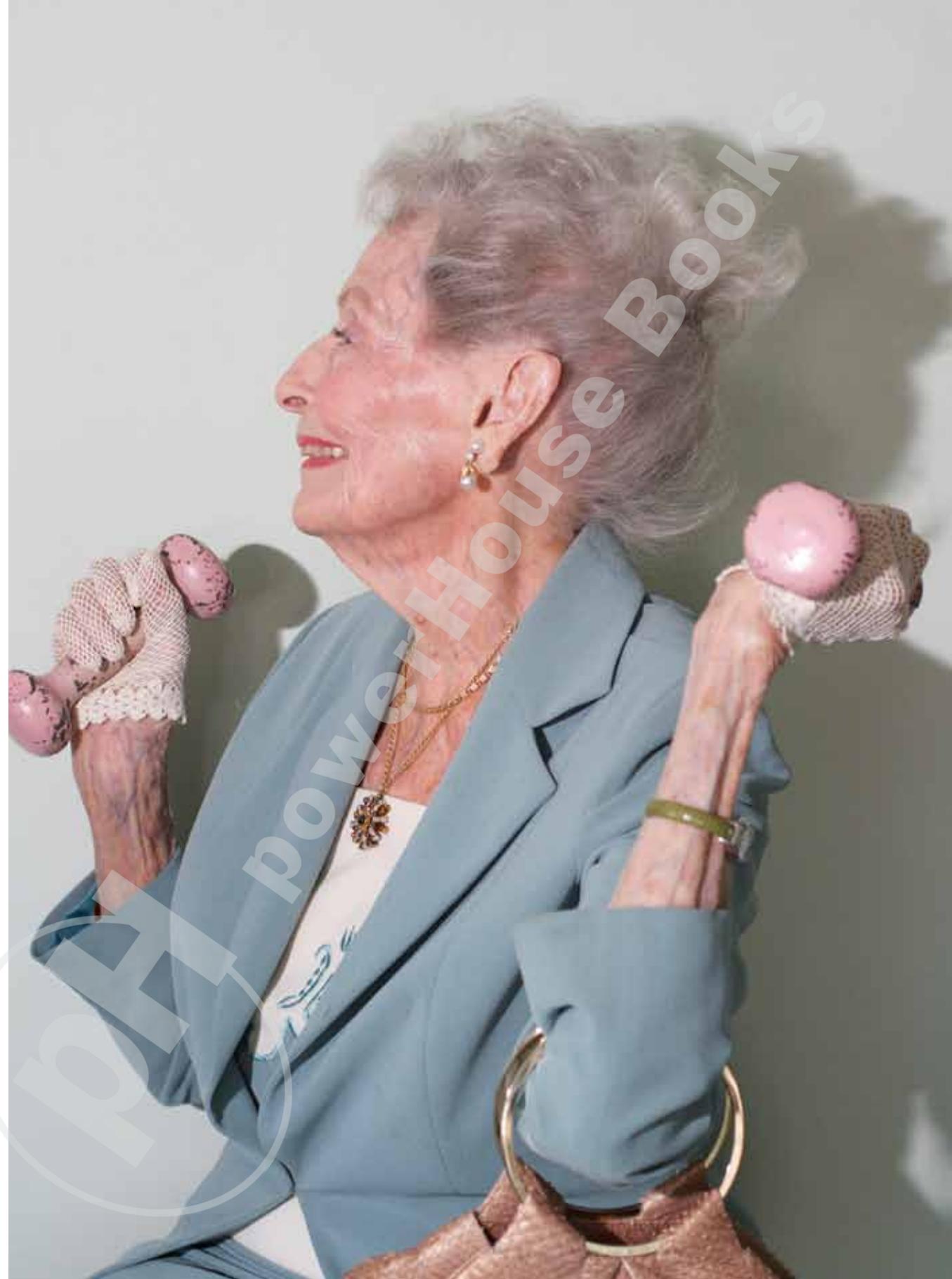




**“Style is about the right jewelry, the right know-how, the right neckline, and above all, the right attitude.”**



**Ruth** isn't your typical 100-year-old. Her weekly regimen of Pilates, weight lifting, and stretching keeps her in tip-top shape. She never leaves the house without being perfectly dressed because "you never know whom you may meet on the way to the mailbox."





*Advanced Style's* resident countess of glamour, **Lynn Dell**, has created a world full of flamboyant style and dramatic flair in her Upper West Side boutique. I was first drawn to her bright colors and bold accessories, but it is her energy, enthusiasm, and enterprise that truly define this magnificent woman.



**Mary** has an almost intellectual approach to dressing. Every item she selects plays an important role in striking a harmonious balance of textures and colors. Mary is always amazingly accessorized and is never afraid to speak her mind. Under no condition will she leave the house without the perfect shoes and, more often than not, properly coordinated socks.



