



shirts and trousers. These are clothes that don't dictate a particular way to wear them, so the smallest and largest woman can make them her own. "I think any woman can wear my clothes," says Walker. "All my proportions play against each other to create a strong silhouette. You can achieve different looks each time you wear the garment."

Comme des Garçons has several of its own men's wear labels, including *Homme* and *Homme Plus*, that are popular with women for the same reasons as Deryck Walker – malleability. It's a popularity which Comme designer Rei Kawakubo appreciates but does not factor into her work: "I see no problem at all with people being free to express themselves as they wish, but it remains inconceivable for me to design the men's collection with women in mind, and vice versa." Because, of course, if the female consumer were factored into the equation, the masculine edge that women customers like would be cancelled out.

It is Paul Smith, the eminently British designer, who has an eloquent explanation for – and response to – modern women's demands for a new direction in dressing. His work is consistently playful and flamboyant and always just conservative enough to please customers who want to wear clothes rather than have clothes wear them. Consequently, Paul Smith has a devoted following among men and women who want something understated yet with a creative pulse. "They're working girls and active women," says Smith. "When I started my women's wear, I was seeing a very sizeable clientele who were buying my men's jackets in the smallest size. Then fashion changed from oversized clothes to a more fitted look for women, so I started to think differently."

Smith now produces *Men Only*, essentially a men's wear range for women, but one that keeps the strengths of the men's wear that attracted so many customers in the first place. At the autumn/winter show his *Men Only* women walked the runway in brown Prince of Wales wool single-breasted, wide-legged suits with turn-ups (£790) over waffled cardigans (£300), simple blue cotton shirts with white colours (£130) and dip-dyed loafers (£180). The look was relaxed and gentlemanly but executed with a feminine sensibility. "The idea was to do women's clothes based on the men's, but it has been expanded. I've added femininity with the fabrics – luxurious satins and heavy silks – and some twists like gathering down the back of a jacket that men wouldn't buy." Smith insists that the *Men Only* collection is for all women, not just size 8 models: "The difference from the men's is the fit; it respects the female form and is shorter and trimmer." The inspiration for the collection came from a vintage photograph of the actress Katharine Hepburn in a fur coat wearing blue denim trousers, something which, he says, "represented a mix of luxury and basic that is so Paul Smith".

What Smith is doing with *Men Only* is indicative of what many women want: a more masculine wardrobe relevant to their modern reality but still with a certain glamour... just like Katharine Hepburn. As the great lady once said of her own personal style: "A girl can not do everything she wants in stockings." ♦

SUITS YOU, MADAM

Boss Orange, Hugo Boss, The Willet Building, 35-38 Sloane Square, London SW1 (020-7554 5700) and branches/stockists. **Brooks Brothers**, 132-134 Regent Street, London W1 (020-3238 0030; www.brooksbrothers.com). **Browns**, 23-27 South Molton Street, London W1 (020-7514 0000). **Comme des Garçons**, see Dover Street Market. **Day Birger et Mikkelsen**, see Diverse and Harvey Nichols. **Deryck Walker**, see Dover Street Market. **Dior Homme**, see Harrods and Selfridges. **Diverse**, 286 Upper Street, London N1 (020-7359 0051). **Dolce & Gabbana**, 6-8 Old Bond Street, London W1 (020-7659 9000) and branch. **Dover Street Market**, 17-18 Dover Street, London W1 (020-7518 0680). **Edward Bates**, 21a Jermyn Street, London SW1 (020-7734 2722). **Harrods**, 87-135 Brompton Road, London SW1 (020-7730 1234; www.harrods.com). **Harvey Nichols**, Knightsbridge, London SW1 (020-7235 5000). **James Smith & Sons**, Hazelwood House, 53 New Oxford Street, London W1 (020-7836 4731). **Jean Paul Gaultier**, 171-175 Draycott Avenue, London SW3 (020-7584 4648). **Jil Sander**, 0049-4055 3020. **Paul Smith**, 40-44 Floral Street, London WC2 (020-7379 7133) and branches/stockists. **Selfridges**, 400 Oxford Street, London W1 (08708-377 377). **Y Shop**, 07711-277 069; www.y-shop.co.uk. **Veronique Branquinho**, see Browns.

White cotton fitted shirt, £179, black wool tuxedo, £793, black wool striped waistcoat, £219, and black wool mix trousers, £526, all by Dior Homme. Whangee handled umbrella, £59.95, by James Smith and Sons. Black fur felt bowler hat, £172, by Edward Bates.