

“Want to join me, Kerstin?”



As Kerstin raves about the dress, I forget for a moment just how bitterly cold it is outside © HBM

When Kerstin Weng, editor-in-chief of *Instyle*, thinks of her childhood dream dress, the first thing that comes to mind is “big blue puffed satin sleeves with printed black velvet flowers and a puffy miniskirt”. The dress belonged to her sister, six years older, who wore it to her dance class ball. As Kerstin raves about the dress and we try to force our way through the rush-hour traffic, I forget for a moment just how bitterly cold it is outside. Winter has taken hold of Munich.

In our “Want to join me?” interview series, I usually meet my Burda colleagues at home and accompany them on their journey to work. Today, however, Kerstin is picking me up: “I live right around the corner, so I’ll just swing by your place”, she says on the phone. Just like that.

After all, she has quite a lot on her plate – glamorous events like the *Bambi* ceremony in Berlin, signing off on the new issue of *Instyle*, moving to a new apartment and finding time to pack up her huge wardrobe. “I’m the Messi of clothes”, she says, beeping briefly but firmly at the driver in front, who doesn’t seem to have noticed the green light.

Alongside her father’s 80s jumpers, her moving boxes are sure to contain an old H&M T-shirt: “I wore it when I was 15 and sneaked into a club for the first time with my cousin’s fake ID. ‘Marco’ quickly became ‘Maria’”, she laughs.

An expert eye and a feel for fashion

These days she dresses a little differently for parties and events. When she rubs shoulders with world-famous celebrities at international fashion weeks, her own outfit isn't the only thing on her mind. Her eyes are always open and her antennae primed for other people's clothes, for new trends, for "the feeling in the air".

Her phone is always on and close to hand: "I only switch it off at night. Otherwise I'm always available." She keeps her 18,500 Instagram followers updated at all times.

"A look of love passed across her face"

When Kerstin does put down her smartphone, she likes to read. Beautiful sentences often stay with her long after she finishes the book: "I discovered one such sentence in Robert Schneider's novel 'The Untouched'", she says. She pauses before reciting: "In this moment, a look of love passed across his face." As she talks about the book, love seems to pass across Kerstin's face too. A brief silence.

Sadly, I have to ruin the mood by asking her about the fashion industry. After all, we're nearly at the office and I am sitting in the car of *Instyle*'s editor-in-chief. "Is the fashion scene really as superficial as it seems?" I ask. "I've made many long-standing friendships in this job that are very important to me. But the fashion industry has its dark sides, of course." She tells me that, as a student at a girls' school, she saw first-hand how women can be affected by distorted body images in the media. "I have been known to turn down models for our magazine for being too thin."

Don't be fooled by appearances

We have now passed the barrier and arrived in the *Instyle* car park. As we leave the car, Kerstin tells me another story from her student days. "In the first semester, I saw a tanned, extremely blonde student wearing high heels and a ridiculously short dress. She seemed to fit perfectly with my clichéd view of the fashion world. But when we started talking, she turned out to be incredibly nice, and my assumptions completely wrong. Authenticity is what makes a person attractive. You can't let yourself be fooled by appearances", she says with a laugh, disappearing into the lift.

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