



CAROLYN HAX

Lunchtime detours leave sour taste in friend's mouth

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Dear Carolyn: This feels like an absurdly specific question, but it's a kind of question about courtesy that I have sometimes, I'm in college; sometimes, after class, a friend and I have lunch together...

Yikes. Next time she tells you to go ahead without her, say, "Why don't you just call him? Otherwise I end up eating alone while I wait."

That's for you. For your friend, if she happens to read this:

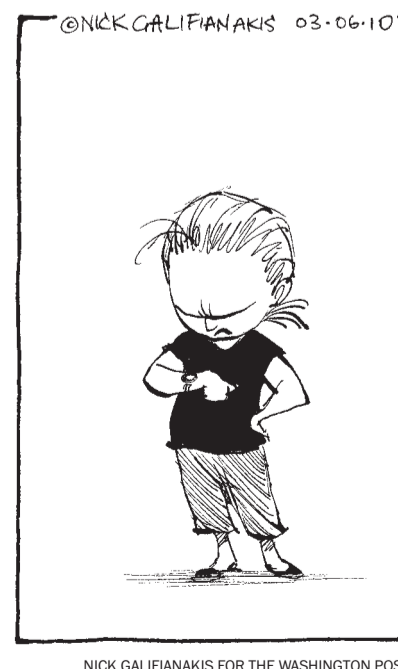
1. Stop "coaxing" your boyfriend out of a "bad mood." When you take it upon yourself to manage someone's emotions like that, you might as well be diapering a baby.

Dear Carolyn: Please help me figure out what to say to my sister, who got a tattoo yesterday. I have two myself, so I have no problem with tattoos.

"You love it, right?" [She presumably says yes.] "Then that's awesome." Or, "It's a real statement." Or, "I love how happy you are."

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on www.washingtonpost.com/discussions.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or tellme@washpost.com.



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL



Tom Tancredo's outrageous speech at the tea party convention: Tancredo's recent tea-bag rant was so downright embarrassing that other fonts of right-wing cant are Palin in comparison.

REPORT FROM WEEK 855 In which we asked you to write a poem summarizing, or at least musing upon, an article or ad that appeared in The Post Feb. 6-15: That was the week of the Super Bowl, the "tea party" convention and, of course, snow snow snow.

- 2 the winner of the \$100 trillion bill (Zimbabwean): John Mayer's Playboy interview in which he said his sex organ was a "white supremacist"; Higglely pigglely, Singer John Mayer - his interview made him sound crude, oversexed; Even more shocking than Genito-racism: Readers of Playboy do Look at the text.

MUSES FIT TO PRINT: HONORABLE MENTIONS

- 'A reporter faces the naked truth about full-body airport scanners'; There's a sneaky new scanner that's bad to the bone; It detects hidden bombs in your underwear zone. But the ACLU's bid for privacy won: You can just have a "pat-down" (Oh, won't that be fun?); 'Sainthood win Super Bowl for first time'; With its Super Bowl triumph, New Orleans at last bids goodbye to Katrina's ill winds of the past.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



YOU CAN talk with your hands BUT YOU CAN'T type w8th y4ohufr et;bo9ws. (Joe Shepherd, Gaithersburg)

Week 859: Can't goods

If they can _____, why can't they _____? If you _____, they will _____.

Mining the Invite archives from 1996: Cast a joke in one of the forms listed above, as in the example, the winner from Week 188. We are looking for original humor; we do not want to see driveways and parkways, or heat and stupidity.

Few designers have the knack for artful time travel

FASHION FROM CI

austere benches and a white, eerily illuminated checkerboard runway. The ambience was old-fashioned elegance merged with retro cool and futuristic bravura.

Ghesquiere made confident references to the house's signature silhouettes of rounded backs and ease throughout the torso. He blended those shapes with textured fabrics in shades of melon (both honeydew and cantaloupe), teal and lemon that call to mind the swinging '60s and the pop art movement.

The designers who present their collections here, in what is fashion's international capital, generally are not the type to harp on the past. Indeed, the '60s-inspired collection that Marco Zanini put on the runway at Rochas was an anomaly in its near period drama styling.

Purple reign at Balmain

Christophe Decarnin at Balmain looted a different era - at least for inspiration. He has been the ringleader in fashion's return to '80s excess. There is no explaining or defending his hyper-ostentatious sensibility other than to declare it an appeal to purely visceral and base desires.

His Thursday afternoon show opened with Prince's "Let's Go Crazy" and what followed was an homage to the Purple One and his glam rock style. There were tight jeans and frock coats in purple and gold brocade. One coat was so thickly embroidered with gold sequins that it looked as though it was gold-plated and should come with its own security detail.

Make no mistake. The Balmain collection was dazzling. It tapped into the fantasies of any woman who has ever envisioned herself a rock star, part of a rock



TIME WARP: From left, Marco Zanini's collection for Rochas was a return to the 1960s, with teased hair and mini-dresses; at Balmain, Christophe Decarnin was all about '80s and excess, with daringly high hemlines on boldly colored dresses; and Balenciaga's Nicolas Ghesquiere drew inspiration from the '60s pop art movement.

band or merely a well-dressed groupie. But these are costumes, not clothes. They are for women who live their lives as if every day is a performance and not an attempt at authenticity.

It is an aesthetic that looks backwards, narcissistically inward and dismissively at the glutinous behavior that precipitated the global economic meltdown. They are me, me, me, clothes at a time when the new mantra seems to be: Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.

Ghesquiere looks forward without going - too far - into sci-fi outlandishness or pure self-indulgence. He makes futuristic fashion desirable and festive. He redefines "pretty" for a different generation, allowing that it does not have to be equated with soft, sweet frillery. It can have sharp edges and curious juxtapositions of color.

that one wants to wear because they look good, but in a way that one never thought possible.

Rick Owens's storm

Ghesquiere is the polar opposite of designer Rick Owens, for whom the beauty of a woman has never been a primary concern. His work is an emotional thunderstorm both intimidating and cleansing. If it is possible to be put off by a designer whose work shows too much sleek optimism, then Owens can be equally exasperating for being such a rumpled downer.

Owens uses a muted palette of black, aubergine, navy and mushroom - more portobello than shitake. His airy down coats are more wraps and throws than anything resembling two sleeves, a body and a few buttons up the front.

He uses triangular shapes to whipstitch together jackets and long vests. The shapes are unbalanced so that they make

one think of shards of broken glass, rather than a perfectly balanced study in geometry. His skirts are short with a pleated flap in the front, and his hooded jackets lack shoulder seams so that they round the models like some prehistoric pod.

Owens's work is poetic, but it is a melancholy, agitated verse. And if Ghesquiere believes there's salvation in a bright and shiny future, one senses that Owens longs for a tender and soulful past. Owens isn't nostalgic for some 1950s world, but something more tribal, uncomplicated and humane. His longing is understandable, not depressing, in these high-tech, frenzied times. It's the futility of his desire, however, that makes one want to weep.

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MORE PHOTOS Robin Givhan takes a look at collections from Rick Owens, Balenciaga and Balmain at washingtonpost.com/style.

DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU

