

Personal Trainer Marian on Body Sculpting

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This month I will diverge from the question and answer format to address a totally cosmetic, superficial matter of fashion...And what could possibly be more important than looking super?

I'm here to tell you that you can do away with all those gussets, grommets, cinches, Padding and the rest of those accoutrements with which fashion designers have been reshaping us for years. Yes – you can wear a totally unstructured form-fitting frock from Versace and look gorgeous and powerful. How can this magic be performed? Body sculpting.

V-Shape

Body sculpting is a term I use to imply reshaping the contours of your body to evoke the illusion which clothing is designed to give. Contours are created by muscle (rather than fat, which if you're over 22 you'll agree is too blobby in shape). What we're after is a V-shape rather than a pear shape, which unfortunately is the sordid work of gravity on an untrained physique.

I don't mean this to sound easy. It's not. It means devoting 2-3 hours per week of hard work in the gym – for several months or even years. Anyway, here are the exercises along with the rationale for the optical illusion the trained body will evoke...

Shoulders

Starting from the head to toe. From a frontal view we need to make your waist and hips look narrower and, of course the shoulders then must be the widest body part. The first priority is to develop the side shoulder (medial deltoid). This means lots of dumbbell or cable lateral shoulder raises which, once the exercise is mastered with impeccable form, should be performed with heavier weights for low repetitions to build them up. Some form of shoulder pressing movement should also be regularly used to build overall strength for this exercise. Remember, every additional inch of shoulder width looks like a two inch reduction in waist size. If you succeed in this area you'll soon be removing those shoulder pads from blouses and jackets.

Chest and Back

Next, to go with the wider shoulders you must develop the outer pectorals (chest) and the upper latissimus dorsi (lats=side back) for extra width at the top, so these muscles taper from wide at the shoulders to nothing at the waist.

The outer pecs (chest) are best worked in any chest pressing exercise which you stretch the weight back

down below chest level. At the bottom of the pressing movement, your hands, gripping the weight/machine, should be at chest level – elbows bent back as far as possible. Upper lat width can be attained though regularly performing very wide grip cable pulldowns to the front.

Waist

Okay, it's not sufficient just to give the illusion of a small waist, let's try to tighten it up! See my December 1995 Boutique column for your basic abdominal exercise regime and be sure to add in 3 times per week 3 sets of "broomstick twists". With the broomstick held behind the trapezius (upper back/shoulders), do these seated on the edge of a bench with the shoulders back and down, ribcage lifted and legs together in front of you firmly planted on the floor. Ensure that the twisting motion comes from the waist not the hips and performed 100 – 150 repetitions for each set. Be straight with your form. You can knock the head off a broom and do these regularly at home.

Hips

That leaves the hips, and the most result-oriented exercise I know for this part would be lunges. This is a high-repetition exercise that can be effectively performed with body weight alone or better yet, light dumbbells in hand or a light barbell across the upper back. Forward lunges can be executed on a flat floor at home or up onto a stable bench or platform at the gym for an extra stretch. Make sure your upper body is very erect and stretch forward as much as your flexibility and balance will allow alternating left, right, etc. The key to effective lunging is to put all your body weight on the front leg and push off with the front heel. Side lunges can be executed with body weight alone on a flat floor. 3 -9 sets of 49 – 100 repetitions should be preformed at least once a week. This is a great tightener for hips, bum and thighs!

There you have it, a 6-exercise reshaping regime which, if you embark on it now, can have you looking buff in those unstructured fall fashions. Get started! Good luck and good health to you!

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