

Kiss My Aster

10/1/2023

Take Me Seriously! (J/K, Please Don't)

Amanda Thomsen



I don't know at what age I decided that being a "novelty" behooved me, but I was quite young, maybe third grade. It's similar to being a class clown, but more introverted, quirkier. I think it was junior high where I started to dress a little differently. I wore Hawaiian shirts and glittered Keds. I had a purse that looked like a fish. The subconscious thought behind it, although I didn't realize it at the time, was "I am here, I'm not going to make a fuss, but I need to be seen."

In high school this morphed into wearing a lot of black and bright red lipstick. You'd think the black would say, "I do not want to be perceived," but it delivers the exact opposite. I had combat boots, ripped tights and wore NKOTB shirts ironically. The subconscious thought behind all of that was "I am here. I'm afraid of everything, so if you could act like you're afraid of me that'd be great. I want to be seen, but give me space." At this age, the message was for authority figures and the male population.

Today, the song stays the same, but I'm more aware of it. I very much want to be in control of when I'm to be taken seriously. My wardrobe is unmanageably large

since it needs to encompass my everyday looks, the ones where I turn it up even louder and my "unperceivables." When I go to a trade show I want to be noticed and I turn up the quirk. I'm proud of who I am, so obviously I'm wearing a dress with hot pink shrimps on it. And I always want to get hired to speak more, but I also do a bang-up job at keeping my head down so as not to attract an awkward conversation. People see me in my fun little outfits and they're prepared to have a fun time. They make that judgment from the get-go. Then I hit them with the KNOWLEDGE BOMBS and they didn't even see it coming. I feel like that's an asset.

As a shop owner, I love having the say in how seriously I'm going to be taken. Am I going to greet you in a llama mask and a Pee-wee Herman shirt (RIP) and then say, "What do you mean you have full sun in the morning with southern exposure? The sun doesn't work that way, Sally." It all works, like a weird sandwich with peanut butter on it

and it sounds unlikely, but it turns out super delicious.

From my daily costumes, I put myself in the headspace of how I'm going to run the ship each day (if I'm wearing cute shoes, I aim to sell you lots of plants, so look out!). In every conversation, I decide how jokey and fun I'm going to be and when I want to be deadly serious. At this age, it's no longer subconscious. My clothing says, "In an age where women my age are often not 'seen' I know you see me and quite possibly it's the highlight of your day. You're lucky I want to be seen today, but that could change any minute. Best behavior." At this age, the message is usually for men older than I am and terrible people.

Example: Man walks up to me at the farmers market: "Something is wrong with your outfit."

He points to the atrocious yellow safety vest I'm wearing over an adorable tea dress with a freaking adorable bunny print.

Me, flatly: "I wear this because I am in charge and people need to find me."

Him, approvingly: "You run ALL of this and that shop?"

Me: Already walking away because I don't take fashion tips from farmers market randos.

I am curious if other retail industry people have developed a "don't take me seriously/OK, now you have to take me seriously" personality also. There's shelter in hiding behind a fun facade, but it doesn't usually get you listened to, respected and paid. **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author now with her own store, Aster Gardens in Lemont, Illinois. Her blog is planted at KissMyAster.com and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.