

Foreword

The French artist Jean Cocteau once said, “Style is a simple way of saying complicated things.” When I first met Douglas Hand, I knew he was someone important, someone sophisticated—a man of style and inner refinement. He had that air about him. It was decidedly so.

We were both leaving a menswear show at Lincoln Center. I was introduced to him by a fashion stylist I knew. Douglas shook my hand with a warm but serious smile, and I noticed that while his sleeve cuffs were a crisp half inch from his gray flannel suit, his tie knot was appealingly knotted somewhat imperfectly—perhaps even artfully. He also had an odd (somewhat morbid), cryptic copper hand peeking out from his trouser pocket (which I later came to know held his keys). He was running back to his office after the shows. I learned later through industry chatter he was a preeminent fashion lawyer, representing many of the menswear brands that have grown into American mainstays. And that made perfect sense to me. His presence communicated it all quite effectively and without a word.

Douglas is the consummate professional and a true gentleman. He’s appropriately orderly and his appearance reflects that—neat but not annoyingly precise. Counselor Hand is no automaton; nor is he a fop. He is a true acolyte of the great Regency era cultural icon Beau Brummell in his ability and desire not to stand out for his clothes but to stand out for his intelligence, wit, and capability for action. As most of us know, Douglas’ clothes are impeccable and discriminating, but they are just the frame for the man within. His statement is understatement.

As a consumer, writer, lawyer, and professor in the fashion industry, Douglas knows clothes. I mean he *really* knows them: not only how they are designed and constructed, the raw materials that comprise them, and the legacy of storied brands as well as up-and-comers, but he understands the power (or the lack of it) that apparel choices convey. The coded language of style.

To be sure—and he’ll blush when he reads this—Douglas has been blessed with classic male physical proportions which neatly fill the lines of a suit. But through this book he’ll teach you, without any disdain or conceit,

that the great benefit of the suit as a garment to all types of men is that it brings most body types toward an agnostic mean rather than some hyper-proportioned one. In this book he'll make his case against over-casualizing a casual dress code. He'll teach you some laws (as any good law professor would), but he'll also encourage you to reach beyond your comfort zone (even—gasp—beyond the laws the book sets forth) to attain degrees of personal style.

Douglas is not only a man of style, not only my attorney, not only an engaging and droll writer, he's also my friend. He is that rare example of an actualized man in—readers, please forgive me here—the fairly homogenized army of legal and financial services providers. He's a wolf that runs his own way but still very much gets along with the rest of the pack. No *lobo solo* he, this attorney follows his own course with a subdued panache that is all his own but is still very much “lawyerly” (I don't really know what that means, but I know it when I see it). Douglas loves the law, academic discourse, old scotch, his late-model Saab, his kids, his dog, the perfection of an ocean wave at sunset, artists and their art, planting things and watching them grow, and, perhaps most of all, he loves being himself. As Whitney Houston tells us, that is the greatest gift of all.

This book is an achievement. Truly—there is nothing like it. You'll undoubtedly enjoy the anecdotes and the jocularity, but you'll come back to it for the guidance. It's what you'll earmark pages for. Designer Marc Jacobs once said, “To me, clothing is a form of self-expression—there are hints about who you are in what you wear.” I believe that. So does Douglas. I'm pretty confident you will too after reading his insightful and compelling work. Now to it!

—Nick Wooster