



Advanced Style Discussion Guide

Director: Lina Plioplyte

Year: 2014

Time: 72 min

You might know this director from:

ADVANCED STYLE is the first feature-length documentary from this director.

FILM SUMMARY

When *ADVANCED STYLE* ends at 72 minutes, time seems irrelevant. Or at least time doesn't seem like a burden, but a gift that allows us blossom into beautiful, vibrant individuals. Who says that beauty has an expiration date? Who says that women over a certain age are no longer relevant? The women introduced in *ADVANCED STYLE* are anything but invisible, and while sharing their style tricks, they offer secrets of leading a happy life.

Growing up in San Diego, Ari Seth Cohen was greatly influenced by his grandmothers, two fashionable ladies with a sense of the creative and bon vivant. Moving to New York, he was immediately struck by the numerous savvy women gracing the streets and wondered why they weren't featured in media and advertising campaigns. As he approached the women about featuring them on a blog, deeper questions surfaced. Why, when these women have so much to teach us about the most pertinent aspects of life, are we ignoring them? Soon, the *Advanced Style* blog evolved into a movement that includes a book, coloring book, and documentary film.

Joyce Carpati, Ilona Royce Smithkin, Zelda Kaplan, Tziporah Salamon are just a few of the inspiring ladies who reveal that aging can be the pinnacle of a well-rounded life. An individual's value and relevance resides within. Time need not be a burden, but rather an invitation to become stronger in character. Instead of retreating from the pulse of life with the passing of time, the women of *ADVANCED STYLE* show that life is to be lived, the spirit to be manifested, right up until our very last breath.

FILM THEMES

Society has an invisible rulebook that many of us abide by when it comes to aging, particularly on the definition of beauty. The ladies of **ADVANCED STYLE** not only challenge but rewrite these worn-out rules.

RESPECT YOUR ELDERS

At a certain point in a life, society believes an individual to be irrelevant. We might “respect our elders” by holding a door or helping them up some stairs, but do we truly respect those above age 60 as the bearer of life, wisdom and beauty? In Western society, beauty is so intrinsically tied to youth that to pursue it after a certain age is silently preposterous. Now that we’ve fought to extend life spans and regularly live well into our 80s and 90s, societal rules are outdated. The eloquent ladies of **ADVANCED STYLE** believe that if life is worth prolonging, then each life - regardless of numbers or wrinkles - deserves to be appreciated.

BETTER WITH TIME

Through advertising, we are bombarded with images of beautiful, vibrant youth with glowing skin who jump from mountaintops or flaunt their outrageous styles, embodying what anyone hopes to be. Cohen and Plioplyte offer a refreshing flipside to this one-dimensional take on existence by presenting women who give the middle finger to society’s decree of aging. Instead of becoming less with each passing year, they are enlivened and consider it almost a duty to spread their wisdom and joy. The best is truly yet to come, they proclaim, if you so decide. Like wine and cheeses that get better as they age over time, so too can we.

PERSONAL STYLE, PERSONAL STATE

The fashion industry is often criticized for its frivolous, shallow flippancy. The body is only the body, after all, quite separate from the spirit. But style is something else. We constantly reveal ourselves to the world. How we choose to present ourselves can be seen as a direct reflection of our internal state. Because clothing is a daily reality of our lives, why not play around, test the boundaries, be imaginative and experimental with color and texture, and bring our inner realities out into the light? Why not prove to the world and to ourselves that we are still here and still matter?

AN OUTLET FOR THE AGING PROCESS

The aging process undoubtedly includes its aches and pains. The women in **ADVANCED STYLE** have their fair share of difficulties: failing eyesight, hips that don’t move like they used to, memory loss, friends dying off, the body breaking down. Rather than disappearing behind a closed door to await the certainty of death’s arrival, **ADVANCED STYLE** confirms that we always have access to our beautiful selves, regardless of the number of years we’ve been alive. The women focus on the joy of being alive, and thus, are able to view the travails of aging differently than mainstream media. An interest in personal style becomes an outlet for the hurts that old age can bring.

“I never wanted to look young. I wanted to look great.”

Joyce Carpati

“There is no time limit to anything. When you look good, you look good.”

Ilna Royce Smithkin

“You’re never too old to be creative. When you’re creative, you stay vital.”

Debra Rapoport

FILM FACTS:

- Director Lina Plioplyte was born in Lithuania and currently lives in New York where she creates short films, music videos, and documentaries about bright personalities. *ADVANCED STYLE* is her feature directorial debut.
- Ari Seth Cohen was born in San Diego and lived in Seattle. He began his *Advanced Style* blog in August 2008, shortly after moving to New York City. In addition to the blog, Cohen published a book documenting the *Advanced Style* women, as well as *Advanced Style: The Coloring Book*, which contains 20 hand-drawn outlines based on photographs from the book.
- Cohen also photographs older men for his blog.
- Plioplyte and Cohen originally met at a coffee shop in Brooklyn, New York where Plioplyte was working. *ADVANCED STYLE* was made over the course of 4 years with USD \$50,000 funded from a Kickstarter campaign, with Plioplyte and Cohen comprising the entire production team.
- Ilona Royce Smithkin was born in Poland in 1920 and moved with her family to Berlin at the age of one. As a teenager, her family moved to New York, fearful of their living situation in Nazi Germany. At the age of 18, she married a pilot in the U.S. military who died in WWII. Smithkin never remarried and never wished to have children. Since moving out of her family's home in the Bronx at the age of 18, she has lived in the same top-floor studio in Greenwich Village.
- Allure magazine conducted a survey in 2013, asking 2,000 Americans questions regarding their perceptions of aging. It was revealed that the ideal age is 31. Men believed that female beauty peaks at 29, while women believed it peaks at 31. Also, 56% of women were concerned with the physical signs of aging and 42% considered anti-aging injections or plastic surgery, with 18% of men considering the same.
- Jacquie Tajah Murdock grew up in Harlem and learned ballroom dancing from a friend in his mother's living room. While raising her two children after divorcing her husband, she studied at NYU, where she earned three degrees.
- Zelda Kaplan was married twice earlier in life. After divorcing her second husband in the late 1960s, she moved from Miami to New York. Surviving off an inheritance she made from selling her parents' horse farm, Kaplan traveled to Africa, where she campaigned against female genital mutilation. Kaplan died at the age of 95 after collapsing at a New York Fashion Week show of her friend, Joanna Mastroianni, in 2012.
- In 1910, the U.S. female life expectancy was 52. By 2010, that number had risen to 82. Men lag behind, with a life expectancy in 2010 of 76.
- Joyce Carpati was born in Brooklyn after her parents immigrated to the U.S. from Russia. She started singing from a very young age and began studying opera in Milan, Italy at the age of 16.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. Share this film. Give others the opportunity to be inspired by these wonderful women and their sense of style.
2. Learn more about the *Advanced Style* concept of Ari Seth Cohen, available in blog and book formats.
3. Be cautious of the judgments you make based on age. Encourage people of all ages to pursue their own personal style, beginning with yourself and accept and look forward to the increasing beauty and wisdom that comes with aging.
4. Support brands that feature older models in their advertising campaigns and do not shun away from the reality of aging. Some brands are [MAC Cosmetics](#), [L'Oreal](#), and [Dove](#).

We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.