

**“I HAVE FOUR DOGS: CHANEL,  
PRADA, DIOR, VALENTINO-  
VUITTON. DOES THAT TELL YOU  
ANYTHING?”**



# ASSET APPRECIATION

This accounting professor's statement-making style adds up.

By Avery Zolfaghari

Photography by Ella McDonald

Professor Lillian Hickman-Riggs has mastered the art of the entrance. Whether she's walking into a classroom at SMU's Cox School of Business, where she's taught for 14 years, or approaching the Fondren Library Starbucks counter, a chorus of "I love your outfit!" begins upon her every arrival.

It's easy to understand why. Hickman-Riggs — called LHR by her students — epitomizes head-to-toe clothing creativity. Some days, she's a blur of color; other days, she might be donning a cape. But every day, she boosts her petite frame with towering heels, including a signature pair of five-inch platform boots. Clothing, she believes, is "an expression of who you are."

Hickman-Riggs sums up her fashion philosophy with a formula she calls the six C's: clothing, cut, color, class, craziness, coordination and care. It's the balance sheet she lives by, but it's an approach that took her years to learn.

When Hickman-Riggs was young, her parents owned a fabric store, and she remembers spending endless hours draping herself with fabric and experimenting with color combinations when other friends her age were happier playing with toys. But that fun with fashion ended when school started — she attended a Catholic boarding school until she was 19 years old, and her wardrobe consisted only of uniforms.

She'd initially planned to become a doctor, but soon pivoted toward language. She'd grown up speaking Italian and German and studied French in school, so she moved to London to attend the Institute for Languages. It was there that her style developed. She says London was where she could "express herself in the ways she wanted to." Although she was living on a limited budget, she says she learned to re-allocate her funds to cover fashion necessities. "The allowance I was given for food became my allowance for perfume and clothes," she recounts.

She frequented popular markets like the one on Portobello Road and invested in pieces from timeless brands like Chanel, which she says she still wears today — albeit more creatively. "It is not the name brand, but it is how the garments speak to me," she explains.

Last fall, Hickman-Riggs lost her beloved husband, William. She says she used fashion as an emotional outlet, and dressing up to teach helped her to stay strong despite her grief. She continues to honor William through combinations of cheerful colors and patterns.

Hickman-Riggs encourages all students to take risks, to love art and to embrace the crazy, starting with their outfits. "Everywhere I go, look at the reaction — it is always the same," she says. "People say, 'I love your clothes,' and I say, 'It's because you've got great taste.'"

