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Michelle Obama's accessories will draw attention on Inauguration Day

By Wendy Donahue | Tribune reporter
January 15, 2009

Millions of eyes will feast on [Michelle Obama's](#) attire for Inauguration Day, and no detail will go undigested.

Beyond her day dress and evening gown are the accessories, which often register the loudest *cha-ching* in this era of \$2,000 handbags, \$100,000 gems and \$1,000 pumps. (Believe it or not, they're still out there.)

Obama must walk the line between presidential pomp and economic circumstance. Where will she skimp? Where will she splurge? Fashion experts are split.

With brooches a signature and dangling teardrop earrings a highlight of her Election Night ensemble, Obama isn't likely to omit jewelry. Nor are other attendees, said fashion designer Maria Pinto, a hometown favorite of Obama's.

"I think we'll see important jewelry—significant but not blingy," said Pinto, who is attending the [inauguration](#).

Constance White, a New York-based fashion reporter and style director of [eBay](#), doesn't see Obama cutting expense with a mass-market dress brand. So she may temper a glam gown with fabulous but affordable cubic zirconia jewelry, instead of jewels.

"I don't think Americans really want to see their first lady in [a dress from] White House/Black Market on Inauguration Day regardless of the state of their own pocketbooks," White said. "They just don't."

If past is prologue, Obama won't wear jewelry in a staid way, said Jesse Garza, a Chicago native and partner in the multicity styling team Visual Therapy. Obama often groups three brooches on the neckline of dresses

and sweaters, and even pins them to necklaces.

"I remember working at Ultimo, and Joan Weinstein, the owner then, was very clear about how you place something," Garza said. "When you place a brooch on the lapel of a jacket, it's too classic. When you put it in an unexpected place or add another one and another one, it's artistic. Michelle takes some classic elements, but the way they're applied is very artistic."

A brooch plays a key role in the inauguration-ball prediction of Mary Tomer, founder of the Mrs-O.org fashion blog. She prophesies Obama will wear: "Winter white chiffon gathered asymmetrically from an empire waist to one shoulder, with a gray-silver full satin skirt. A bejeweled diamond brooch worn off-center at the waist line."

Now, down to the toes. Will the nearly 5-foot-11-inch Obama soar to new heights in killer Jimmy Choo heels?

"I'd love to see her in really high heels, but she won't do it," White said. "At least not yet. She'd tower over her husband."

We already know he intends to wear a tuxedo from Chicago-based Hart Schaffner Marx.

But we also know that no tux, however elegant, can measure up to the fashion of a first lady.

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