



## Fashion Scoops

# Labeling the First Lady

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*Michelle Obama wearing an Isaac Mizrahi pre-fall sheath and coat.*

*Photo By George Chinsee*

**DRESS POLICY:** First Lady **Michelle Obama**'s on-again, off-again fashion nods have some in the design and journalism communities wondering what the White House protocol is behind giving out those fashion credits. Her press secretary, **Katie McCormick Lelyveld**, explained it to WWD this way: "It is not an announcement from the office. We simply let

folks know on the nights of big events like the ballet, state dinners and events hosted here, or when she is traveling. Of course, there is a great interest on higher-profile nights and for those periodic requests, we let pool reporters know. Otherwise, for daytime trips or daytime activities that she might do, like taking the kids to school, or hosting a service event, which occur more frequently and are lower profile, we obviously do not announce anything. But for the big events, there is a great interest."

And while it might seem hit and miss — since what some might consider "high profile," like this week's Metropolitan Opera House appearance, the White House doesn't (it didn't reveal she wore Alaïa and Thakoon) — **Carl Sferrazza Anthony**, historian at the National First Ladies' Library in Canton, Ohio, said the First Lady's approach is "dead-on." "I think maybe some mornings Mrs. Obama says, 'Well, I have to do a school event at 11, a luncheon at 12 and leave early to tape a public service announcement and it's hot out,' and she may not know what she is wearing and it is possible that her press office doesn't even know," Anthony said. "Their approach [to releasing information about Obama's wardrobe] is a very reality-based way of functioning. At the same time there is a really highly conscientious effort and there has always been a conscientious effort historically, to be aware that what they wear will help define the administration and help serve as a symbol for the administration and beyond themselves as an individual. Mrs. Obama has struck the right balance."