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French fashions, Swiss fabrics

ALTHOUGH this season's offerings from Paris show a trend towards the simple and sophisticated for day wear, romance and glamour are the keywords for evening wear.

All the froth and glitter of Hollywood has been tucked, gathered and frilled into a collection of theatrical gowns – using some of the finest Swiss fabrics.

Switzerland's silk and embroidery specialists have supplied the precious shimmering taffetas, satins and organzas, many of them decorated with intricate embroideries.

The lines for many of the extravagant gowns are taken straight from the romantic period films of the '30s and '40s – full, flounced skirts, tiny waists sashed with satin, scooped necklines and sleeves which are full and flamboyant.

With so much fabric required, each garment is a showcase for the very best which the Swiss fabric houses can produce. And the designers have not wasted the opportunity.

Many of the fabrics are almost works of art; gold embroidery and spray printing are combined on black crepe georgette, rhinestones are stitched onto silk organza, metallic embroidery shimmers against silk-Lurex.

And like other works of art, the prices put them well out of reach of most of those who admire them.

"Eventail" – baroque dream in taffeta with golden metal yarn embroidery and rhinestone applications.





Velvet applications
re-embroidered with
golden metal yarn
embroidery and
rhinestones on taffeta.

Watch for a brilliant new blue

WHO really dictates the clothes that we wear? The fashion buyers in our local stores? The designers who pronounce on cut and length?

What about the people who design the actual textiles of which garments are made? Do they have the ultimate responsibility?

The really important people in the fashion chain are often the scientists because it is their efforts which govern what is possible. However creative the designers are, if fabrics cannot be given the right feel, drape and colour, their concepts cannot be translated into beautiful clothes.

As synthetic fabrics have become more sophisticated so has the technology involved in dyeing them to new and exciting shades. A colour must not only look right; it must be stable to light, fast to water and reasonably simple and economical to produce.

With all these problems a really new dyestuff is a rare occurrence despite the massive investment which dyestuffs companies make in research and development.

But breakthroughs do happen, and recently Sandoz Ltd, the Basle-based chemical firm, announced Foron A-R Brilliant Blue – a dye for polyester fabrics which its manufacturers claim surpasses all known brands of blue in brilliance and beauty.

Once the colour had been created and perfected, Sandoz then set about trying to generate a wave of blue fashions. They contacted colourists and textile designers and supplied them with samples and technical information. They joined with a New York fashion school to sponsor a modelling contest and worked closely with people from all levels of the fashion world.

To date, the active sportswear industry has expressed interest in the new dyestuff and the first batch has already reached Japan, where it will be used to dye silk-look polyester.

But how fully will the new colour be exploited by the fashion world's creative people? That we shall discover when a wave of brilliant blue breaks all around us.