

# Looking back over a hundred years

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# LOOKING BACK

## OVER A HUNDRED YEARS

### The Zurich Association of the Silk Industry

1854-1954



Today, when our economic and social life is highly organised into groups of all kinds, the creation of a trade and economic association no longer strikes us as anything out of the ordinary, even if it is an event that took place a hundred years ago. Nevertheless it seems fitting to us to celebrate the centenary of the *Zurich Association of the Silk Industry* since — in spite of the local character of its name — this group has gradually become the supreme organisation uniting all the concerns and associations throughout Switzerland connected with the silk and rayon industry and trade.

The reason «Textiles Suisses» is devoting a considerable part of the present number to this centenary however is not so much to call attention to the aims and collective efforts of a particular section of industry, as to show once more that artistic and economic success is due, in this field of the Swiss textile industry as in others, to the free play of creative energies and the spirit of enterprise of each firm acting individually.

Further on will be found some outstanding facts in the history of the Zurich Association of the Silk Industry, a history that has been very vividly told by Dr. Th. Niggli — who devoted half a century of his life to this association — in a book due to be published shortly and to which we shall be returning in one of our coming numbers.

### Paris and the Swiss Silk Industry

We should like here simply to call attention to the importance of Franco-Swiss relations in the field of fashion in general and of silks in particular. It is no mere matter of chance that, among the many photographs we publish to show the use made of Swiss silks by Haute Couture and ready-to-wear manufacturers all over the world, we traditionally give pride of place to the most recent photographs from Paris. For in spite of import quotas, several members of the Zurich Association of the Silk Industry who have specialised in the making of «high novelty» fabrics have once again seen a large number of their creations chosen by Haute Couture, and the photographs in the pages that follow give an idea of the good use made of these fabrics by the great Parisian couturiers. Both Pierre Balmain and Christian Dior have been kind enough to express the high esteem in which they hold the creations of the Swiss silk industry. Their letters are reproduced here, with the wish that very soon there will be no restrictions in the way of the exchange of goods between Paris, the capital of couture, and Zurich, the centre of the production of Swiss silks, and that this exchange will be just as unrestricted as the flow of spiritual values existing between the two cities.

Christian Dior

30, AVENUE MONTAIGNE  
PARIS

ELYSEES 2044

LE 9 Février 1954

avec tous mes vœux  
pour l'Association zurichoise  
de l'industrie de la soie  
dont les beaux tissus  
nous sont si utiles  
— | — au dior

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PIERRE BALMAIN

44 RUE FRANÇOIS I<sup>er</sup>  
PARIS

à l'  
Association zurichoise  
de l'industrie de la soie

Paris le 19 Février  
1954.

Pendant des siècles, la Suisse  
fut unanimement saluée comme le  
pays de la qualité.

Voici qu'aujourd'hui l'industrie  
zurichoise de la soie, exerçant son  
inventivité créative, travaille dans  
l'élégance, et nous voici charmés.

Tous mes meilleurs vœux  
pour le centenaire.

Pierre Balmain

N. O. 2000 2000 4

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The important role that Paris plays in the Zurich silk industry is not peculiar to our day, for it was already the case a hundred years ago. Paris was at that time the most important European market for silks, and clients from all over the continent — and from overseas too — came flocking there to buy silk fabrics among other things. Switzerland and France both practised policies of free trade in those days. Fabric transactions involving large quantities were carried out unhindered in both directions. Europe was still, to a certain extent, an economic whole; the division of labour on the international scale made possible, with the still very limited industrial means of the time, a rational and comparatively inexpensive production: France specialised in costly luxury materials, and the manufacturers of Zurich concentrated on the less expensive articles of everyday use. This system lasted only until France adopted protectionism towards the turn of the century; the Parisian market then lost its importance for the sale of Zurich silks. Swiss manufacturers and merchants therefore exported directly from Zurich. Increases in customs' duties in various countries and above all the introduction of the weaving of rayon fabrics on numerous markets compelled Swiss silk manufacturers to go in more and more for the production of novelty fabrics. Thus it came about that Paris, owing to the prestige of her position as a world fashion centre, gradually in spite of everything began to re-assume her great importance for the Swiss silk industry.

The silk producers of Zurich, whether manufacturers or not, have achieved considerable success throughout the world during recent years thanks to their high novelty fabrics in silk and rayon as well as in man-made fibres. Today « Zurich Silks » is everywhere recognised as a sign of quality, and we are glad to extend here to the whole of the economic branch it represents our wishes for a prosperous and successful future, particularly as the silk industry is among the earliest and most faithful supporters of our periodical.

*Textiles Suisses*

PIERRE BALMAIN

Basra de L. Abraham & Cie, Soieries S. A., Zurich.

Photo Kublin, Paris





CHRISTIAN DIOR

Super Miyako imprimé de *L. Abraham & Cie, Soieries S. A., Zurich.*

Photo Kublin





JACQUES FATH

Basra chiné de *L. Abraham & Cie, Soieries S. A., Zurich.*

Photo Kublin

PIERRE BALMAIN

Super Miyako imprimé de *L. Abraham & Cie, Soieries S. A., Zurich.*

Photo Kublin







CHRISTIAN DIOR  
Photo Adrien

Doupiataft pure soie de *Rudolf Brauchbar & Cie, Zurich*.  
Distribué par Montex, Paris.



PIERRE BALMAIN

Twill pure soie imprimé de  
*Rudolf Brauchbar & Cie, Zurich.*  
Distribué par Montex, Paris.





Photo Adrion

NINA RICCI

Honan uni brodé de  
*Rudolf Brauchbar & Cie, Zurich.*  
Distribué par Montex, Paris.



PIERRE BALMAIN

Radzimir noir en soie naturelle de la S. A. Stünzi fils, Horgen.

Photo André Ostier





CHRISTIAN DIOR

Poult noir soie naturelle de la S. A. Stünzi fils, Horgen.

Photo André Ostier



Photo de Dulmen

JEAN PATOU

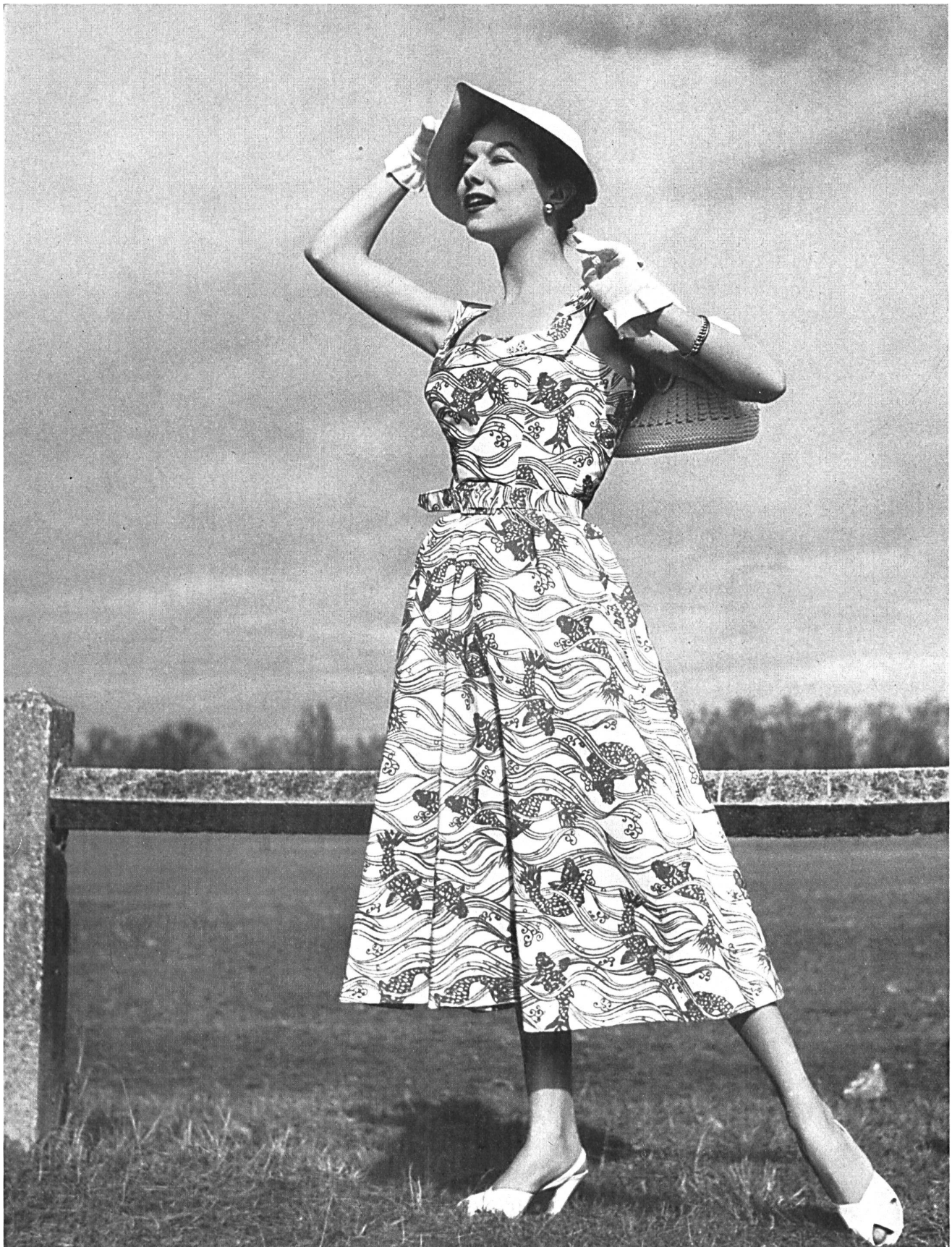
Toile Magique « Moineau » (dessin inspiré des ailes d'un moineau), 100 % soie naturelle de Emar S. A., Tissage de soieries, Zurich.



MAGGY ROUFF

« Poisson rouge », givré imprimé « Zurrer »  
de Weisbrod-Zurrer fils, Hausen s. A.

Photo Astre





PIERRE BALMAIN

Coimbra, taffetas mousseline pure soie de *Berthold Guggenheim fils & Co., Zurich.*



Retenu par  
JACQUES FATH

Pure soie Pré Catelan de  
*Berthold Guggenheim fils & Co., Zurich.*

