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New York Letter



Faille pure soie suisse
Pure silk Swiss faille
Modèle Elizabeth Arden,
New York

Fashion for American women grows more and more a matter of looking for the fabric first, and only afterward considering how that fabric is cut. At any social gathering after 5 p.m., the eye is dazzled by a variety of surfaces, of three-dimensional brocades, of embroidery and bead-

ing, handsome jacquard weaves and artistically pleasing prints. What can one do with such imposing fabrics but style them simply and let them speak for themselves?

In the current collections of New York couture houses, it is evident that the designers were inspired by their



Soie imprimée suisse
Printed Swiss silk
Modèle Baroness Radvanszky, New York

fabrics. On all sides one hears the word «simplicity»; naturally, for the sophisticated abstract prints and interesting weaves call for simple lines.

« Closer to the body » and « more feminine » are two other phrases that are frequent in the conversation at fashion showings. The boxy straight line has given way to a curved line, which is not sleek and form-fitting but curved with a subtlety that demands fine detailing. And such subtlety is impossible without superlative fabric.

The words « more feminine » often signify a judicious use of little bows and bands, sometimes even ruffles. And since clothes that flutter are traditionally feminine, today the New York designers are fascinated by scarves, capes, floating panels, sashes.

When one hears « The Thirties », the reference is to that decade of our century when clothes were bias-cut and clinging and sometimes fluttered. Evocative of these '30's is a pair of ballgowns that Norman Norell made in a black silk crepe from Switzerland. These narrow sheaths cling almost to the ankles, where they burst into a flurry of godets that is absolutely necessary for walking, not to mention dancing. One gown has the diagonal neckline that bares a shoulder; the other is topped by a cape terminating at the elbows in godets.

The cape is an integral part of an important spring dress by Pauline Trigere, who cuts her cape cleverly into the bodice and extends it into the flared skirt. Two

versions of the same Swiss silk print are used: the bodice is white with a black scrawl, while the skirt reverses those colors. These sister prints appeal to Trigere so strongly that she puts them in a whole group of garments that can be worn together or interchanged. For instance, the darker print makes a street-length reversible cape with one side in white piqué, that may be worn with the dual-print dress or with a skirt-blouse-sheath combination in the print and black wool.

One of the most highly publicized cocktail dresses of the season is a series of silk chiffon ruffles, 13 of them from neckline to hem, that Trigere calls Millefeuilles after the many-layered pastry. (In America that pastry is called Napoleon, which is no name for a dress, especially one with ruffles.) In its most spectacular version Millefeuilles is cut from a Swiss floral print with tropical blossoms in shades of red against a black background; since the print is large and the ruffles are narrow, the splashes of colour fall haphazardly and the effect is that of Expressionist painting.

A more severe Trigere gown, a Swiss silk printed in large black dots on an emerald background, falls straight to the floor, its line broken only by the overblouse that stops just below the waistline. Jacqueline Kennedy has made the two-piece evening look so popular that even one-piece dresses look as if they were in two pieces. This is one of them.

It is no coincidence that all New York collections include today a higher proportion of floor-length formal gowns. American women, who persisted so long in loyalty to « the little short evening dress », now are discovering again the romance of the ballgown. Skirts do not sweep or billow, however; when they do not fall straight, they are shaped with great discipline.

Fernando Sarmi always has been a devotee of the long gown, as well as a fan of Swiss fabrics. He has united these two enthusiasms several times in his new collection. One slim gown in shades of yellow exemplifies a trend in silk prints, for the clash of contrasting colors that made a chromatic turbulence of last year's fashion has given way to the blend of several shades of a single color.

From black silk organza embroidered in chenille Sarmi has fashioned a bell skirt, arching below a wide black patent leather belt below a white piqué bodice. Here is the high-waisted look that delights so many designers, doubly feminine because unlike the true Empire line it has a natural waistline tightly belted. A contrast in color emphasizes this look, so for another ballgown Sarmi puts a bodice of aquamarine gauze, heavily embroidered in silver, above a bell skirt in moss green gauze.

Sarmi uses silk gauze also for a café-au-lait dinner dress with a high waist marked by a large pink rose. And some leading milliners have bought this same silk gauze, so we may expect airy bouffant hats this spring.

At any luncheon in New York in the spring, one is likely to see a preponderance of dress-plus-jacket costumes. This spring the jacket is usually short and fastened with a single button or a cluster of buttons in a single spot. An example, in a Swiss blend of silk tussah and wool, is Teal Traina's short cutaway jacket fastening at the

throat with one large button over a sashed dress with inverted pleat. The color is citron.

At that same springtime luncheon one will spot some classic styles, for American women with their growing sophistication in dress are realizing that their favorite styles can go on... and on... and on... A classic in Swiss fabrics is the wool challis, paisley printed. Vera Maxwell, who can resist change better than most designers, has made her favorite sheath dress, with soft pleats at waistline and soft bow at throat, in a challis of beige, red and

navy. For the past 25 years she has combined paisley with navy cheviot, and this season a side-fastened coat in navy cheviot is lined with the paisley challis.

In America the Swiss have a reputation for stability and dependability, as witness their banks and watches. So it must be a sign of maturity that so many major designers are basing so many styles on the fabrics made in Switzerland.

Rhea Talley Stewart



Mousseline de laine
suisse avec impression
cachemire
Swiss paisley printed
wool challis
Modèle Vera Maxwell,
New York



LA SUISSE A NEW YORK

Vue d'une exposition de tissus de coton et broderies suisses, organisée dans une vitrine de l'agence de l'Office national suisse du tourisme à New York ; ce remarquable étalage, au centre de la métropole américaine, a remporté un vif succès. Photo Manny Greenhaus.

SWITZERLAND ON DISPLAY IN NEW YORK

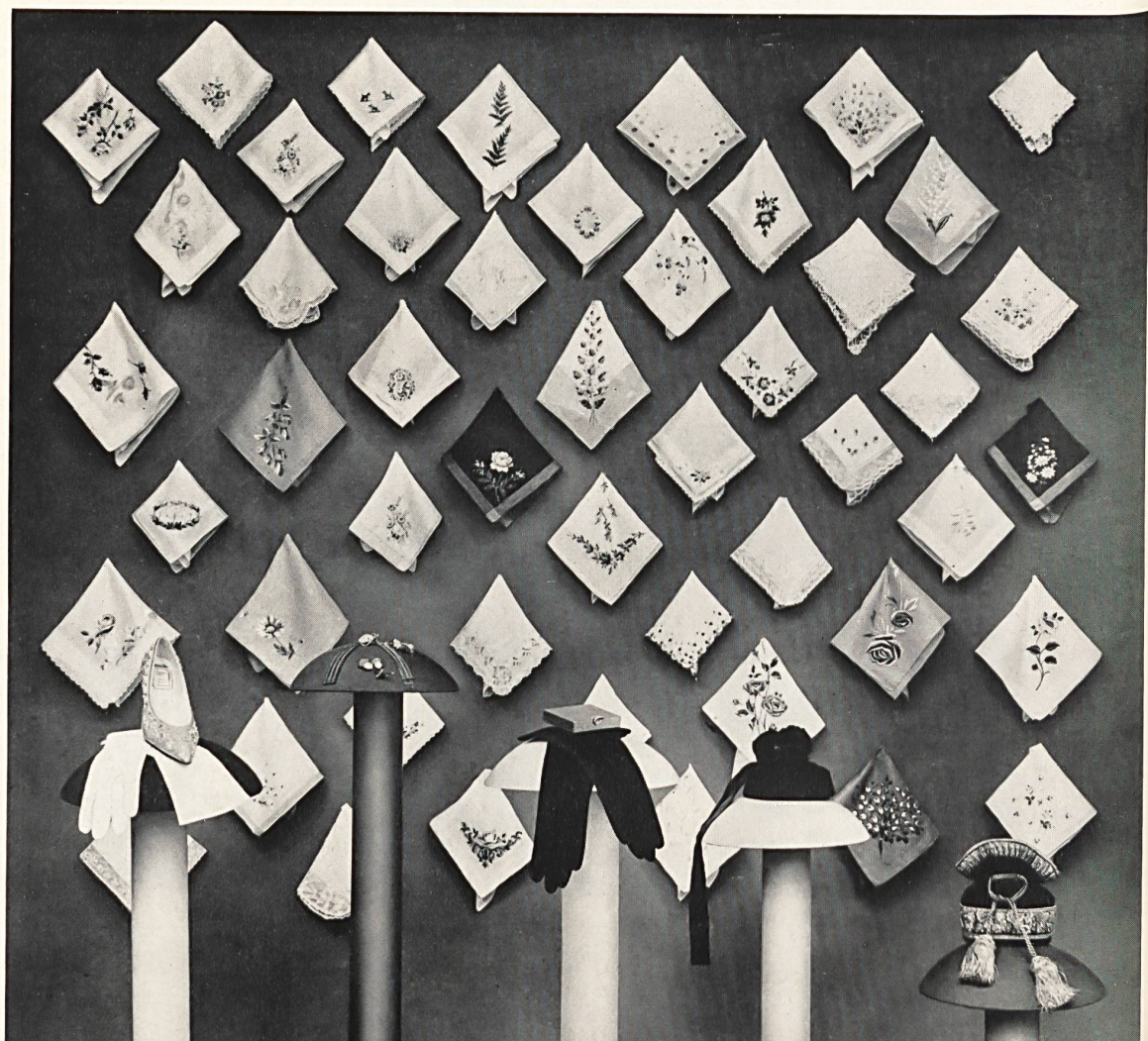
View of a window display of Swiss cotton fabrics and embroideries at the New York agency of the Swiss National Tourist Office ; this attractive display, in the heart of the American metropolis, met with considerable success. Photo Manny Greenhaus.

Le mouchoir est décidément devenu un accessoire de mode indispensable, capable de s'adapter à toutes les exigences, à toutes les situations. Pour rappeler cette vérité aux Américaines soucieuses de se bien vêtir, et leur fournir les éléments d'un choix, le bureau de New York de l'Office de propagande de l'industrie suisse du coton et de la broderie a présenté cet assortiment de mouchoirs brodés en connection avec des chaussures, des gants, des bijoux et autres accessoires.

(Bijoux de Cartier - chaussures de Roger Vivier pour Christian Dior - chapeau de Adolfo pour Emme - gants de Hansen).

The handkerchief has definitely won its place as an indispensable fashion accessory capable of being adapted to every requirement and every situation. In order to remind fashion-conscious American women of this truth and to give them a representative selection to choose from, the New York branch of the Swiss Fabric and Embroidery Center presented this collection of embroidered handkerchiefs in conjunction with footwear, gloves, jewels and other accessories.

(Jewels by Cartier - footwear by Roger Vivier for Christian Dior - hat by Adolfo for Emme - gloves by Hansen).



« NELO », J. G. NEF & CO. S. A.,
HERISAU

Jupe en organdi rose
Skirt in pink organdy

A. NAEF & CIE S. A., FLAWIL

Corsage blanc brodé
White embroidered corsage
Modèle Helen Lee

REICHENBACH & CIE, SAINT-GALL

Bordure brodée sur batiste à pois bleus
et feston

Embroidered, scalloped blue polka dot
edging on batiste

Modèle Florence Eiseman, Milwaukee



Swiss Fabric and Embroidery Center, New York



JAKOB ROHNER S. A., REBSTEIN

Organdi rose brodé
Embroidered pink organdy
Modèle Helen Diran pour Elena



A. NAEF & CIE S. A., FLAWIL

Laize de broderie anglaise sur batiste
Eyelet embroidery on batiste
Modèle Céleste