

Letter from New York

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Letter from New York

It is once more fashionable to be a grown woman.

After a period when all clothes seemed to be made for the habitués of the discothèque, those whose youth makes acceptable any whimsy or extravagance, the New York designers are working in a slower, more gracious tempo. The wilder forms of dance are yielding to the folk steps, or even the waltz.

One of the most significant dresses is made by Pauline Trigere of wool challis from Switzerland printed in red and blue Portuguese tiles. The bodice fits snugly and the skirt is gathered where nature put a waistline, with a demure small bow in back. Its set-in sleeves fit tightly to the wrists, and around the neck goes an enormous ring scarf. Here is a dress in the classic tradition, that is now the vanguard of fashion.



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Tissu de laine à carreaux marine
et vert

Wool fabric in navy and green
plaid

Modèle: Branell, New-York
Photograph courtesy New York
Couture Group, Inc.

The waistline can be anywhere. The Empire silhouette is especially evident in the evening, as in Adele Simpson's long gown of Swiss matelassé in gold and silver, its high waist emphasized by a brief matching jacket with those long, tight sleeves and an extravagant collar that is also an important fashion note. Sometimes the waistline is low, around the hips above flares or pleats, and in this case the bodice comes closer to the body than it would have come last year.

This is a season when designers are showing new interest in the curves of a woman's figure. Their means are subtle, a matter of suggestion rather than explicit tightness. The fabrics are soft and clinging, and often they are cut on the bias in the manner of the 1930's, as in Fernando Bosc's afternoon frock of Swiss crinkled satin, the lines pulled forward in a bow at center front.

Colors have no reticence at all. Vivid as a blast of trumpets is the Swiss challis in a paisley of many bright hues, from which Bill Blass of Maurice Rentner makes cardigan jackets which he mates with sleeveless sheaths in shocking

pink and intense lemon yellow. This, says Mr. Blass, is the way to look at cocktail time when other women are wearing black. Plaid also is chic for parties, and Pauline Trigere puts plaid Swiss challis blouses to many suits.

The sobriety of gray flannel for evening delights some designers, like Jo Copeland of Pattullo, who buttons it down the front but leaves the buttons undone from the knee down. Many other wool fabrics make evening dresses.

Also there is the gaiety of coral cut velvet from Switzerland which Sarmi makes nearly invisible by swirling ostrich feathers around it. This dress has no shoulder straps, and the look of bare shoulders with a small waist and full skirt is young enough to please the discothèque dancers but graceful enough for those who took their dancing lessons in white gloves to Strauss music.

A footnote: No report on New York fashions would be complete without noting that when the Mayor of New York took a bride, she wore an outfit of Swiss cotton.

Rhea Talley Stewart

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Brocart de soie magenta
Magenta silk brocade
Modèle: Gustave Tassell

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Satin de soie cloqué
Crinkled silk satin
Modèle: Fernando Bosc for Paul Parnes

