

London fashion week in optimistic mood

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ABRAHAM AG, ZÜRICH
Pure silk chiffon with gold print
(Model by Salvador, London).

The London Fashion Week is now firmly established on the seasonal international circuit. The March 24th-28th 1980 event was better than had been expected, both in terms of merchandise offered and business effected. One came away feeling that the trade had pulled out all the stops to present a fresh new look for winter 1980.

At all the different exhibition venues in town that was refreshing and reassuring. British designers excelled in knits and late day to evening wear and these were the areas most sought after by foreign buyers. The main theme was no nonsense, no gimmicks, no exaggerations but simple, very effective shapes which added up to exciting, wearable fashions in new colours and fabrics.

Prominently featured among the fabrics in the collections for winter 1980 were checked mohairs, also quilted fabrics for coats and jackets worn over matt jersey dresses. Lustre effects and lots of glitter, frequently on matt grounds, appeared everywhere. In the foreground were velvet, moiré, brocades, lamé, crêpe georgette and lace and embroideries for evening. Paper taffeta vied with glitter nylon in tiered cocktail and evening dresses. Velvet or jersey trousers teamed well with silk tops and jackets in sensuous evening outfits to ring the changes with mini to full-length dresses.

London fashion designers offered a full spectrum of suggestions to their customers to choose from according to individual taste, personality and life-style. Shoulders for winter 1980 remain wide but soft, waists are frequently pleated or gathered, emphasized or dropped to hip level with narrow falling skirts on or above knee length, sometimes seen with plain camisole tops sewn onto tiered glitter skirts.

Important colours are: black, cream, oatmeal, ochre, terracotta, camel, grey, laven-

der, maroon, wine, grape, plum, peacock blue, turquoise, emerald, jade green, combined with silver and gold for evening.

A great favourite among British designers is Janice Wainwright. She formed her own company six years ago and has since gone from strength to strength, assisted by her sister Wendy. Her showroom is in 10, Poland Street, London W1. The two charming sisters form an excellent team, both being equally unassuming and friendly, just the right mix with talent for lasting customer relations backed up by good delivery service, so important for succeeding in these economically difficult times, when other London designers have sadly had to close down their business.

Janice Wainwright Limited has increased its business in each of the last two years by 50% to reach almost £1 mil. Exports, particularly to the USA, Hong Kong and Germany make up 45% of the total. For each of her collections, Janice has consistently chosen a colour theme and line and then played this through to the full with great attention to detail and skill, thus creating her

own distinctive handwriting. Once she likes a particular fabric, she uses it over and over again and this too adds to her success because customers come back for it. 85% of her winter 1980 collection fabrics are by Abraham, Zürich. Janice has used plain matt jersey for the past four years in succession, "because it is just the right weight and they are so good with colour". For some of the models, she had colourful panels painted and these were inserted, creating interesting geometric effects.

In contrast to the plain fabrics where she played out all possible variations with flounces, spirals, drape pockets, side frills, asymmetric necklines and flared or narrow skirts with dropped waistline or sheath styles, she used Abraham's silk chiffon with silk spotted and trellis jacquard for a large group of short to full-length ruched and frilled cocktail and evening dresses.

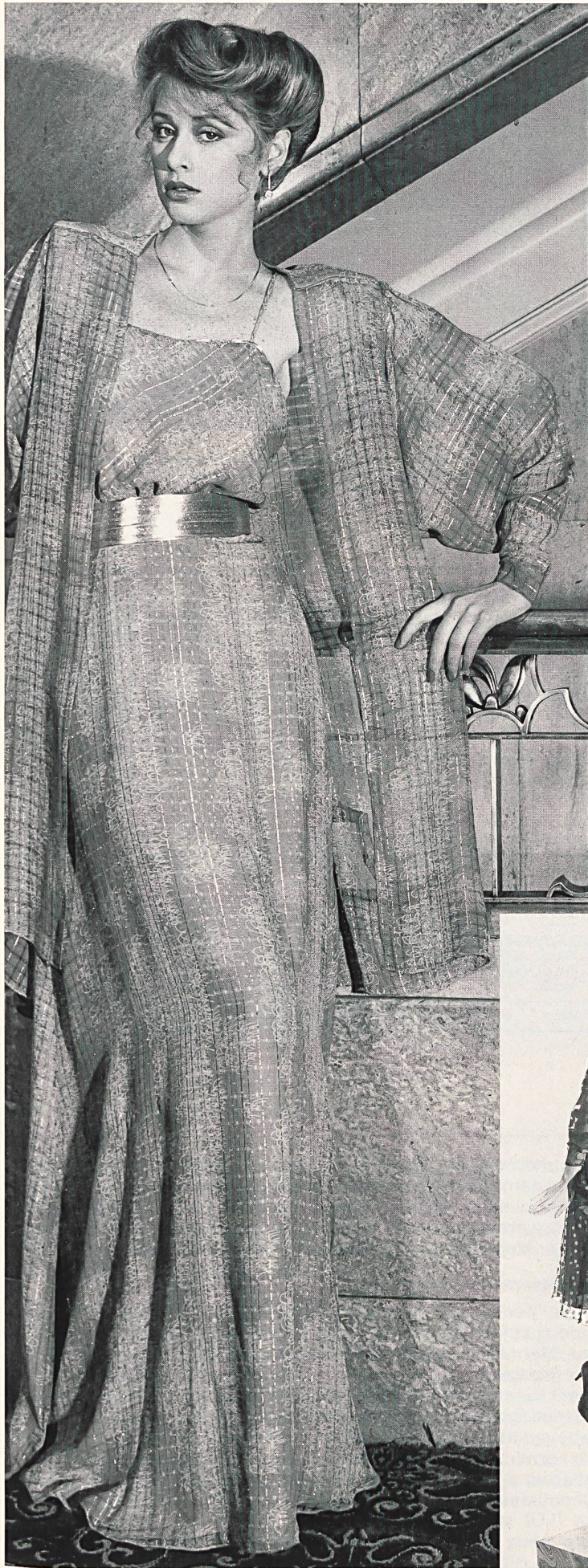
Her main colours for winter 1980 are: bottle, grey, maroon, Prussian blue and ochre. The flapper dresses Janice created have a new 80s look about them. The leading skirt length is just on the knee.

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On price level, Swiss textiles still have a hard time on the British market competing against imports from France and Italy. Some designers regretfully admitted that they had to opt out from buying Swiss because their customers would no longer pay the high prices. Mr. Velden, designer at Salvador, clenched his teeth and said "These fabrics are so expensive but I am still using them", pointing to some beautiful silk chiffons and gold lamé from Abraham which he obviously could not resist and had made into quite delightful late day and evening ensembles. Abraham's moiré featured strongly for suits and coats in the beautiful couture collection by Murray Arbeid. When asked what he thought of the question raised "why do all the loveliest laces have to come from Switzerland?" he replied without hesitation "I would dearly love to buy British if Nottingham would produce something like this", pointing to a superb deep plum coloured sequin embroidered chiffon from Jakob Schlaepfer, St. Gall. Murray Arbeid also loves Abraham's jersey which was used for a dozen of his beautifully made styles in the winter 1980 collection. He now produces about 4,000 dresses a year, employs 35 people and is one of the "happy" hard working survivors on the precarious fashion scene.

Where money does not present price barriers, Swiss embroideries, so many of which are truly works of art, were seen in London collections aimed at the very top end of the trade, as for instance that of Christina Stambolian for D.P. Designs, 10, Great Marlborough Street, London W1, who has used embroidered georgette by Jakob Schlaepfer, St. Gall and printed lamé georgette by Stehli, Switzerland, in the winter 1980 collection.

Greta Sitek



◀◀
STEHLI SEIDEN AG, OBFELDEN
 Georgette print with Lurex® stripes
 (Model by Christina Stambolian, D.P. Designs, London)

△
JAKOB SCHLAEPFER + CO. AG, ST. GALLEN
 Embroidered georgette with rhinestone applications (Model by Christina Stambolian, D.P. Designs, London)

◀
ABRAHAM AG, ZÜRICH
 Pure silk chiffon with clipcord dots (Model by Janice Wainwright, London)