

Letter from Los Angeles : portrait of a lady

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Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss textiles [English edition]**

Band (Jahr): **- (1954)**

Heft 1

PDF erstellt am: **24.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798826>

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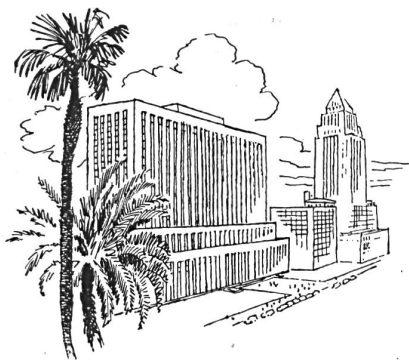
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LETTER FROM LOS ANGELES

Portrait of a Lady



Little-girl dress in anti-creased and sanforized cotton voile, Pat Premo's exclusive fabric by Stoffel & Co., St-Gall.

« It's a perfect dress for a lady »... that is what the buyer of one of the most interesting specialty shops in the country said when they showed her one of the new Pat Premo cottons for summer. And this very accurately

sums up the collection of Premo clothes... clothes for the woman who knows « good » fashion, appreciates the detail of flattering line and values the importance of quality in fine fabrics.

Pat Premo herself feels this way deeply. She believes that women want to feel pretty and yet not too conspicuous. No matter what the current fashion trends are, Miss Premo believes in retaining only the most flattering features... « if it isn't flattering it isn't good fashion ».

There's a gentlewoman manner running through everything she does, a basic mood of serenity and dignity that make her clothes a genuine pleasure to be worn. Her clothes make a woman feel secure and « right ». There are many reasons for this. One is the Premo motto : « Don't spare the yardage. » Her simple cottons sometimes have as many as nine yards of fabric in one dress. Another reason is the use of the finest fabrics obtainable. Although Miss Premo is known far and wide for using the most luxurious and unusual materials, and therefore attracts the most exclusive fabric dealers to her salons, she is obsessed with an explorer's thirst for discovery. She will go anywhere in the world to find the rich, exciting materials that inspire her.

For the past seven years Miss Premo has been concentrating more and more heavily on Swiss fabrics. Each year she and W. J. Schminke, owner of the firm for which she designs and incidentally, her husband, travel to Europe to work with fabric designers at the source... at the mills. They work as a perfect team : he is the ideal business man with a remarkable grasp of production techniques, sales and management methods and a fine eye for detail and color ; she is the introverted artist with an almost infallible decisiveness in her choice of materials, a firm grasp of the mathematics and mechanics of designing, draping and pattern making and a deep sensitivity as to what a woman wants in fine resort and citified casual clothes for winter and summer.

Before they leave for each trip they set the number of garments which they plan to manufacture each season... perhaps 450,000... and then they assign a certain number of garments to each fabric selected. If both agree on the acceptability of a fabric they set a high number... if they

« Fisba » satin striped cotton voile ; fabric confined to Pat Premo by **Christian Fischbacher Co., St-Gall.**

Hand printed cotton honan confined to Pat Premo for America, by **Stoffel & Co., St-Gall.**



Cotton damask, Pat Premo's alone in America by Stoffel & Co., St-Gall.



disagree, they compromise and set a lower figure. The result of this teamwork is a successful business netting over \$2,250,000 a year and a comfortably growing volume of business from the finest stores in the United States... Bergdorf-Goodman, Neiman Marcus, I. Magnin, Marshall Field and others.

More and more this firm has come to rely heavily on Swiss mills for a large part of their fabric supply. They do their largest foreign business with Stoffel & Co., whose famous designer, René Hubert, works closely with Miss Premo. Fortunately, the free hand Mr. Hubert has been given works to the advantage of the American firm, for many of the exciting flights of fancy he has allowed himself are just the designs that Miss Premo is sure to cherish most. She also selects, with Mr. Schminke, fabrics and trims from other Swiss firms such as Fisba, Forster-Willi and one or two others.

The summer collection features an exciting group of voiles interwoven with a heavy Peruvian thread in large blocks. There are also heavily embossed cottons, called « plastic » cottons, that will dance divinely under many a summer moon. Other fine Swiss fabrics in the collection are satin striped sheers, plain and satin checkerboard cottons in heavier weights, woven batistes, several sheers woven completely of fine Egyptian yarn, pima batiste with a metallic frosting in an Appenzell design, a Swiss cotton honan resembling fine oriental silk hand-blocked in an antique design. Several frocks in plain fabrics have been appliquéd or embroidered with Swiss trims. The effects are sharp and striking, the results satisfying and saleable.

Pat Premo, the designer, is a shy, beautiful woman, mother of two teen-age sons, an outstanding swimmer, a mathematical wizard and a completely citified sophisticate. She is descended from an adventurous great-grandfather, named Primeaux, who sailed around Cape Horn



« Plastoprint » plastic cotton lawn by Stoffel & Co., St-Gall.

to find his fortune in California. Miss Premo's greatest recreation is golf... and her work. She personally designs, drapes and corrects every one of the more than sixty numbers of each collection. And there are four collections a year, most of them started in Miss Premo's head when she visits the mills, for, like the true artist she is, she lets the fabrics dictate their design to her. To such a designer each fabric has a life of its own, a distinct personality that at once suggests ways in which it will suit a certain kind of woman. This is one of the reasons why Pat Premo has been such a successful creator; each design is the

natural and best use of the fabric she has selected. Thus her clothes have an effortless look altho the utmost care, calculation and intuitive understanding of the function of fabrics have gone into each dress.

Miss Premo freely admits that again and again Swiss fabrics are one of the most exciting sources of her inspiration and the good, strong backbone of almost every collection. That is why when summer comes, Miss Premo and Mr. Schminke will be heading back again... to Switzerland, of course.

Helene F. Miller



All models are from
PAT PREMOM, LOS ANGELES.

Photos from John Engstead

Cotton voile with satin stripes by
Stoffel & Co., St-Gall.