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Letter from Vienna



Siegfried Elias, Wien
 Beige Wevenit von : / de :
Alwin Wild, St. Margrethen
 Photo Sandmann

But Viennese fashion designers today find markets for their creations in Western Europe and overseas. In these parts of the world, which are open to French and Italian influence, an original and specifically Viennese touch has always been appreciated. The adaptation of the creations of Vienna to the tastes of western buyers implies, quite understandably, a very wide use of Swiss fabrics, which correspond admirably to the tastes of these customers.

Swiss textile concerns have rapidly made a name for themselves at the Vienna Fair, which is held regularly every spring and autumn. They can count on finding an ever widening circle of faithful Austrian clients as well as a continually increasing number of foreign buyers. At this spring's fair, great notice was attracted by the originally decorated stand of a Swiss lingerie manufacturer, in the centre of which stood a model of an historic fountain from the town of Berne. The attractive diaphanous lingerie sets in synthetic fibres displayed on this stand came in for enthusiastic admiration.

Franz L. Preminger, Wien
 Reinseiden Tussah von :
 Tussah pure soie de :
Emar S.A., Zurich
 Photo T. Kolars-G. Walter

Switzerland and Austria are neighbours with many points in common not only geographically but also in their climate and people; the tastes of the women too, on both sides of the frontier are very similar. Unfortunately, almost all relations in the field of fashion were put an end to during the unfortunate period of the war and immediate post-war years. Recently however, exports of Swiss textiles to Austria have once again assumed a certain importance, particularly as a result of the progress made in the liberalisation of trade; in 1954 they amounted to almost 48 million francs, which is quite a respectable figure. High quality fabrics account for a large part of this total.

For « Viennese fashions » — at one time famous throughout the world — are not dead; the former imperial city is no longer, it is true, the capital of a great power as in the years before 1918, and the aristocratic society of Austria, both Magyar and Slav, which at one time formed the principal clientele of the leading fashion houses, has almost completely disappeared. The states which inherited from the two-headed empire and which were faithful clients of Viennese fashions until 1938 no longer make their purchases in the Danubian capital as they used to do.



Viktor J. Maschek, Wien

Razimir von : / de :

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

Photo Sandmann



In addition, several Austrian exhibitors displayed articles bearing labels such as « Swiss nylon ». Goods marked in this way quickly found favour with professional buyers, for a label of this kind is a sure sign of good quality.

The top fashion designers buy only the finest of Swiss fabrics ; the best ready-to-wear manufacturers and retail stores use and sell fabrics such as organza, duchesse satin, peau de soie, Honan and poulte-de-soie. Among the prints, the favourites are the « toile magique », the flat Honan and crease-resistant poplins with a highly perfected finish. The label « Swiss finish » has become a kind of hall mark ; Swiss finishes, which confer a luxurious look and feel on fabrics, give an invaluable boost to sales.

For the winter, Austria has given big orders for figured damask, peau de charme, cristallines and tussatines. Wevenit is another Swiss speciality that is very popular with Viennese women, and the demand will probably continue for a very long time to come.

Certain models made of Swiss fabrics came in for a great deal of attention at the first collective ready-to-wear presentation in Austria. This is doubtless the reason why Swiss fabrics were used more extensively at this year's event. It is interesting to note that new and repeat orders for Swiss quality fabrics increasing all the time.

Articles made of Helanca yarns are particularly popular in Austria. Stocking and sock manufacturers very quickly obtained stocks of this novelty. Most women soon took to stockings in Helanca for the winter and all are delighted with this article which they praise for its exceptional strength, comfort and elasticity which gives an attractive line to the leg. Men too are very pleased with the new Helanca socks.

Men and women are unanimous in their praise of the fine Helanca swimsuits. Trimmed with big buttons or decorative effects at the neckline, they could almost be called « party swimsuits ». At a fashion parade a short while ago some Swiss beach outfits in « givré » met with great success. One of these outfits, for example, was composed of small puffed out bloomers and a bodice, worn with a short bell-shaped skirt and small bolero.

Austrian lingerie manufacturers have chosen three colours for the autumn and winter : a luminous pure red called « opera » in honour of the re-opening of the Viennese State Opera, « serenade », a deep navy blue and a sporting beige called « Tibet ». It seems that importers of Swiss fabrics in Austria have taken these fashionable colours widely into account in their orders.

As can be seen, the textile economies of Switzerland and Austria are coming to complement each other more and more. If this continues — and everything seems to indicate that it will — the demand in Austria for high quality Swiss fabrics may be expected to go on increasing.

Dr. Walter Schwarz



Viktor J. Maschek, Wien

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Rudolf Brauchbar & Cie, Zurich