

London letter

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Objekttyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **- (1955)**

Heft 4

PDF erstellt am: **23.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798507>

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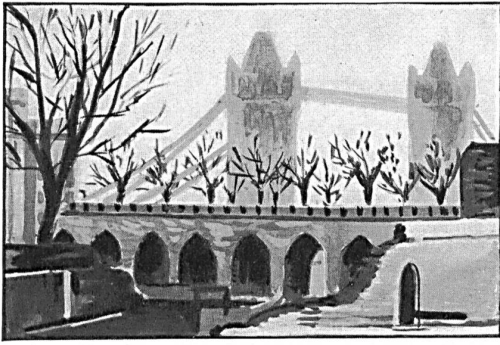
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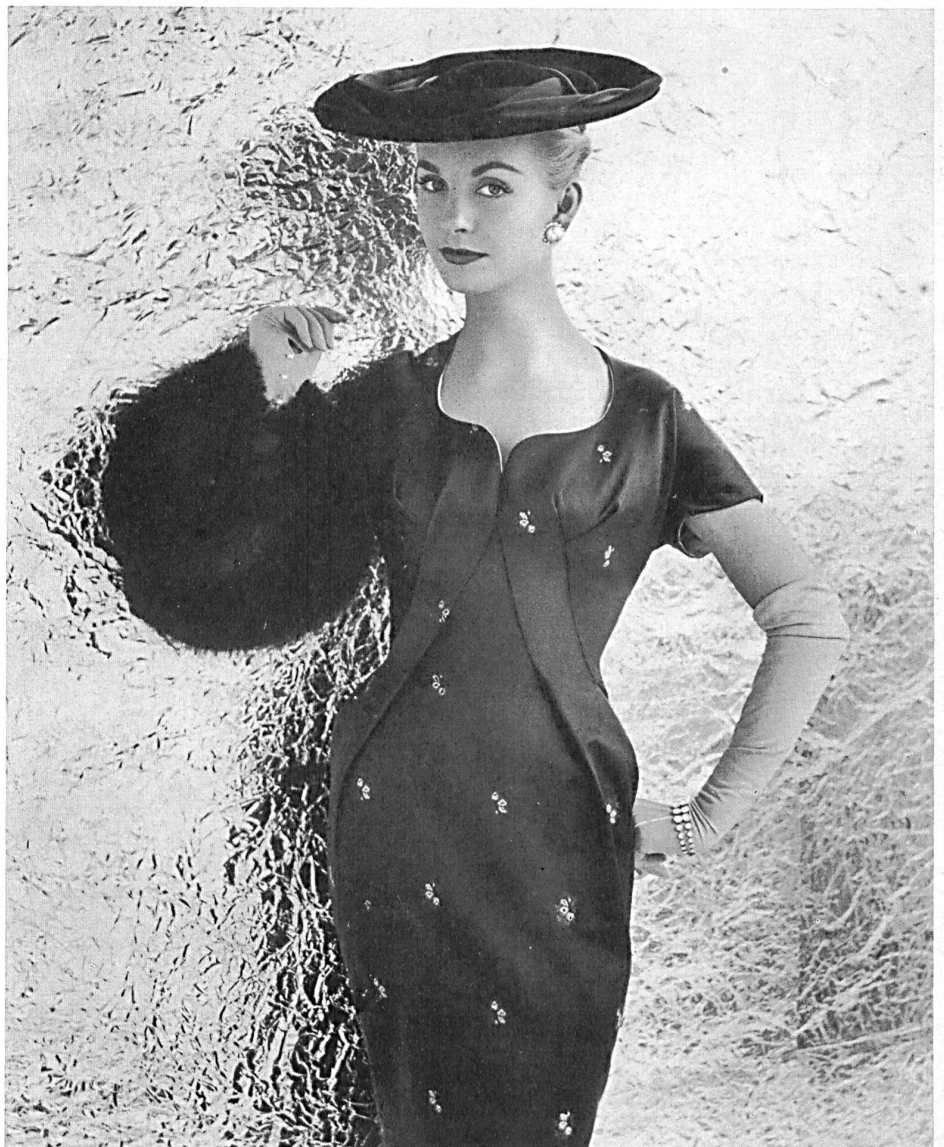
London Letter

November, from a fashion writer's point of view, can be one of the most exciting months ; entire days are packed with invitations to see the different manufacturers' collections of styles for the coming season. So even if a day is cold, dull and sunless we can at least anticipate some of the pleasures of fashion just a little way ahead.

It is, of course, in the very nature of our industry that new names should appear almost every season so that one naturally attends a new manufacturer's — or designer's — first collection with a great deal of interest. During the last year or so, more designers or manufacturers, or groups of manufacturers from abroad have been presenting their collections to British journalists and buyers.

And so while the current economic developments make it necessary for manufacturers to look over their own national frontiers for new markets abroad, the creators of fashion find themselves looking for inspiration in all the past pages of history, the great civilisations and even over to the half-remembered parts of the world of to-day.

It has only needed one journey to the East by one great designer — Christian Dior — to send a violent tremor throughout the fashion world. Caftans (how many of us had ever heard of the word before ?) long-tunics (or Chinese tunics), Tartar and Mongol hats, Pekin coats, Oriental make-up, Japanese hair styles, saris, Mandarin sheaths — all these have descended on us like an avalanche to give birth to « The Oriental Look ».



L. Abraham & Co., Silks Ltd., Zurich

Embroidered cotton.

Model by :
Roter Models Ltd., London

Photo John French



Rudolf Brauchbar & Co., Zurich

Printed pure silk.

Model by :
Roter Models Ltd., London

Photo John French

Its presence can, of course, already be felt to some extent but the inspiration of the Master which seemed at first hard and severe is being wonderfully translated by talented adapters for the average market. So let us admit that this Oriental line will be good for the average woman, its graceful, simple, clear lines will reflect the elegant neatness of the more expensive clothes which have so far been beyond her budget.

Although I decided, on this occasion, not to include any store for review I feel I should just mention that I have never seen so many Swiss-made ladies' handkerchiefs (Jacob Rohner) ; lovely as they are, is there a hope that we shall all develop streaming colds this Winter? It would be remiss of me not to mention also the really attractive children's party dresses made from embroidered nylon and on display in a well-known store in Oxford Street.

At the London showroom of one of the major importers of Swiss knitwear I had the opportunity of a private preview of Swiss creations for the coming season, some of which are incidentally to be shown at a special reception to be given early in December at the Dorchester Hotel ; even on the tightly packed rails most of the models revealed some of their distinction. In fact I usually prefer to see a dress in the first instance on a hanger ; its virtues

— or otherwise — are immediately apparent, stark and exposed ! However, as far as Swiss knitwear is concerned the three features which invariably win me completely are : first, the quality of the fabric ; second, the cut and finish ; third, the consistent good taste throughout the stylings. Dignity was very subtly and forcefully expressed in a perfectly plain long tunic with pockets low on the sides accentuated by two large buttons (Henro). The skirt was, of course, straight and slim. Other models which I felt to be particularly interesting were a two-piece lisle knit, with horizontal ribs on the jacket and vertical on a softly gathered skirt (Hanro) ; a sleeveless day dress (Egeka) with a round collar line and « ribbon » insets making large squares on a plain ground ; an entirely new character was imparted into some three or four models by the colourful repetition of a small floral motif — knit in as part of the fabric. A full length coat in this particular fabric, with mandarin collar, was picturesque and most expensive looking !

As far as the British market is concerned, more Swiss fabrics are generally used by manufacturers for their spring and summer ranges ; this, of course, is due to the greater opportunity of using dress silks (plain, printed or embroidered), organzas, voiles etc. It would now be

Forster Willi & Co., Saint-Gall

Fine guipure trimming.

Blouse by :
Janet Colton Ltd., London



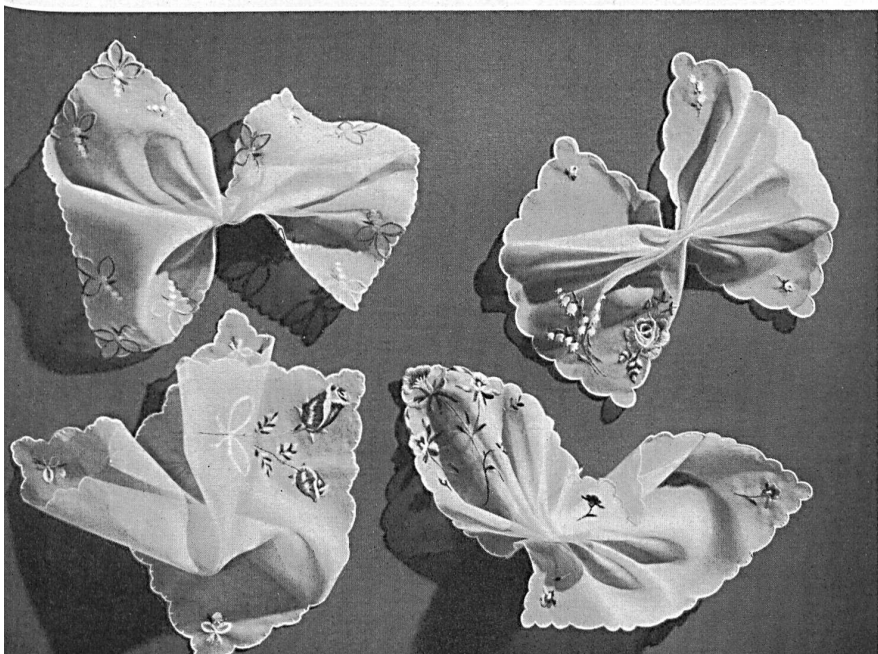
quite a shattering exception if one of the major well-known manufacturers were not to use Swiss materials for some models in his collection ! Such major makers as Roecliffe & Chapman, Marcus, Frederick Starke, Susan Small, Frank Usher, Roter Models etc. are regular users of Swiss fabrics. In fact at Frank Usher's I was told that thirty models in the new collection are made from Swiss fabrics. In the Roter collection I noticed a particularly effective embroidered cotton (Abraham), possessing an excellent sateen finish and good handling texture. This house, in fact, seems to have the happy knack of always using good original fabrics to their greatest advantage — whatever the line may be.

Swiss guipure is being used extensively and most attractively by a young but rapidly growing concern, Janet Colton's, which is specialising in the better grade day and

evening blouses. At Nettie Vogues', another youngish firm, I was shown six exquisite models for the coming season and as may be expected the materials came from some of the best known Swiss concerns. My immediate reaction on seeing these models was how well they had been adapted from the present inspiration, each style radiated a wonderful sense of happiness, youth and light-heartedness. If I were just under twenty-one instead of being just over, I would fall — very hard — for one of Nettie Vogues' styles made of organdie with horizontal bands of embroidered floral motifs (Union).

Tailpiece. The dress manufacturers are much too busy this season to conjure up any little stories about themselves ; so instead, may I make a suggestion (if it has not already been made before) of creating evening and dinner gowns in Swiss jersey.

Ruth Fonteyn



Jacob Rohner Ltd., Rebstein

Embroidered nylon ladies' handkerchiefs.

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