

Today... : yesterday...

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Paris



FASHION - A DICTATORSHIP ?

Whatever the form it assumes — military, political, financial, economic or cultural — dictatorship is a species of authority abhorrent to all people. Its very name is hateful and everything that shows the slightest affinity, however superficial, is included in the universal aversion it inspires.

Why, therefore, do we speak openly of the « dictatorship of Fashion » and, above all, why do we accept this tyranny, real or pretended, to which not only the daughters of Eve, but even members of the stronger sex (although less markedly) are happy to submit ?

Why do so many men and women accept with pleasure the fascination of this collective and mysterious will ? In reality, they do not allow themselves to be led so utterly and blindly as the casual observer might be led to believe.

Let us consider for a moment the origin and essence of Fashion. Its secret power lies in the fact that she — or he — who comes under its sway and analyses with more or less critical eye that which Fashion seeks to impose, will gradually and inevitably become emancipated from its tutelage, adapting its suggestions as an expression of individual personality. The individual, therefore, unconsciously co-operates in the anonymous and ever renewed creations of Fashion. He is an element in the world of Fashion, not a passive subject, but an active component, because of the individualization he brings to bear on Fashion's final effects. Fashion does not take possession of us, but we each, in our own way and to the best of our imagination and vision, strive to possess Fashion, to make it live and become concrete, to renew it.

Fashion is not the clearly expressed will of some artist or other, but it is we ourselves, we the general public, who, in the long run, determine its success, accentuate or correct its tendencies. It is for this reason that the popularity of creators of fashion waxes and wanes from one season to another. It is their customers who make the final decision and not the specialists themselves. Fashion is not expression of chance or of an arbitrary will ; it is the eternally changing reflection of the spirit of our time to which the poetry and fancy of each season add their changing moods. Each one of us is more or less attracted by Fashion ; we register its vibrations, its impulses, but we all act independently by eliminating that which does not suit us personally, or what we cannot assimilate among the suggestions made to us by the couturiers or other creators of Fashion.

Youth has the gift of feeling things much more vividly, of translating them more freely ; Fashion is therefore always youthful. As we grow old, we lose some of that power of responding to sensations and we are less easily drawn under the influence of Fashion ; we like to show prudence, to temper too eccentric trends.

The personal attitude towards Fashion adopted by each individual is the undeniable sign of his degree of culture, of his power to adapt the spirit of his times to his own particular style. And, in the long run, it is this power of free will which we preserve in relation to Fashion which enables us to support its dictatorship.

M.-O. Z.

TODAY...

YESTERDAY...

Modern trends fulfil the past

The careful observer of feminine fashions will notice that modern styles tend to stress the bust by a broad belt and to break the line of the silhouette by accentuating the waist. Are we to witness a revival of the type of corset worn by the well-dressed woman of the XIXth century and its adaptation to present-day exigencies ?

The time of « Eton crops », flat-chested women and their servile imitation of masculinity is past. No woman conscious of her femininity condones such excesses.

New styles demand that women should remain faithful to their natural characteristics without having to abandon the ease and freedom they have won in recent years. Young girls can still play sports, not in imitation of their men-folk, but in a duly feminine way. If they aspire to political rights — which they enjoy almost everywhere today — it is with the knowledge that their task is to bring a new element to public life ; mothers see in these rights a means to procure better protection for their children.

This new moral orientation finds its reflection in the fashions of the day. Garments are inspired by the rational role in society women have chosen for themselves, but they also express the poetry which is one of femininity's eternal charms. From the Old Masters and their portraits of young women in the flower of their beauty, modern fashions select that which can give a simplified illustration of this type, a rejuvenated expression of classical feminine values.

M.-O. Z.