

Zeitschrift: Swiss textiles [English edition]
Herausgeber: Swiss office for the development of trade
Band: - (1947)
Heft: 2

Artikel: Silken aristocracy
Autor: Florestan
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798938>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 21.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

SILKEN ARISTOCRACY

You, Celia, like so many of your sisters, adore to go clad in silks from head to toe, but do you know that the Chinese have been using silken fabrics for these four thousand five hundred years and more? They say that a certain subtle minded Empress of the Middle Empire, having observed the silkworm at work, conceived the idea of undoing its work, that is to say of unravelling the cocoons and spinning a filament.

And, do you know, Celia, that even before this discovery, the Chinese already used silk for their garments, silk they obtained by fraying the cocoons of the Bombyx moth? And, that is just what I wanted to say! It is this age-old history which makes silk, the silk of cocoons, the oldest textile in the world! Forty-five centuries, that is surely both a noble age and a recommendation. Because, if silk had not possessed very evident and indisputable qualities, it would definitely have lost its supremacy in the course of centuries. And that has never happened, despite certain attempts which have been made to dethrone it; silk has remained the aristocrat of textiles. Because of its ancient lineage which has permitted it to witness all the great periods of history; because of its origin — is it not born of a tree and a moth, of Earth and Sky? — because of its characteristics, its appearance, its handle, its delicacy, its suppleness, elasticity and diaphanous weight, its discreet lustre and its strength... It is not absolutely perfect, for perfection is not of this world, but to produce it requires, as in the case of wines and the nobler products of the earth, the generous help of man, and depends on unpredictable meteorological and biological conditions. These are the factors which confer upon it that innate aristocracy to which commodities born of the machine cannot aspire.

Practised at first by the Chinese, the art of silk weaving spread to Japan 2,000 years later and, from there, to Turkestan, and to Byzantium in 552 A.D. under the Emperor Justinian. Thence the manufacture of silk spread rapidly throughout the Near East and to the Mediterranean countries. But Chinese silks were already known and much sought after for centuries.

It is silk which adorns and enhances the beauty of Oriental princesses, the grace of sylphs, the charm of fairy princesses, the majesty of Emperors and temporal and spiritual powers... Veils, crepes, damasks, brocades, satins, taffetas, poult de soie, fabrics as airy as the wind, as colourful as the rainbow, sombre or gay, supple, sumptuous and heavy as the severe folds of marble draperies — that is silk, the same and yet never the same, an eternal youth of refinement and nobility, spun and woven for thousands of years of civilization and human culture: from the stiff solemn robes of the mandarin to the diaphanous, printed, embroidered and cloudlike gown of a modern Eve.

By what destiny has Zurich become a centre of the silk industry? This development must be attributed to the fact that this commercial town is situated on the St. Gotthard route along which came merchants from North and South. In the early XIIIth century, the first silk yarns were brought from Italy. Silk weaving soon took root and became a local craft; it prospered, almost died out and was later revived, becoming an important industry not only in the city itself, but in the neighbouring countryside, receiving the support of an excellent, international sales organization. There is no civilised country — not even the Fiji Islands — where Zurich silks have not been imported. Many of the leading Zurich firms of international fame have branches in the Orient, specialized in the purchase of raw silks. For over one hundred years Zurich has had its «Silk Condition» and a reputed professional training college where weavers and designers are prepared for the craft.

Here, surely, are reasons enough for manufacturers to remain faithful to this precious fibre, although they certainly have not neglected the potentialities offered by the more youthful rayon and staple fibre. Both these viscose fibres, manufactured in Switzerland, have helped silk weavers to carry on through the darkest days of raw material shortage during the war; they have also helped to popularize silk goods and now we cannot conceive the silk industry without these two auxiliaries. Nevertheless, Swiss manufacturers bestow their most loving care on silk, their favourite child, a child more prodigal perhaps than its synthetic sisters, more capricious, more costly, but to which they owe their reputation. For it is silk to which Zurich owes its fame: poult de soie, taffetas, novelty silks and rich fabrics, delicate lingerie, evening gowns — to silk which is the raiment of houris, fairies and princesses or — in our day — the sheath which moulds a pretty leg and dresses the loveliest women.

Florestan.



Satin faille moiré
Damas Jacquard.

Créations présentées à la
Foire Suisse, Bâle 1947.
Creations presented at the
Swiss Industries Fair,
Basle 1947.

Creaciones presentadas en la
Feria Suiza, Basilea 1947.
Modische Schöpfungen
ausgestellt an der
Mustermesse Basel 1947.

Robt Schwarzenbach & Cie.
Thalwil (Suisse)



**Fabrique de Soieries
ci-devant Edwin Næf S. A., Zurich.**

Impression „Orbis“ sur Poult de Soie.

„Orbis“ Print on Poult de Soie.

Impresión „Orbis“ sobre Poult de Seda.

„Orbis“-Druck auf Poult de Soie.

Heer & Co. S. A., Thalwil.

Satin Duchesse rayé.

Satin Duchesse imprimé.

Raso Duchesse listado.

Raso Duchesse estampado.

Striped Satin Duchesse.

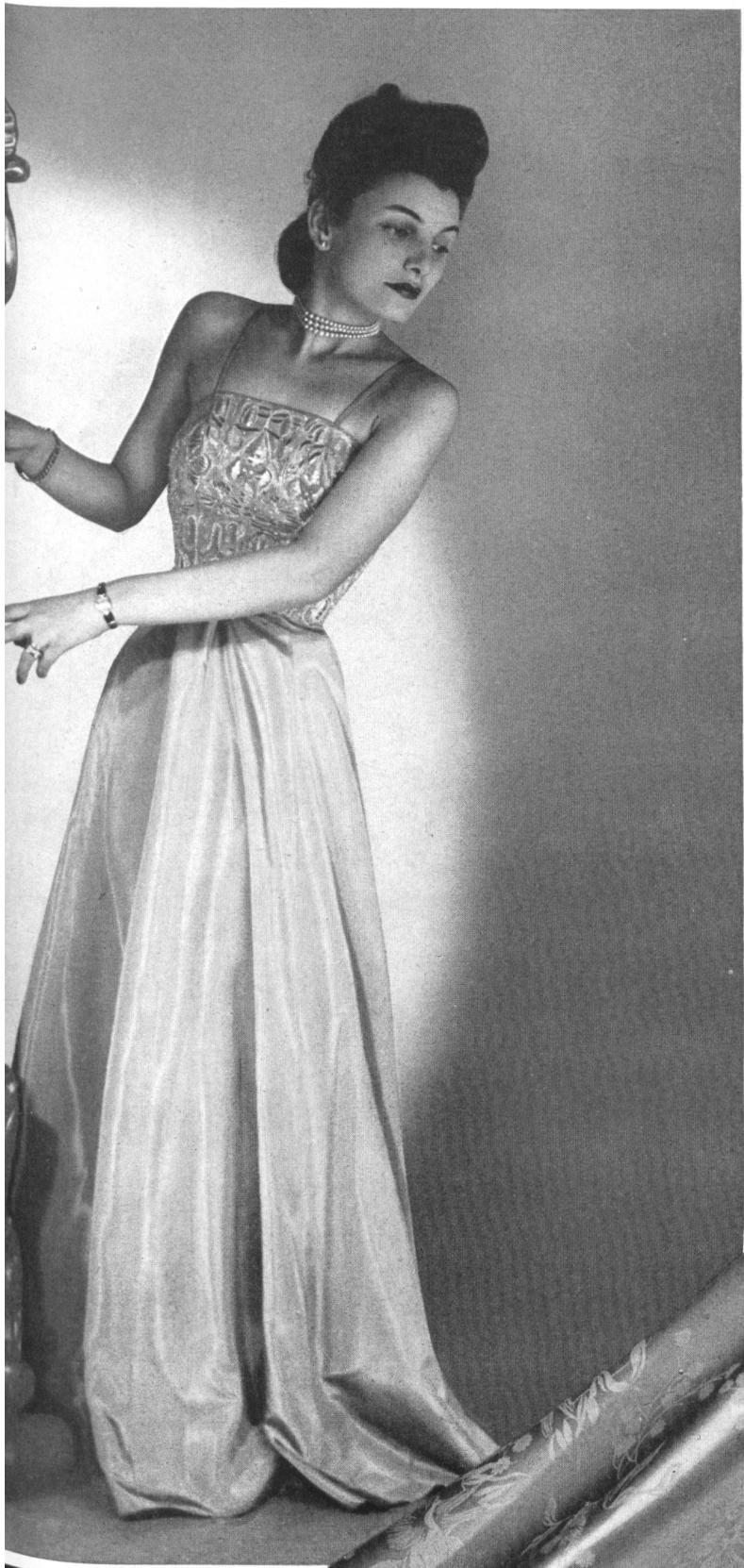
Printed Satin Duchesse.

Gestreifter Satin Duchesse.

Bedruckter Satin Duchesse.

Algo S. A., Zurich.

Robe du soir en Poult de Soie lourd de :
Evening dress made with an heavy Poult de Soie from :
Traje de soaré en Poult de Seda pesado de :
Abendkleid aus schwerem Poult de Soie von :
Stehli & Co., Zurich.





Rudolf Brauchbar & Cie, Zurich.

«TORTOSA RAYÉ»

La qualité infroissable idéale pour l'été et le sport. Collection 1948.

Crush-resisting finished for Summer and Sport. Collection 1948.

La calidad inarrugable ideal para al verano y el deporte. Colección 1948.

Die ideale, knitterfreie Qualität für Sommer und Sport aus der Kollektion 1948.