

Zeitschrift: Swiss textiles [English edition]
Herausgeber: Swiss office for the development of trade
Band: - (1948)
Heft: 1

Artikel: London letter
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-799165>

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London letter

London

In the fashion world, the London Spring Collections have been the great event. The shows of the haute couture have definitely established the more feminine line of the «new look», at it is still called here. People in England have been wondering if this was a freak of fashion, not meant to last. Some considered the long skirts impractical in our workaday world, and the new fulness wasteful of material for which we have to pay so many precious coupons. These women did nothing, and waited to see if the new fad would pass. Now, they are taking out their shoulder pads and letting down their skirts. There is no doubt that the «new look» has come to stay. The clothes we buy this summer will have its rounded silhouette; and the old clothes we cannot afford to throw away must be altered and brought into line as much as possible. (The greatest tragedy is a good dress with no extra hemline.)

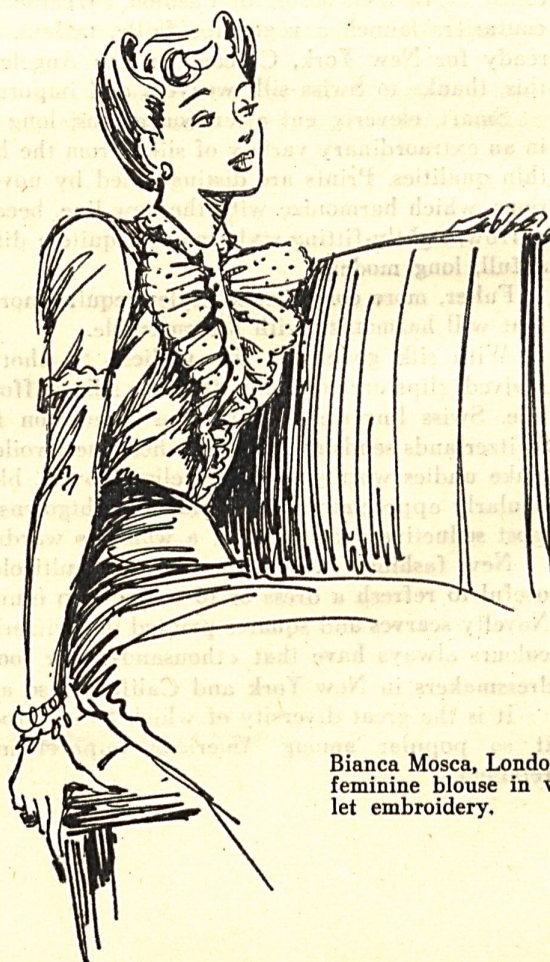
For the inescapable fact is that fashion is one and indivisible all over the world. When we were cut off from our neighbours by the war, ideas developed along different lines; continental fashions, revealed at the time of Liberation, were strange to English eyes. But now free communication is restored, it is inevitable that fashions like other ideas should become international.

Indeed, the different nations of the West each contribute to the creations of the rest. France uses Swiss muslins and English tweeds; Switzerland may import gowns from Paris, and in England you will see Swiss embroideries, Swiss shoes, Swiss furnishing fabrics with their subtle colours and individual designs.

Swiss muslin and embroidery combine to form one of the salient features of the London Collections. In crisp blouses of broderie anglaise; in touches of frosty white at neck and cuffs of dark dresses; in romantic evening frocks and delicate lingerie, which

are a drift of white lace and embroidery, the Swiss motif is repeated again and again.

Hardy Amies shows two evening dresses of lace. One is a delicate shell pink with a black velvet corselet belt. The other, which is called «Swiss Miss», is a heavenly party dress for a debutante: pure white daisy-patterned broderie anglaise with a long full skirt, tightly moulded bodice and shawl-fichu crossed over the bosom. Another designer shows a white broderie anglaise blouse with short gloves and sun-bonnet hat made of the same material. Bianca Mosca has a romantic summer evening dress of white corrugated nylon which glows out into a ruffle all down the front of the skirt, the collar, sleeves and ruffle



Bianca Mosca, London: A very feminine blouse in white eyelet embroidery.

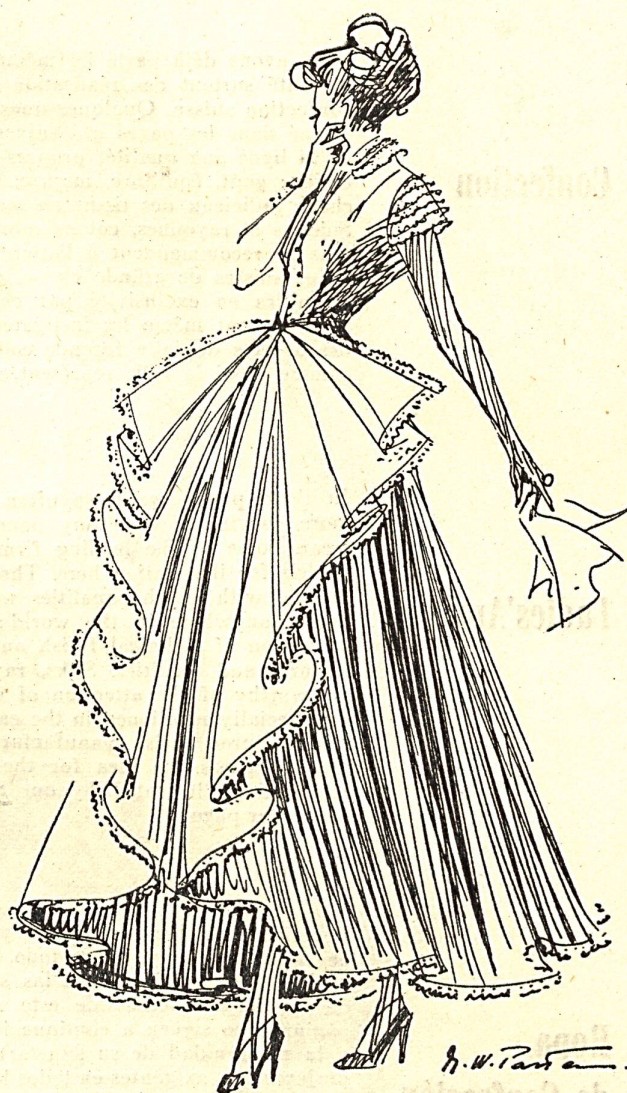
edged with Swiss lace. She also shows a pretty and very feminine blouse of white broderie anglaise, made in Switzerland. Michael Sherard, a new high fashion house, has a charming evening dress of white organdie printed with coloured flowers — high in the neck and blossoming into panniered fulness in the skirt. Molyneux reveal a froth of lacy petticoat beneath the full skirts of some of their dresses. Angèle Delanghe is another designer who likes lingerie touches, or blouses, of crisp white lace.

Other characteristic features of the London shows are hips emphasised with padding, and sometimes padded stomachs, too; small waists, tightened with guêpières; sloping, unpadded shoulders. Coats are full and tent-like or close-fitting to the small waist and then flaring out into a full skirt. There is a great deal of pleating: both Molyneux and Hardy Amies show skirts which swirl out in a fan of tiny sunray pleats; Amies even uses pleating in some of his topcoats. In contrast with the full skirts, bodices fit like gloves, and jackets are shorter — sometimes tiny boleros.

As the silhouette gets softer, fabrics follow suit. There is a tremendous amount of stiff silk-faille, poulx, brocade. Often this is used for «fin de journée» suits; sometimes for dresses, like one for restaurant dining, designed by Victor Stiebel in bronze coloured faille with jet embroidery on the bosom; and Delanghe has a full-skirted coat of swishing black brocade.

Hats and hair have a new look, too. Hair-styles are romantically pretty, with soft chignons and light curly fringes, like those Renoir's ladies wore. And the curls are crowned with little straw hats set, not back or sideways as they were last season, but straight on the head. Sometimes they are demure sailors adorned with roses and a foam of veiling; sometimes they're narrow at the sides and jut forward, shovel-shape. We don't, alas, see as many of the fine Swiss straws as we should like, particularly in the London shops; for the import quota is very small. But negotiations for a larger supply continue, and we hope that soon this popular demand will be satisfied.

Moving from top to toe, we come to shoes and stockings. The latter are darker than they used to be: at many of the shows, the mannequins wore fine stockings of dark brown or gunmetal shades — ideal colours for the splashy streets of a wet London spring. And the shoes which dart in and out beneath the long skirts and rustling petticoats have reverted to a prettier and more delicate fashion, too. They are



Bianca Mosca, London: Evening dress in white corrugal nylon, edged with lace on the collar, the sleeves and the hem.

mostly plain pumps, thin and high-heeled, closed at heel and toe, and decorated sometimes with a tiny bow. One sees again the brown leather shoes which were in fashion in the early 'twenties; and sometimes, too, black satin shoes for street wear. Swiss shoes are highly prized and sought after; and this spring we have been seeing in the shops some manufactured by a firm famous all over the continent. These, when we can manage to secure a pair, delight us with their cut, and their durability. This last is a very important point in regard of the scarcity of the coupons here. The Swiss shoes, conforming to the new fashion, are usually plain court shoes, light and elegant.

Enid Grand.