

Zeitschrift: Swiss textiles [English edition]
Herausgeber: Swiss office for the development of trade
Band: - (1949)
Heft: 2

Artikel: What summer brings... : ...and takes away
Autor: Semont, E. de
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-799283>

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What Summer brings...

... and takes away



It is customary for summer fashions to set the stamp of approval on spring trends and innovations. Anything revolutionary at this season of the year would be quite out of keeping with the holiday spirit in the air and the nonchalance, the zest of living it brings in its train and which is inevitably reflected in feminine elegance. And yet, for the well-informed, summer collections are the first heralds of autumn styles. New ideas are on the wing and designers cannot help but give — here to a bodice, there to a skirt — new and characteristic details.

But now it is of summer that we are speaking: less stylized, fashions have now a domesticated trend — little frocks beckon invitingly to beach and countryside. To protect us against too ardent sunshine, hoods are enormously wide brimmed; skirts lengthen and billow as befits the summer...

And what is summer bringing us this year? Combination dresses, fabulously large hats, scarves, boleros, wide décolletés and accessories bolder than we have seen for a long time... Buttons, deceptive trickeries, flowing panels, false skirts, detachable aprons... all these artifices are to be found on our summer frocks this year. Linen, shantung, piqué and tussah are to the fore. Pastel tones and, matching summer's own colour scheme, all shades of rose predominate; yellows, too, almost always stressed with black. White retains its pride of place. Muslins, organdies, eyelets and St. Gall laces and embroideries are somehow above the caprice of fashion and return ever crisp and daintily gracious.

And what is fashion taking from us?... All drapes and folds over-complicated for wear under an August sun. However sumptuously elegant they may be, summer styles are characterized by youthfulness and simplicity. Even cocktail and evening gowns bear that sobriety of style which seems to make them especially suitable for the very young woman.

And there are the linen suits: dark two-pieces and tailormades. Discreet they may be, but they are always relieved by a piquant detail: a lapel, cone-shaped to reveal a white piqué lining, a pocket which seems to have slipped backwards — or is sported on the sleeve. Skirts are faithful to the

wrap-over tradition, but look more voluminous when they fold under an unironed box pleat on the side. Even the soberest of such ensembles holds some little surprise in store: contrasting linen bodice, with deep shoulder line... just the thing for sunbathing or an evening at the Casino; slit skirts which reveal dark-hued shorts or an amusing draped knickerbocker; jackets which are spencers, boleros, scarves. And withal, dressing and undressing becomes something of a conjuring trick!

Prints are few and far between: very sober for town wear, very splashing for the beach. Garden-party styles are infinitely exquisite.

This year, fashions are characterized less by audacity of styling and cut than by the beauty of the fabrics employed and the subtle details which stress their elegance.

Fresh white linen dresses pricked with paste diamonds will gleam like glow-worms in the summer night. Many touch the ground; others are ankle-length. Here again trickery and illusion are practised... The transparency of silvered muslin is more revealing in a high neckline than bare back and shoulders. A black, off-the-shoulder crepe gown is worn with a pink satin tailored coat with three-quarter length sleeves, matching toque and elbow gloves, while a huge pink bird-of-paradise frames the face. Some couturiers have used embroidery, open-work, encrustations and guipure in their afternoon styles to stress femininity and exquisiteness.

For evenings, crisp billowings predominate... Pierre Balmain dreams of 1910: a brief, close-draped smock in muslin and satin, against a wide, fan-shaped panel which plunges to the ground... This new interpretation of narrow line allied to volume may well become autumn's most definite trend.

There are no limits to fancy and caprice: beach suits, long muslin gowns transparently revealing beaded, lastex swimsuits. Slips and pareos of the atomic age hidden under skirts, long and short, have long since overstepped formerly prescribed limits! But who would complain of this? They are so lovely and summer is so short!

E. de Semont.