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Now that all the collections for the great winter season have appeared, it is possible for us to give an opinion on the trends adopted by South American fashions for 1950. Perhaps it would have been preferable to have been able to speak of styles. But having been compelled for many years now to choose between the creations of Paris and the interpretations of America, Brazil has always succeeded in taking the maximum from these two sources and fusing it into a successful whole, at the same time adding a touch of originality. This year we have no alternative but to admit that all the collections show evidence of a certain hesitation.

Everyone knows how far from simple is the way in which the Brazilian woman likes to dress. What might be a defect in another country is perhaps a quality in this. Her type, her manner and her silhouette permit a certain extravagance. Now the style of the 1950 Paris fashions is not exactly the line she has been dreaming about. The wonderful French restraint, so subtle in its balance, this season offers little she wants to keep.

To be sure plunging necklines are well designed to rouse the boundless enthusiasm of the Brazilian woman, but on the other hand it seems that the hour has not yet come to abandon wasp-waists and allow the body a more natural freedom. Skirt lengths remain fairly constant at about 15 1/2 inches from the ground and the rivalry between the sheath and the full skirt is still keen.

Every collection includes several models with decorations of guipure or embroidery from St. Gall, and we hardly dare think of the difficulties that will arise when it comes to repeating these, in view of the present shortage of materials.

The economy of dressmaking is rather special in Brazil. Here too we are torn between France and the United States. The formula of other countries, that is French haute couture and interpretation to measure, is unknown here; the question of labour is probably the most important reason for this. Here it is a case of a cross between American ready-to-wear fashions and European high fashion, which moreover makes it possible for a good house to have a continuous collection that renews itself without interruption throughout the year with the clearly marked entries of the different seasons, fashion parades, etc. This perhaps gives more variety to fashion, but there is no mistaking that it is more harmful to style. However, Brazil has never made any exorbitant claims and is content to offer its customers the maximum variety that any woman could desire. For a country which is not creative, this is not bad it must be admitted.

Generally speaking, there is no doubt that the Brazilian woman is well dressed compared with women of other South American countries. Anyone may discover this for himself, since Rio is one of those rare towns where fashions for street wear are known or at any rate developed to the full.

Copacabana is certainly the jewel which has given birth to this life of freedom, spontaneity, and at the same time of elegance. This out-door fashion is expressly made for the joys of strolling along the Avenida Atlantica, the climate not being conducive to sport. However we must not omit to mention here the yacht club, one of the smartest and most elegant centres in Rio, where all kinds of outfits adapted to nautical sports can be seen.

A fashion which exists as much for indoor gatherings as for the street finds in Brazil the ideal climate for the flowering of the most beautiful ideas. The eternal summer of the tropics is not the only factor which has contributed towards the popularity of Swiss textiles. Their quality, so happily allied to their wealth of ornamentation and allowing the Brazilian woman even the extravagances she knows how to use to such good effect, marks a marvellous note of freshness which is perhaps more suitable here than anywhere else.

Fred Schlatter



Swiss textiles in the tropics



*Small two-piece,
richly decorated with embroidery from Saint-Gall.
Schlatter Model.*