Swiss textiles and Paris fashions

Autor(en): **Gaumont-Lanvin, J.**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss textiles [English edition]**

Band (Jahr): **- (1951)**

Heft [1]: **25th anniversary of Textile suisses**

PDF erstellt am: **30.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-798750

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.
Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.
Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

Ein Dienst der *ETH-Bibliothek*
ETH Zürich, Rämistrasse 101, 8092 Zürich, Schweiz, www.library.ethz.ch

http://www.e-periodica.ch

SWISS TEXTILES AND PARIS FASHIONS

On the occasion of an anniversary

To give a faithful account of the relations existing between Swiss Textiles and Paris Fashions, would take the whole of this special Silver Jubilee number. For the subject is vast and includes countless developments. It goes back to the most distant past, as is so delightfully shown for example by the charming pamphlet in which, in an illustration of 1572, a horseman can be seen galloping at full speed to establish a rapid connection between *St. Gall*, the capital of Swiss Textiles, and *Lyons*, the capital of French Textiles.

In order to recall these centuries' old relations and the interdependence they have created, it would be necessary to unravel the skein of the years, the fashions, exhibitions and fairs, to quote long lists of figures, enumerate and count the markets, evaluate the equipment, list the capital invested and go into the details

of the manufacturing processes. This would make a rich, very well documented but perhaps slightly indigestible article.

But how could one possibly dream of being so dull when speaking of fresh muslins, light cottons, gossamer-like silks and straws brightly coloured like the crests of birds? Perhaps it might just be conceivable in an economic review. Besides, since it is a question of Paris fashions — as varied, evanescent and changing as the colours of the sky and reflections in the water — statistics would take on the appearance of the columns of a customs register.

That is why the following lines which are dedicated to the beauty of Swiss textiles are only a series of notes, memories and impressions. It seemed to be the only way to keep the charm and grace of the subject.

* * *

Nothing but visions of colour and pictorial expression come to mind when one thinks of these fabrics and embroideries. And this is true, through the years and through the different ways of life. What is the proof of this? It is simple and quickly told. Place the scene I am going to describe in any year towards the end of the last century, at the beginning or even in the middle

of the one in which we are now living. It is always the same. Nothing changes, except perhaps the street in which it takes place, the stage properties, heavy old-fashioned gilt furniture, over-elaborate furniture of the 1900's or the English style of to-day. Outside admittedly the cars are no longer the same, Cadillacs have taken the place of the electric Krieger coupé or the carriage and pair, but the principal character and his imagination are alike. He is of course the couturier. He is tired, by definition. He is tired of creating and his inspiration is drying up. Out in the street, beyond the windows, it is January. The snow is softly falling over Paris in light flimsy flakes which melt as soon as they touch the ground and turn to mud. The street lamps give off fringed circles of light. The window panes are misted. It is the winter of the town. The couturier, tired and uninspired, presses his forehead against the cold damp window pane. He thinks of the rapidly approaching date of his presentations, of his weariness and the necessity of creating a spring collection. With difficulty, he conjures up the sun. And suddenly, against the background of snow and greyness, he imagines the sun lighting up a field of corn where poppies and cornflowers rear their heads in brilliant splashes of colour. He sees a young girl whose warm amber-coloured forehead is a small pool of shadow under her bonnet, her dress dazzling in the bright mid-day sun, an image of white purity. He thinks of the organdies with which he would like to adorn Ophelia, the immaculate guipures over which golden tresses cascade, maidenly flutterings and delicate transparencies. Inspiration comes back to him, he

has his subject. He turns towards his assistant standing by silent and respectful of his artist's meditation: « Bring me, » he says, « the files and samples from Switzerland. » Then he designs, drapes or cuts out, in a fever of ardour regained.

* * *

This is no imaginary scene. Thus, for example, I remember seeing that great lady Jeanne Lanvin bending over your beautiful products from Switzerland, full of a deep satisfaction. I can also remember, more recently, seeing Jacques Fath smile as he looked at a piece of embroidery imagining, at that same moment, how it would adorn a dress.

It would really be necessary to mention them all — all these couturiers who love their profession and beautiful materials, and who know at a glance how to recognise this beauty.

Living in their world makes it possible to understand the intimate alliance they make between the textile and the dress. Naturally a layman could never understand how out of some hundred different fabrics they could chose, in a few moments only, the two or three they like best. Thinking of the years of work and research that have gone into the making of these fabrics, he would be astonished to see them considered, judged and often rejected all within the space of a few minutes. But if he had become familiar with the act of creating, he would immediately sense the vast amount of technical knowledge, the precision and vision required; thanks to the sifting process that takes place in Paris, a direction is given to the work of the artists and the master weavers, and the Swiss textile industry, which goes to Paris to seek its consecration, is enabled to reach out all over the world.

* * *

On looking through the pages of those books which for over a century have been reproducing the principal patterns of these glorious fabrics, one sees again the themes that have inspired Paris Fashions during the whole of this period. And one finds oneself in a climate, in an atmosphere which goes beyond Couture — that is to say, in the world of representation in colour.

It is not purely a matter of chance that the Paris School of Painting has been the greatest in the world for more than a century, and that couturiers are to be counted among its most ardent admirers. It is not purely a matter of chance that public and private art galleries in Switzerland, whether in Zurich, Winterthur or elsewhere, possess marvellous collections; that Doucet, one of the great creators of yesterday, had one of the finest collections of paintings of his time; that Jeanne Lanvin and Molyneux possessed some of the finest works of the impressionists; that Christian Dior presided over the destinies of an art gallery; that Piguet has a striking *Bérard* in his office; that in the flat of a Zurich silk manufacturer I have seen some wonderful paintings. This community of art is the link between your textile people and our couturiers. And it almost seems as if it were by design that the most wonderful paintings very often recall those light and filmy fabrics produced by Switzerland and which are so well beloved by our Couture.

Remember *Claude Monet* who is in the Louvre and who, in 1867, painted women in a garden, some seated and some fleeing in the swirl of embroidered muslins, or the *Renoir*, « Lisa with a sunshade », or « Spring », by *Manet*, or some of *Toulouse-Lautrec's* rustling draperies, or the work of *Helleu*, *Boldini* and *La Gandara* or even, nearer to our time, the young girl lying on a red rug that *Matisse* painted in 1946 in all the starry whiteness of her dress. There is not one of these paintings that does not immediately call to mind a Swiss fabric.

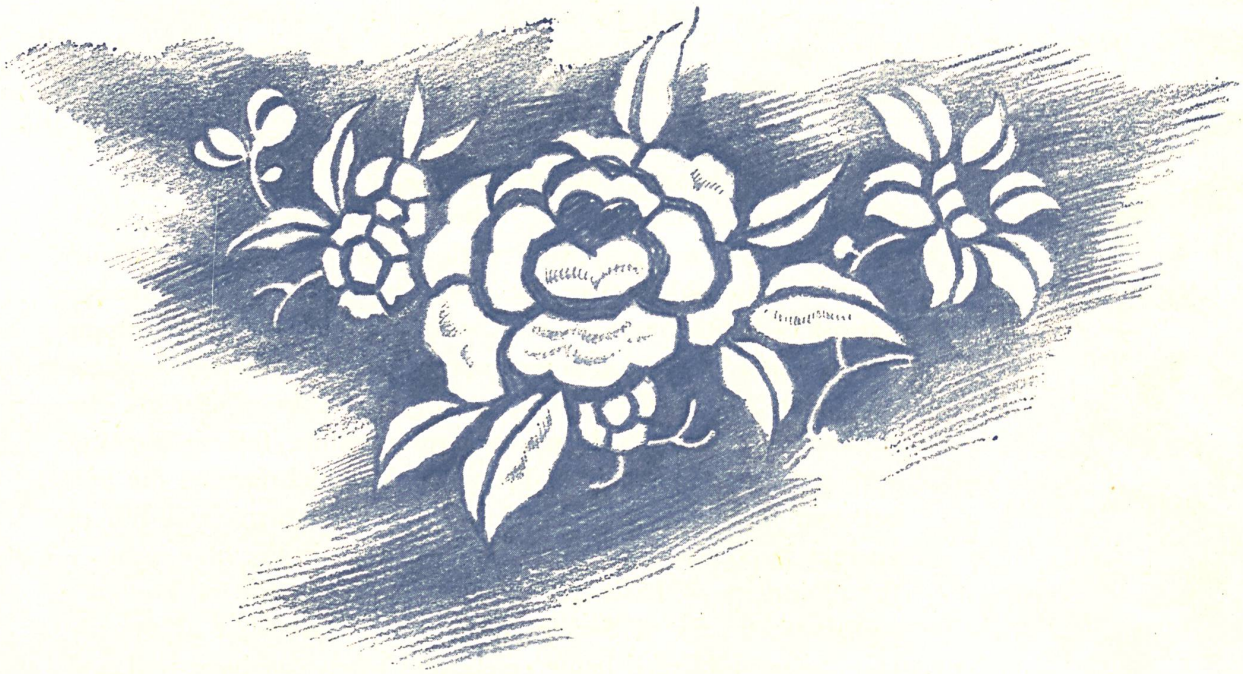
* * *

When manufacturers, artists and creators come together with the same inspiration, with the same love of beauty, in order to create beauty out of matter, when all of that is backed by a tradition and a manpower with twenty generations behind it, is it astonishing that the result exceeds all expectations ? Trunks of Switzerland — with heavy lids covered with customs labels, that I have so often seen opened and from which overflow the snows of St. Gall, the dove-coloured silks of Zurich, the brilliant straws of Wohlen; conjurer's trunks, full to bursting with pure and splendid products; trunks which formed the link between the producer, proud of his achievements and full of anxious hope, and that light figure dancing in the lime-light — the Couturier of Paris, like a character from one of *Watteau*'s paintings; trunks of Switzerland, to-day somewhat arbitrarily your Silver Jubilee is being celebrated when you have well and truly passed your Diamond Jubilee. As soon as you are opened the couturiers see, as in a fortune-teller's crystal, the enchanted

countryside of Switzerland, its torrential rivers, its lakes with their bluish green reflections, the chalets with their shutters looking like brightly coloured coats of arms, their flowers, fields, luxury, calm and beauty. Twice a year you bring a message from a world which will not change, which still attaches the same importance to human values, which continually renews itself by drinking from the fountain of life. That is why you have always been loved in Paris and why we shall continue to love you. This dream-like element in you is indispensable to Paris Fashions, and we owe you our gratitude.

J. GAUMONT-LANVIN

Paris, February 1951

The illustrations accompanying this article are motifs of machine-made embroidery of St. Gall from the « Iklé Collection » (Museum of Industrial Art, St. Gall) from the book
« La broderie mécanique 1828—1930 »
Souvenirs et documents réunis par Ernest Iklé, A. Calavas éditeur, Paris.

DESIGNS AND LAYOUT BY FRANÇOIS LORRIS