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Letter from Los Angeles

California Curtain Raisers

The recent Press Week showings unveiled their fashionable mysteries with much elan and fanfare, with visits to movie studios, with costume balls, cocktail parties and activities planned to keep the visiting fashion editors busy day and night. From early morning

until late afternoon, there were showings, showings and more showings... with an occasional swim wedged in between tightly scheduled presentations. This was California at its best.

Highlights of the show were the colors mauve and



Don Loper, Los Angeles
Pink gauze dancing dress.
Fabric by
Stoffel & Co., Saint-Gall

Photo John Engstead



Don Loper, Los Angeles
 A lounging outfit of striped
 « Lanella » by
 S.A. A. & R. Moos, Weisslingen

blue-green, to be watched for great fashion favoritism as the year marches on. Very much in evidence were those California darlings: persimmon, tangerine, capucine or hot orange.

Fabrics both domestic and foreign ranged in texture from roughened homespuns to smooth, silken and glistening fabric fascinators.

Along with adult fashions, children's fashions played a refreshing part in this cavalcade from California. Altho the miniature adult look seems to be this season's idea of what the well-dressed tot will wear (including mother and daughter matched lounging wear) other ideas appeared to capture the editors' fancy such as glamorous rainwear glittering with rhinestone rain flurries, subtle deceptions to help teen-agers thru the awkward 9 to 12 year old stage as well as elaborate party dresses pleated and ruffled in organdy and various cottons with matching coats.

In the realm of grown-ups, certain changes have taken place. Although the free-and-easy Californians could never completely endorse the latest Dior look, their

rambunctious curves have nevertheless been tamed. The shape of things to come seems to be a quixotic one... slim one moment, full the next, and even, in Howard Greer's case, a lovely combination of the two.

California designers left their native shores this time in search of exotic inspiration... Peru, Persia, Java, Jamaica turned up in prints and California versions of their native garb. Materials borrowed their look and feel and color from the homespun fabrics of South America or ethereal Oriental prints, crisp poplins or embroidered linens turned up in Bermuda shorts, new Scotch kilt-length skirts or softer fuller skirted patio styles.

Three big names made big news: Edith Small, Don Loper, Galanos. Miss Small's silhouette has not changed violently although it has adapted itself gently to the new trends with easy waistlines, and suits display carefully elongated torso lines without exaggeration. Her line is slim, hips are slim and emphasized with longer jackets. Dresses are soft sheathes cleverly varied with fringe, stripes, laces and jewels. Miss Small, as usual, imports the unusual in European fabrics.

Don Loper, whose whole life is a series of startling coups and surprises, brought off another shocker for the visiting ladies as gentlemen entered the scene wearing tucked raw silk shirts, velveteen walking shorts and hot pink knee socks. They were accompanied by feminine models dressed to match thus completing the part of Loper's collection he calls « Inseperables », clothes keyed to make beautiful harmonies together. The rest of the collection showed a slim-shouldered, high-busted, narrow silhouette, bowing to the undeniably strong French trend. His touch irresistible was the frequent accessorizing with small, less expensive furs he considers more expressive of a woman's personal chic than the mink-longed-for by "everybody". However, a featured color in the collection was a luscious cocoa-grey he called « pink mink ».

The big, big news of the entire showing was a young man, barely pushing thirty, who has been in business only a few years... James Galanos. This year he received national distinction by winning both the Coty Fashion Award and the Neiman-Marcus Award. Like most extremely talented artists, Mr. Galanos will not bear with compromise. His full silhouettes are very full, his slim silhouettes are pencil straight. His dresses have long sleeves or no sleeves at all. There is no hesitancy here or feeling for the mere in-between. Galanos favors the soft molded line with the shape built into the dress in the tradition of the great dressmakers. Black and white and red are the colors he chose most frequently for this showing with a startling use of fabrics such as handkerchief linen and chiffon, black linen topping the full

Howard Greer, Los Angeles

Black cocktail dress with white piqué collar trimmed with braid by
Forster Willi & Co., Saint-Gall

Photo John Engstead



Black velvet trim by

Forster Willi & Co., Saint-Gall

Photo John Lee



chiffon skirt. Most bodices are bloused and fitted to the waist. A bias-cut bodice featured a buckle strap across the bust. The climax of this truly thrilling collection was a cloud-drift, billowing great coat of grey silk faille... thirty six yards of it !

Throughout the collections choice items appeared in clouds of organdy, in drifts of chiffon, in the handsome lines of Swiss synthetics, with the show-stopping just right note of Swiss lace in an unexpected sports costume or the delicate tracery and subtle accent of Swiss embroidery to relieve the planned austerity of a beautifully understayed costume. Indeed, here in California, familiarity has bred affection in the hearts of California's designers.

HÉLÈNE-F. MILLER