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Los Angeles Letter

Springtime is Swisstime in Los Angeles

Once a year nearly a hundred fashion editors from all over the country convene in Los Angeles to review spring, cruise and holiday lines. This is the time of the year when designers are their least inhibited, their most colorful, their most fanciful and probably their most delightful.

We are including in this report a number of houses

known as « volume » firms rather than couturiers. They sell to a larger number of stores and are thus known to a wider segment of the public. All these people, without exception, have taken a growing number of yards of Swiss fabrics into their collections and made the American public more and more « Swiss » conscious.

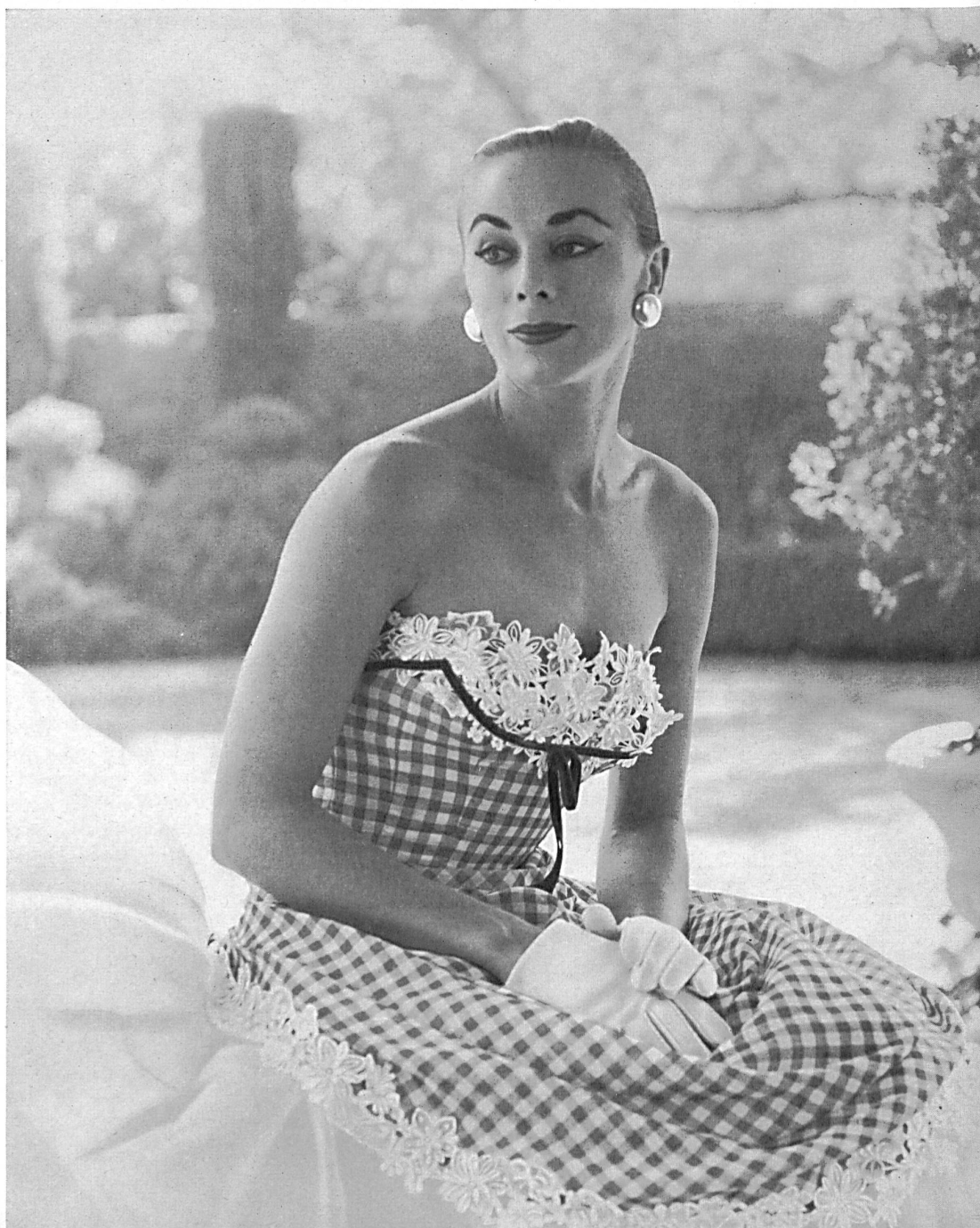
Stoffel & Co., Saint-Gall

Red and white checked cotton gingham over white organdy

Forster Willi & Co., Saint-Gall

Embroidered organdi with guipure lace applications.

Shepherdess dress by:
Howard Greer, Los Angeles



Stoffel & Co., Saint-Gall
 Swiss Nile Valley cotton print.
 Cocktail dress by :
Pat Premo, Los Angeles

Quite representative is a group known as « The Affiliates »... Addie Masters, Agnes Barrett, Peggy Hunt, Marjorie Montgomery. Miss Masters for many years made fabulous lounging clothes when these were absolutely de rigueur in every woman's wardrobe. Today a faster way of life makes it more profitable for Miss Masters to make fine dresses with « the California air ». She tells us that sheaths are far outselling full skirts in her collection and bright colors such as vin rosé are going full swing. An outstanding dress shown is a Swiss flower embroidered organdy with simple cap sleeves, round collar and one of the few full skirts in her collection.

Agnes Barrett, the originator of pedal pushers, after an absence of almost three years, is again creating fascinating sportswear that look as good in size 20 as it does in size 12. Her trade mark has been ric-rac braid, which she uses deftly on a woven striped cotton by Stoffel to make a charming, country-style summer sports dress.

Peggy Hunt has for years used laces skillfully in her cocktail and late day dresses. Several of her dresses displayed the all over use of lace on net or a bodice of Swiss lace or embroidery set on nude net to give a strapless effect, although most of her cocktail dresses feature this season's covered shoulder and longer sleeves.

Marjorie Montgomery, known for her « young » dress in the medium price range, emphasizes that she favors no special color any season, but does point up the « floaty » look and a doing away with stiff fabrics. She has done a tucked silk organza dress with full skirt and a heavy Swiss lace camisole top to illustrate what she means. Several dresses have floating panels also to give this lighter-than-air look.

The Sir James collection, designed by Jerry Grinel has given a new luxury to its vivacious spectator sportswear by importing original prints on thin silks and fine Swiss cottons. Pale-to-deep pinks, pastel-to-deep blues and the lemon-to-orange range of colors has been used.

Tabak has designed seven groups of interchangeable sportswear... boxy jackets in varied lengths, shorts, full and slim skirts and sheath dresses with hi-bulk orlon cardigan sweaters embellished in heavy Swiss lace. The colors are all ice-cream colors : pistachio, peach, pink ice, lemon, vanilla and licorice.

Perhaps most famous in this casual clothes group is De De Johnson whose travel and holiday collection, as she calls it, has long been famous for its beautiful adaptations of Swiss fabrics. Now using Swiss fabrics and cottons for year-round clothes, Miss Johnson features a Swiss satin stripe woven to look and feel like silk and dyed in colors

Stoffel & Co., Saint-Gall
 Printed cotton.
 Panel dress by :
Pat Premo, Los Angeles





L. Abraham & Co
Silks Ltd., Zurich

Silk organza.
Dress by :

Helga, Los Angeles

Photo John Engstead

that glow. The cotton suit in this group emphasizes her dexterity in the manipulation of stripes that has made her outstanding in the fashion world.

Of course, the highlights of the showing are the work of houses who can afford to do a little more experimentation, incorporate more expensive styling and play up the understated look. The speciality of all these houses is fabric and here there is great variety in fine Swiss fabrics.

Pat Premo, for example, uses a Swiss cotton chiffon, metallic decorated and woven cotton, Swiss Nile Valley cotton satin, Swiss brocated lace piqué, « Moustache » piqué, St. Gall Galloon trim and a variety of Swiss embroideries plus a number of exclusive prints designed by René Hubert, formerly of Los Angeles and the cinema.

Helga, formerly of London, New York and San Francisco, says she has now settled here for keeps and for inspiration. She specializes in the luxuriously understated frock that is all line and fabric and seldom trimmed. To greet spring and get variety from navy and grey, Helga uses charcoal browns, muted greens, and a slate-blue. She uses only exclusive fabrics, designed for her, many of them in Switzerland as in the Victorian striped cotton pictured here.

Don Loper, as usual distinguishes himself with his latest presentation. This dancer-designer-director-couturier has now expanded his scope to include coats, suits dresses, theatrical costumes, shirts for men, cravats and now nurses uniforms. He continues to define waists and bosoms,

J. G. Nef & Co. S. A., Hérissau

« Nelo » cotton fabric.

Dress by :

De De Johnson, Los Angeles



J. G. Nef & Co. S. A., Hérissau

« Nelo » cotton stripe in gay colors and black on white.

Dress by :

Helga, Los Angeles

Photo John Engstead



emphasize the feminine and the dressmaker line. He features a costume of Swiss cotton. The box coat is a plain color, complementary to the delicate print. He also adds gaiety with His and Her shirts, front pleated to wear with « at home » pants, now a California classic. In Swiss fabrics, of course.

Greer launched his showing with pink carnations and cocktails and general relaxation near the end of a busy day. As many as twelve numbers in the group were of Swiss fabrics or were dramatized with Swiss trimmings. His show stopper was a shepherdess dress of white organdy topped by a large red and white checked gingham apron embroidered in Swiss lace and banded with a fine line of dark green velvet ribbon. Greer says that he is taking cottons more and more into the realm of luxury lines and getting luxury prices for them, too.

Ending the showings for us was the collection of Irene, the almost legendary designer who formerly made Metro Goldwyn Mayer Studios her headquarters and whose touch is unmistakable and inimitable. Irene as always comes to designing through a philosophy and a definite « Irene » look. She feels that individuality, as always, is the highest function of fashion but she emphasizes that such individuality incurs great personal responsibility on the part of every woman. Now that there is a greater fashion range than ever before from which to choose, it is up to a woman to study herself more carefully and choose more discriminately.



Stoffel & Co., Saint-Gall

Black pleated cotton.
Dinner dress by :

Howard Greer, Los Angeles

Irene gives us a great range of choice in colors this season : grecian sand, pompeii pink, mediterranean blue, imperial red, grecian green... all muted, deep glowing colors made more dramatic by contrast with white and sometimes black. As a novelty she adds a flower holder to waist or breast pocket. Evening clothes all have an ethereal line and look. Therefore there are no stiff fabrics but soft organzas and a plethora of chiffons and what little trimming is used is generally fine Swiss embroidery or embroidery directly on fabric.

As you can see, each year our reporting of National Press Week showings becomes a larger and larger task as the use of Swiss fabrics and laces mounts steadily and surely in each collection. Each year more designers become aware of the possibilities for greater originality, for the more definite look of quality spelled out clearly for each woman to see without being told and for the increase in variety as Swiss mills turn out refined fabrics and designs. May we say with the Prophet : « Crescite et multiplicamini. »

Helene Miller