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Autor: Chambrier, Th. de
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New York Letter

Swiss Fabric Fashion Showing Spring 1958



Embroidered white organdy with permanent finish.

Model by William Fox, Inc., New York

The fashion parade draws to a close in the elegant ballroom of the Ambassador Hotel, packed to overflowing for the occasion. The last spring dresses have vanished behind the scenes, to the applause of the discerning spectators. The attentive, almost rapt audience is not that usually found at fashion shows. The male element

predominates: representatives of the textile industries concerned, importers, members of American high fashion and ready-to-wear houses, members of the press and buyers from the big stores. The atmosphere of this hall was therefore very different from that of the social teas where the guests, mainly women of leisure, idly chatter



Embroidered white organdy with permanent finish.
Model by Doge Separates, New York

to the tinkle of cups and saucers while keeping an eye open for a smart outfit for their next trip to the Bahamas. Here the atmosphere was rather that of an important opening, like that of a big Paris couturier presenting his creations to buyers from all over the world.

Two or three main impressions remain after this showing of seventy-two outstanding and original creations which were among the most representative of the new fashion trends.

First of all, the prints are fantastic in their richness, their abundance and their variety. Second, the embroideries are original, rejuvenated, enchanting, and offer new possibilities of use for future fashions. Third, the fancy cottons, brocades, open-work or subtly woven cotton fabrics are also full of new ideas and marvellously conceived by the weaving wizzards of St. Gall.

Prints offer delicate combinations of designs and colours, of a richness hitherto only found in the highest quality silks. The colours are luminous and warm or well-blended in subtle harmonies. Among cotton fabrics, prints now reign supreme.

Embroideries are also breathtakingly beautiful with their new interpretations of a technique that seemed to have exhausted all sources of inspiration. The most

interesting new trend is that of dotted Swiss embroidery, which raises the design on the fabric rather than leaving holes in it as in open-work embroidery such as «broderie anglaise». Design is becoming very important, as well as the choice of colours. In embroidery as in printing, it is possible to ring the changes indefinitely by varying the colours of designs, thus following the changing trends of fashion. The use of several colours offers new scope to embroidery, which no longer has any reason to remain stereotyped in the classical models of white embroidery, first introduced during the early days of Queen Victoria's reign and repeated with great success down to the present day.

It should not be thought that we wish to disparage the typical eyelet embroidery which has an assured place reserved for it among the great classics of fashion and textiles. This was clearly shown at this particular fashion show: many little girls' dresses and aprons were trimmed with the charming innocence of classical white embroideries, which are irreplaceable for children's fashions and debutantes' dresses. But here too, there were novelties in organdy and silky cotton fabrics, colour embroidered on light grounds and in embroideries appliqued onto fabric rather than open-work.

Among the embroideries for afternoon and evening dresses seen at this parade were some remarkable interpretations of Alpine flowers on organdy, as realistic as

Soft printed voile.

Model by Philip Hulitar, Inc., New York



the illustrations in an old botany book. The freshness of the colours of these flowers is yet another attraction. The strikingly beautiful raised embroideries, comparable to Venetian lace, are remarkable for the artistic brilliance of their designs. In the children's wear too the designs are perfect: embroidered animals, angels and small flowers in gay colours. The classical «broderies anglaises», the embroidered allover of open-work geometric rosettes and the cut-out flowers are used with great skill by American fashion designers who incorporate them in eminently wearable dresses for afternoon or evening wear that are easy to pack for cruises or simply for week-end trips.

This type of Swiss embroidery and fabric is admirably suited to the various American climates. This is one of the reasons which make them so successful with ready-to-wear manufacturers, not only for their winter collections (California, Florida, tropical cruises) but also for the spring/summer collections. These models will be worn along the Atlantic seaboard of the United States, from Maine to Florida, and as far west as the Rockies.

The art of American fashion designers is the art of adaptation. They have a flair for getting the most out of a fabric by handling it in an entirely original way. For example, a simple plain cotton voile in a bluish emerald green was skilfully draped with such a perfect knowledge of modelling and cut that the evening dress shown at the Swiss Fashion Show was as sculptural as a gala creation

in silk chiffon and as classically beautiful as the drapery of a Tanagra figure.

Another example: a luxurious embroidery with clusters of purplish blue pansies in relief on an ivory cotton satin ground was cut with a simplicity of line that makes it a perfect dress that will never date. Its appeal, which could be oriental, is quite simply «1958».

The illustrations accompanying this article will suffice to give an idea of what American ready-to-wear manufacturers can do with the Swiss fabrics they have selected. Rosalie Macrini, Inc., chose a pink organdy, richly embroidered with pink wild roses with grey-green leaves for an ankle length afternoon-cum-evening dress. Doge Separates adds ornamental touches of shiny satin to a white and bright red clusters. William Fox Inc. combines a white organdy embroidered with flowers in muted blue shades with plain organdy for a short evening dress. Adele Simpson, Inc. has created an attractive practical dress in cotton satin with oval dots printed in irregular clusters giving a very original effect. J. R. McMullen Co., Inc. uses a dotted voile print on a ground of satin stripes for a shirtwaist dress. Philip Hulitar created a cocktail-into-evening dress in a gold and grey printed cotton voile as elegant as a priceless silk. Pat Premo of California likewise chooses a Swiss print on cotton satin which might easily be taken for silk. Nettie Rosenstein uses a brown and black cotton voile for a very distinctive

Color embroidered pale pink organdy.
Model by Rosalie Macrini, Inc., New York

Satiny soft printed cotton.
Model by Pat Premo of California, Los Angeles



afternoon dress. These cotton voiles are practical, washable and stand up to all the stress of modern travel. Dorothy O'Hara, Inc. uses a cotton twill with big hand-painted roses completely covering the fabric for a dressy dress for formal occasions. Maurice Rentner makes a dress that could be worn anywhere, with a skirt of pleated sections alternating with plain panels, in cotton barathea printed with golden yellow roses. Lanz of California combines the dignified simplicity of a white ribbed cotton fabric with the classical cut of a sheath suitable for wear on all occasions.

The Swiss Fabric Fashion Showing was organised as usual by the Swiss Fabric Group of New York, which, under the management of Mr. Stanley Brown, is responsible for making known throughout the United States the products of the St. Gall cotton and embroidery industries on behalf of the Publicity Office of the cotton and embroidery industries. It was held under the patronage of Mr. Hans W. Gasser, Swiss Consul General in New York.

Th. de Chambrier



Cotton fabric with woven satin effects.
Model by Adele Simpson, Inc., New York

Voile with woven satin effects.
Model by J. R. McMullen Co., Inc.,
New York