

Trompe-l'œil : keynote of the collections

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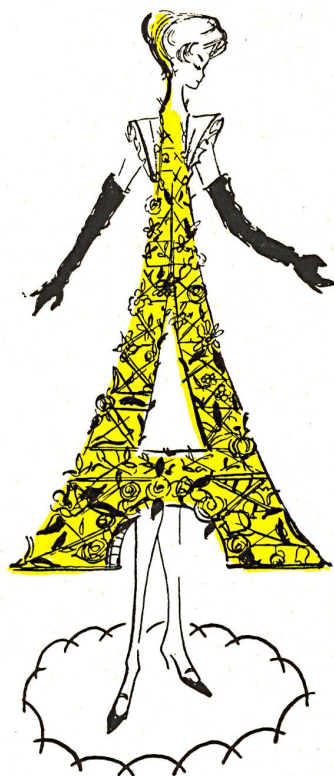
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Trompe-l'œil - keynote of the collections



De gauche à droite :

CHANEL : deux-pièces en
jersey rouge bordé de bleu
marine.

CHRISTIAN DIOR : tail-
leur lainage marine, boutons
blancs, jupe à très larges
plis, canotier blanc.

MAGGY ROUFF : robe d'été
« baby doll » en coton bleu
ciel, boutonnée devant.

The Comtesse de Ségur is enjoying a second lease of life. One might almost believe she was here again in person, with her procession of well-behaved little girls stepping out of the red and gold bindings of the « Bibliothèque Rose ». Sophie and her friends parade up and down before us in the salons of the fashion houses with a sweet demure look on their faces, their loose-fitting dresses with childish yokes flaring out from their slender young shoulders. They are still very young girls and the line of the bust is hardly visible. One almost automatically looks for the long pantaloons with their slotted pink ribbons peeping beneath the skirts. But a second look reveals that it is just one more optical illusion in these collections that are the height of illusion. For these are no model little girls in their teens but fashion models, with names like Victoire or Sylvie, Lucky or Svana. Their make-up, subtle as it is, would doubtless earn them a good thrashing from the charming countess who was a firm believer in such strong methods of education.

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PIERRE CARDIN : manteau du soir en satin duchesse bleu turquoise ; rose du même tissu.

The keynote of all the collections is *trompe-l'œil*, deception and trickery. And this can undoubtedly be explained. The present generation of designers are the offspring of surrealism. They were born later, but their classics were the works written, painted or sculptured by this school. While still young, they were familiar with Salvador Dali's burning giraffe watched over by the woman with open drawers coming out of her thighs. They were familiar with the search for antiques, the craze for objects that are not what they seem. And living at a time when up-to-dateness and a love of novelty are all-consuming passions, they are going back full circle. It is not the first time either that couture has tried to escape from the simple notion of clothing for clothing's sake to indulge in fantasy. What is new however is the completeness of this evolution. When Poiret, just before the 1914 war, caused such a stir and upset the little world of the couturiers of his day with his daring ideas, it was the same impulse that fired him. Paul Poiret went the way of all who anticipate their time, and after the last rockets of the grand finale the brilliant fireworks fizzled out, but the sparks still smouldered. Spurred on by the world demand for novelties, and goaded by the success of the better ready-to-wear industry which has made remarkable progress, the young designers —

CHANEL : robe de cocktail en tulle rouge. — CHRISTIAN DIOR : robe du soir courte en satin duchesse bleu porcelaine drapée ; roses du même tissu.

who all know each other, many of them being great friends, who form a real Paris School of their own, just as there is a Paris School in painting — very sensibly realised that our day and age expected a couturier to do something more than simply dress women luxuriously. Dresses had to be amusing, to break with the monotony and drabness of our daily lives, had to be difficult to adapt for ready-to-wear models and had to change every season in order to create suspense and, above all, had to be amusing.

And this is perhaps the operative word for this spring's fashion. It is amusing. The very difficulty of wearing it makes it all the more interesting for a certain set. Amusing in its rather alarming affectation of youth. Amusing in its trickery and deception, its blouses that are really dresses or coats, its suits that are dresses, its false boleros, its double-backed coats, its two-pieces that are all of a piece, its unexpected fabrics such as houndstooth mousselines, and woollens resembling silks.

Just think back to the early days of Jacques Fath, who took a polo-neck sweater, sprinkled it with spangles and turned it into an evening dress. It is the same thing all over again today. The desire to create something that is not what it seems. To make sure that the creation differs from the classical conception, that the shape, material and colour are unexpected. This is the recipe for today's concoction, for today's amusing fashion.

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De gauche à droite :

PIERRE BALMAIN : organdi de soie blanc : le corsage ; organdi de soie noir sur blanc : la jupe. — PIERRE CARDIN : robe en lainage parme avec panneau détaché drapé dans le dos. — JEANNE LANVIN-CASTILLO : crêpe noir avec « ailes » en organdi blanc, chapeau vert absinthe.



Détails. Chapeaux : JEANNE LANVIN-CASTILLO : paille rouge et bande de cuir blanc. — CHRISTIAN DIOR : paille noire, pétales de fleurs blancs à l'intérieur. — CHRISTIAN DIOR : deux-pièces avec quatre petits nœuds. — JEANNE LANVIN-CASTILLO : manche double avec tuyauté. — CHANEL : pompon de laine blanche et noire sur jersey noir.



Everyone waited anxiously for the big opening day at Dior's. An institution that is both artistic and commercial, famous from the Aleutian Islands to Tierra del Fuego, from Tokyo to Santiago, that has a turnover exceeding 7 billion French francs and whose guiding star has suddenly been snatched away, is matter indeed for concern. It looks as though Christian Dior, before breathing his last, rendered one last service to French fashions by appointing Yves Mathieu St. Laurent to be his successor. This very young designer he chose did not let us down. He turned out a collection as fresh as it was amusing, which the splendid team behind him at the Avenue Montaigne executed to perfection.

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Let us talk of the dresses for a moment. Our sketches and photographs give you a true picture of

them. They are short very widely flaring, simple in appearance and yet really very complicated. The sack dress had the element of surprise in its favour; it interested women, even though men did not care much for it. Undoubtedly the latter prefer the new fashion which gives their feminine companions an extra youthful look. And women are bound to love it for the same reason.

They will rave about the big collars framing the neck, the short waists, the loosely fitting backs which give their gait a rather languid air, the discrete emphasis on the bust, which seems to have been overlooked of recent years, the quiet line of the suits brightened with scallops and haws, the general suppleness leaving the body free to move in a fabric that no longer moulds it like a second skin, the casual look of the loosely tied bows, the soft colours in which pink dominates, the hats that come down quite low over the head.

We will say nothing of the evening dresses. They conform to the same tradition of beauty and range from short flowing styles to long filmy drapes. But we will say that the young designers have not disappointed us. Alongside the old guard — whose creations are just as youthful by the way as those of their younger colleagues — Guy Laroche and Pierre Cardin are doing very well, pending the arrival of other young up-and-coming designers, for the Paris School renews itself continuously. This is what is so stable, so permanent and reassuring about the life of French Couture.

Gala

De gauche à droite :

JEANNE LANVIN-CASTILLO: robe en lainage et soie bleu marine.

PIERRE BALMAIN: tailleur avec jaquette boutonnée de côté en lainage pied-de-poule vert-jaune et blanc.

Chapeau de JEANNE LANVIN-CASTILLO avec faux cheveux en rubans. PIERRE CARDIN: robe de lainage avec drapé devant.

JEANNE LANVIN-CASTILLO: faux deux-pièces en lainage beige. Effet de boléro.

