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Los Angeles Letter

The Return to Nature — in California



FORSTER WILLI & CO., SAINT-GALL

Model by Maxwell Shieff, Los Angeles.
Photo Garnett Howard, Hollywood.

UNION S. A., SAINT-GALL

Model by Maxwell Shieff, Los Angeles.
Photo Garnett Howard, Hollywood.

The way California designers feel about the tendencies of fashions was summed up recently by one of them: « We're tired, tired, tired of all the torturing, distortion, unflattery and negation of what makes a woman a woman. Of course, the original newness of it all was exciting, » says Maxwell Shieff, one of California's top-notch designers of fine clothes, « but like many sharp, novel experiences we tire of them soon and get back to the basics, back to a re-appraisal of our thinking. We give up the gadgetry that excited our fancies and stimulated our customer's desires momentarily, and we arise from what has now become ennui looking at things with a newer, fresher point of view.

Of course a sharp departure in fashion is an immensely valuable experience because altho it may have its roots in the past, it speaks the language of our time and changes the face of fashion forever. Now we have had a dramatic change, now we return to calmer times. My clients want fashion... not fads. Women who purchase top price bracket clothes want classical, flattering clothes rather than gadgets. They are women who no longer possess the sharp, trim figures of their youth although they have retained in maturity the good bone structure and compactness that comes from our active, American way of life. And the shirt-maker dress in fabrics of all or any kinds is the voice of that way of life. »

Shieff's new collection returns to the natural torso line, the belled and full skirt which has always been successful with him, the long, flower-like stem look obtained by means of many gores from neckline to flounced hemline,



RUDOLF
BRAUCHBAR & CIE LTD.,
ZURICH

Taffetas papillon chiné pure soie.
Warp printed pure silk butterfly
taffeta.

Model by Maxwell Shieff,
Los Angeles.

Photo Garnett Howard,
Hollywood.



and the tight torso, harem-skirted cocktail dress. Mr. Shieff noted a trend to lighter airier fabrics, except in areas of extremely cold climate. Even in New York however, he has had requests for softer, lighter fabrics. In keeping with this trend he has ordered many of the newer, lighter materials for his cruise collection. Among these are fine Swiss batistes in print, Swiss basketweave cottons, and warp silk taffeta with matching sheer prints. He says these unique, quality fabrics have exactly the right appeal for his exacting clientele. Colors have gone exotically Oriental: wild cyclamen pinks, tangerine pinks, carrot-like yellows. Of course there are always the more conservative palomino beiges, black and navy combinations with sharp white, and the blue and green color axis is still exciting and good.

We asked Mr. Shieff about ball gowns. He replied that fewer were ordered this year than last and that he finds more women want a fabulous short dress to wear for the frequent black tie occasions. Of course, such short dresses are the Shieff forte, along with his late day dresses and exciting cruise-party-resort clothes. His immense talent seems to transform a woman into a romantic being without the cloying sweetness of frou-frou. This is undoubtedly true because of his great good taste, but it is also true because of his regard not only for his duty to himself as an artist but to his clients and his clients' husbands for whom he has a genuine sympathy and real understanding. He's a husband with definite ideas himself!

Hélène F. Miller