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The more things change... the more they are the same

In a play by Rip, one of the wittiest of Parisian light comedy writers, one of the characters had invented some sort of a machine for travelling back into the past. This contraption of his took our contemporaries off on voyages into the mists of time and deposited them among their ancestors. And infallibly, every single time, whatever their way of life, the way they spoke, the way they dressed, the same characters always ended up in identical situations.

This is what happens with Parisian couture too: the more it changes, the more it remains fundamentally the same. Twice a year, the same hordes of fashion writers, spectators and socialites crowd into the same salons, the reporters take out the same old notebooks, the same pencils, jot down notes, gossip with their neighbours, and applaud with the same loud enthusiasm. And, as soon as the bridal gown that brings the showing to a close swishes out to the dressing rooms, there is the same mad rush to cluster round the couturier, the same gushing praise, and the notebooks are put away until the next showing. But just as the spectators go on for ever — so does the talent.

And so, with every new season, one hears again of Chanel's inimitable style, Grès talent for draping, the feminine loveliness of Balmain's dresses, the sumptuousness of Dior's creations, the glamour of Balenciaga's gowns. This backdrop forms the setting for the hushed exchange of the latest gossip about the switching back and forth of the designers as they come and go, leaving one house for another or setting up on their own. This season there is a great deal of talk about Gérard Pipart, the recruit from ready-to-wear, who is making his début in Couture (with a capital C) at Ricci's. There is also much talk of Crahay, who was with Ricci and is now with Lanvin. And of Castillo who was with Lanvin but is now on his own.

What do all these comings and goings matter? The most important thing after all is that couture should continue to exist, that it should sweep along in its wake a host of creators of all kinds, those who make the fabrics and those who make the laces, those who make the embroideries and those who make the trimmings, those who make the feathers and those who make the flowers...

* * *

What else are they saying at the beginning of 1964?

- That the fashion is influenced by the 30's...
- That skirts have a tendency to be a tiny bit shorter...
- That daring décolletés are all the rage. Actually they are very often only make-believe, relying largely on flesh-coloured mousseline to give a strip-tease effect (see Pierre Cardin)...
- That white dresses are prominent in all the collections...
- That everyone has gone overboard for lingerie collars and demurely white butterfly bows...
- That couture has not remained indifferent to the present cult of youth and that the blazer style is as ubiquitous and as popular as the Beatles...
- That Bohan-Dior has resuscitated the macramé so dear to our grandmothers...
- That evening dresses are more and more ornate, lavishly worked, re-embroidered, bespangled, ablaze with the false fire of fake jewellery and pearls...
- That mousseline takes pride of place in this riot of vaporous fabrics...

PIERRE CARDIN

Caroline Rautt



PIERRE CARDIN



YVES SAINT-LAURENT



PIERRE CARDIN

- That the milky whiteness of organdie is used to brighten an infinite number of models...
- That while the suit is king, the dress in mousseline is queen...
- That Yves Saint-Laurent, whose sheath dresses are generally set off with collars and ties in piqué or white organza, has taken the unprecedented step of presenting a bride whose plaited head-dress cascades down to the ground behind her...
- That Castillo is launching pleated slacks, to be worn with middy tops...
- That Guy Laroche boasts as many colours on his palette as the notes on an organist's keyboards...

- That Roger Vivier, the bottier, supplies the shoes for the mannequins of night on ten couturiers...
- That the part played by Swiss creations is greater than ever...

* * *

In this Paris, that will be more luminous this spring than we have ever known it before, in this Paris whose freshly scrubbed monuments dazzle with their whiteness and, as night falls, take on a delicate shade of pink, Couture, to keep in step, is gayer, daintier, smarter and more Parisian than ever before.

GALA

CHRISTIAN DIOR



PIERRE BALMAIN



PIERRE CARDIN

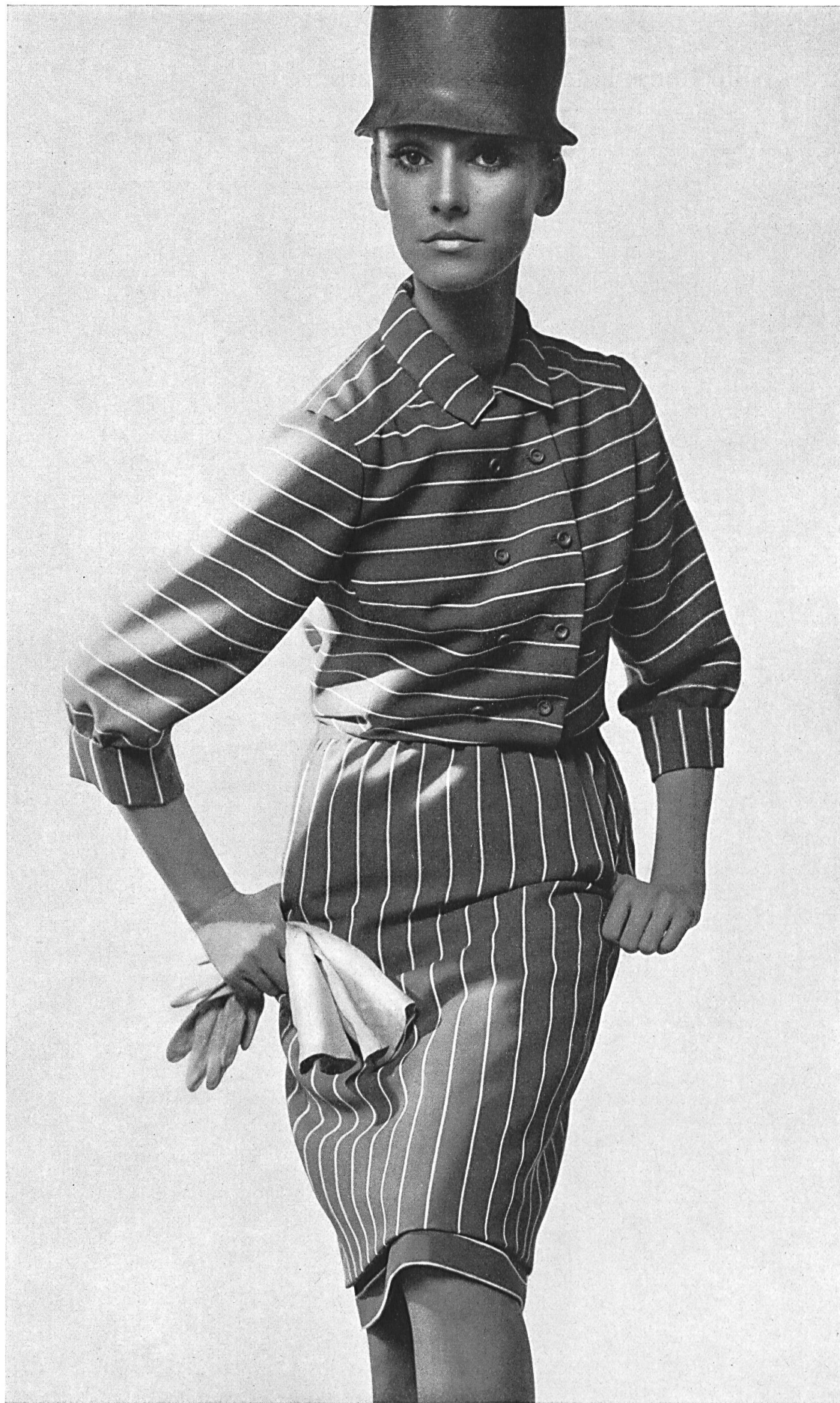


Dans les collections : les nouveautés de Zurich

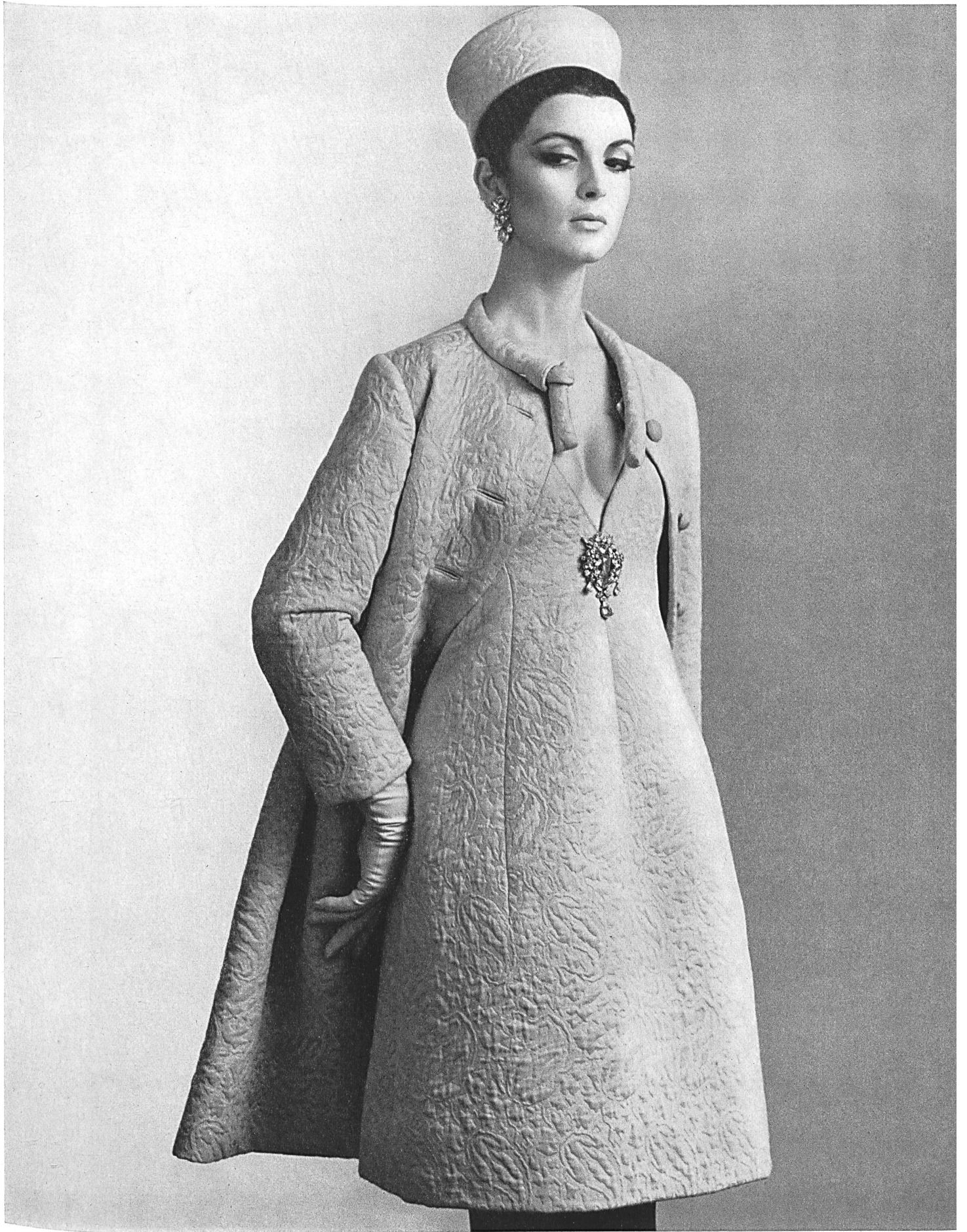
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