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Swiss novelties in the Haute Couture collections

The latest couture collections have come and gone in Paris without hitting the headlines, in a very quiet harmonious atmosphere, the emphasis once again being placed more on elegance and wearability, on noble materials and smart accessories. The themes proposed seem the logical extension of the cut and lines of the last Prêt-à-Porter collections with particular emphasis on decorative details.

Through this carefully planned evolution, creating a more feminine version of last year's autumn and winter fashions, the materials used and the colourful designs become two of the main factors helping to give a completely new look to fashion.

The fact that

Swiss Novelties

play an important role, is immediately visible in the leading collections. Swiss silk fabrics and embroideries are naturally used mainly for afternoon and evening fashions, a field in which Haute Couture shows particular creativity.

It comes as no surprise therefore to see that lavish use is made of Abraham's silks. The new heavy silk matelassés — plain or with rich gold lamé designs modelled on old Chinese patterns — and the fine structured cloqués — both plain and printed — are all enjoying a success which could lead to new trends, also in the commercial sector. Very striking too are the printed figured crêpes de Chine, the softly draping satins, dainty mousselines and crêpes georgette, whose designs also draw their inspiration from Far Eastern art with dragon and cloud motifs, peonies and chrysanthemums. The execution of the designs and their colouring are a symbiosis of perfect beauty and harmony. No wonder then that Yves Saint Laurent has used these silk novelties for the larger part of his collection, and even Givenchy has let himself be tempted by the "Chinese" look.

St. Gall embroidery, which was also prominent in the autumn and winter collections, brings the much desired gold accents into the fashion picture. Gold embroideries, from naive-style flowers to the aristocratic rose, are just as much in demand as Lurex® and lamé dots and lozenges, sometimes lightened with rayon embroideries. There is a great deal of tulle lace, often enriched with burnt-out appliquéd work, in the style of 18th and 19th century needlepoint lace. The trend towards somewhat stiffer fabrics is catered to by embroidery grounds like gazar, taffeta and organza. Embroidered gold tulle is also making an appearance.

Important details of the new fashion

Coat and suit outfits are prominent — very often worn with wide scarves. Gathers, bias cuts and pleats add fullness to skirts. Trousers are also back in fashion in every shape and size — narrow and straight, pageboy style, wide and baggy, harem pants or in the form of divided skirts.

A striking feature of dresses and blouses is the variety of round or rectangular yokes, from which the gathers fall. Ruching and flounces are popular decorative touches, the elongated waist a detail worthy of note. Tunics, worn over narrow skirts or trousers, often hang loosely over the waist and some are even hemmed with fur (Givenchy). Capes are worn from morning to night. Coats are either loose or frockcoat style. Fur edging is much in evidence as well as fur toques, which are to be found in practically every collection.

The revaluation of Haute Couture, initiated by Yves Saint Laurent a year ago, continues apace and the new emphasis on quality, luxury and beauty is very much in evidence.