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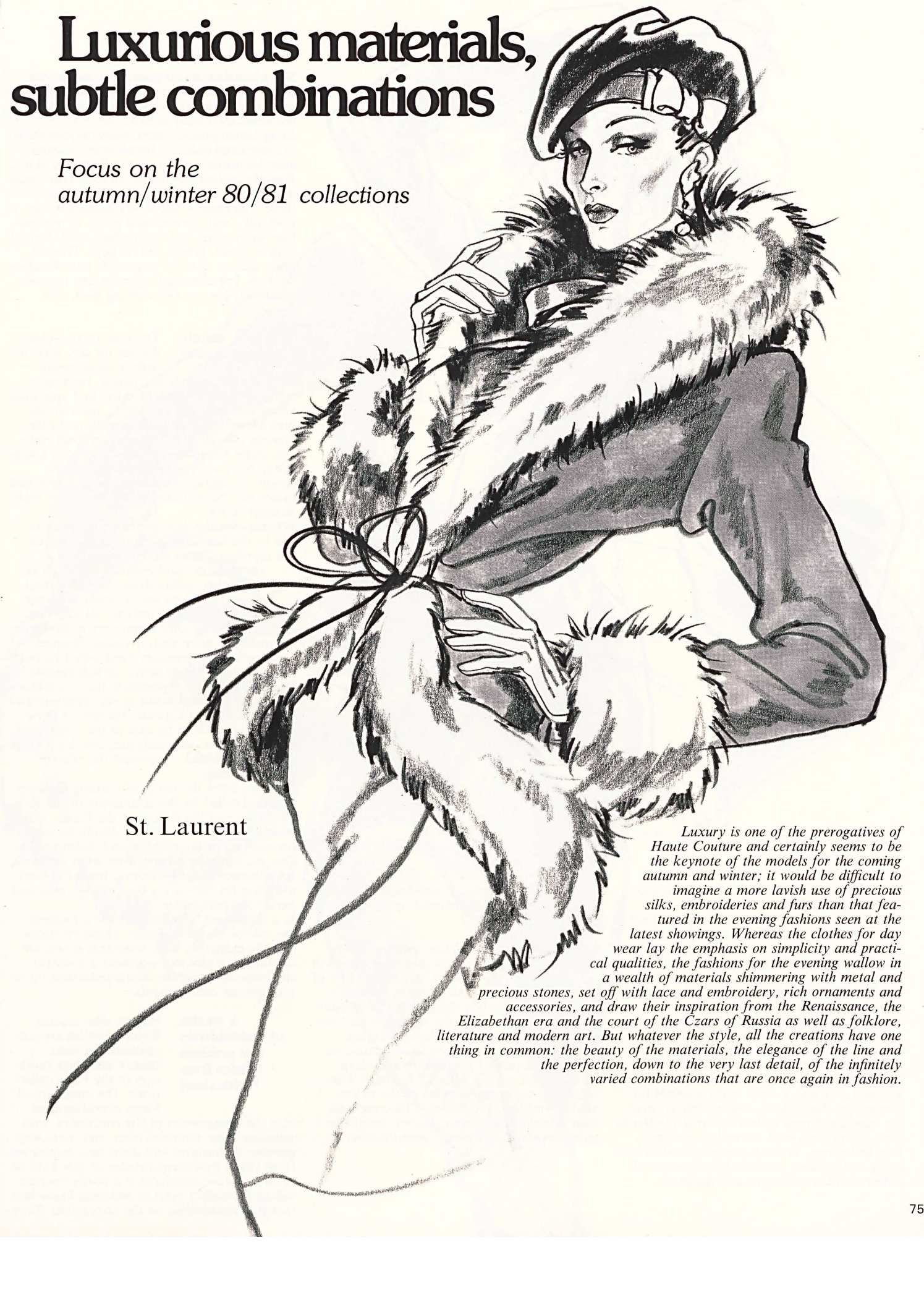
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Luxurious materials, subtle combinations

Focus on the
autumn/winter 80/81 collections

St. Laurent

A black and white fashion illustration of a woman in a fur coat and beret. She is wearing a dark beret with a light-colored band and a large, dark fur coat with a thick, light-colored fur collar. She is holding a pair of glasses in her hands. The illustration is done in a sketchy, expressive style with heavy shading on the fur and the woman's face.

Luxury is one of the prerogatives of Haute Couture and certainly seems to be the keynote of the models for the coming autumn and winter; it would be difficult to imagine a more lavish use of precious silks, embroideries and furs than that featured in the evening fashions seen at the latest showings. Whereas the clothes for day wear lay the emphasis on simplicity and practical qualities, the fashions for the evening wallow in a wealth of materials shimmering with metal and precious stones, set off with lace and embroidery, rich ornaments and accessories, and draw their inspiration from the Renaissance, the Elizabethan era and the court of the Czars of Russia as well as folklore, literature and modern art. But whatever the style, all the creations have one thing in common: the beauty of the materials, the elegance of the line and the perfection, down to the very last detail, of the infinitely varied combinations that are once again in fashion.



Grès

Coats stage a comeback

While during the past few seasons, jackets have had it very much their own way, today it is once again the whole gamut of coats of every shape and length that catch the eye. Wrap-around styles, straight Ulsters, slender or swirling bell-shaped redingotes, and countless capes and ponchos, are all cut in superb fabrics – cashmere, camelhair or pure new wool, as well as chenille or leather. The half-belt, sometimes unbuttoned, plays an important role, as do pleats at the back – slat-like at Cardin's – and velvet applications on collars and cuffs, as well as very many opulent fur trimmings. Particularly striking details were the huge coachman collars covering the shoulders, the profusion of passementerie and frog fastenings. The cut is emphasized by stitching, embroidery, and the combination of different colours, designs and materials.

Coats have been given a new lease of life by the wealth of details dreamed up by the couturiers.

Ensembles and suits that are the height of chic

When speaking of the suits that were shown in Paris, one thinks first of all of Saint Laurent's Hamlet and page-boy models, with full bouffant sleeves, pleated at the shoulders and narrowing towards the cuffs. Small basques, passementerie trimmings, narrow wrap-over skirts, all in perfect proportion and worn with a velvet cap set off with feathers, who could resist this new version of the tailor-made? And the very feminine blouses, with their double Renaissance sleeves, should be a great inspiration to blouse manufacturers.

Saint Laurent also influences suits with the cut of his two-button jacket in which the moderate fullness of the material is held in at the waist by a built-in belt.

Long belted jackets, worn over narrow skirts, are just as popular as the shorter versions – even blouses – worn over bell-shaped skirts. Straight and sunray pleats are still very much in demand. The finishing touch is given to these creations by the lovely blouses in figured silk, both printed and plain, in mousseline, satin crêpe and embroidery, with Pierrot collars, bows, jabots and dickeys. There is once again a spate of pant-suits with knickerbockers, breeches and cigarette-line trousers, while tuxedos are also coming back into fashion.

Dresses, mainly evening dresses

The one- or two-piece dresses for day wear are mainly unobtrusive.

Shirtwaisters with bows, jabots, ruching or stand-up collars, straight skirts and appliquéd velvet flounces, narrow waists, belts at the hips are as popular as the sheath and tube models, as well as the recently revived princess styles found mainly at Nina Ricci. Close-fitting tops worn over full skirts are the height of elegance as are the narrow unbelted tunics that Saint Laurent has combined with straight skirts.

Whereas for the day, the length is more or less to the knee, for cocktail dresses which are more and more numerous, as well as short dinner and evening dresses, it is higher, often above the knee, mini-style, or on the contrary reaching down below the calf. At any rate, legs are once again very much in the limelight, often with frivolous flounces and ruching, sometimes emphasized by balloon or olive-shaped skirts, or half revealed half concealed by asymmetric hems. Folklore is a motif for inspiration as are literature and the fine arts. The Chinese, Persian or Peruvian influence is to be seen in the combination of designs, materials and colours. Everything is permitted – provided the effect is really stunning.

Once we enter the realm of evening fashions we are dazzled by the splendours of the Renaissance and the Russia of the Czars, with widely flaring skirts, daring décolletés and luxurious, precious fabrics and embroideries. One may wonder where or on what occasion such dresses could be worn... but what does it matter for they are a feast for the eyes and perfection personified.

It is important to remember for a moment the role of Haute Couture, whose creations and the extremely high standards it sets for the fabrics it chooses represent a constant challenge spurring the textile industries on to ever greater achievements.

A wealth of embroideries and precious fabrics from Switzerland

Season after season, Swiss novelties are conspicuous for their beauty and their profusion in the Paris collections. The creativity of Swiss manufacturers stirs the imagination of the couturiers, who welcome these novelties more and more with genuine enthusiasm and draw new inspiration from them. Producing articles of this kind to satisfy couture standards is a costly venture, calling for such a mass of technical know-how that it often borders on the impossible. They

no longer have anything to do with mere business but represent an inspiration of inestimable value to the whole textile industry and even though they can only be achieved at the cost of financial sacrifices and altruistic idealism. This is something that cannot be taken for granted in this materialistic day and age, but reveals the existence of an elite ready and determined to do everything in its power to promote the Swiss textile industry.



St. Laurent

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