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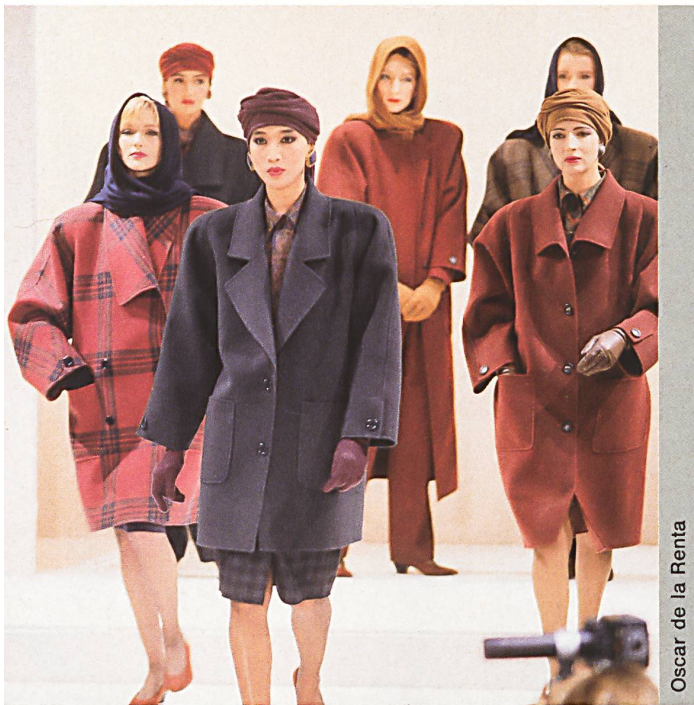


Blass sport

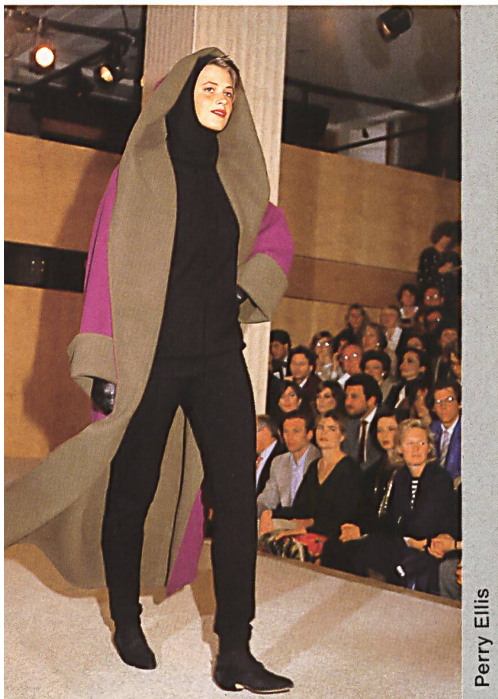
NEW YORK FASHION

by JOLE FONTANA

The Fall Collections FASHION REALISM



Oscar de la Renta



Perry Ellis

Reach for the stars – was once the motto in the US. It isn't anymore. Today the approach is down to earth. The American Dream chased after with narcotics and drugs, if necessary, is no longer being pursued. Anything unhealthy or eccentric is "out". Fancy meals, drinking wine, and smoking have become undesirable habits that one tries to abandon. Healthy nutrition, exercise, modesty, and reasoning – are the trend-setters these days. A modern form of puritanism is gaining ground. Indulgence in gourmet dining and excessive pleasures, as well as unconventional impulses, and high flying creativity have been dealt an obviously severe blow.

This shift affects also the arts which no longer develop freely, and which lack the vibration of a few years ago. As a consequence fashion is now aiming at very realistic objectives: it is to help a woman look good, to give her self-assurance, and to make her attractive. Fashion as an enhancing wrapping, totally free of experiments and extravagancies, but maintaining its artistic "ligne pur". When the fall collection was shown nobody had to ask who was supposed to wear it. American fashion is not the least bit elusive; it is thoroughly realistic.

Oscar de la Renta summarizes "the reality factor" in a few words: "We are in the business of selling clothes instead of making a statement with them. What we do best in this country is make clothes for women who wear them. We do not sacrifice this realism for abstract ideas of showmanship or theater." The ambition to give impulses at creative heights no longer dominates.

Comfort in a nice material and neat details is the formula for daytime fashion, which never forgets the concept of combination. The silhouette is usually short, but leaves room for longer alternatives, and, of course, includes slacks.

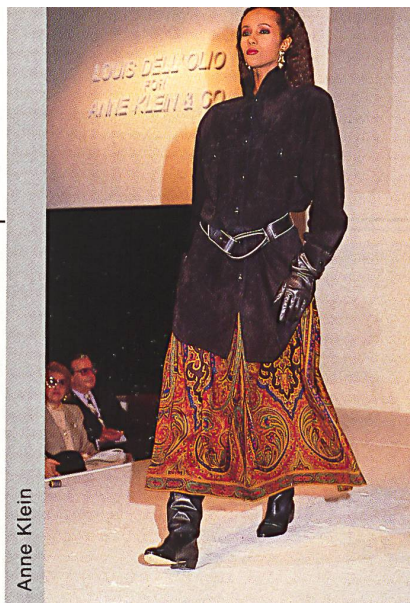
American sportswear still remains the basis of the collections, despite a trace of female allure, with a mix of long and increasingly short jackets, from lumber jackets and blazers to slacks, skirts, and tops.

The latter is mostly a decorative Jacquard sweater, with the knit fashions proposing in general very effective, large, multicolor designs. The combinations are accompanied by comfortable, wide-shouldered coats, often shortened to 7/8 and 11/12 lengths or by extremely long wraparound coats. Cool chic combined with a trace of softening elegance dominates in the urban every-day styles, allowing at the same time for a touch of sophistication and dandyism.

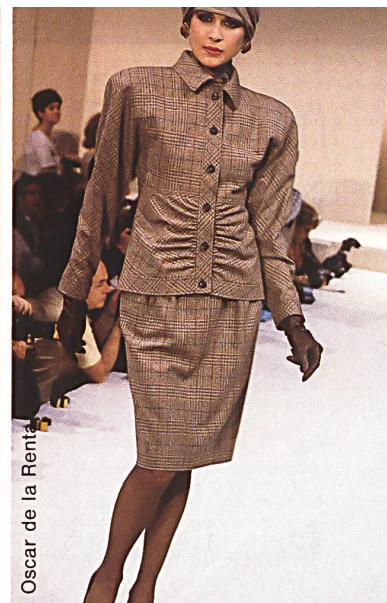
Photos: Christopher Moore

The clothes that are close to the body are the alternative to the matter-of-fact career woman style. They are slim, long etui-coats, feminine combinations in soft wools and especially dresses. Stalky-slim jersey models trace the figure skin-tight. Drapés, wraparound effects, slim waists and flattering necklines are the characteristics of the daytime dress which for the American designers is more important than for their European colleagues. The same applies for the little elegant dresses which show similar styling elements, but are made of higher quality materials, especially of silk. Transition to the cocktail dress is seamless. "Women in this country never seem to have enough of these dressy styles, which are the workhorses of their wardrobe," says Bill Blass, and "I am especially interested in short dinner dresses, which can be worn to parties as well as to restaurants. I believe there is a strong need."

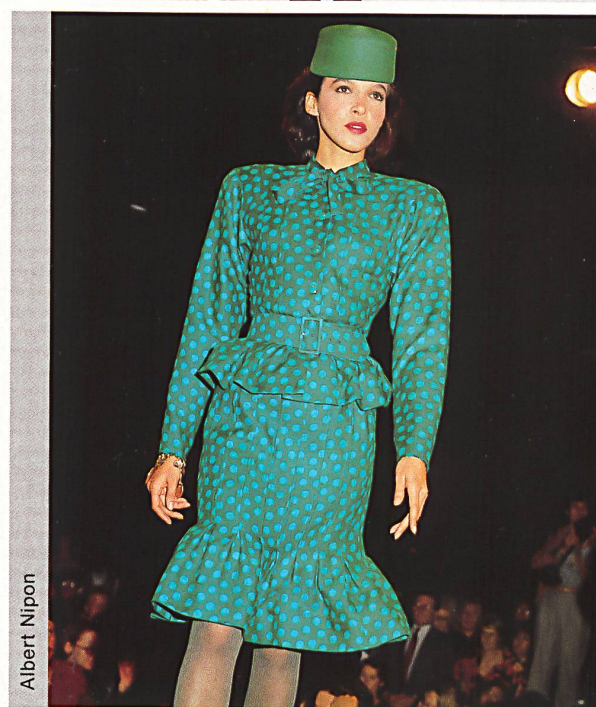
The evening is an important topic in New York anyhow. Evening fashion there shows two tendencies – understatement and great appearance. The first one stays with the silhouette of daytime, including sweaters made of thick silk yarns of glittering lame, instead of wool. The great appearance, however, may be either very sexy with daring necklines or shoulder-free corsages, with high cuts and emphasis on the waist, transparent or paillette-covered, or it may be ladylike, stylish with rich pattern-printed silk, velvet and brocade, glimmering and glittering, expensively embroidered or of golden lace, and also often with simple beauty in the conventional sense. Beauty is primarily based on the material used. And the material often comes from Switzerland as the following pages will show.



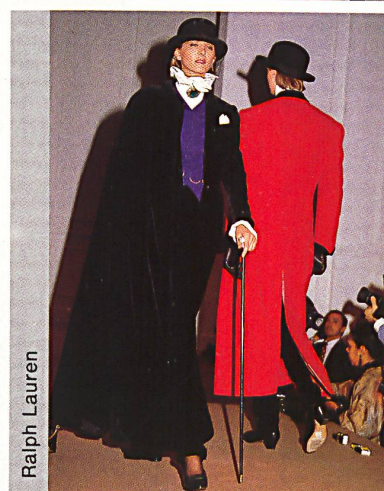
Anne Klein



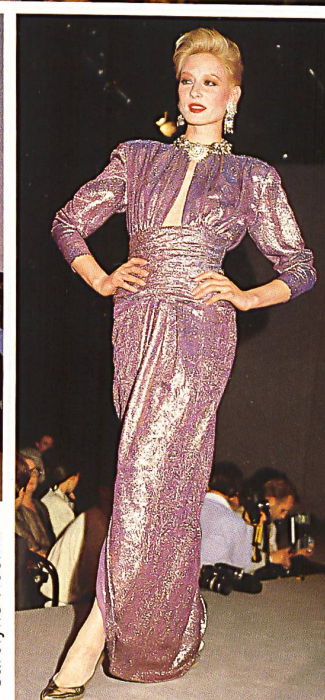
Oscar de la Renta



Albert Nipon



Ralph Lauren



Carolyne Roehm

COLOR AND FABRIC INTEREST

It is the task of exclusive fabrics (e.g. the mohair embroidery on a wool base by Forster Willi) and new colors to add an interesting touch to the rather classical silhouettes. Colors have conquered New York's fashions, and nobody is afraid to use them in large pattern designs: bright colored coats are no exception. On the other hand colors are used as accents livening up the reverse side of winter cotton coats by Fischbacher or they are to connect pattern mixes like the Abraham prints in silk and wool muslin.

Anne Klein/Fischbacher

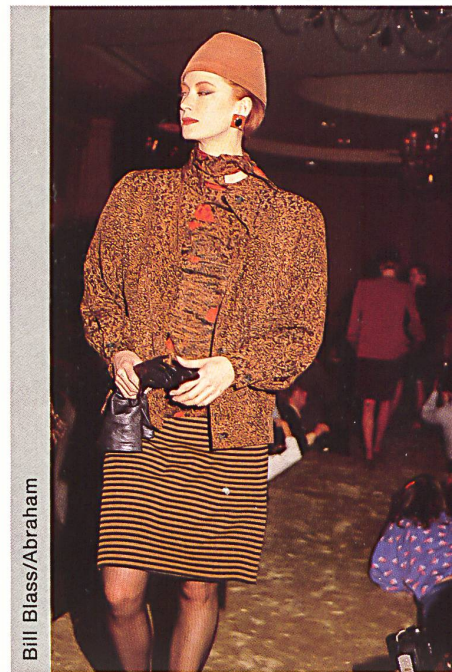




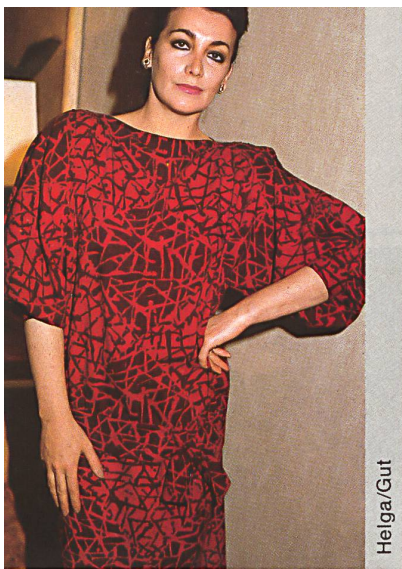
Carolina Herrera/Forster Willi



Carolina Herrera/Abraham



Bill Blass/Abraham

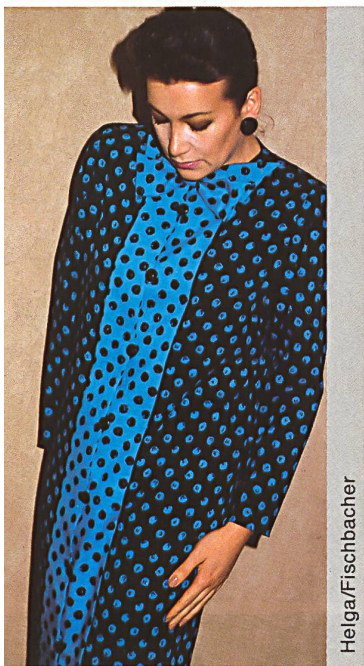


Helga/Gut

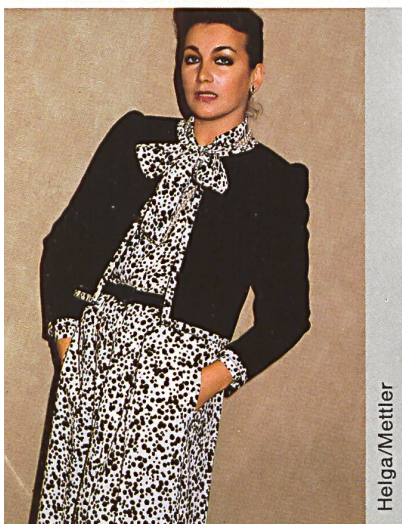
NEW YORK FASHION

PRETTY LITTLE DRESS

Even though combinations and the option to combine are always closely watched – simply for comfort and functional reasons – most collections also have little dresses suitable for many occasions, even though they cannot be combined. These are made of fine wool muslin (prints by Fischbacher, Gut, Mettler) or of printed Crêpe de Chine façonné (Abraham). A glittering embroidered motive on satin (Stehli) or velvet and moiré (Gut) lend these styles a slightly more festive character.



Helga/Fischbacher



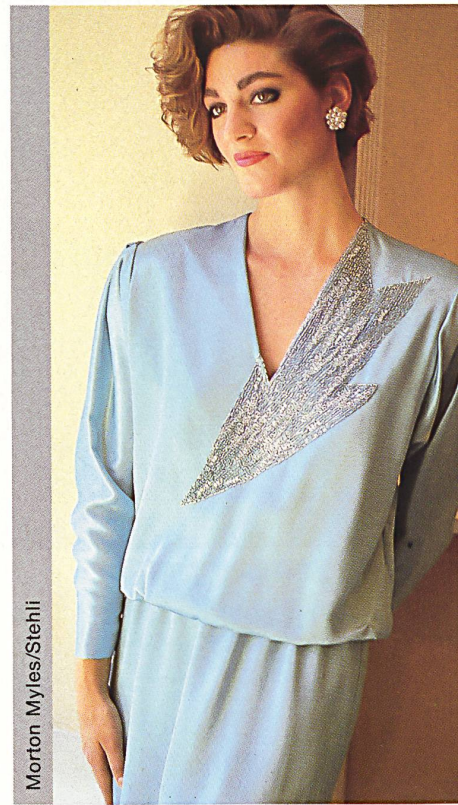
Helga/Mettler



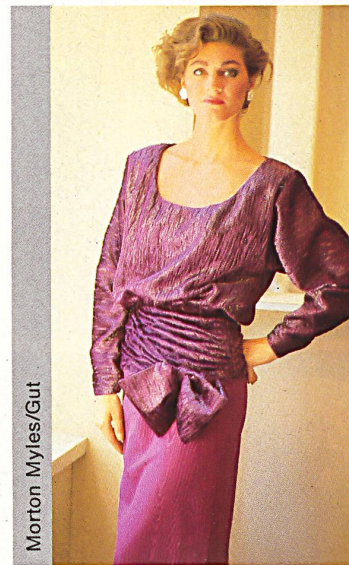
Bill Blass/Abraham



Carolina Herrera/Abraham



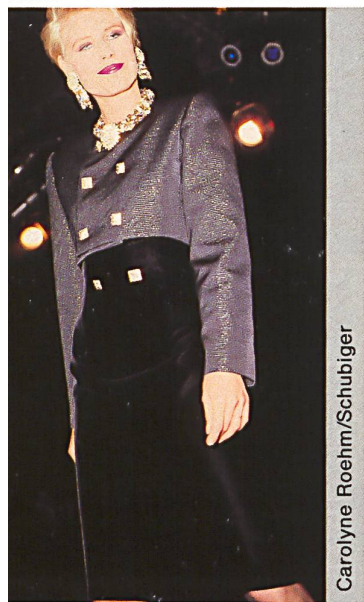
Morton Myles/Stehli



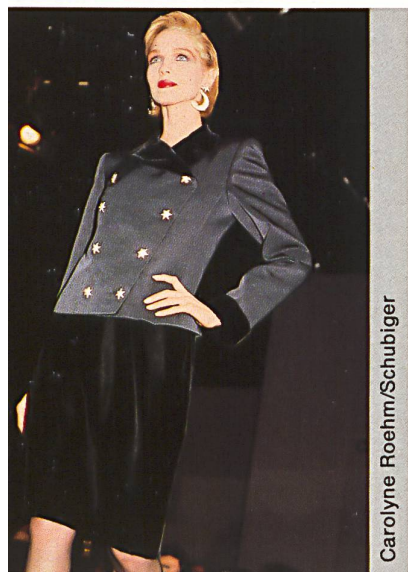
Morton Myles/Gut



Carolyne Roehm/Schubiger



Carolyne Roehm/Schubiger



Carolyne Roehm/Schubiger

NEW YORK FASHION

DINNER TIME

Black has not been forgotten despite all the proclaimed colorful fashions. As a passe-partout for evening events, black silk (Ottoman by Schubiger, Lurex pattern on satin by Gut), and velvet and lace (Forster Willi) make for a festive impression. Colorful bright accents (blouses of silk façonné by Abraham) liven up the rather austere picture thus underlining the effect of Black Magic.



Carolina Herrera/Forster Willi



Oscar de la Renta/Abraham



Morton Myles/Gut



NEW YORK FASHION

EVENING UNDERSTATEMENT

The evening attire aiming at understatement consists of silhouettes borrowed from daytime styles, shows simple styling, but is very picky when it comes to fabrics. First of all there has to be some shine and glitter, whether on sweaters to go with printed wool muslin (Abraham) or on the short cheery model of shine-coated and transparent material with colored Lurex stripes by Stehli or as smart glitter knit material by Schlaepfer. On the other hand the evening dress with long coat borrows the material from daytime fashions – therefore understatement of the material side with wool jersey doubleface by Forster Willi.

Soo Yung Lee/Schlaepfer

Bob Mackie/Stehli

Carolina Herrera/Abraham

Soo Yung Lee/Schlaepfer



Geoffrey Beene/Forster Willi



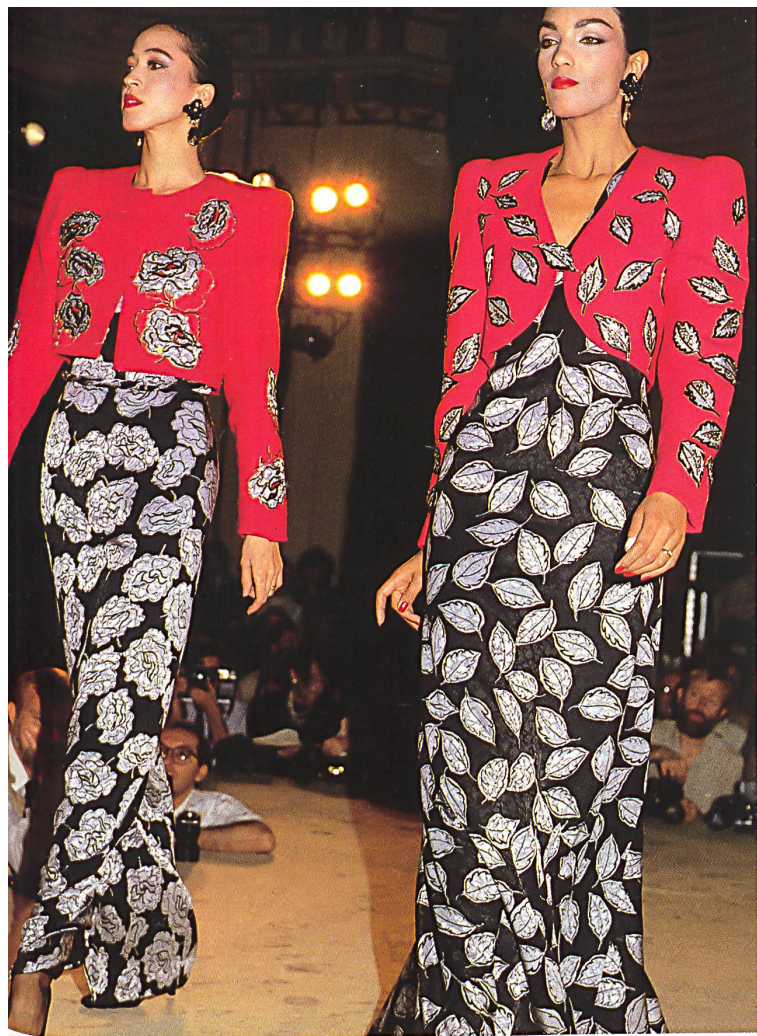
Bill Blass/Abraham

NIGHT ELEGANCE

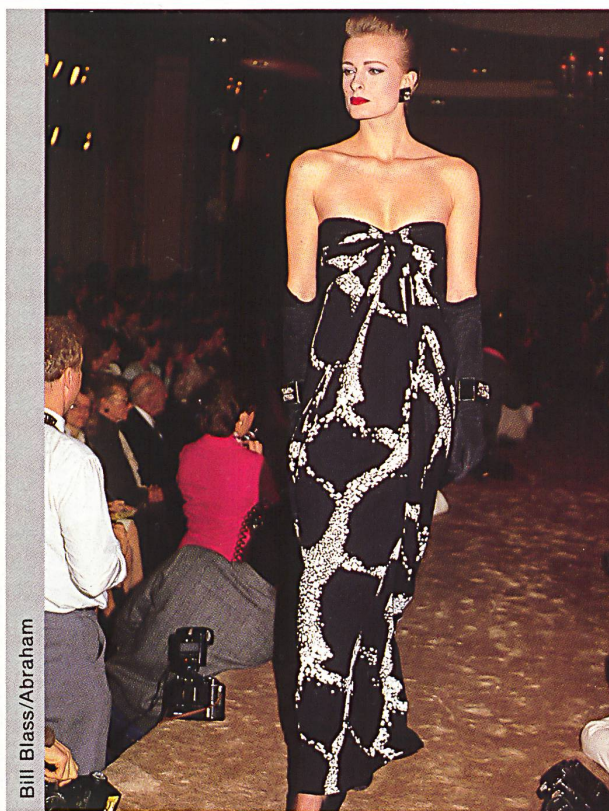
Femininity is the term that always pops up when one is looking for an alternative to the androgenous elements. But femininity is multifaceted with one facet marking the evening styles of the New York designers: the slim, soft, siren-like silhouette which appears especially elegant and slightly sexy without any note of the vamp. Thin jersey, soft velours froissé, flowing silks favorably hug a figure that in its full length sets off smart designs.

Bob Mackie/Stehli

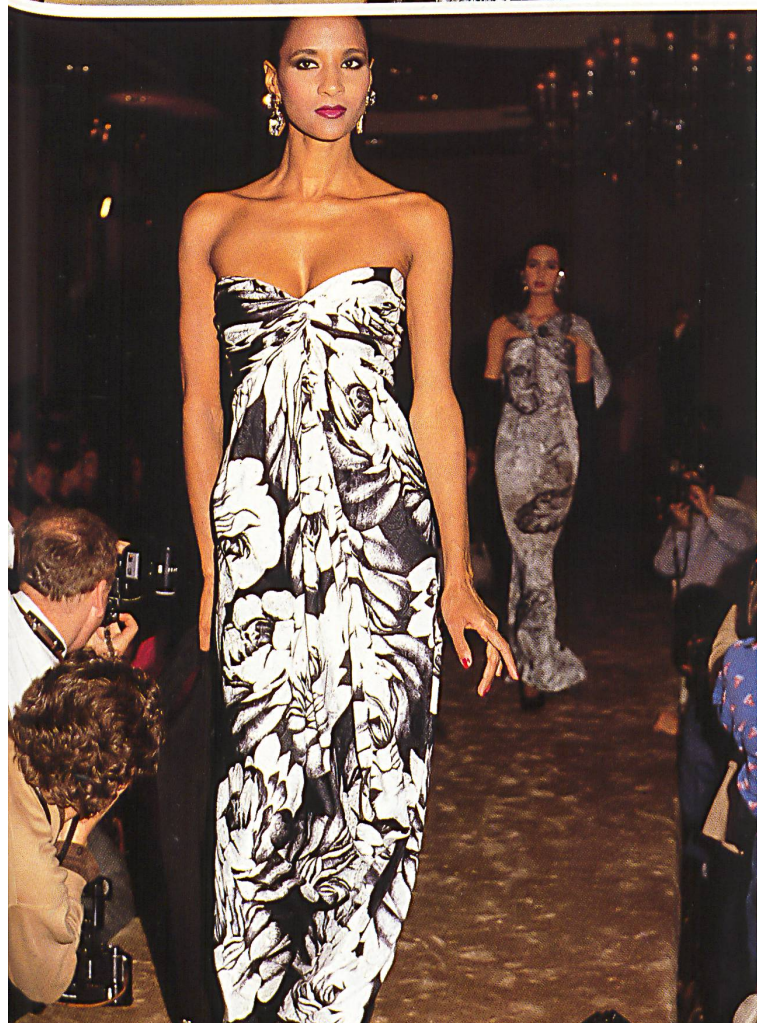




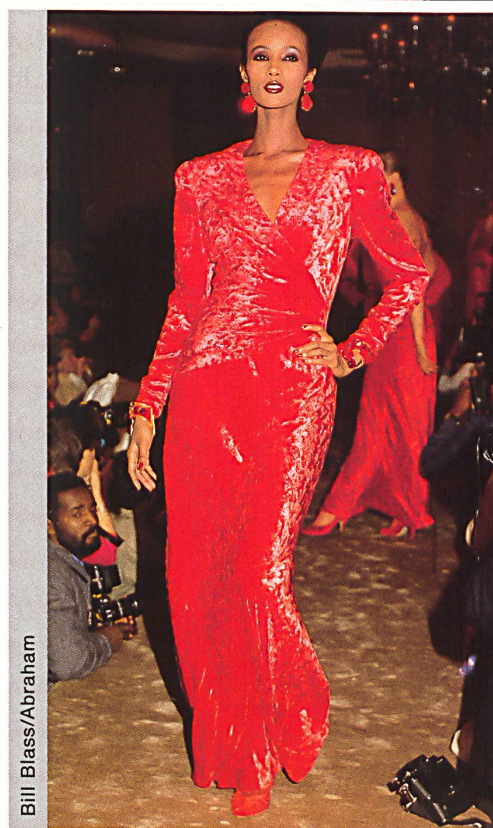
Carolina Herrera/Abraham



Bill Blass/Abraham



Bill Blass/Abraham



Bill Blass/Abraham

The US is a much courted and crowded fashion market. One glance into the windows on Fifth Avenue instantly reveals famous names from any fashion center worldwide. Exporting to the US means more than just doing business; continued exports almost equal the successful conquest of a fortress or, put simply, mean proof of thoroughly checked-out competitiveness or true innovation.

Competitiveness, of course, is a prerequisite for selling a product in any market, even at home; however, not every market is equally demanding and spoiled. The selection in the US literally offers products from all over the world. C'est à prendre ou à laisser (take it or leave it): the best or the cheapest, the newest or the most special – superlatives are common. Therefore when Swiss materials find respect and appreciation it is an indication that they represent in one (or more) way(s) a superlative of their own, and that they are ahead of the competition. American business is cutthroat, knows no mercy, shows no sympathy, and does not care about customer loyalty if a product seems to lack target group orientation or sales volume. Made in Switzerland is no sales guarantee. The materials are ordered strictly for what they are: their design, quality, innovation, and service must display special performance and must justify the price.



Fisba

Bleiche

Weisbrod-Zürren.

Bleiche

Mettler

Abraham

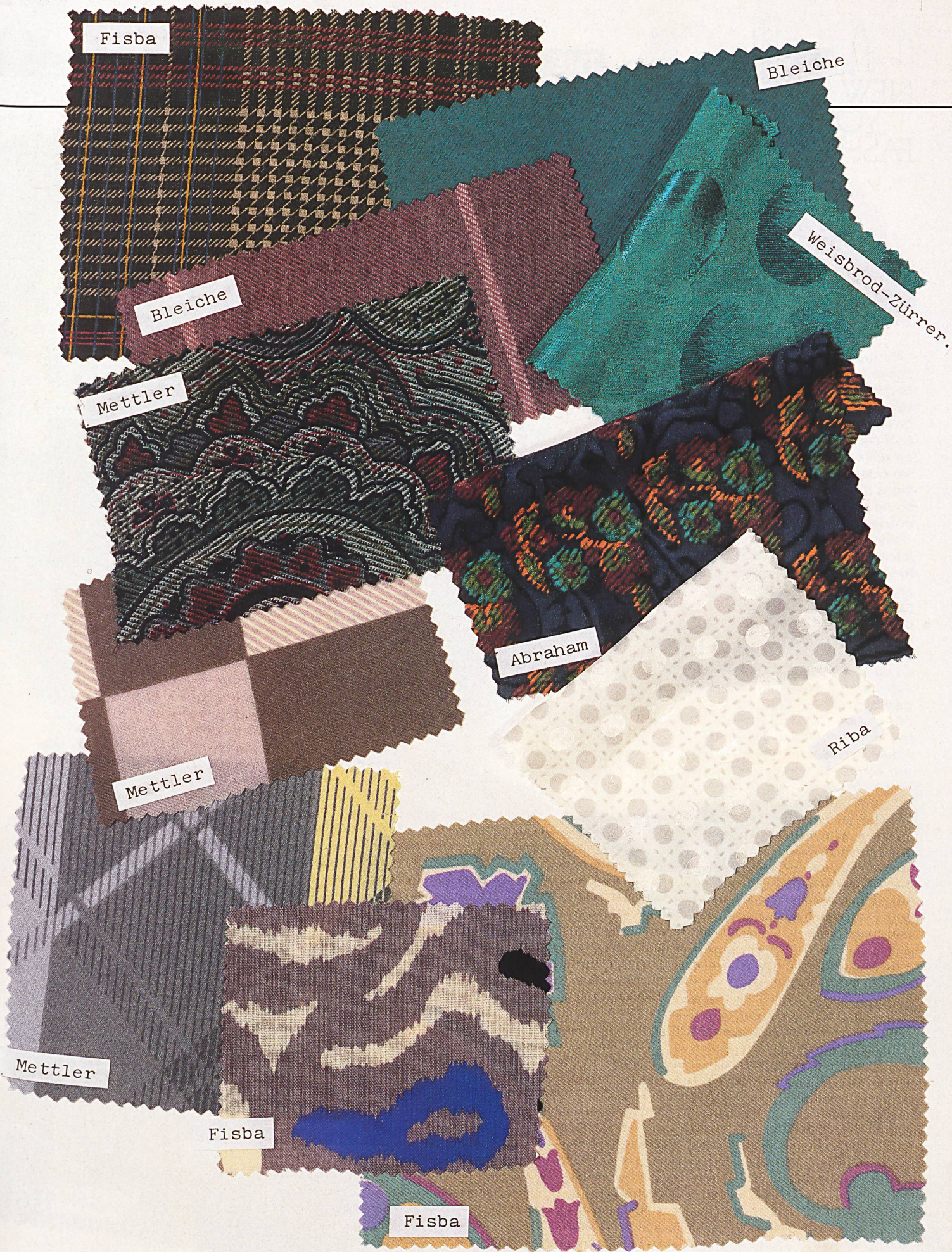
Riba

Mettler

Mettler

Fisba

Fisba



"Throughout the market there is a desire for exclusivity – too many people did the same thing last year," states Jerry Shaw of Oscar de la Renta in regard to the winter collections 85/86. That turns into an advantage for the Swiss Nouveauté companies, especially since the American textile industry so far never ventured into the nouveauté sector, because a "meter business" just isn't interesting, when you are aiming for a "kilometer business" – regardless of the fact that specialties (e.g. embroidery or fine cottons or silk prints) are based on a long tradition.

Of course it would be wrong to say – as the examples on these pages illustrate – that the choice of the American designers and of the model confection is only Haute Nouveauté. Also uni-colors are well-liked; an interesting color combination, a smart connection effect, or a supersoft wool fabric may be the deciding factor. "The sales of nouveautés fluctuates at times widely," says a representative of Swiss textile firms in New York, referring to the past seasons, "because sometimes the price, sometimes the fashionable innovation and other times the exclusivity seem to dominate as selection criteria." It seems that the desire for exclusivity is currently of overriding importance. Especially the multitude of tasteful prints and the fine qualities for evening styles seem to confirm this.





THE BUSINESS OF FENTS

The title should not nurture any wrong ideas: this is not the big business. But nevertheless fents must not necessarily mean a small business either.

"The US thinks always in quantity," says a New York boutique owner with slightly critical undertone. He for one is thankful that there are fabric suppliers that also accept and handle small orders reliably, and for whom the business with fents is interesting enough to deal with it as correctly as with large orders. It is not by accident that he is a loyal customer of several Swiss textile companies. And he is not the only one.

During the past years along Madison Avenue and on the Upper Eastside area which turned into a real fashion quarter, a large number of elegant boutiques has opened up. They offer mostly their own designs, thus representing a mixture between couture salon and boutique. Their strength is exclusivity. What hangs inside the store is not on display in the window around the corner, and their materials and designs will not be duplicated at the next party. The elegant New Yorker seems to appreciate this fact, for all these individualistic fashion businesses are proud of their loyal regulars.

"Almost all our cottons come from Switzerland," says Mariko, herself of Japanese origin and owner of one of the most famous and successful boutiques of this kind which had already opened in 1968 as a family venture. Also other businesses often buy nouveautés from Switzerland either directly from the New York representative or through a broker who really is responsible for small meter quantities going directly to the detail business. Always requested is that which is special and which the competitor looking for larger series cannot offer.

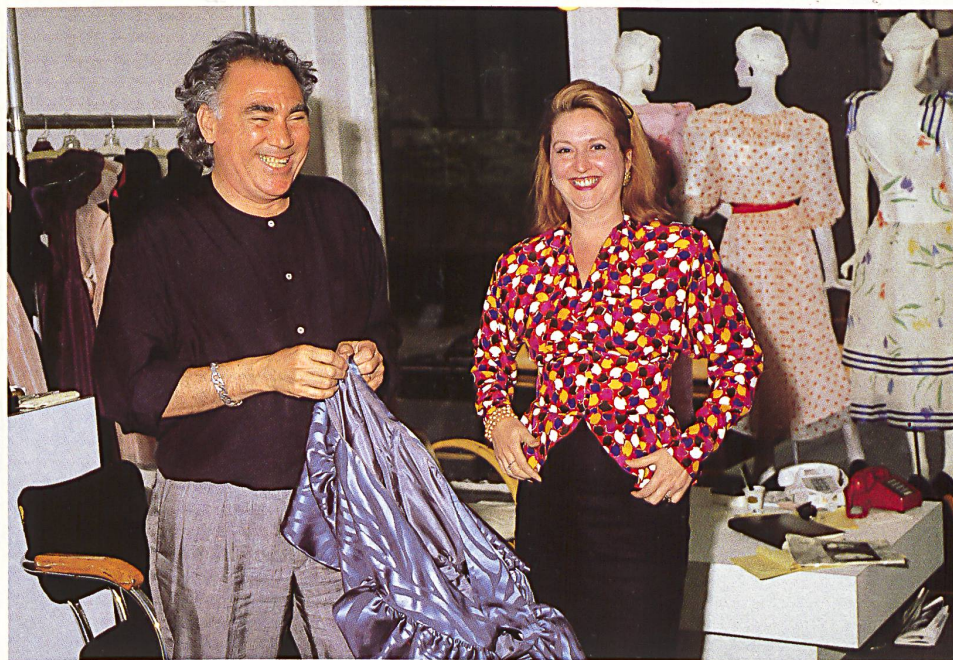


Mariko, owner of the boutique with the same name at Madison Avenue, with one of her best customers who just bought a printed pattern dress made of Swiss cotton.





Jeane Eddy was opened 12 years ago as a store on different floors along elegant Madison Avenue. Ninety percent of the models are own designs among which those of Swiss material make up a good portion.



Sander Wilin whose boutique is located on 57th Street East, examining the fit of a dress of Abraham imprimé being tried on by one of his regular customers. His colleague is also dressed in Swiss silk.

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