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THE CREATIVE EFFORT OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN WARTIME

Those who have had occasion to visit foreign trade fairs of late, have been struck by the intense development of industrial production. Manufacturers of all countries have striven to maintain their exports and have achieved a hitherto undreamed-of degree of output and ingenuity.

It is most encouraging to note that exhibitions and displays of Swiss export products become more important each year, while their power of attraction seems also to increase. The merit for this must be attributed to the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade which, realizing that the sympathy of the consumer is a determinant factor in his purchasing the products of a foreign country, has spared no pains to arouse such sympathy abroad.

This organization is thus establishing the Swiss export trade on a sound political and economic basis. Government departments are, in their turn, co-operating in these efforts by discreet cultural propaganda which serves to spread abroad a conception of Switzerland's natural beauties, of the national life of its people and their scientific, artistic and literary achievements.

Swiss exporters are therefore concentrating their efforts on the finding of new markets for their products. However, good results can only be obtained by a collective drive, on condition, of course, that both the exhibitions and the products exhibited incorporate the elements essential to successful advertising.

The task of the architect of a trade fair is so to arrange the exhibition space and the decorations that they will serve to enhance the goods exhibited. On the other hand, the products themselves must stand out by their originality, unusualness and fine workmanship.

These factors are even more essential as regards fashion products, for in this domain novelty is an indispensable condition of success. Competition here is relentless, and only the choicest goods can awaken the interest of a satiated public and win that prestige so necessary to success in this field of activity.

Manufacturers have found that trade fairs, where the various qualities of foreign and Swiss products can be weighed and compared, raise all kinds of difficulties. It is in this that the aid of the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade proves so invaluable.

The object of the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade is preeminently sound. Its aim is to enlist the energies of Swiss industry in order to attain a common purpose : the manufacture of high quality goods.

Convinced of the capacities and progressiveness of the Swiss fashion industry, and also of the prospects which lie before it, the Textile Department of the S.O.D.T. decided to make an experiment.

Its first task was to circumscribe the situation and to make Swiss manufacturers realize fully the importance of foreign fashion centres as such. The main task of the Swiss textile, embroidery, lace, millinery and footwear industries does, in effect, lie essentially in the supplying of products which, by their quality and, above all, by their outstanding originality — and hence by their great potentialities — will strike foreign designers and couturiers.

This point having been settled once and for all, the question arose as to who was best fitted to create such novelties. Experience has shown that only a highly specialized designer can undertake such a task. He alone knows what can be done in this domain. Consciously or unconsciously, his imagination is subordinated to technical possibilities and guided by past experience, by the requirements of the clientele and existing markets.

This knowledge of the needs of the trade nevertheless presents certain disadvantages and dangers. Intense daily work, a too rigorous subordination to technical requirements, hamper the freedom of imagination and often result in a blunting of creative sensibility.

How often manufacturers insist that their designers should not imitate the products of trade competitors in any way, not realizing that they are thereby repressing the designer's personality and preventing the natural development of his artistic instinct. Little by little, the draftsman's inspiration is impoverished for lack of opportunity, time, encouragement, or even of that freedom of thought indispensable to all creation.

It was therefore decided to fight against this danger by inviting independent artists to place their talent at the service of fashion which is, after all, the mirror of the age, the foretaste of things to come.

The taste for what is new, undreamed-of, is latent in every human heart, but the tendency is particularly developed in an artistic temperament. The independent spirit of the artist allows him to achieve intuitively the most unexpected and original creations, strikingly bold in their conception, and his artistic ideal makes him soar far above practical considerations.

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84 Gown in black silk organza manufactured by STEHLI & Co., ZURICH, with an opera scene design of the Lully period, embroidered with very pale pink twist. The UNION Co. LTD., ST. GALL.
Model by Bouchette, Zurich.

85 Orange silk muslin by STEHLI & Co., ZURICH, with a grey embroidered motif of birds and musical instruments by FORSTER, WILLI & Co., ST. GALL. Model by Grieder, Zurich.

86 Lavender-blue rayon crêpe with a printed design of flute-playing shepherds. SILK MILLS FORMERLY NÄF BROS. LTD., ZURICH. Model by Andrée Wiegandt, Geneva.

87 Chiffon crêpe by HEER & Co. LTD., THALWIL, with a printed "Lohengrin" design picked out with embroidery in silver thread executed by WALTER SCHRANK & Co., ST. GALL.
Model by Grieder, Zurich.

88 *Left :*
White silk organza by E. SCHUBIGER & Co. LTD., UZNACH, with appliquéd edgings showing an angel motif, the latter by The UNION Co. LTD., ST. GALL. Model Sauvage Couture, Basle.

88 *Right :*
White silk organza by STEHLI & Co., ZURICH, with tulle incrustations and embroidered in white and gold by AUG. GIGER & Co., ST. GALL. Model by R. Scheidegger-Mosimann, Berne.

89 Gown in "Orbis" silk taffeta printed with a bold design of many colours. STRUB & Co., ZURICH.
Model by Bouchette, Zurich.

90/1 "Les petits rats" (The Little Opera Dancers). A model in white silk organza by E. SCHUBIGER & Co. LTD., UZNACH, with an embroidered design of organs and ballerinas in white and silver by WALTER SCHRANK & Co., ST. GALL. Model by Andrée Wiegandt, Geneva.

Right :
An evocation of "Idylle" (after Arnold Böcklin).

92/3 Wohlen braids. Manufacturers :
M. BRUGGISSER & Co. Ltd., WOHLEN.
DREIFUSS BROTHERS LTD., WOHLEN.
JACQUES MEYER & Co. LTD., WOHLEN.
OTTO STEINMANN & Co. LTD., WOHLEN.

Third page of cover :
A cello motif in beige embroidery by The UNION Co. LTD., ST-GALL, on a pale pink rayon crêpe by STEHLI & Co., ZURICH. Model Grieder, Zurich.

(Continued from page 8.)

Although manufacturers were at first disappointed with some of the purely artistic drafts laid before them, after having studied them carefully, they found in most cases that these designs provided absolutely original and most interesting ideas, which could easily be adapted by a specialized draftsman. It cannot be said therefore, that the method fomented any spirit of rivality between artists and designers, for they both deserve equal recognition, the former for the wealth of their inspiration, the latter for their practical sense.

Another and no less bold experiment was that of imposing a set theme on all manufacturers concerned. This innovation has been crowned with success, thanks to the goodwill of all those involved in the experiment ; the theme proposed by the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade was spontaneously accepted by all, testifying to their broad-mindedness and to their abstraction of all considerations of prestige. Even the artists themselves, although they usually fight shy of constraint of any kind, understood the necessity of submitting their talents to fair competition. Thanks to their intuitiveness, to their power of adaptation and to the information previously given them as regards the different values of the fabrics, it can be said that, on the whole, no draft was entirely unpracticable. Stimulated by the joy of extending the sphere of their activity, the textile specialists also produced fabrics of which they may well be proud. The success with which the promoters of the movement have met at fashion and trade fair displays abroad, have fully repaid them for their untiring work and trouble.

This experiment has made it quite clear that a collection of fashion textiles which combines artistic as well as purely commercial values, does possess a far greater drawing power and enhances the prestige of the manufacturers. It is a more effective weapon against that mortal enemy of fashion — standardization.

Artistic exclusivities are not created expressly for immediate commercial exploitation but with a far sighted eye to success in the long run ; behind their creation lies a sense of duty — the satisfaction of enhancing the good reputation of Swiss products and demonstrating by example how a concerted effort provides employment for 300,000 Swiss, thus promoting the common weal. It is to be hoped that these fine results alone will keep alive the zeal and painstaking endeavour of all those associated with the common cause of Fashion.

JEAN KLINGER.