

MODERN DRESS DESIGNERS AND THEIR PROFESSION

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INTRODUCTION

The many complexities of a business which transforms the designers inspiration into garments sold by the retail trade is not generally understood by the modern consumer. A study has therefore been made of the French and American dress designers, and of the business in which they engage.

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MODERN DRESS DESIGNERS AND THEIR PROFESSION

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Thesis Outline

H.A. 500

HISTORY OF THE HAUTE COUTURE

A. Paris

"To Paris in 1846 journeyed a young Londoner, a penniless draper's assistant named Charles Frederick Worth. His rise was not long delayed. By 1855 he was attracting attention by the dresses he exhibited at the Exposition of that year. Three years later he took an apartment at 7 rue de la Paix, where stands the present ten-story House of Worth which still flourishes although no longer has it the significance of its 19th century position, and set himself up as a couturier. This was a bold move because here was the most aristocratic residential street in the city. His pioneering was successful as all the world knows. Worth's next step was even bolder. He showed his patrons the first "collection" of models and displayed the first mannequins. It was a revolution. Up to that time, ladies used to buy their own materials and carry them to their dressmakers, telling the latter pretty definitely how they wanted a dress to look."¹

The celebrities of the day were the initiators of fashion--not the dressmaker. Headdresses, for example, were lowered from their inconsiderate height when Lady Sandwich made her appearance at Versailles as the wife of the English Ambassador. The rage for yellow silk was introduced by Actress Rachel when she reclaimed some old material which she found in a trunk. With the advent of Worth

¹ Dressmakers of France, Fortune, August 1932.

in Paris all this was changed and the dressmaker was raised from a nimble-fingered craftsman to a creator and artist. Worth designed, chose his materials and cut his dresses in advance and independently of his customer. He was able to effect this first great revolution in the dressmaking world because he was a designer of genius, and possessed a masterful personality. His success was assured when he won over the Empress Eugenie, the most fashionable woman in Europe in her day. Before long all the courts of Europe were coming to his salon to be dressed. During the siege of Paris his shop was closed, but he reopened it when peace was declared to bring out two sad new colors: a deep orange called Bismarch enrage and a gray, Cendres de Paris. He brought in many new materials, and revived old ones like satin which set the Lyons silk mills humming. The House of Worth had the richest, most artistocratic clientele in Europe during the first forty years of its existence. Today, run by the third generation, it is still one of the great houses and queens and actresses delight in buying their clothes at Worth's.

"Between Worth and the Contemporary School of Couturiers there rose and fell an intervening dynasty of fashion leaders. By 1890 there were at least four other important houses: Doucet, Paquin, Rouff, and Redfern. All these exist today, but their glory has been more or less eclipsed by the ascension of newer stars. A little later came Callot Soerus and, in the decade just before the War, Paul Poiret. These two came closest to inheriting the mantle of Worth."²

² Ibid.

As Worth carried the torch which ignited the first revolution in the world of Paris fashion, so the World War touched off the second upheaval. The Haute Couture as we know it today is a product of the War, which reshuffled the great couturiers so completely that most of the modern houses date after 1918. It destroyed, socially, economically, or physically most of the rulers of fashion who had patronized the pre-War houses.

"Out of the ashes of the War, phoenix-like, rose a new dynasty of fashion leaders. These are the women who made a fine art of dressing well to whom many a couturier looks for new ideas. Even more drastic and considerably more far-reaching were the less definite effects of the War. Before 1914 only the extremely wealthy among the American women looked to Paris for their fashions. For the mill foreman's wife or the bond clerk's sweetheart, Worth and Callot were glamorously distant names only vaguely connected with the dresses she could afford. After the War, couturiers of Paris began for the first time, to dress the whole Western World. Their ideas, much deluted, but still theirs, filtered down to the cheapest grade of dresses, and flowed out all over Europe and both Americas. Paris became and remained the keystone of the whole arch of international fashion. Of late this supremacy has been challenged by New York, where the American School of Couture, long held in anonymous subjection by Paris is fast becoming articulate. But Paris, for a while at least is still Paris."³

The War also expanded the scope of haute couture. Before the War only nobility or women of great wealth went to the couturier

³ Ibid.

for their street clothes. The most fashionable Parisienne thought the dressmaker around the corner good enough to make her everyday clothes. Only occasionally did she consult a couturier for a costume for some special affair. She often paid as much as \$1,000 for a stiffly bejeweled and brocaded dress. After the War there was no demand for such dresses and no money to pay for them. The new couture came into being to take the place of the little seamstress around the corner, to make all of Madam's clothes from formal to sport things. He used cheaper materials and simpler designs, and brought the haute couture down from the ballroom to the tennis court.

The Paris haute couture can be divided into three groups: first, the old firms who hold great prestige but exercise little creative influence on fashion trends. In this class are Worth, Paquin, Poiret, Redfern, Callot Soeurs, and Chervit. Second, are the houses, fairly young ones, which are not notably powerful as leaders of style. Among these may be mentioned Lelong, Bruyere, Goupy, Louise Boulanger, Lyolene, Jane Regny, Martial and Armand, Maggy Rouff, and Captain Molynux. Third, are those that set the taste and alter the mode of the day. The following houses undeniably belong in this category--Vionnet, Lavin, Chanel, Patou, Augustabernard, Mainbocker, and Schiaparelli.

"Twenty years ago what the haute couture of Paris decreed was seldom questioned. Styles were made known to everyone in the trade well in advance of the pre-established seasonal openings. All concerned had ample time to prepare for them. Occasionally a fashion eluded or defied the established directive forces. This

happened when the couturiers decreed repeatedly, but vainly, against the hobble skirt, between the years 1909 and 1912. And back in the 'Nineties manufacturers of elastic elicited the support of established powers in fashion in an unsuccessful effort to continue the popularity of Congress gaiters. But fiascos such as these were the exception. What the haute couture decreed did indeed become fashion. Paris still exerts a strong influence on style. But the influence that it now wields is conditioned upon its exceptional understanding of fashion, or feeling for it. Most of the fashions in women's wear continued to come from Paris. But it no longer has a monopoly of them."⁴

⁴ Ibid.

B. America

At present fashions may start anywhere. A movie actress or a Hollywood designer may start a fashion that sweeps the country, or it may even appear spontaneously without any known sponsor, as did the one-piece bathing suit. No one has unquestionable authority in the field of fashion anymore. America now is most important from the standpoint of accepting or rejecting new styles. Europe has most to do with creating style. This probably is due to European advancement in the fields of art.

"And just as quantity production and mass distribution makes fashion commercially important in America, helping to sell an article by hundreds of thousands where in Europe it is sold by thousands, so the less advanced stage of quantity production in Europe encourages experimenting with large number of designs. It is not so expensive to test the appeal of the new or unusual in Europe. Fashion is more flexible."⁵

"In March, 1932, the Manhattan retail establishment of Lord and Taylor made history. It bought and paid cash for space in the daily newspapers to advertise fine dresses designed in America. It was no news to the trade that fine dresses were designed in America. In fact, Best had quietly featured them in 1929. But it was sensational that anyone should base a strong campaign on it. A generation of shopping girls had been trained to ignore American design, to talk everlastingly of Paris, Paris, Paris. For who could sell a dress admittedly designed

⁵Ibid.

by an American? The answer was quickly given. Lord and Taylor could. So other Fifth-Avenue shops--Best's, Altman's, Russek's to name three--followed the Lord and Taylor lead."⁶

Anyone who is style-conscious knows that America is fast developing her own haute couture. There are American designers whose names are famous, others--many of them, who are still fighting in the dark. America has a chance not only to rival Paris, but to replace it as a style source for the \$1,000,000,000 ladies' ready-to-wear business of the United States. Why should 45,000,000 women of America depend on Paris for the style of their clothes? Three thousand miles of ocean separate the two countries, and their inhabitants differ markedly in temperament. In spite of the fact that America is fast taking her place as a source of clothing style, the 45,000,000 are still partially tied to France, and go back to it for the basic motif of their costumes. There are a few things which America must achieve if it is to be on a par with Paris as a style center of the world: the finest ideas, the finest materials, the finest workmanship, and the loudest ballyhoo. The last is important.

"Ideas spring from the head of the designer. They spring also from the study of past styles. The Paris haute couture during a century has accumulated a copious literature of fashion, thousands of sketches and descriptions of bygone costumes, tons of fabric samples from the days of the Empire. Ideas spring, too, from the sight of new and unusual materials. Paris is close to Lyons, a center of handweavers producing the rarest and most beautiful textures imaginable;

⁶ Dressmakers of United States, Fortune, December 1933.

and Paris accessories, the buckles, clips, metallic shoulder straps which, if fabric is the food of design, may be said to be its spice-- these unique, ornamental things are made in the same spirit of fine craftsmanship. The French seamstress is as medieval in her devotion to her task as the Lyons weaver or the Parisian goldsmith. She is the product of centuries of subtle and substantial sewing. Paris has a group of fifty or sixty women of social or financial fame, who make a career out of dressing well, who might be said to be obsessed with their own clothes. The city is, relatively speaking, small and centralized, and these peacocks are seen and recognized everywhere, are constantly photographed and described for Harper's Bazaar and Vogue and Femina and Argentine fashion magazines of which you may never have heard. These women are the ideal ballyhoo for a gown, and a fine couturier can build a success on one of them, such as sleek Princesse de Taucigny-Lucinge. But in addition the very age of Paris haute couture has given it a perfume, a world-wide reputation, so that the designer who is a part of it enjoys a momentum of that reputation. And she capitalizes on it with the most luscious salons filled with the odor of sartorial sanctity."⁷

The American haute couture is not the temple of style that Paris is. Fashionable American women are still devoted to Paris. The American designer must still follow main Paris trends, even though she puts her own original touch to it. If the American designer would make dresses of superb quality she must import her materials from Paris. One designer, Muriel King, has shown a lovely collection

⁷ Ibid.

of dresses made entirely of American fabric from houses of Forstmann and Huffman and Cheney. The United States textile industry is a mass production enterprise--fine artistry is incidental. The manufacturer is too busy feeding his enormous market to fool with hand-loomed varieties which smaller French industries handle with profit. In general, the United States fabric industry has produced few fabrics which would inspire the designer of highstyle clothes selling between \$90 and \$300. Most dress ornaments must be imported from Paris, so American designers reduced ornaments to a minimum.

"There have been no style leaders in New York since the days of Ward McAllister when the hostess of the Four Hundred shopped in Paris and the clothing of the mass of American women was more notable for bulk than for chic. The newest approach to style leaders in the United States are the members of the Hollywood colony. Stars like Norma Shearer and Joan Crawford do have a very real, if somewhat eccentric influence on American styles."⁸

"One hears a new phrase on people's lips these days. It is said that such-and-such a dress is "a Hollywood fashion", that this-or-that vogue "started in the movies". One is informed on every hand, that Hollywood is originating fashion."⁹

There was a day when Hollywood styles did not hold a high place in American fashion world. In that day, only yesterday, Hollywood was its own law. Hollywood fashion was made for the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Does Hollywood Create?, Vogue, February 1, 1933.

screen and remained in Hollywood with its spangles, curls, macara, and jewels. But that day is past. The revolution of the silent drama into the talkies has brought an influx of talent from the legitimate stage which has served as an inspiration to the costume designers, with the result that Hollywood has revolutionized its styles with this change. The movie styles became more reasonable. They became smart. At length, from the fashion point of view, they became worthy of study and even of imitation.

Today, there are designers of first rank in the United States. "Many Americans supposed that the home talent cannot produce those delicious subtleties of style for which Paris is noted; the felicitous clouds of chiffon, the liquid triumphs in satin, the virtuous molding of a gown which makes it a tantalizing medley of the voluptuous and the discreet. But this American view is sheer superstition."¹⁰ No locality has a monopoly on any of the arts, including dress designing. It is futile to suppose that Paris possesses secrets of draping which are not available elsewhere. There are potential Schiaparellis and Vionnets in this country silent and unglorified though they be.

In the past few years the American Haute Couture has grown rapidly from infancy into a well established, self supporting business, supplying dresses to thousands of American women. The response of women to the designs of American creators has recently been so gratifying that it is felt that not only are these designers rivaling the French but that, in a measure,

¹⁰ Dressmakers of United States, Fortune, December 1933.

the United States is replacing Paris as a fashion center for American women.

MODERN DESIGNERS

A. Parisian

Parisian designing is linked with a retail business in which each designer maintains his or her own establishment. The French haute coutures are divided into two main classes: the greater houses, or "BIG TEN", as they are sometimes called; and the lesser houses. The following classification will divide the outstanding French houses.

Greater Houses

Madeleine Vionnet

Agustabernard

Gabrielle Chanel

Jeanne Lan^vin

Patou

Mainbocker

Captain Molyneus^{*}

Worth

Lucien Lelong

Elsa Schiaparelli

Lesser Houses

Paul Poiret

Redfern

Marcel Rochas

Maggy Rouff

Paray

Paquin

The names of many of the Parisian designers have become familiar to us through sketches of their designs which appear in all the leading fashion magazines but little is known about their establishments and the particular features which distinguish their creations.

A thumbnail sketch of their work as creators of fashion will serve to emphasize the characteristics for which each is noted in the fashion world.

The Big Ten (Great Houses)

Vionnet

"Madeleine Vionnet, Goddess of the bias cut and greatest of them all, is a little gray haired woman who acts tall with brown eyes of character and morality and small vital hands. She began her career her career as a pin girl working for Callot Soeurs, where they said that the little Vionnet would never make anything but nice old-maid's dresses. She is married and her husband is a bootmaker, whose shoes she displays in her shop."¹ She lives an extremely simple life. It takes the combined energy of her whole shop to get her into a dress, hat, and gloves to make an appearance. She is creator of French present day elegance. "Back in her old days, on the rue de Rivoli, she was the first to throw whale bones and linings into the dust bins; the first to use crepe de chine for fine dresses rather than coat linings; the first to make dresses slip over the head; the first, like Nature, to work on the round. Two weeks before her opening date in 1934 with her collection finished, she suddenly

¹ The Big Ten, Harpers Bazaar, October 1934.

scrapped it and began all over again. She finally opened on the dot."²

Vionnet still works harder and cuts and pins better than anyone in her shop. No one else can handle materials as she can. She has a classic feeling for the rhythm of the body and for line at the expense of color. To make her gowns cling to the figure, she cuts her materials on the bias and avoids gathers except for decorative purposes. Her garments are exceedingly difficult to copy because of unexpected darts and seams that help to produce the dress effects.

It is interesting to note that in her effort to prevent copying, Vionnet puts her own personal finger prints on every label that leaves her establishment to assure her customers that the garments are original. Her collections display a classic elegance which is the very pinnacle of the dressmaker's art.

Augustabernard

Augustabernard knows the French dressmaking business from the bottom hem up. She has made her own way in the world, and lives quite independently in a hotel. She began in a small establishment on the rue de Rivoli, and before she left there the Marquise de Paris and everyone in the smart world of Paris had visited her establishment. Unlike most of the designers she is uninterested in the appearance of her shop as long as her sewing-rooms work well. Her present establishment is in a court up a rather dark staircase, and her furniture is of Regence mahogany, which has obviously never bothered her. She decorates women, not rooms.

² Ibid.

She is one of the few great couturiers who come into the fitting-rooms and looks at the hem and has something to say about the fit of the sleeves and chats familiarly with her clients. She is a modern dressmaker in an old dressmaking tradition. She stands for the subtle handling of drapery about the neck and for flare of long skirts at the bottom.

Her evening gowns usually quite simple with hand pleated Grecian folds especially please the connoisseurs. The buyers are less interested in her creations, for her dresses tend to be impractical, and they depend too much on expensive materials and workmanship to be effectively copied. For sheer loveliness, however, her gowns excel.

"The perfection of her technique and the promotion of "Vogue" have been her two chief assets. Let it also be said that she is a true Parisian as only Patou is--and possibly Paguin, that she dresses some of the smartest women in Paris, and that like many good Parisians, she came from the Midi."³

Chanel

In dramatic contrast to Vionnet is Chanel, who prefers a businesslike simplicity to classic elegance, who never cuts material on the bias, and who cannot sew. She dominated the post-War decade because she gave it the straight line, well-tailored clothes it wanted. Gabrielle Chanel came to Paris a year before the War and opened a little millinery shop in the

³ Dressmakers of France, Fortune, August 1932.

rue Cambon with one employee. Today she occupies practically the entire block on both sides of the street and has some 3,000 people working for her. "They say that someone first suggested that she make dresses as well as hats but she burst into tears and cried: 'But I can't make dresses!' And she couldn't, at least not the dresses that were being worn then."⁴

Chanel is from Auvergne, the harsh hill country of France, and she has a peasant's scorn for the trappings of wealth, and a peasant's lust for money itself. She began to dress the post-War rich in sweaters and scarfs such as Paris laborers wore, making them of the most expensive materials. She gave women a freedom that they had never known before, cutting down on everything that was merely ornamental. There is not a button on a Chanel dress that is not needed to fasten something, nor is there excessive ornamentation. Her favorite color is beige which is near the natural color of wool and silk.

While the other dressmakers go in for elaborately decorated salons, Chanel's establishment is as brutally simple as her clothes. She is a good friend of Picasso, Cocteau, Stravinsky, and was one of the chief backers of Diaghileff's Ballet Russe, but she dislikes "art" and would probably be furious if anyone called her "artistic." So far as anyone knows, she owns her business, completely. She has accumulated a fortune estimated at some \$15,000,000 which makes her one of France's richest women.

⁴ Ibid.

Jeanne Lanin

Madam Jeanne Lanin is considered by the French a person of authority and power. She is eminently respectable, has fine slender ankles, and a superb wealth of uncompromisingly braided gray hair. She goes to hear good music at night and the next morning is behind her cash box. At her openings she sits behind the table which looks like a lecturer's desk.

Making clothes for her beloved daughter, now the beautiful Comtesse Jean de Polignac marked the beginning of her career. She arrived at her peak through the strength of the overpowering, and unflinching respect she arouses. Her work is characterized by highly artistic effects and "she is the dressmaker par excellence of French women."⁵

Lanin made fashionable two sartorial items. The first was her famous short metal jacket which she wore herself. The other was the robe-de-style culled from old costume books, daguerreotypes, and historical plates in her fashion library. Lanin conducts a men's tailoring shop as well and is greatly in demand as an interior decorator. At the last Paris Exposition, she was awarded the Legion of Honor.

She is not original in the sense that Chanel or Schiaparelli are, but whatever she touches becomes her own. She started in business in 1902, and from the very first her shop was a favorite with wealthy Argentines. Because of her preference for rather regal designs, she is patronized mostly by South Americans and

⁵ Economics of Fashion, Nystrom, p. 216.

Europeans, and is especially famous for her wedding clothes. She has dressed Yvonne Printemps and many other French actresses for years. She travels widely and reads extensively. Her fondness for books is evidenced in her designing room which is lined with books on costume. The fascinating thing about her is that she keeps up to the minute without really changing at all. Her quilting and stitching and embroidery and sequins, her blues, her "jeune fille" quality remain the same, but she presents them to the world each season with new thrusts and turns.

Patou

Jean Patou served his apprenticeship as a designer in several leading houses before setting up his own establishment in 1919. Few French designers have taken such pains to become familiar with American women and American life as has this clever designer. He uses modern methods in his work shop and is exceedingly clever in advertising.

He is enthusiastic about modern painting and has perhaps the finest collection of Segonzacs in the world. He speaks English perfectly but slowly, and constantly relapses into a stream of French to give his torrent of ideas full run. His clothes have always had a direct appeal to the American country-club set. His bathing suits dot chic beaches the world over, and the youthfulness and wearability of his afternoon gowns appeal to the fashionable matron.

He was the first to show French clothes on American mannequins. For this purpose he brought six American girls to Paris, and gained world wide publicity for his showing.

He is a natural showman. His dressmaking openings were the first to be given at night. They are extremely smart functions, with little tables crowded together as at a night club, butlers moving about with sandwiches and champagne, and Patou lipsticks, in cartier cases, as favors for the ladies.

Every season he brings out a new shade; a Patou red, a Patou green, a Patou blue. His competitors regard the notion doubtfully, but it is successful as is Patou, a Parisian with a perfect grasp of the present. "Night Flight" (PLATE I) is representative of Patou's tailored creations.

Mainbocher

The youngest of the modern popular houses, is that of Mainbocher, which was founded in 1930. Just as Lanin and Molyneux--the one with her "robe-de-style", the other with her tea gown--cater to the post-War desire for elegance, so Mainbocher presents modern simplicity in his celebrated "don't dress" frocks for semi-formal wear.

Mainbocher was born in Chicago. He is the only American dressmaker in Paris who in the seven years he has been in business, has consistently ranked with the foremost French. He is rather young, usually dresses in gray flannels, and in conversation is definitely a wit. He had a university education in the Middle



Plate-I

West and wanted to be an opera singer. He eventually became the Paris editor of French Vogue, and established a record for active style forecasting that he still retains. He has a beautiful baritone voice, patronizes operas and concerts all over Europe, and knows more about opera roles and traditions than many in the profession itself.

"Because of his double knowledge of trends, style, and American psychology, he molded the classic form of French requirements to that of the American scene. Consequently, he has made clothes of distinction which important American men like their wives to wear. In his clothes elegance predominates and the hip is minimized. In 1934 his chief contributions were his very wearable, very ladylike evening gowns, and in particular his dark semi-formal evening dresses."⁶

Molyneux

Captain Molyneux is an Englishman with a French name. He was a Captain in the War. Before 1914 he was with Lucille, and the Lady Duff Gordon's London establishment, and started his own business in Paris after the Armistice. He is a quiet, courteous, reserved, rather sombre man with a perfect English tailoring and a beautiful speaking voice. He rides in the Bois, enjoys fast motors and motorboats, plays bridge, is a friend of Noel Coward, dresses Gertrude Lawrence, Lynne Fontanne, Gladys Copper, and at one time dressed more Anglo-Saxons in Paris than Parisians. In dressmaking he

⁶ The Big Ten, Harpers Bazaar, October 1934

stresses fine simplicity and his gray salon sets the key-note. He employs beautiful mannequins who add beauty and grace to his costume showings. An example of his artistry is shown in the costume illustrated in Plate II. In this creation there is a tunic like an inverted Columbine stiffened to stand out, with a skirt slim as a stamen. Silk velvet is used for the creation.

"His clothes make no demands on the wearer. They stay on. A woman in a Molyneaus need never worry that any of it will have slipped, shifted or shed before she gets home. In 1934 Molyneaux starred with his beautiful daytime dresses and capes, and dresses and jackets, completely unsensational and at the same time the talk of Paris."⁷

Worth

Worth's represents the royal dressmakers of Europe. During their existence they have dressed many queens, including the late Spanish and Russian Royal Houses. They made the Court trains with precious stones for the tragic, murdered Czarina, and they dressed some noble cousins of the late King of England.

The house of Worth is one hundred years old. It is the oldest couture establishment in Paris today. It was founded under the Second Empire by a Lincolnshire Englishman. He became court dressmaker to the clothes-loving Empress Eugenie, and to the famous Princess de Metternich, wife of the Austrian Ambassador, who, a loud-voiced, lively, witty woman, influenced the queen for a time and set all Worth's styles.

⁷ Ibid.



Plate II

Old Charles Frederik Worth, the house founder, revived the Lyons silk trade, and popularized the use of real lace, putting it by the yard on skirt flounces. He never made two gowns alike; styles "en serie" not having yet been invented. Not only did Worth dress the Emperor's wife but he also dressed the Emperor's mistress, the famous beauty, Paive.

Though the present house of Worth is now run by the third generation in the business, the brothers Jacques and Jean, the ritual elegance is still maintained. The lofty standard never varies, the tailoring is perfect, evening gowns are still very formal, and every debutante is turned out like a little queen.

From the house of Worth, comes the Mariner's sea-green-wool full-length coat suit, with the "visor" cap of matching felt. (Illustrated in Plate III.)

In each of the three generations there have always been two Worths in the house, each running a different end of the business. Today Monsieur Jacques is financial head, and Monsieur Jean-Charles is artistic director. Monsieur Jacques who was also trained to be a doctor is a large, big-hearted fellow who laughs a lot and has humanitarian interest he expends on his employees, such as a model house restaurant for their lunches, old age pensions, and maternity funds. The Worth family really founded the Syndicat de le Haute Couture. This is the employer's organization of French dressmakers. They also founded Metualite or employees' organization which regulates hours, wages, and food for the working women, especially the little apprentices. The house of Worth has done much good for both sides



Plate III

and Monsieur Jacques particularly is very popular.

Lucien Lelong

"Lucien Lelong is perhaps the best representative of the modern business spirit in Paris coutures."⁸ Lelong is a Frenchman although he looks like an American, and speaks English without accent. He is short, and compact in build, and his even-tempered, considerate and kindly disposition makes him popular with his friends and employees.

He is exceptionally well-informed on topics foreign to dress-making, such as politics, economics and current events. With industrialism native to his blood, Lelong is primarily a businessman who has become a dressmaker. He has repeatedly traveled all over America and is closer by practice, knowledge of, and sympathy with American women than most of his compatriots.

To meet modern conditions he has definitely lowered his prices and has added to his fitting rooms, for he says he would rather dress more women at lower prices than cater to a few exclusive clients.

Lucien Lelong is the creator of the "classic" blue chiffon evening dress shown in Plate IV.

Schiaparelli

"The dressmaker to whom one hears the word "genius" applied more than to any other is Elsa Schiaparelli."⁹ A Roman daughter

⁸ Hopkins, Marguerite Stotts, Dress Design and Selection, MacMillan, 1935.

⁹ Dressmakers of France, Fortune, August 1932.



Plate IV

of an archeologist, she is the last word in modernism and displays the most daring and original talent in the French dressmaking world.

"She makes collars out of china; belts from stands of aluminum, glass rings, and coils of celluloid; uses metal clasps instead of buttons. Where Chanel represents the mechanical age in her practicability, Schiaparelli is the esthete of the machine. While Vionnet's lines follow the contours of the body, Schiaparelli has discovered a new line which is based on the bony structure, a line that is bold and young, with square "military" shoulders."¹⁰ "For color she is the feminine Paul Poiret."¹¹ At her collection Paris expects her to produce some extreme fashion each season. She invented clothes as modern as skyscrapers. She brought shoulders into prominence, and made rough peasant textures chic. The taste for black and for curious winey combinations of color can be credited to Schiaparelli. Her critics say that her clothes are difficult to wear, but her enthusiasts refuse to believe it. She has exerted an outstanding influence on the designing of modern fabrics. She is quick to adapt new things to her use and it was Schiaparelli who used "Lastex" before any other dressmaker would touch it. Likewise, it was this same designer who was the first to make dresses from glass.

"Her clothes are stark, simple, and stylized as her striking black and white modernistic home. Unfortunately, her creative talents are greater than her gifts of organization, and her workshops are not up to their inspirer."¹²

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The Big Ten, Harpers Bazaar, October 1934.

¹² Dressmakers of France, Fortune, August 1932.

Italian by birth, she lived for six years in America before going to Paris where her advent into the dressmaking business was quite unpremeditated. It began with her making unusual sweaters for herself employing several women to knit for her and this later developed into a sportswear business. So spectacular was her success that she began designing town and evening clothes as well. Her designs are inspired to a great extent by incidents noted in her everyday life. Recently, amused by the parachute jumper on a Russian trip, she introduced the costume in which the skirt was like an opening parachute. (Plate V)

Schiaparelli is a dark, slender little woman with a great store of energy and a sound sense of modern invention. "She wears massive modern jewelry (crystal and black enamel, being her favorites) loves to be on the go, cares little about eating, is fond of the movies, reads American books, speaks French and English with a delightful Italian accent, and can outwork anyone in her shop."¹³ Her entire use of material is new, and she has an Italian profusion of ideas. Her objective is not to make women pretty but she often gives them a magnificent beauty in spite of herself.

Lesser Paris Houses

Paul Poiret (1910 - 1914)

Paul Poiret was perhaps the most artistic designer who ever associated himself with dressmaking. He was certainly the best

¹³ The Big Ten, Harpers Bazaar, October 1934.



Plate V

publicized of modern coutiers. Obstinate vain and incorrigibly extravagant, he was constantly producing changes in fashion.

There was no end to his ideas. His energy was so limitless that besides designing, he would fence, invent, and sell perfume, act, lecture, paint, cook, write books and plan illustrations.

"He predicted bobbed hair, short skirts, and trouser-skirts and did all that he could to bring them about. He revised the pale colors of Callot Soerus, whose pallett, under the pretext of distinction, had lost vitality. Poiret threw in royal blues, greens, reds and brilliant oranges and lemons. It is a question how much he owes to Bakst; the truth probably is that Poiret, after seeing the Russian Ballet was confirmed in his natural courage in colors. If he did not, as he has claimed, dress an epoch, he certainly dyed it. That is his great contribution; Poiret's colors have clashed around the world."¹⁴

His faults, however, were as enormous as his ambitions. The son of a little "marchand de drapes", apprenticed in childhood to a mean maker of umbrellas, Poiret retained from his lowly origin a delight in insulting his betters. He revoked the Grand Duke Cyril for keeping on a hat in his showrooms, and drove Baronne de Rothschild home because she did not approve of his models. He might have learned discretion from Doucet and manners from Worth, for he had worked for both. He created quite independently.

¹⁴ Dressmakers of France, Fortune, August 1932.

A dress from him was a creation but too often he disregarded the women who wore them.

The stage brought him his first success. He was less popular with the Americans who dominated the market of 1920's. His real peak was reached just before the War.

Some years ago he sold out his name, and withdrew from the house that now bears it. Before his recent death he had announced his intentions of setting up once more as a couturier in London.

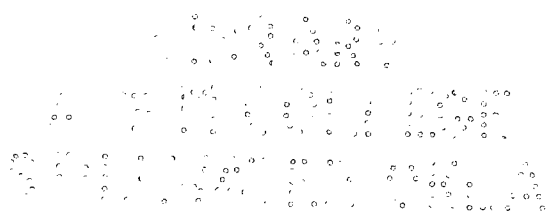
Redfern

Redfern which was established by an Englishman from the Isle of Wight is another of the older coutures of Paris. It is now under the leadership of Robert Piquet, a designer trained by Poiret. "For a period before the World War, Redfern attempted to conduct a dressmaking unit in New York, but it failed. The present company is owned by English interest."¹⁵

Marcel Rochas

Marcel Rochas is such a recent couture that few details are known of him. It is expected that much more will be heard from him in the future. His creations are very striking and unusual and are quite popular and much sought after by American buyers.

¹⁵ Hopkins, Marguerite Stotts, Dress Design and Selection, MacMillan, 1935.



Maggy Rouff

Maggy Rouff was founded in 1928. She is original and is also much favored by American buyers who constitute the greater part of her trade. Jay-Thorpe imported a spectacular tunic by Maggy Rouff (Plate VI) which brought a great deal of applause at her opening. A battle of flowers rages over the crepe, the bodice is snug and the flounce profuse. The skirt is a slim tube of crepe.

Paray

Paray is a comparatively new establishment which was started in 1928. The clothes are quite wearable, with attention paid to neck and sleeve details and the house is popular with buyers, especially for town clothes.

Paquin

Paquin is an old traditional house which still has great prestige but exercises less influence on fashion trends today than in the past. A recent design of Paquin which is influencing current fashion is a costume displaying a bustle effect with a jutting gold taffeta coat. (Plate VII)



Plate VI



Plate VII

B. American

Dress designers in America are classified according to the type of business they are associated with. The following outline represents the classification of the outstanding designers whose names are mentioned in these pages.

Wholesale

Nettie Rosenstein

Mrs. Clarepotter

Hattie Carnegie

Hollywood

Adrian

Howard Greer

Travis Baton

Retail

Jessie Franklin Turner

Muriel King

Elizabeth Hawes

Store Designers

"Jay-Thorpe" -- Renee Montague

"Bergdorf Goodman" -- Bernard Newman and Leslie Morris

"Saks-Fifth Avenue" -- Adam Gimbel

"Bendel" -- Mr. Bendel

Small Designers

(Heads of private establishments and exclusive manufacturing concerns)

Margot De Bruyn Kops

Gladys Parker

Emmy Wylie

Adele Smithline

Lisbeth

Dorine Abrade

Dorothy Cox

Jo Copeland

Shirley Baker

Grace Arcuri

Ruth Payne

Josette de Lima

Kiviette

Nettie Rosenstein

"Nettie Rosenstein owns the business under her own name making high-priced dresses to sell to exclusive stores."¹⁶

"She is a short, swarthy and completely unaffected Jewess who is regarded in various discriminating quarters of the women's wear trade as the cleverest woman in New York. The wholesale dress business, one endless racking process of trying to satisfy scores of retailers with thousands of dresses, is complicated enough on any level. When it is on the highest level, like Rosenstein's, its complexities approach the unendurable. Yet Nettie Rosenstein endures and triumphs."¹⁷

She has an ivory showroom in West Forty-Seventh Street, through which she is somehow able to propel more than 400 new models a year. All of them are strictly original designs, and are capable of exciting the buyers for more than 150 of the most exact retail accounts in the country.

Mrs. Rosenstein and her sister-in-law, Mrs. Rosenscrantz, share in the designing and take turns in making inspection trips to Paris. They refrain from designing glossy and ornate clothes. Molding and remolding the most sumptuous fabrics on living models, they produce gowns of long and patrician line. These gowns might be called dressmaker's costumes because their full beauty and subtlety is really apparent only to other professional designers. Nettie Rosenstein prides herself on the fact that

¹⁶ So You Want to Be a Designer, Ladies Home Journal, March 1935.

¹⁷ Dressmakers of United States, Fortune, December 1933.

her dresses will flatter every normal shape and size. She never spares expensive workmanship out of consideration for the final sale price. The great French silk house of Bianchini values her business to the extent that it makes many exclusive fabrics for her--such as Gyptian and Moutinne. "She has all the usual couturier's gifts in multiple, combined with a double-quick tempo and an iron set of nerves."¹⁸

Mrs. Clarepotter (Nudelman and Conti)

Mrs. Clarepotter, who has been a particular success at Lord and Taylor's, is one of the very few designers who have been drawn out of their anonymous wholesale activities, and given a vast amount of personal advertising. Actually, she is an employee of the house of Nudelman and Conti, and that establishment is not at all jealous of her personal success. "I am smart," remarks the brief, cheery Mr. Nudelman, "Because I got Mrs. Potter to work for me."¹⁹

Clarepotter loves fabrics better than anything else in the world, except horseback riding and her dogs. She is usually found among the tweeds and linens from which she makes those stunning sport clothes that bear her name. Her fame is based on her sportswear. She has made a great thing of country club costumes--the one field in which America admittedly surpasses France. French women want their clothes as feminine as possible, partly because Frenchmen regard the tweedy woman as a monstrosity.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Clarepotter, as she is known to the public, does unusual and striking things with combinations of off colors, and she has scored with such novelties as bamboo buttons and black cire bathing suits. She started the vogue for black linen and, is past mistress of out door materials and effects.

Extremely sporting herself, Clarepotter rides horseback and raises Dalmatians on a farm in Rockland County, New York. She came to Mudelman and Conti in 1931 after an art schooling and apprenticeship in the wholesale trade. Developing her design by draping, Clarepotter is especially interested in soft supile materials and spends much time in the selection of her fabrics.

Hattie Carnegie

"Perhaps the most famous single figure in American designing is Hattie Carnegie. She would be unable to cut a pattern if she tried and has never sewed a stitch in her life. Her dresses, both wholesale and retail, are currently designed by a staff of assistants. But there is no one whom the trade watches with more hawklike vigilance than this pale, slim, middle-aged woman whose yellow curls cover an intense and over-worked brain."²⁰ She is today and has been for years, one of the best forecasters in the United States women's wear business. Twice yearly she goes to Paris, four times each year her stylists go, and one Carnegie employee is stationed there permanently.

²⁰

Ibid.

Carnegie began with a small millinery and dress shop at Broadway and Eighty-Sixth street which she conducted until 1919. She then moved to what were the smart East Forties, where she still remains. One of Carnegie's brothers handles her finances, another superintends her wholesale business. Carnegie herself may be seen walking about her retail shop, which is crowded with customers, viewing perambulating models from early morning to closing time. Carnegie also dresses numbers of cinema people on and off the screen. She believes that Hollywood exerts a great influence on American fashion.

Carnegie is outstanding, not as a designer, she leaves that to a capable staff, but as the clever owner of a costume dress-making shop and wholesale business as well. "She is a keen analyst of fashion trends and her predictions of coming style are usually correct."²¹

Adrian

"Most of Hollywood's contribution to fashion have been made by Adrian of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Adrian is a lean, dawdling artist whose real name has escaped the world and who was born in Naugatuck, Connecticut."²² It was he who camouflaged the gawky Garbo in romantic draper and changed the personality of both Crawford and Shearer by his skillful costuming. Early in his career Adrian attended the New York School of Fine and Applied

²¹ So You Want to be a Designer, Ladies Home Journal, March 1935.

²² Dressmakers of United States, Fortune, December 1933.

Arts. He first came to prominence in Paris where a costume he made for the Grand Prix ball drew the attention of Irving Berlin and Hassard Short, who were planning their first Music Box Revue. Adrian made the costumes for that show as well as for succeeding editions of the Music Box, the Greenwich Village Follies, and George White's Scandals.

Adrian went to Hollywood on the persuasion of Natacha Rambova (Mrs. Rudolph Valentino). "Today he poses his long form in a drawing room of lettuce green and convulses his actress friends with tart comments on the dowdiness of their rivals. Adrian's attitudinizing and remarkable pants and vest he devises for his own benefits are justified in Hollywood as the privilege of "genius".²⁵

Adrian has stamped his personality on world-wide design with such successes as the light suit and dark blouse of Shearer in "Divorcee", the pill-box hat of Garbo in "Mata Hari", and Crawford's contagious "Letty Lynton" costume.

Greer

Next in importance to Adrian, is his good friend, Howard Greer, formerly of Paramount. While Adrian refuses almost all demands for off-stage designs, Greer is proud of his clientele of off-stage customers. He maintains his own shop on Sunset Boulevard, and his wholesale line has recently been featured at Marshall Field's and Best's. There is very little suggestion of the movie lot about either the man or his clothes, rather they strike a fine

²⁵ Ibid.

Fifth Avenue accent, although he is the robust son of a Nebraska farmer. His outstanding successes included Katherine Hepburn's apparel in "Christopher Strong" and "Morning Glory". An interesting story in connection with the clothes Greer designed for a picture of Katherine Hepburn is this: "Such is the appeal of this Hepburn, that Mr. Greer has sold and delivered four copies of one of the dresses she was to wear to other women who heard she was going to wear it, before he had delivered Miss Hepburn's own dress. Such is the strength of the movie influence."²⁴

Mr. Greer's clothes are his own original creations. He goes to Paris yearly, but not for the purpose of attending the Collections, merely as a vacation. Mr. Greer claims he sells more dresses to New York than to California. He is among the Hollywood designers who can lay some claim to true fashion origination. He is a young man with a fashion background which he obtained when he worked with Captain Molyneux at Lucille's in his earlier days.

"Mr. Greer used wool fabrics for evening dresses seven years ago, starting simply because the material hung in such good lines, this being important to the camera. He also had the idea of using rucking to edge dresses nearly five years before others were using it."²⁵

Like Adrian, Greer dreams of a day when American design will cease to depend on Paris, and as a move in this direction he

²⁴ Does Hollywood Create?, Vogue, February 1, 1933

²⁵ Ibid.

presented a collection of dresses under such American names as the following: Boston Common, Albuquerque, Peekskill, Tallahassee, Back Bay, Cactus, Levee, Mojave, Walla Walla, and Ypsilanti.

Baton

Another Hollywood headliner who must be mentioned is Travis Baton, who for ten years has been head designer for Paramount. He designs very modest clothes, more like Greer's than like Adrian's. He is so highly admired on the Coast that United Artists borrowed him to do the costumes for the American debut of their German importation "Anna Sten". He refuses to do private work for the ladies of Hollywood but it is rumored that he does a New York wholesale line on the sly.

Jessie Franklin Turner

The bearer of this name is a self-assured, white-headed woman who is certainly one of the most magical and independent designers in the world. She pays no particular attention to Paris styles and modes or costumes. There is nothing sensational about her antique New York salon in which she never consents to meet a customer. In spite of this reserved method of conducting her business, she has a fastidious clientele of several thousands, half of whom live outside New York and many abroad. "She holds the classic belief that costume is the eloquent draping of the human body regardless of the tricks of the mode, and she will take a unique velvet of Coptic or East Indian design and give it a flowing, medieval treatment which so naturally and beautifully embellishes the figure that the customer

seems to be beyond fashion, to be, in other words, perpetually "le dernier cri".²⁶ Her gowns are particularly suitable for the formal hours, and it is upon those hours that Jessie Franklin Turner concentrates her attention.

Muriel King

In a sense, Muriel King is most truly American of American haute coutures. At Altman's she has shown whole collections using American fabrics exclusively. And her striking, highly styled dresses are sufficient proof that elegant costumes can be achieved quite independent of the looms of France. "In designing, she steers a genteel course between the sumptuous Jessie Franklin Turner and jaunty Elizabeth Hawes."²⁷

Muriel King has had a pleasant shop in the Sixties since 1930, and has received large and recent prominence due to her designs in Vogue and Harper's Bazaar. She is slim in stature, born in Seattle, Washington, attended the University of Washington and while there did costumes for Maurice Brown's little theatre. She later drew for Vogue, Femina, and Women's Wear, and spent some time in France, sketching the Paris collections. Her career as a designer began with the casual making of clothes for a friend, and later she opened a private couture establishment. Chamelion costumes which can be worn from luncheon to bed-time by the simple expedient of adding, subtracting, or changing parts, are Muriel King's favorites. She

²⁶ Dressmakers of United States, Fortune, December 1933

²⁷ Ibid.

never duplicates a costume. She designs some models for quantity reproduction. Her creating is done entirely with sketches.

Elizabeth Hawes

"Next to Jessie Franklin Turner in the social Sixties is the ultra-modern salon of a dark and diminutive young woman who is Turner's diametrical opposite. The clothes of Elizabeth Hawes, which have been sensational both in her own shop and at Lord and Taylor, are the essence of timeliness, youth, and impudence. They reek of martinis at Tony's, of the Princeton Promenade, and the polo field of Westbury."²⁸ One does not have to be beautiful to wear Hawes dresses properly. Her dresses fit the figure smoothly because of the most complicated diagonal cutting of the material after the manner of Vionnet. But Hawes has the ability of getting novelty within simple contours. Her recent sport clothes have shown amazing combinations of such uncongenial material as rough woolens and velvets. She has had the distinction of preceeding Paris in the use of big buttons, cottons for evening, and fancy string and rope.

A native of New Jersey, Elizabeth Hawes made children's dresses at the age of twelve which she sold to a Philadelphia store. She later went to Vassar (class of 1925); worked behind the scenes at Bergdorf Goodman; went to art school; and then to Paris. From Paris she sent back fashion notes to the New Yorker under the name of "Parisite." One season she designed for a rather minor Parisian house of Nicole Groult. Returning to New York

²⁸ Ibid.

in 1928 she opened her own shop with Rosemary Harden, a personal friend and a niece of the banker Frank Vanderlip. In 1931 Miss Harden married and left the business. Hawes adopted as her ensignia a pair of scissors and a simple black dummy beribboned red, white and blue. In 1933 Hawes experimented with wholesale designing for the house of Livingston, which makes Hawes dresses to sell in department store.

Her openings, spectacular affairs planned primarily for her friends, at which she refuses admittance to many of her good customers, paid big dividends, due to their exclusiveness, and Hawes began to be known as a brilliant designer and a first class showman. She is perhaps the only American designer who has advertised as loudly as the Parisian couturiers.

Store Designers

It is advantageous for a fine department store to design a certain amount of its own clothes, because in this way the customer can be assured of some dresses that have not been copied or duplicated elsewhere. Consequently, some of the best talents in American work more or less anonymously behind such dignified facades as Bergdorf Goodman, Jay-Thorp's, Saks-Fifth Avenue, and Bendel.

Jay-Thorpe

Jay-Thorpe gets many of its designs from a small girl named RENEE MONTAQUE, who is known to the organization as Mickey Mouse. She designed costumes for a scene from Ziegfield Follies in 1931

which startled the trade, and ever since she has had many Broadway contracts. She made a mark for herself with Claire Luce's wardrobe in the "Gay Divorcee." She has a doll called the "Pomponella", on which she sometimes designs.

Bergdorf Goodman

Bergdorf Goodman offers its customers the attentions of BERNARD NEWMAN AND LESLIE MORRIS. Mr. Newman started to be a painter. He later found himself sketching fashions and dressing windows on Fifth Avenue. "While doing this sort of work for Bergdorf's, he amused the management by insulting the dresses he arranged in the windows. The management defied him to design clothes himself. He did, and today he personally fits his designs to many of Bergdorf's most valued customers."²⁹ Miss Leslie, his colleague, may be described by saying that she herself is the best of all possible models for her own handsome creations.

Saks-Fifth Avenue

Saks-Fifth Avenue's manager is ADAM GIMBEL of the famous merchandising family. His wife, Mrs. Gimbel has been designing costumes for amateur theatricals and she has tried a few for Saks. From 1930 to 1933 she tripled the sales of her Salon Moderne. She designs three collections a year, specializing in deluxe sportswear, more conservative than Hawes and more expensive than Clarepotter's.

Bendel

For years Bendel has sold its own conservative and expensive dresses, many of them designed by Mr. Bendel himself. Today

²⁹ Ibid.

because of his poor health he has virtually retired, but a nameless group in his "Creative Room" carry on the aristocratic traditions and the shop sells more American designed clothes than Paris originals and copies combined. One of Bendel's designs, a chiffon sheaf, shirred in the hem, with a full-shouldered bolero is shown in Plate VIII.

Small Designers

In addition to the American designers previously mentioned there are heads of private dressmaking establishments and very exclusive manufacturing enterprises, who in the last ten or fifteen years, have made a profession of designing clothes for making and selling in quantity. The outstanding characteristics of their work are mentioned briefly.

Margot De Bruyn Kops is a small designer of dresses known as "Junior" which means size rather than age, for Margot's designs are certainly sophisticated. Margot has no eccentricities as to her method of design, but she insists that travel plays a great part in furnishing her inspiration. She commutes to Europe several times a year.

Gladys Parker is small and vivacious with a colorful shock of red hair. "She says that persistence, good lungs and a high temper are a help in wholesale designing."³⁰ She learned sewing from her grandmother and uses this knowledge to advantage when sketching her designs.

³⁰ So You Want to be a Designer, Ladies Home Journal, March 1935



Plate VIII

designs.

From fashion drawing, Gladys Parker originated a syndicated comic called Flapper Fanny. One day, tired of attending fashion shows, she decided to do something unusual, so put on a show in which she made and modeled every dress herself. This proved so successful that soon she was in the business.

Emmy Wylie started as a fashion artist and went over into designing. She specializes in knitted clothes and designs for a manufacturer of machine-knit garments. She is one of the few young women designers engaged in this work. In knit goods there is no fabric to begin with so that the yarns and colors and type of knitting must be determined as well as the details of the costume itself.

Adele Smithline and her husband are in partnership in the wholesale dress business bearing her name. Mrs. Smithline had a desire to design dresses. In her first minor job she found that all her ideas were futile without a knowledge of cutting. So she went to school. She designs in the actual fabric on a live model, being careful to design costumes that can be made in quantities at a profit.

Lisbeth features sport clothes under her name. She designs in a very big paneled office which is always piled with new materials. Lisbeth never drapes her designs, but makes a rough sketch, which she turns over to a capable assistant, dictates the fabric and corrects and checks the result, in the manner of Chanel. She is of foreign birth but her business experiences have all been in America and so she is considered one of the American designers.

Dorine Abrade's mother and grandmother were designers. When she was a little girl she began by making doll clothes. Some years later, when she was a successful designer, she spent considerable time in Europe, getting a Paris background, which she has found invaluable. Miss Abrade is an American citizen, but was born in the northern part of Italy.

Dorothy Cox started out to be a portrait painter and then went into fashion drawing. She has recently become a wholesale dress designer and writes chatty articles on fashions for women's magazines.

Jo Copeland, head of the business that bears her name, began by doing illustrations for magazines. She started making original designs to sell to dress manufacturers, and took a regular designing job, learning garment construction and cutting as she went along. Her work is in sketches, supplemented by quick draping. She makes dresses that sell in the stores for \$85.00 and up.

Shirley Baker designs youthful daytime and evening dresses which have proved popular among the younger set.

Grace Arcuri designs beach clothes. She studied at New York Art schools and first specialized in knitwear. She finds a challenge in beach things because they may be varied and gay. Beach-wear fashions depend greatly on fabrics and she works with them exclusively. Her designing is done by draping and cutting muslin on dress-model figures.

Ruth Payne designs sport clothes sold throughout the country. Her work is from sketches which she considers the modern way of designing popular-priced clothes.

Josette de Lima was born in France, but studied costume and stage designing in New York. She makes active and spectator sport clothes for a manufacturer of national distinction. Josette spent some time in Hollywood as chief designer in the studio.

Kiviette began selling dress sketches to manufacturers. Now in her own establishment, she makes wholesale clothes, and also theatrical costumes for which she is known.

THE BUSINESS OF DRESS DESIGNING

There is a much closer link between the manufacturer of fine fabric and the designers of the costumes of the world than the average layman is aware. In the business world there are many who believe that even the establishment of the greatest couturiers are little more than exhibition rooms for exclusive dress fabrics.

It is a well known fact that large profits do not come from selling dresses but rather from selling materials. A manufacturer will buy only one model of a dress he intends to copy, but he must necessarily buy material for many reproductions. And if he likes the original material well enough to use it in his copies, he will place a large order. Thus the couturier is not only a customer of the fabric maker, he is a star salesman as well. A material used by Lanin or Molyneux in a popular mode is "made" so far as the sales go. This community of interest has resulted in exceedingly close relations between the designer and fabric manufacturer, resulting in a generous credit given the couturiers by the fabric houses.

About two months before the spring and fall openings the textile salesman visit all the shops. The couturier orders a little more of each material than he thinks he can use. He doesn't pay for it then, nor on receipt of the cloth. Once a month the manufacturer's agent comes and measures each bolt, and the couturier pays only for what he has used. The system is necessary because out of the average collection of from 100 to 350 models, perhaps only fifteen may be successful and since no one knows which fifteen they will be,

materials for all must be kept on hand. After the cloth has been used the couturier gets liberal credit and plenty of time to pay. So generous has this credit been, and so great has been the effect of the depression on the dress houses, that today many a leading couturier is said to be deep in debt to the textile people. Because of the latter's greater size and financial stability this condition is growing more pronounced every year. "There are some who consider Rodier and Bianchini the two leading material houses as the twin pillars of the haute couture, whose support alone keeps the whole brilliant but unsubstantial structure from crashing into financial ruin."¹

The origin of a new fashion is a baffling affair and certainly couturiers do not meet in caucus to decide on future fashions as is sometimes supposed. Yet, though they do not consult with one another, they draw their inspirations from common source. They all know "what is being worn" in the most fashionable circles by the "grande dames of Paris". They all have similar materials with which to work. Some of the samples shown by the textile manufacturers are so obviously good that practically all houses choose them. They see the same shows. The Empress Eugenie rage, for example, was started by the 1860 costumes in Parisian revival of Offenbach's Opera, *La Vie Parisienne*. The world they live in is, geographically, a small one, on the east it includes the Place Vendome and the rue de la Paix, to the west it goes to the Etoile with occasional excursions beyond to the Bois de Boulogne and the race courses at

¹Dressmakers of France, *Fortune*, August, 1932.

Longchamp and Auteuil. There is a certain prevailing tone each season--a tone that is merely an overtone of a common environment.

"The couturier is the barometer not only of the prevailing Parisian atmosphere, but also of social and economic forces. He is far from being a passive indicator. In every collection he makes proposals which if they are accepted, will start fashion in a new direction. He must venture these prophecies, for his reputation depends on change. He has, indeed, no other reason for existence. Whether his proposals for change are accepted or not, however, depends on how accurately he has gauged the temper of the time. For the Paris dressmakers do not so much create fashion as discover it. As artists, they are vain, vindictive, and endowed with an exaggerated sense of their own importance. They seem to dictate, and on whatever is done they leave a strongly personal imprint. And yet they must look beyond their personal tastes and express the current manner of living in their creations. They are arbitrary, but only to a certain point. They can make no profound changes in dress unless there is a corresponding change in society."²

Due to racial and environmental causes there is a vast difference between the taste of the American woman and the Parisian. For the French change is a necessity which has given them the reputation of being fickle. This is not really the case. They are an old race with a curiosity for novelty. The Parisian woman has no illusions about her own faults, and she cares less about what other women are wearing than the American. She considers

² Ibid.

rather what she can wear. She dresses more for men than the American and tries to parallel their changeableness with her costumes.

To the contrary, the American woman almost invariably resists a new fashion, only in the end to succumb to it more completely than ever the French woman would. "In America, changes of fashion are really changes of uniform. 'I have never met a woman as faithful as Americans', observes Poiret scornfully. 'This is a quality, and a somewhat rare one, but when it is a question of fashion, fidelity becomes routine, and routine is detestable. Fashion needs change, the original dressmakers are becoming weary of dragging at their feet the Ball and Chain which represents the American public.'"³

The mode of the last decade was dominated mainly by the American woman. She liked the short skirt which was so perfectly adapted to her free, athletic life and to the showing of her slim legs and ankles. The American **also** liked the tube dress which is adapted to slender hips and square shoulders but not to the rounded less athletic French figure. French women complained that they did not feel dressed. But the franc was falling all those years from 1919-1926, and the American dictatorship flourished. Paris did not dare resist the tube dress and the short skirts, which became the uniform of the decade. Poiret might express his outrage of Americans who imposed their tastes over Parisian couture, but there was nothing much to be done about it. In 1926 the franc sank to

³ Ibid.

thirty-one to the dollar, and French exportations reached their height. The American influence predominated.

In 1932 France was economically the most powerful nation in Europe and the franc was backed by one-third of the world's gold. The result of the return to power was a great surging up of national pride and determination to rid France of foreign influences so strongly felt in the Post-War decade. Styles again were designed for the French. Tube dresses went out, and in their place were flowing, distinctly feminine gowns. Skirts became longer. They came down in fact a month or so before the 1929 stock market. Thus the couturiers of Paris preceded even the stock brokers of Manhattan as harbingers of the new economic order.

The couturier's stock in trade is his "collection", the group of new models he puts on sale twice a year. The first step in its creation is the arrival of the material salesman. The materials chosen, the couturier begins to design. Designers differ in their medium for producing their ideas. Those most commonly used are the sketch, and the muslin model, which he cuts and drapes on the living mannequin who is to show it. The sketch may be his own creation or he may have bought it from a free-lance artist. In any case he will have a muslin model made from a sketch, for muslin is to the dressmaker what clay is to the sculptor. Generally he makes his preliminary design and his first changes in this cheap and pliable material. Suggestions from the assistants in the work room come to him in the form of models in muslin, from which he may retain

a detail or two. Four or five muslin models may be made before the couturier is ready to proceed to the model in its final material. Even this last may be destroyed many times before the gown is ready for the collection. Chanel has been known to destroy such a model, executed in high-priced material twenty times before she was satisfied.

The couturier's big event is "The Opening". This is usually theatrical in nature. It is frequently at night and the guests are admitted only upon the presentation of much-sought-after cards. Among the guests are included members of the press, such Parisian first-nighters as Cole, Porter, Sem, the Baronne de Rothchild, Elsa Maxwell, and the Comte and Comtesse de Robilant, together with the commercial buyers, first the Americans, then, in order of their importance, the English, Belgian, German, Italian, and South American. The names and numbers of the models appear on the program so that one may check his favorites as the showing proceeds. Jean Patou excels in the skill of staging an opening. Schiaparelli is probably the most indifferent to her openings. The autumn collection is "opened" near the first of August, the spring collection appears in February, and the two mid-seasons in April and November.

During the opening each buyer is accompanied by an "accompagnateur" whose duty it is to accompany and assist the buyer in his selections of models and to take care of all the details of packing, shipping, insuring, and getting the purchases through the customs. The buyer depends upon still another for assistance--

the "commissionnaire" who acts as a moral and a financial guarantor for foreign buyers. The commissionnaire relieves the couturier of all the dreary details of credits, deliveries, cancellations, collections, and so on. For these services he receives a high commission. The couturier pays this, but adds a twenty per cent over charge on his original price to the buyers. Certain American stores, however, have eliminated the cost of the "commissionnaire" by forming buying agencies in Paris which combine the functions of buyer and commissionnaire.

The couturier has three prices. The highest, naturally is for the commercial buyer who buys to copy. The next, twenty per cent less, is for the casual shopper who buys a dress or two. The lowest, which is ten per cent less than the preceding, is for the regular customers of the house. There is a further concession for those fortunate ladies whose figure or social position makes them especially desirable as customers for advertising purposes. The buyers' price, averaged \$500 several years ago. This price, of course, fluctuates as economic conditions change.

"Whatever the price, it is all the couturier receives for his work. Since there are no international copyright laws applying to dress designs, he is paid only for the single model he sells, is not a penny the richer for all the thousands of copies. Something less than 25 per cent of most couturiers' gross business is with the buyers. But this is an important 25 per cent, and without it the couturiers would find it hard to exist. For the buyer often pays cash, always pays promptly. Private accounts, on the other hand,

are notoriously slow, and often hazardous. Rail against the buyer as a commercializing, standardizing influence as he will, and does, the couturier none the less, depends on him for ready cash with which to carry on his business. Thus the buyers supply the cash, the fabric manufacturers the credit."⁴

"In America there is much more money, and much less time. All women from top to bottom of the social scale have approximately the same idea of what constitutes smartness--and when they want it, they won't wait. To satisfy this enormous demand a fashion machine has been built up the like of which the world has never before imagined for speed of output, economy of operation, and precision of results. But in the very vastness of the undertaking the individuals responsible are seldom heard of and never recognized by those who buy their wares. The American woman at large has never heard their names, though she wears their successes. She lays her chic at the door of Paris, though the imports sold and the exact copies made in this country amount to little in the trade. If she thinks beyond the imagined source of her smartness, she gives secondary credit to the retailer whose label appears in the product he merely handles for sale. Actual creation in the ready-to-wear industry is conducted on an anonymous basis which its leaders wouldn't be human if they didn't resent."⁵

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Made in America, Colliers, October 18, 1930.

At the present there is an attempt being made to offer a blanket acknowledgement that styles as worn by American women are created right here. Paris is the cradle of fashion undoubtedly, but America is too individual in its needs, too dynamic in its demands for speed to be controlled entirely by foreign designers.

Whether Paris is aware of how far the growing up process in American Haute Couturier has proceeded is a question. American visits on the part of the French couture, American correspondence maintained on this side of the Atlantic by the French creators, American mannequins taken abroad as concrete inspiration to design-- what are these but signs that Paris is endeavoring to hold America as her primary market?"⁶

The general lines of the silhouette, the main colors and some of the more outstanding materials are still taken from Paris and this practice will probably continue at least some time to come. But the representatives who go from American industry to the French openings are not, as they used to be, mere buyers. They are themselves creators, desiring inspiration, rather than seeking something to copy. Mere copying is worthless when a competitor down the street can do the same. If the competitor's materials are cheaper, and his finishings shoddy, he can whip up an inexpensive replica that will kill the sale of your own number before the mannequin has modeled it twice. But the American creator does not propose to cease going to Paris. "Paris is beautiful. Paris is gay. Paris is the goal of an international

⁶ Ibid.

set of exotics whose whole code and creed consists in doing everything with a finish that takes no account of time or money. The American creator shakes off the tense hurry, the open commercialism of New York, in a world where everything is made easy for him to think in terms of beauty. He visits the smart places of the moment. If his appreciation of the arts has breadth and depth, he visits his favorite section of the Louvre, the Musée Carnavalet, then the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. He spends a week-end at the nearest smart resort. Then he goes to the openings to see along what lines the mind of the couture is working.

Naturally his Paris trip is not limited to observations. There are some outstanding successes that he must have, for there is a section of trade and the public that attaches a sort of "divine-right" significance to a Paris label. There are other things that he sees as containing a new idea--a fresh manipulation of material, an inspired combination of colors, a trick sleeve--a previously untried method of using fur; so he buys the original even though he never intends to reproduce it "in toto".⁷

A comparison must be made of the trade situation of Paris and America. The Paris haute couture is primarily a retail institution. It is the fore-runner of the modern department store and has very little present connection with it. It consists of some 20-25 first class designers with their own shops, producing some four or five thousand new designs each year. These models, and as many duplicates of them as are desired, are retailed to

⁷ Ibid.

the whole world. Some designs are particularly appealing to the English women. Others, of a more vivid sort, intrigue the ladies of Argentine and Brazil. The Paris haute couture has been developed to satisfy the demands of the entire world.

During the post-War boom, America acquired such a desire for finery that the Paris haute couture, for the first time in history could not meet the demand. Paris designers could not produce designs fast enough. Paris seamstresses could not sew quickly enough to satisfy the demand. Here was the change America designers had hoped for, an opportunity to capitalize on dresses which equal the Parisian in quality and chic. America had an opportunity to develop its own haute couture and, this institution naturally allied itself, for the most part, with the typical, established outlet--the American department store. In other words, Paris haute couture is a retail enterprise but the American haute couture is chiefly wholesale in nature.

Some idea of the vastness of this new enterprise can be gathered from the fact that the "Fashion Guild", an association of high-class wholesale houses, is comprised of 130 establishments (mostly of New York), each of these, with one or more designers, produces from 200 to 450 designs each year. Some of these dresses are fine copies of Paris originals; however, the largest number are fine rearrangements of Paris originals. A very large number, probably several thousand, are truly American designs, influenced by Paris trends, but original in every detail. The Paris designers are outstanding originators, but the Americans have been able to

produce more variations on the Paris themes than was considered possible. Original American designs sell for about the same prices as the Paris original (\$90 to \$300). These American originals are displayed next to the creations of Augustabernard, Lanin, or Molyneux in such exclusive shops as Bergdorf, Goodman, and Jay-Thorpe of New York. The most exacting customers of these shops will buy the French and the American originals indiscriminately.

Often customers do not realize when they are buying an American dress for usually they would not know the designer's name when they heard it. Only a few of the wholesale designers have been advertised. The American haute couture got its start from American women wanting more Paris in dresses than Paris could supply, naturally when the stores acquired dresses with the authentic Paris smartness from their own designers, they said nothing about it. They still say little about it--unless questioned.

The Americans try to duplicate the Parisian atmosphere in their salons. It would scarcely enhance that atmosphere if they were to announce that many of their most irresistible dresses were designed by Nettie Rosenstein in West Forty-Seventh Street in New York. Moreover, the stores dislike to give the wholesale designer a public reputation, because it induces women to attempt to get dresses at wholesale prices from the wholesaler. Hence, the dresses of American designers are not openly advertised.

During the boom years there sprung up in the women's wear business a class of ingenious young women who copied Paris

originals for cheap and middle class trade. It became positively dangerous for a stylish New Yorker to buy a French costume on Fifth Avenue, because a month later she would see burlesques of her dress all over the city. As a result of this situation, many fastidious women developed a decided preference for dresses by American designers, which because they were not of French origin, exerted less appeal for the copyists. The best American shops began to demand American-designed dresses which could rival the French masterpieces.

"In 1932, Lord and Taylor made its momentous decision; other smart shops followed the Lord and Taylor lead. Today, not only are the buying departments of the quality stores more favorable than ever to United States designers, but the publicity departments are accessible as well. And in the opinion of many, publicity is all that is needed to give the American haute couture a wide reputation under its own name."⁸

The fact is the American raiment is exquisite enough to support extravagant publicity. A visit through the wholesale houses of the "Fashion Guild", would substantiate the fact. The retail buyers find excellent dresses at all of them. A further contribution is made by Hollywood, whose haute couture is unique and positive. And there are a dozen or more American designers with their own retail shops in New York, conducted in a Paris manner. Finally, there are the designing rooms of those Fifth Avenue shops which make part of their own clothes, and now advertise them. Although there are many

⁸ Dressmakers of United States, Fortune, December 1933

branches in the American couture it is characteristically a wholesale proposition, and the names of these important wholesalers are mentioned: Omar Kiam, Germaine Monteil, Charles Armour, Jo Copeland, Herbert Sondheim.

"So far as the business is concerned, fashion experts are very likely to choose as particular leaders the neat, stout, gentlemen called Omar Kiam (his last name is real), who costumed "Dinner at Eight"; Germaine Monteil, a petit French woman with dark eyes and a tumble of dark hair, who introduced the vogue for the linen duster; Charles Armour, who is as temperamental as a declining opera singer and who has a great following in the half-world between the footlights and the Social Register; the handsome Jo Copeland who does clothes of rich distinction and exhibits them in a salon decorated with white Wedgwood figures on tobacco-brown plaques, which is among the most attractive in New York; and Herbert Sondheim, whose wife and sister-in-law design a large proportion of America's smart middle-priced dancing dresses. Fashion will agree that the three following names are the very top rank of United States wholesale designers: Rosenstein, Clarepotter, and Carnegie. Together with the names already mentioned they do a business of about \$4,000,000,000 a year."⁹

Everyone in the American women's wear trade realize the tremendous influence that the cinema has had on American clothes, perhaps greater than any single force outside of Paris. This effect is largely visible among less discriminating classes. Yet the fact

⁹ Ibid.

that millions of American women want to wear clothes that resemble their movie favorites, and that these same ordinary millions know very little and care much less about Paris, constitutes a serious blow at Paris as the style center of the world. Moreover, such actresses as Dietrich, Crawford, Francis, Shearer, Hepburn, and Garbo, do have a definite style influence on women of style. Cinema magnets are noted for their insensibility to many things, and they have not always been aware of the potential stylistic power which was theirs.

Hollywood was caught unawares in August 1929 when Paris decided that skirts should go down. Its attempt to sell short-skirted pictures it had made earlier almost resulted in tragedy. The movie magnets thereupon resolved that Hollywood should become as much of a style center as money could make it. They sent scores of stylists to study in Paris, and brought Gabrielle Chanel to Hollywood. As a result the men who dress the screen beauties today are very sensitive to the stylistic trends of the moment.

Usually the Hollywood designers must of necessity content themselves with more or less theatrical variations on the Paris themes. These sometimes get back to Paris and reappear on Fifth Avenue under the name of "Paris models". Just as often, however, it happens that a Hollywood actress gets her personality emphasized by a Paris couturier and returns to create a French style flurry in Hollywood.

The movie is a medium which reaches every nook and corner of the world; it has stupendous potentiality as an exploiter of

fashion. Its responsibility is likewise immense. One of the chief criticisms made of cinema clothes is that they represent exaggerated fashions. Hollywood explains that the technical side of photography demands extremes. A sleeve that would be chic in a drawing-room would fall flat--lose its whole force after the movie camera had finished with it. There is no reason why Hollywood dress designers should not achieve fantastic heights. Nowhere is there greater opportunity for the creator of fashion than in this movie center.

Those American designers who have chosen to market their own wears, through their own retail salons are classified as "Designing Retailers". "But few designing retailers in this country have risen above a small and precarious dressmaking business. Among the more successful have been Milgrim, Inc., also a wholesaler, Gervais, Mrs. Franklin, famous for sweater suits, the dignified Stein and Blain, Frances Clyne, Peggy Hoyt, Maybelle Manning, and once powerful and newly restored Herman Patrick Tappe."¹⁰

The expense of maintaining a retail business makes it selective. There must be capital to buy materials, to set up workrooms, and attractive salesrooms, and to advertise. Unless the designer has well-to-do friends who will spread her name, she will resort to the familiar and expensive racket of hiring social young women supposedly to act as models, actually to try to persuade their own friends to buy. The designer herself must

¹⁰ Oglesby, Catherine., Fashion Careers American Style, Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1936.

be a saleswoman as well as a designer while the wholesale designer can leave the problem of selling to others. If the designing retailer succeeds exceptionally well, she may add a wholesale line. "The surest test of the worth of a couturier is the amount of attention she receives from the thieves of fashion. Judging by this final and unfortunate criterion, American designers are already on a stylistic par with Paris. Today Rosenstein, Hawes and King are as much the prey of the style pirates as Chanel and Vionnet and Schiaparelli. Paris discourages the pests with substantial fines and terms in the "Bastille". If New York has not yet had recourse to such extremities, it may well be necessary in the near future. Meanwhile, the Fashion Guild has a contract with 4,000 retail stores to the effect that no model shall be sold knowingly to a pirate and that no pirate's model shall knowingly be received or sold by a retailer."¹¹

That definite damage is done to the value of the original model through dress piracy is easy to understand, but the maddening personal irritation which such copying causes the designer is understood only by those of the profession. The designer has an original and smart idea--an artist's "brain-child", which she transforms into lovely substance, with skill born of instincts and experience. No wonder she doubts the worthwhileness of the art of the Haute Couture, when she sees her ideas, substance, and skill insulted by cheap imitations on the boulevard. She

¹¹ Dressmakers of France, Fortune, August 1932.

could take the easier method, rent the newest French models from firms who make it their business to buy and rent them to wholesale trade. Among those who rent models are Ellerbe, Wood, Copeland, and Madam Palmsani. The designers study these importations and make hundreds of easy variations. A Schiaparelli shoulder is adapted to a 36-inch material instead of a Schiaparelli's fifty-four-inch material. A Vionnet neckline and a Mainbocker skirt may be combined. One may make from \$8,000 to \$20,000 a year as the "designer" for a big middle-class wholesale house in this manner with little or no risk but to the true artist in the field such designing offers no attraction. Often the buyers for wholesale houses are unwilling to pay for the master model and consequently become style pirates themselves. This is one of the pertinent problems in the fashion world today. "In the last few years there has been a growing movement against the style pirates. These gentry, through traitorous employees or spies at openings, contrive to get detailed information about the new models without going to the formality and expense of buying any. Making up copies from this information, they bootleg them at greatly reduced prices. French law is hard on these buccaneers, who are prosecuted mercilessly if they are caught. As many as 400 of them have been jailed at one drive. Leader of the war against piracy is an Egyptian named Trouyet, who is "head of the house" at Vionnet's and is described as a horrible person but smart."¹²

¹² Made in America, *Colliers*, October 18, 1930.

The fashion pirates are usually neat, busy little women with sketch books concealed somewhere. Any woman who has worn a French original knows the reluctance of putting on a dress that is marked "copy". It is more than the undeniable excellence of the original, it is the physiological effect of possessing the genuine article. Copies are never quite as good. Copies incorporate the obvious features of a dress--but lose that particular ounce of special chic.

Just what comprises fashion piracy and what legitimate "derivation" has come to be one of the finest little points that ever confused sticklers for meaning. You can walk along the street in broad daylight and make a sketch of a dress, and run a dress like it up at home, and sell it for less than a customer would have to pay at the store, and nobody can prosecute you, for the store had made that dress fairly public property. On the other hand, you can hide a little pad of paper and pencil under your coat, go into a dressmaking house, and, under the pretense of looking at clothes for yourself, sketch dresses and have them copied by a sweat-shop manufacturer and set up your own disreputable little business selling these dresses for a song, without having committed piracy. If you are employed by a department store, this store should not send you to wholesale dress designers to see what you can see, to order a few dresses, and have cheap labor "copy them down", so that the store can sell for prices that could not be managed if they were ordered from the wholesale designer who originated the models and demands a legitimate price. Some things are piracy and some things are not."¹³

¹³ Ibid.

In Paris where the couture bears such prestige and influence, the dress designers are protected by the full extent of the law, against French houses who do not themselves design but offer perfect copies of the great houses, at half price. On the other hand, it is considered a perfectly legitimate practice for American dress houses to send buyers to Paris Openings, where they buy only one of each model they select. These are brought back and copied exactly in large numbers for customers who wish a "French model". "Here the definition slips and falters. But there is no sin where none is felt; the French are aware the American shops buy their wares for copying. That has become an accepted fact. Piracy, really, must mean the copying of clothing of original design when the designer is set against it being done and is trying his best to prevent it."¹⁴

The great community of the American wholesale designers who do mind having their originations copied and sold at reduced prices, have formed themselves into "The Fashion Originators Guild". They are manufacturers of highest standards. They refuse to compromise with cheap materials, and labor. They ask good prices for their clothes and supply that amount of money's worth in quality. They sell to the top shelf of the shops and department stores in this country.

What used to happen to them was this: little fly-by-night manufacturers would sneak in and out again with sketches of the new models which they proceeded to approximate from almost-as-good materials with very much underpaid labor. Certain retail shops

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Ibid.

also, in an effort to reduce cost, would buy one model and then send it out to a cheap manufacturer to run up in a version that they could sell to their customers with the proud, if somewhat untrue boasts: "it's the same thing at half the price." This practice was most detrimental to the business of reputable designing manufacturers, and in an attempt to provide mutual protection the Fashion Originators Guild was formed. They provide that if any shop should buy pirate copies of Guild clothes, that shop is forbidden further buying from any Guild member. This is excommunication which no right-thinking shop would be willing to brave. The same rule holds true with fabrics and copies of fabrics. A manufacturer who buys copies, forfeits his right to buy original materials.

Uninformed laymen may think that while such procedure is hard on the manufacturer, the feminine public gets the benefit. Such is not the case. Inferior materials and workmanship are introduced. Nobody gets something for nothing. Even the manufacturer who does a bootleg-business doesn't last long. It remains to be seen how far cooperation can be secured in this game of nimble wits. But the best men in the country are behind the move.

In 1930 there were 1,475 manufacturers, eighty-five percent of whom are affiliated with the Associated Dress Industries. Any number of these firms do a business which ranges from five to six million dollars a year; some of them up to eleven million. A firm must have a business of two hundred and fifty thousand as a minimum to be eligible for membership. In the heart of each establishment,

guiding its destiny, are the American designers.

In France most of the great houses make all types of clothes; the price is never a primary consideration. In America, specialization has divided the field into many subdivisions. Not only is there a rigid line drawn between the dress houses, and those that make coat and suits but one firm makes sport clothes only, while its next-door neighbor deals in afternoon and evening apparel. Not stopping there, many firms limit themselves to a certain price garments in this particular field. Each step on the price ladder is occupied by those firms, and only those firms, whose designers know, to the tenth of a cent, just how much style, quality, finish, and appeal can be put into their own particular speciality without running the organization on the rocks. This is the reason why the American woman is now getting more for her dollar than she ever did before.

The American woman's figure differs from that of the French woman, not merely in inches, but in the way she carries herself. Speed marks her action. She takes less time to adjust her clothes. These differences call for a simplification or exaggeration of the French lines. Sometimes new lines are created in America, to be adopted across the sea and returned to us with a French label. The American college girl can be accredited with the hat worn on the back of the head. The Broadway flapper first wore the natural waistline, which was later tried out by Patou and his American mannequins a year before anyone else in the Haute Couture had the

courage to attempt it. The American favorites: printed silk and chiffon, cottons in the wardrobe, sport clothes and bathing suits--all these Americans demanded from those who create for us regardless of what Paris thinks.

Bridge is responsible for one great difference, between the French and European wardrobes. Visitors from Europe are always surprised to discover the place it takes in the life of the average woman. Around it a world, strange to their eyes, has been developed. Bridge luncheons, bridge teas are important daytime events on the American calendar to which usually not a solitary man is invited. In Europe if men are not available, life takes a breathing spell. Women rest, read, visit their dressmakers. Consequently, the negligee one wears in a boudoir is a French rather than an American affair, while a bridge frock has been brought to a state of perfection in America for which there is no French precedent.

Time is the element that has worked against the French Capital as an arbiter for an earth that spins faster in America than elsewhere. The American ambassadors of trade have already made their main deliveries for the winter season when they go to the fall openings. Their clients, the retailers are demanding Palm Beach fashions that will foreshadow next summer's clothes. Therefore, models which are bought and created at the time of the openings are fill-ins and actually constitute less than a fifth of the line, even at high-class houses.

"Years ago it was the dressmaker, who, with the aid of "fashion-books", designed as she went, each garment being more or less an original. Now it is not unusual in a manufacturing establishment for hundreds or even thousands, of dresses to be made, within a few weeks, from one model. Some few of our present-day designers started by being private dressmakers, but most of them are spending at least part of their time making clothes that are available all over the country, and in some cases, all over the world. While some of these people that have blazed the trail are mature women who have been working at it ten years or more, most of them are girls in their early twenties or thirties."¹⁵

Thus, it is apparent that there is a fundamental difference in the dress designing business in France and America. In France, it is a retail enterprise, owned and controlled by the designers themselves in their own shops. They are the creators, salesmen, and business management of the French Haute Couture. In America, on the other hand, the dress designing business is maintained through retail and wholesale establishments, with the latter in great predominance. Because of this fact, the American designers remain in obscurity with a few exceptions. Models are presented with labels bearing the names of outstanding women's wear stores, rather than those of the designers who created them. There is a gradual movement, however, toward more recognition of American designers. Piracy remains one of the most eminent problems of the dress designing business, though steps have been taken in the form of laws in France, and the Fashion

¹⁵ Does Hollywood Create, Vogue, February 1, 1933.

Originators Guild in America. This condition will probably never be eradicated but advance has been made toward protection of the American consumer by legitimate labeling of dresses.

CONCLUSION

When a customer pays \$50 for an afternoon frock marked "copy of Chanel" instead of paying Macy's regular \$22.79 for an afternoon frock marked "Macy", she is paying tribute to an art, which she realizes; she is also paying tribute to an industry, which she may not realize. The designing industry is an industry of art. Any woman recognizes that there is genius in the style of a dress created by an artist. The industry works in obscurity, it must necessarily be so--for it is an industry of ideas.

The life of a couture is one of uncertainty, from the famous Schiaparelli down to those whose names are rarely heard. They exist to produce newness, newness that will appeal to the trade to the extent that the public will buy. If they succeed, the rewards are limitless. If they fail, their influence may be permanently lost.

"Like all arts, the haute couture has its philosophy and history; a philosophy of humanity and a history of dolls. We begin with dolls and a revolution. Paris has set the fashion for the last four centuries, ever since France eclipsed, in luxury, the dying oligarchies of Venice, Florence, and Genoa. In the last hundred years' history of Paris as a center of world fashion there have been two revolutions. One was brought about by the amazing Englishman, Charles Frederick Worth; the other by the World War".¹

¹ Dressmakers of France, Fortune August 1932.

There are three factors which have had an outstanding influence on fashion trend: (a) dominating ideals which mold the thought and action of large numbers of people; (b) outstanding events; (c) social groups which lead and influence the rest of society.

Wherever a group of people with wealth, leisure, courage, intelligence, and good taste may be found, there is a style center from which new fashions radiate. Quite naturally there are many such people in the great, active cities of the world--Paris, London, New York, and Buenos Aires. All make some contribution to fashion trends. Thus for example, London groups may suggest the fabric and the silhouette, New York the length of skirt, Buenos Aires the color combinations, and Paris, the fashion exchange of the world, the finishing touches of chic--thus determining the fashion in sport clothes for women of the coming season.

The millions of dollars that American and European women spend each year for clothes, goes for the support of one of the world's major industries. This industry includes wholesale manufacturing houses, retail stores, and private designing establishments. The creative end of the business rests with the artists famous and obscure in whose artistic and original minds spring forth new ideas for each season's fashion. The promotion and selling of these ideas to the consumer is guided by some of the shrewdest business brains of the country, who are associated with the large manufacturing and retail dressmaking establishments in the major cities of America and Europe.

The dress designing business is characterized by intricate organizations, full of hazards and pitfalls for those engaged in it.

An extensive study of this subject discloses the fact that back of every modern fashion is the creative thought and achievement of the person who conceived the idea. True artists are these geniuses who design the clothing for the world. It is therefore to the advantage of the modern consumer of women's wear that she become better informed concerning this subject which so vitally effects her everyday purchases.

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