

Conservative but functional fashions forecast

COLLEGE PARK, Md. - The fine art of dressing is no longer restricted to women with sufficient wealth to make trips to Paris for personal consultations, as they did in the 1920s and 1930s.

Most Americans - both men and women - can get a feel for the flow of fashion, even if they have never traveled beyond the limits of the continental U.S. So says Dr. Eleanor F. Young, Extension textiles and clothing specialist at the University of Maryland in College Park.

With style trends for Fall and Winter now fairly well established and forecasts for Spring already on the fashion pages, any well-read persons should be able to pick up clothing items during special-purchase and after-Christmas sales which

will constitute a good fashion investment.

For example, one will probably want to avoid buying a coat which doesn't have plenty of room in the sleeves to accommodate the padded-shoulder suits and dresses which are a part of the current fashion scene.

Similarly, a person should keep in mind the trend toward narrow legs when shopping for pants.

And, when you're Christmas shopping for a friend, remember that the layered look is still around - but it may not be in fashion too much longer. So a moderate-priced vest would be a better gift choice than an expensive one intended for long usage.

Some basic points describing current styles are these:

Fashions for both men and

women tend toward the look of the 1950s. This "return to conservatism" implies long skirts, high heels, and an emphasis on dresses for women. Also narrow lapels and ties for men; padded shoulders for both men's and women's clothing.

One should keep in mind that today's fashions maintain an emphasis on being functional. So one probably won't see a return of hobble skirts that some women wore in the 1950s. Today's women are also sticking firmly with pouchy shoulder bags for daytime wear because they are functional. Similarly, long evening skirts are being superseded by shorter, more body-revealing dresses for partying and disco-dancing.

There is really a two-way trend in women's fashions today. One hears much

about the soft, feminine look; but there is also a tailored - or corporate - look favored particularly by the growing numbers of women business executives. This latter trend has been spurred by John Molloy's best-selling book, *Dress for Success*.

Elaborating on the functional theme, Dr. Young declared that modern fabrics are here to stay.

"Who wants to go back to the days of untreated, all-cotton fabrics that required so much ironing? Or the untreated woolsens that attracted moth damage?" she asked.

The Maryland Extension home economics specialist noted that treated cottons today require little or no ironing, and many woolsens now are treated with a moth-resistant chemical. Then

there is a wide array of no-iron and manmade fibers. These were only in their infancy in the 1950s.

There are probably two shortcomings which must be considered, however. One is that manmade fibers absorb some stains more readily than their natural counterparts. So they require some special care, such as pre-treating prior to laundering.

Another drawback could be discovery that some of the chemicals used to treat modern fabrics are carcinogenic; i.e. cancer-producing. The chemical, Tris, used to make children's clothing fire-retardant, has been removed from the market for this very reason.

Turning to the college-age scene, Dr. Young agreed that co-eds today are more fashionable than their older sisters of five or six years ago. For one thing, more of them are wearing kinky or curly, shoulder-length hair in contrast to the straight, waist-length hair which had become so universal.

And she noted that dresses and skirts are now outselling women's pants for the first time in five to 10 years. Also, woven fabrics have finally regained their popularity over knits.

The color trend is reflected in muted tones and soft colors for both Fall and Spring fashions., Dr. Young observed. Earthy tones are again popular this Fall - but more muted than in past years. And soft pastels appear to be setting the fashion tone again for Spring.

Plums and purples are prevalent this Fall, but they may not be around much

longer, the Maryland specialist predicted.

Most of the fabrics nowadays are textured. And corduroy, fleece and wool flannels appear to be "in" - rather than the hard denims typified by the long-popular blue jeans.

On the business scene, many tailored "corporate" women are carrying briefcases instead of handbags. With subdued colors, their jackets will be padded and well-fitted at the shoulders but slightly loose at the waist. In this milieu, blouses will have scarves to emulate neckties.

Despite the overwhelming accent on dresses, women will still be wearing pants, too, because they are so function for sports and informal wear. But they are becoming more narrow-legged. And they will be getting shorter.

Already, fashion writers are forecasting a literal pants explosion for Spring in a wide variety of lengths - including pedal-pushers, burmudas, and short shorts.

Concert set

PHILADELPHIA - The Oratorio Singers of Philadelphia College of Bible will present Handel's great work, *Messiah*, on December 14 at 8 p.m. at the Philadelphia Academy of Music. Directing for 300 Voice Chorus and Mostovoy orchestra will be Music Professor Alfred E. Lunde.

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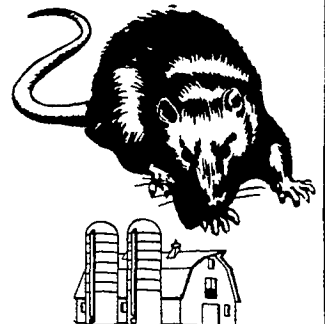
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