

Sportswear exec

Claiborne designs a business

By SHIRLEE IDEN

Working together with your husband has a lot going for it, according to designer Liz Claiborne. "It's nice to be in business with your husband," she said in a recent interview at Hudson's Northland. "If you're going to work, work together."

Ms. Claiborne and husband, Art Ortenberg, are a genuine success story and a couple who have shared the pressures of their business. Just a year ago, in the midst of a shaky economy and an even shakier apparel business, they launched their own sportswear company called Liz Claiborne, Inc.

She did the designs and he managed the business end of things. They took their risks and they made it.

"The business is going very well," she said. "It's been a lot of hard, hard work and some mistakes like projecting too much fabric or choosing a wrong color, but things are OK."

"The mistakes you make are a part of the business."

Ms. Claiborne who likes to come to Hudson's said a lot is happening in fashion this spring.

CLOTHES are loosening up," she said. "Skirts are full and tops will be blouses."

Her own preference is for mixing patterns such as stripes and solids but with a strong accent on neutral colors.

"A neutral base is great," she said. "Neutrals build a good wardrobe. For this season, I'm using a lot of white. I love off-white because you can team it up with neutrals like dark red. My preference is for more of a city-white."

As for fabrics, she finds herself turning more and more to naturals and occasionally to the 50-50 blends.

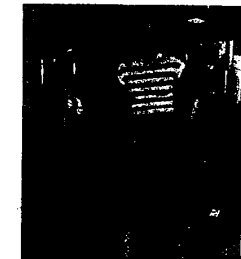
"The only non-natural I use is a linen because I believe most people don't want to be crushed the minute they sit down."

The Claiborne line features all sportswear but the designer said, "If dresses become popular, we'll be flexible and make them."

Planning fabrics and designs takes place six months in advance in the apparel business. "You do the design and then the follow-through," she explained.

"From design to rack it takes six months. I'm into the holidays of this year already."

Part of the reason for planning ahead is the volatile state of the fabric market. "Fabric prices are up mainly because of the demand for cotton, and silks are sky-rocketing."



City white pants complement a textured blouse trimmed with more white, at left. Above: a knee covering skirt from the Claiborne collection is topped with a striped top with capped sleeves.



Liz Claiborne likes to match solids and patterns like this plaid which sets off the outfit whether it's pants or a slim pocketed skirt. She accents the natural in fabrics with positive stress on collars. Neutral colors, like the tan here are used as a basic foil for the bright plaid skirts. Ms. Claiborne calls neutral colors a "wardrobe builder."

Staff Photos
by
Gary Friedman





Where It's At

By JUDY SOLOMON

Help full

If you're having a party, here's a great way to eliminate running all over town to borrow fine wine glasses from your Aunt Mary and matching dessert plates from cousin Jane. United Rent All has just about everything you could possibly need from crystal stemware in every size and shape to a full-size dance floor. You can also rent: silver plated flatware, good quality china, silver tea services, punch bowls, tablecloths and napkins in seven different colors, portable bars, candleabras, outdoor tents, and much more. What's even nicer, you don't even have to wash the dishes when the party's over. Just rinse and return. Delivery service is available as well as free consultation in your home.



Wax menagerie

Ball of Wax carries a line of animal-shaped candles that can be used alone or in combination for a marvelous centerpiece at your next dinner party. Or, if you can't bear to light them, they would be lovely on permanent display in your home. Some are whimsical; some are true-to-life. The animals included are turtles, elephants, owls, squirrels, French poodles, collies, boxers, springer spaniels, cardinals, bluebirds, walrus and panda bears, as well as both Siamese and alley cats. Prices range from \$2 to \$6.



Ball of Wax, 147 Pierce, Birmingham, 646-2527.

Throat culture

Sally Sanfield custom designs and creates stunning one-of-a-kind necklaces. Featuring antique trade beads in soft, muted colors, the necklaces also incorporate brass, silver and lead beads as well as fetish pieces. You may choose the popular, ethnic style or the new, lighter weight, more sophisticated style that is currently in vogue. Prices begin at \$45 but can vary according to the materials and the complexity of design.




Sally Sanfield, 626-0948

Net Work

Roots has come out with a super contemporary version of those fisherman's net bags that all Europeans use for shopping bags. Constructed of a sturdy net, the Roots bags are trimmed with saddle-color French organically tanned leather. The more you use it, the softer the leather becomes, plus it takes on a lustrous patina. The bag costs \$39 and is sure to be the "in" thing to carry on your shoulder this year.



Roots, 125 W. Maple, Birmingham, 647-1120.



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