

'The Europeans take a look and add their own panache'



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Brenda Rosenberg and Wilmer Weiss couldn't wait to start thinking about fall clothing. As fashion executives, their work on autumn fashion began back in April when the world's top designers held their ready-to-wear shows.

"We really start in Europe, because Europe is the first to show the fall collections," said Hudson's chic fashion director Brenda Rosenberg. But timing isn't the only reason Rosenberg and Weiss cross the Atlantic to spot new trends. Flamboyant vice-president for fashion and design Wilmer Weiss says Europeans have style. "They take a look that began in America and put the panache to it."

Weiss and Rosenberg returned from ready-to-wear shows in Paris, Milan, Florence, and London agreeing that Italian designers will have the greatest impact on what is in vogue this fall.

"The last few years the Italians have made tremendous strides in becoming originators," said Weiss, who looked decidedly original himself in an orange plaid shirt and polka dot tie. "There is a group of young designers—such as Armani, Basile, and Versace—who have taken street clothes and turned them into high fashion. Really what they have almost revived is the whole look of 1950—what you see in the movie 'Grease.'"

Nor were the Italians the only designers to introduce a new look. At all the overseas showings, sharp, clean, sophisticated clothing has replaced the billowing layers of peasant garb so popular in the last few years. Their conclusion: this is the beginning of a brand-new cycle of fashion.

"There's a whole new silhouette for fall. We've gone from that very full, relaxed, casual look to a very refined,

slimmed-down look of fashion," said Rosenberg, a picture of sophistication in Anne Klein separates she wore to demonstrate the new trend.

WHAT'S THE IMPETUS behind the swing to a more formal dressing? "Sophistication comes about because of the stance women have today in the market," said Weiss. "The big thrust today is for the career woman. She suddenly has arrived on the scene and therefore the clothes take on a man-tailored look. Not to look like a man—in fact, these clothes make a woman look even more feminine, more vulnerable, because everything is slightly oversized—but, instead of wearing a soft fluffy dress with ruffles, this is the new attitude."

According to the two experts, the new silhouette requires some significant wardrobe changes. For one thing, hats are back.

"You have hats being worn by an audience that for the last few years has not been into millinery. The trend started when Diane Keaton wore a hat all through 'Annie Hall,'" said Weiss, who is famous among fashion-conscious Detroiters as a trendsetter himself.

"It's part of the very sophisticated, urbane way of dressing," added Rosenberg, who believes that hats add a wonderful, finished look to the clothes this year. "Last season, clothes were very casual," she continued. "Sleeves and collars were pushed up in a relaxed attitude. This season fashion has shifted towards a very dressed-up look. The suit will probably be the number one silhouette for fall."

But the emergence of a sharp, clean, pulled-together look does not mean that sportswear separates have become passe. On the contrary, they're more important than ever.

What's different is the precise way they're combined.

"These are all separates I'm wearing, but they work together as one kind of look. The component parts are still the same. It's the silhouette of the component parts that has really changed," said Rosenberg. "This year, for instance, blazers are broad-shouldered and slim-collared, blouses are longer and leaner, and skirts aren't cut as full."

"We're not into anything terribly structured," said Weiss. "There's a little construction in the blazer as possible. But it's a well-tailored piece."

Does the new tailoring lend itself to any particular fabrics? The two say "yes."

"Part of the whole feeling of having elegant clothes that are more tailored than we've seen in the past is to go to more natural fibers. The skirt I'm wearing is a Scottish hand-woven Harris tweed," said Rosenberg.

"The contrast of textures is important, too," added Weiss. "Notice the smooth melton flannel against the Harris tweed, and the textured leg against the smooth leather boot."

They agree that the golden bronze range is one of the most important color palettes for fall.

IN SPITE OF THE TREND toward tailored clothing, these fashionable folks say that nobody has to toss out last season's clothing to attain a look that's chic.

"Nobody has to throw anything away totally. Not anymore," said Weiss.

"You just have to put pieces together in a different way," said Rosenberg. "Even if someone has a very full skirt from last year, she could wear it with one of the new, shorter jackets and it would still look good."



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Photos by Stephen Cantrell

"Or she could pull a long, lean sweater over it, and then it would just shoot out at the bottom," mused Weiss, who recommended updating an old blazer by putting pads in its shoulders or wearing it with a vest on top.

Of course, everyone makes some additions to his wardrobe during the fall season, and the experts—with the spend-money-to-save-money logic of retailers—point out that now is a particularly good time to make investment purchases since we are at the beginning of a new trend.

"I think that this fall everybody would like to have a new coat," predicted Brenda. "Because this year the coats are more exciting than they've

been in a long time. And with the whole attitude of the broad shoulder, the coats really do look marvelous."

OTHER IMPORTANT LOOKS include: the new blazer jacket, a charmeuse blouse in the longer length, and one of the new slim skirts with a functional slit.

But just as important as the clothing you choose, says Rosenberg, are the accessories you pick to accent the outfit.

"I think accessories play the most important part in how a woman looks," she said. "Most women don't

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