

The fashion plate

It's true customizing in cottage industry

RUSTLE SHAND

When home sewing and knitting hits the haute couture shops, it's a sure sign it's time to oil the old sewing machine and take the knitting needles and yarn out of mothballs. The new wave of fashion is called "cottage industry."

Bill Bliss has shown "cottage industry" hand knitted sweaters with his last two collections. Mary McFadden took weaver Nancy Pollack out of her home and into her own fashion design studio when she launched the Pollack handwoven sweater and coat collection as part of her fall collection.

Native New Yorker Joan Vass made a big splash when she brought her "cottage industry" clothing to Chair Pearce's Somerset Mall shop last month.

Joan Vass has not been in the field of fashion very long. But she's been in it long enough to have been honored by the Smithsonian Institute. Ms. Vass and Zandra Rhodes, Sonia Rykiel, Mary McFadden, Bonnie Cashin and Norma Kamali were named by the Institute as "exceptional women in fashion."

MS. VASS was particularly credited with what the Institute has called her "wave of the future" influence on fashion.

It all began five years ago when she gave up an art editorship to market her "cottage industry" pieces of clothing.

She originally had no intention of going into the fashion business, she said. It was simply an idea for women and men who find themselves housebound from illness or responsibilities to the family and are unable to go out to work.

To prove the feasibility of her theory that it was indeed possible to return to a work-at-home premise, she designed clothing that could be worn, knitted or crocheted at home, then sought people who had to stay at home, but who needed an income, to produce the garments.

She found an amazingly high level of skills. So, hand in hand with the need, her premise burgeoned to the point where she had to leave her job as art editor and devote all her time to her "cottage industry" fashion business.

TEARS CAME to her eyes as she told of the success of her endeavors, particularly in the case of a woman called Grace Rossi, who, confined to a wheel chair, knits Joan Vass sweaters beautifully, contentedly and profitably.

"I will never forget the day she called to tell me that not only is she able to meet her own expenses but was able to buy herself a brand new wheel chair to replace the broken down one she had," Ms. Vass related. "The old one had been repaired so many times it had reached the point of no return."

Ms. Vass is a perfectionist who demands such quality in the work that goes out over her name that it is possible to wear her clothes inside out. And just in case you do decide to do just that, even the tacks that finish the side slits in her garments are carefully sewn in place and are often made of Liberty silk or cotton print.

THERE IS a striking individuality about the Vass designs. They are like nothing else you've seen before. One minute their utter simplicity has a cottage charm and the next minute they seem futuristic and sophisticated.

"My clothes are designed to live in," she said. "You can cook in them and then go out dancing in them." One black cotton skirt and blouse with all-over tiny pink polka dots, Ms. Vass calls her "work dress." One can imagine it being worn on a frosty morning to bake bread in or worn to the office. Yet, it's just as wearable for dinner.

Many of her dresses come with short, just below the calf, cuffed pants. When the easy shift dress comes off and is replaced with a hand knit or crocheted sweater, it becomes an alluring, slinky evening costume. All the pieces work together, designed to be worn in many different ways.

The newest Vass touch for now into spring-summer are rag braided rope belts and ties.

Aside from helping the lame and the infirm, Ms. Vass says her cottage industry approach to fashion is putting some home workers through graduate school.

Volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau, a program of the Volunteer Action Center of United Community Services, has weekly listings of agencies needing volunteer services. Further information about these and over 200 agencies may be obtained by calling the bureau, 615-7272. Any non-profit agencies needing volunteer assistance may also call the bureau.

GRAPHIC ARTIST-A volunteer with the ability to do lettering and simple graphic design is needed by the Oakland County Association for Retarded Citizens to help with a major organization project in late January. This would be a short term commitment.

PARENT AIDES-Family Focus in Birmingham is urgently recruiting empathetic, mature and sincere individuals who are prepared to devote four hours weekly, for a period of eight months, to contributing to the well-being of children. Training will be provided at a workshop in late January.

COURT WATCHERS-Volunteers interested in joining the Oakland County Court Watchers program are invited to hear Perry Johnson, director of the Michigan Department of Corrections, 2-3 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 23, in the Bloomfield Township Library, 1089 Lone Pine. Court Watchers attend regular sessions of the Oakland County Court and complete evaluation forms to determine fitness of judgment.

INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE ASSISTANT-Patience, a love of children and an appreciation of the problems of handicapped children are the only requirements for this job at Wing Lake School. Duties involve assisting the instructional aides in the daily program with the youngest handicapped children. Volunteers are needed to help with the dressing, feeding, exercising and positioning training sessions. All work is done under a teacher's supervision. Training is provided.

By
LORENE
GREEN



Graphologically Speaking

Dear Mrs. Green,

As a regular reader of your column, I'd be interested in your assessment of my handwriting. The nature of my writing, I have noticed, changes quite a bit depending on the speed with which I write. This note is dashed off.

M. S. Livonia

Dear M.S.,

This is the handwriting of a very interesting man, one who wishes to impress others and to be well regarded (gestalt picture). Your concern is with big issues, and you have neither time nor interest in details (large writing and no dots on i's). Talkative and frank, you are often the epitome of charm (open tops on many circle letters and tapering humps on m's and n's).

Always spontaneous and often enthusiastic, you are ever-ready for fun and excitement (forward slant and long t bars). You enjoy having your own way and usually are able to obtain it by your charisma (first letters of many words larger than ensuing letters).

Conventional you are not, and you do not encumber yourself with rules and regulations. You have a strong need to exercise your independence (personal pronoun I and gestalt picture).

You are a rather complex man. Beneath your outer facade dwells a man who is not as self-assured as he appears to others. Inwardly you seem to feel

be interested in assessment of my writing, instead of being interested in my writing.

that you have not quite measured up to the family name.

Emotionally, you give your all and then need time to retreat to yourself and become recharged and ready for the next adventure. While this may sound like a contradiction, you have both a strong need for people and also strong need for time for yourself (large writing, forward slant and y's and g's that are only sticks below the line).

You sometimes have trouble keeping your moods on an even keel, and they

with variable size of circle letters).

Yours is a fast mind. In fact everything about you is geared to a rapid pace. I see you in a perpetual hurry. This sometimes results in a sort of hit and miss operation, often creating more work than you bargained for (numerous indications of speed in the writing plus omission of humps on n's).

Basically I think you are a positive person (writing lines slanting up). However, at the time of this writing you were feeling a little down (some word endings droop).

Are you a salesman? Your handwriting suggests a propensity for this vocation.

If you have a question about your handwriting, write to Lorene C. Green in care of this newspaper. Use a full sheet of white paper and write in the first person singular. Age and right or left handedness are also helpful as they cannot be seen in the handwriting.

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