

Designer offers brand new, tried and true

By RUSTLE SHAND

Michael Vollbracht sat surrounded by his own designs, comfortable in a sofa in Saks Regency Room in the Troy store.

His natural-linen sack suit was offset with his last season's black, red and white hand-printed silk fabric, tailored into a shirt for him.

Featured in the September issue of Vogue, Vollbracht and his designs are labeled unconventional, but with a manageable look "that remains quite unique."

The designer watched as a tall, slender, blond model paraded in, wearing his vertically-striped, black-and-red-sequin knee-length suit.

"It's a line-for-line copy of a Chanel 1928 suit," Vollbracht said. "And please close the neckline," he admonished the model.

Vollbracht has gained renown for his highly individualistic hand-painted silk prints. And he doesn't miss a trick.

You want Chinese? He has Chinese. You want western? He gives you western.

And if it's the magnolia blossom or



subtle colors of the Yugoslavian peach you prefer, he has magnolias and peaches.

In a recent series, he has done American Indian, specifically a Navaho series. And a wool challis series features wild geese in a group called "Autumn Geese."

ONE JACKET in his current collection is trimmed all around in hackle feathers (neck feathers of certain birds, particularly the domestic fowl).

Vollbracht's clothes always make strong statements but they have not always been as appreciated as they are currently.

The designer attended Parsons School of Design for three years and at the age of 20 carried off the school's Golden Thimble Award as best student in the class.

Norman Norell, acting as teacher-critic, presented the award.

Several weeks before graduation Vollbracht was lured away to work for Geoffrey Beene, only to be fired from Beene in his first year there.

He was hired and fired by Donald Brooks, then hired and fired again by Beene.

"I guess they both thought I had some sort of talent but it didn't seem to fit in," Vollbracht said. "And even Mr. Norell told me much later that giving me his prize was a little out of character for him."

"He usually liked things with inner facings and such things. My outfit was a wedding dress. It's top was a man's shirt worn backwards, the skirt 30 yards of organdy."

NOW IN his own company for just two years, he is a City Award nominee for his outstanding dress designs at the couture level.

"I have always been rather shocking," is Vollbracht's summation of his designs. "I'm never subtle — never have been."

"The strongest influence in this collection is simplicity and the Chinese cut. Skirts and tops and pajamas, mainly. I think the ballgown days are diminishing."

"Most women want duo-purpose clothes in the sense that they can wear them to dinner in Detroit or a function and then pack it and wear it to Palm Beach."

Known for his flowing, unconstructed silks, he has, in his current collection, the Chanel suit with hand-sewn sequins on classic wool jersey.

Shown with opaque black stockings and a 3-inch-heeled, closed black pump, it's a look of opulent simplicity.

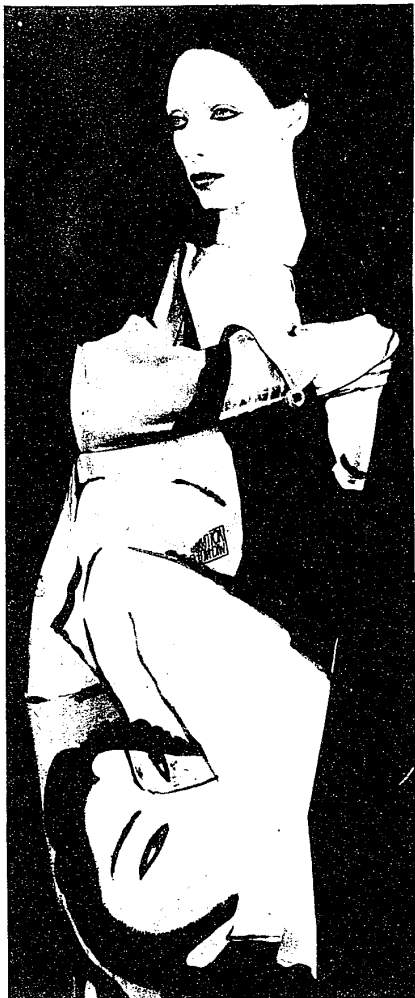
"I'm showing the opaque black leg with everything this season unless the clothes are in pastel colors," he said. "Since we show shorter skirts, black stockings frame and give weight to the legs. Otherwise, the look can be top-heavy."

On lengths, he says designers are "skirting the length issue, but just below the knee is the shortest for evenings. Other hemlines are often asymmetric and there are lots of slits."

Vollbracht's success, he contends, is because "people are buying brand-new or tried and true and we are certainly brand-new."



Vollbracht calls this bare-top long dress topped with quilted feather-trimmed jacket "Autumn Geese." A silk challis print, it is offered also in grey, taupe, rust and cream wool.



"Tatoist" is a dramatic cocoon in black, gray, salmon, and white print silk by Michael Vollbracht.



Where It's At

By JUDY SOLOMON

And that's a Quote

The newly revised edition of "Bartlett's Familiar Quotations" (\$24.95), the book that for 125 has provided colorful quotes for students, scholars and speechmakers is something no home library should be without. More than 400 new authors have been added since the 14th edition appeared 12 years ago. Among them are football coach Knute Rockne, novelist Mario Puzo, journalist Thomas Wolfe, astronaut Neil Armstrong and Pope John Paul II.

Back to back

Pity your poor back! Unless you're a contortionist, it's nigh onto impossible to scratch it, wash it, moisturize it or what have you. Now, with the advent of this terrific Bac-Licator (\$10), it's a breeze to apply liquid soaps, bath oils, suntan oils or medications. The gadget consists of a long plastic handle attached to a sponge-filled plastic head. What you do is remove the cap on the top of the head and pour whatever lotion or oil you desire into the opening.

Marlene's Faces, Old Orchard Mall, Maple and Orchard Lake Roads, West Bloomfield, 851-0480.

Under Current

Whether they use them as pajamas or as underwear to keep them warm on cold winter days, your kids are going to love their Underoos. Priced at \$9 and in stock in sizes 4 to 16, each Underoo set consists of one thermal top and bottom. The Superman and Supergirl styles have a big "S" decal sewn on the top. There are also Spiderman, Spiderwoman, and Batgirl styles. All feature bright colors with contrasting colored neckbands, waistbands, arm and leg cuffs.

Brody's, West Bloomfield Plaza, Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield, 851-6232.

Magnetism

Right now, Rialto has a magnetic personality. The store is chock-full of adorable magnets that you can use on your refrigerator door to hold important memos or on any metal surface in your home, car or office. Ranging in price from \$2 to \$3.50, there are bread dough doughnuts, hot dogs, cinnamon buns and tacos; ceramic popcicles and coffee cups and plastic rainbows, cucumbers, orange segments and cookies.

Rialto, 217 S. Woodward, Birmingham, 642-2230.

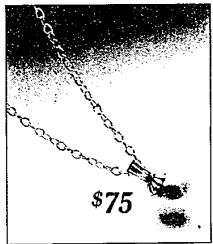
Singles dance into autumn

Hamilton Place Singles' plans an "Accent on Autumn" Dance at 9 p.m. Sept. 25.

Admission will be \$1 for members of Hamilton Place and \$3 for non-members.

A cash bar and dancing are featured. For more information, call Nan Pickman at 646-8990.

Hamilton Place is at 30333 Southfield Road, south of 13 Mile in Southfield.



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