

Wear basics at night

Story: RUSTLE SHAND
Photos: DICK KELLEY

"Pieces of clothing basic enough to transcend climate and occasion should not be limited to the daytime hours," said couturiere Betty Baga Guem in her combined studio and home in Southfield.

"Translating the basic daytime wardrobe concept into evening clothes involves simply exchanging tweed and wool for silk," she said.

Just as a skirt, blouse and jacket comprise the go-everywhere daytime ensemble, so do the same basic pieces complete all requirements for evening, she said.

"Start with a black silk camisole and skirt and then practice putting things together," said the designer.

"Don't be afraid to play with fabric," she said. To prove her point she artfully draped, then softly knotted a length of colorful silk chiffon at the waistline. With quick, efficient tucking she immediately created a short evening gown.

"The European designers are just covering the knee for evening. This liberates women from the formal and expensive ballgown," she said.

By adding a silk-print jacket to the ensemble she not only liberated the simple black dress and made it appropriate for cocktail and dinner parties. Each rearrangement completely changed the character of the component pieces.

"The print jacket with its myriad colors also makes new all the other colored silks a woman most likely has in her closet from past seasons," she said.

Ms. Baga explained that she deliberately designed the jacket so it may be worn many different ways. Closed and lightly sashed at the side of the neckline, the floating top is highly styled and sophisticated. Worn open, the neckline sash becomes a floating panel. Or, wound loosely around the neck and allowed to float at the back, the silk-print jacket is perfect for an evening of dancing.

Adding yet another dimension to the evening wardrobe, this one for at-home lounging or entertaining, she has designed a Japanese-motif satin smoking jacket.

"I assume all women have silk trousers in their wardrobe," she said. "This jacket liberates them and adds a note of mystery and intrigue to otherwise simple and practical pieces of clothing."

For Betty Guem, designing clothing is "like watching a beautiful flower open. Creating new things from beautiful fabrics is an artistic release for me. It gives me such great pleasure to design beautiful clothing and, of course," she said, "enables me to make a living."

Although, as she pointed out, most women cannot afford to pay thousands of dollars for a new dress for every

party, there are a few who do wish this service.

"Still," she said, "it is a well-kept secret that most of these gowns are also recycled from year to year by custom dressmakers such as myself."

One stunning example of her imaginative approach to designing the couture evening gown is the layer upon layer of silk chiffon topped with a hand-painted final layer of tropical flowers.

"Well-designed evening clothes should always be shorter in the front, longer in the back," said Ms. Guem, saying that she uses this design principal in her evening separates as well as in her gowns.

Prices for her basic evening pieces depend on the fabric chosen, but start at \$100 for the camisole or skirt and

\$250 for the floating silk jacket.

When she is not designing for her local custom clientele, Ms. Guem keeps busy creating original designs commissioned by specialty shops in New York and Paris. Frequent trips to Europe present opportunities for conferences with such friends as Hermes, Madame Chapel of Jean Patou and Ungaro. The visits also result in a stock of beautiful one-of-a-kind fabrics and an advanced knowledge of the designer market.

Nor does she skimp on an unerring sense of accessorization when she counsels her clients. Her artistic sense of line, color and beauty encompasses a woman's total look.

Betty Baga Guem's Southfield design studio is located at No. 514, Franklin Park Towers, 27600 Franklin Road, phone 358-3516.



Layers of silk chiffon topped with a hand-painted final layer of tropical flower are featured in Betty Baga Guem's custom evening gown. (Staff photo by Dick Kelley)



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Where It's At

By JUDY SOLOMON

Manhattan Transfer

New Yorkers have known and loved them for years. Now, thanks to former New Yorker Richard Steink, you can buy bialys right here in Detroit. A cross in taste between a bagel and an English muffin, bialys are a boon to dieters (approximately 75 calories each) because they contain no sugar, malt or fat. Baked fresh every day but Monday at Detroit Bagel Factories, you can buy onion or garlic bialys (18 cents each), onion sticks (18 cents each) or onion and garlic loaves (35 cents each).

Detroit Bagel Factories are located in Bloomfield Hills, Rochester, Farmington, Southfield and Oak Park.



Head Hunting

When the frost is on the pumpkin, it's time to get prepared for Halloween. One option would be to buy one of these marvelous headpieces from the new Paper Mache Shop in Franklin. Handmade by a local artist, each headpiece comes with a set of matching paws. Priced at \$32 each, you may choose from a lion, a tiger, a panda bear or a frog and when Halloween is over, your child can use the headpiece as a pajama bag or decorative pillow. Some are in stock; orders take one week. Paper Mache, 32800 Franklin Road, Franklin, 626-1165.



Sticking Around

If you find masks that cover your eyes or head uncomfortable, Riatto has a great group of masks-on-a-stick that you can hold in front of your face from time to time to show that you're in the spirit of things. Priced at \$1.50, they include Charlie Chaplin, a Samurai warrior, a flapper, a Keystone cop, a society matron, a Geisha girl, a clown or a crying Pierrot. The store also stocks glamorous eye masks that are trimmed with feathers and sequins, plus elegant ceramic face masks that you can hang on your walls all year long. Riatto, 217 S. Woodward, Birmingham, 642-2230.



Kits and Caboodle

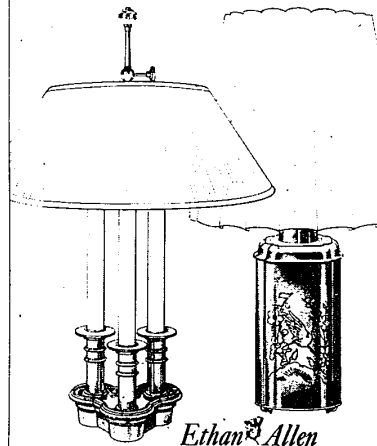
This kit (\$11) from the Children's Bookstore should serve to keep your little ones busy and stimulated for hours on end. Designed to encourage creativity, The Paper Bag Dramatics Kit contains such items as child-safe makeup, masks, props, disguises, pipe cleaners, feathers, construction paper and an idea book that tells how to use the things in the kit. Some uses are to decorate masks, make costumes, or construct props and scenery.

The Children's Bookstore, Applegate Square, Northwestern at Inkster, Southfield, 354-4741.



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