

A return to romance with lace

FASHION is enjoying a return to romance — and lace is heading the list.

The signs of this are evident from the "Christmas Keepsakes" featured in the Lord and Taylor holiday catalogue to the special lace boutiques being created in the Hudson's stores.

Along with lace, other romantic quality things like polypourri, crystal perfume bottles, pearls, moire and ribbon picture frames all remind of times when life was a bit slower and the quality of lace was supreme.

Lace will be a major trend in holiday party dressing this season from full gosses, to jacks, to the importance of a lace hanky sticking out of a sleeve or evening bag.

We found three ladies in the area who have always loved lace and have incorporated it in their wardrobes for many years. Some of the lace they wear is antique dating from grandmother's wedding dresses to lace found at flea markets.

Creating lace is becoming a lost art. Belgium has always been the center of fine lace production. Women toil over very fine threads intricately interweaving them into lovely works of art.

Over a century ago, many of these women went blind after years of focusing on the minute threads. Today lace can also be made by machine, thank goodness. However, lace specialists still regard handmade lace the best. It is a dying art, so if you have any family relics hang on to them.

Susan Thomas, Birmingham artist who displays her watercolors at the Gallery Birmingham, has an impressive collection of lace pieces. Her grandmother's wedding dress is 74 years old and has gone to several functions. In the middle of her living room is a picture of her husband's mother in a lace wedding gown.

SUSAN LOVES to mix modern trends with antique lace. While shopping in New York she found a T-shirt to which she added an antique collar of alencon lace. Being a creative person she has used a family lace tablecloth as an evening wrap.

The most important lace dress she owns was purchased at the Gallery of Wearable Art in New York.

"The dress features at least 10 different kinds of lace," she said. "I bought the dress last March because I adored it, and I saved it to wear to a special



GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

A sampling of the items in Hudson's Lace Boutique are a Christian Dior pants and slip, a camisole, a doll and a child's dress.

party my husband, Ralph, gave at the DAC. The party was in honor of the 100th anniversary of his company's business.

Many lace dresses don't look as fabulous on a store hanger as they do on a body. That is part of the mystique of lace.

Vickie McCord Maxwell is a sales manager for engineering copiers. Her professional dress is the right of John T. Malloy featuring suits and corporate image looks.

She recalls, "My sister goes to the University of Michigan and saw a lace dress in the window of a shop in Ann Arbor. She bought it for me on the spot and phoned me that evening to tell me she had found a dress that looked just like me."

Vickie wore the dress to the party given by Susan and Ralph Thomas thus creating a definite trend.

"My husband is a romantic and lace really appeals to him," she said. "He enjoys the occasions when I look femi-

line, since in business I have to dress to be aggressive. It's a welcome diversion."

Karen Zosel of Birmingham is an avid lace collector. She began collecting when she inherited many pieces from her grandmother's home. "There were so many pieces just stuffed in trunks and suitcases that they didn't look valuable or wearable until I started examining them," she said.

Karen uses lace creatively from using a cascading piece over a simple black dress to create a cocktail look to

making lace pillows for her home from antique pieces.

"I bought lace in Colorado and put it over a wool sweater cardigan years before Ralph Lauren did it in his collections," she said.

Lace is a valuable fabric. During its reign in the fashion closets of chic women in other generations the pieces were passed down by removing them from one dress and adding to another. Many modern women who adore the romantic qualities of lace are adding it to their own contemporary wardrobes.



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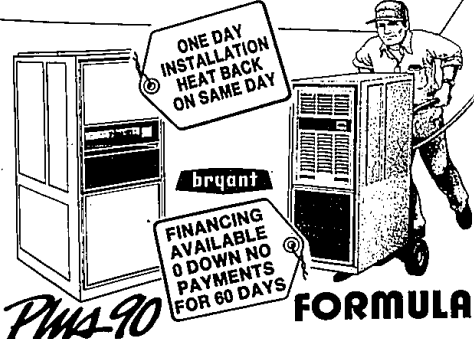
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