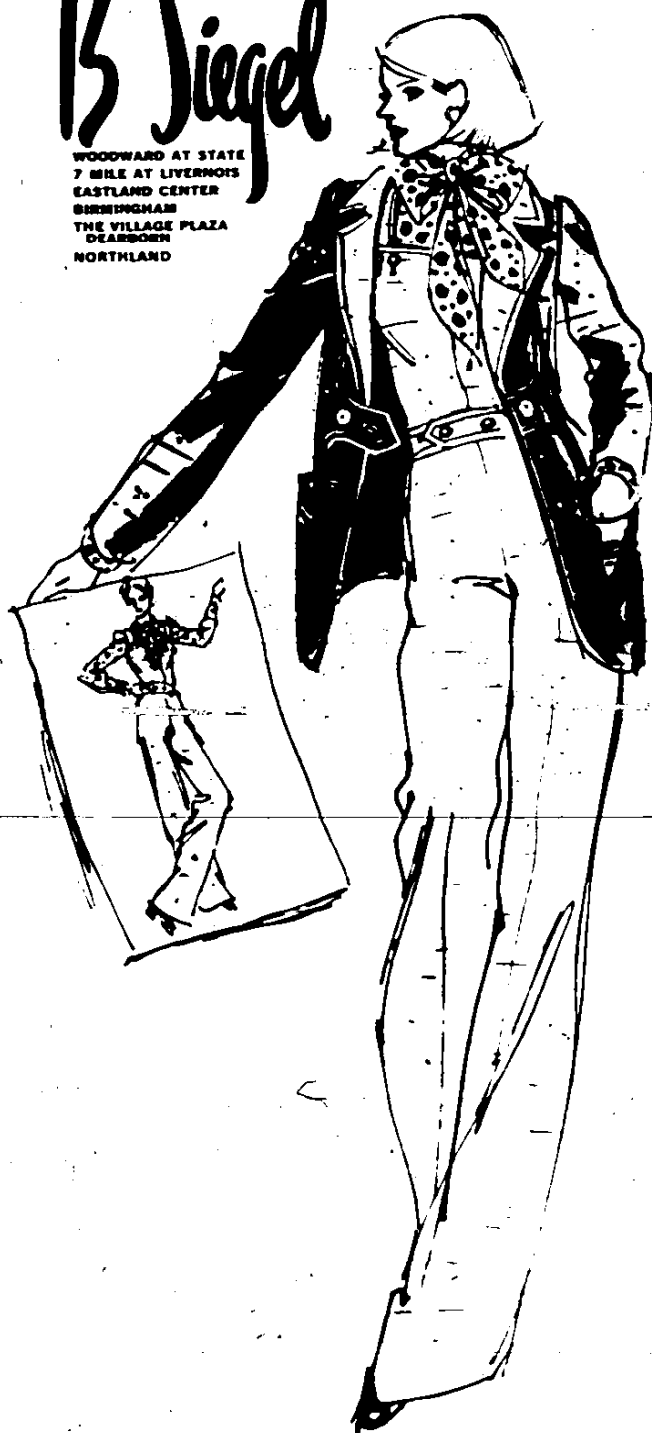


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By DEVON HALL 150.00

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Et tu, Capraro?

Who could be more American than the person who designs for the First Lady?

Albert Capraro's fashion influence is going beyond 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., however, as he prepares to sell designs to Japan. Thus he joins an ever growing number of American designers having an impact on the rest of the world.

Ever since his designs caught the eye of Betty Ford, women everywhere have been eyeing them. He has responded with collections that round the clock in their versatility, ease and price.

"Women everywhere are interested in the American look and the American way of life," said Capraro in a phone interview.

"American women are involved in a variety of activities: politics, home and public affairs. They lead a very fast paced life, and I think clothes have to be accepted on the basis of how they work for the woman."

In a way, Betty Ford's donning of Capraro's designs proved that his clothes work within the context of flexibility.

If they're functional for the First Lady in all her activities, from breakfast in Washington to lunch in Chicago and dinner in Los Angeles, surely they will serve the woman who only has five miles to drive to the office.

"Everyone is interested in the First Lady and what she does. Something about her reflects their own sort of lifestyle, even if they don't agree totally with her," the designer said.

Though Mrs. Ford's attention threw Capraro into Seventh Avenue's limelight, his design abilities were already there. It

was just a matter of recognizing talent that already existed.

"Even when I was very young, I remember being interested in what women were wearing—from a creative point of view. I've worked to develop into a strong designer, working under someone else's label and then on my own. I'm now doing exactly what I want (in his design career), and apparently women like what I'm doing."

While some individuals view the woman who is "into" clothes with a jaundiced eye, Capraro said he has respect for the American woman, adding that her clothes are just one facet of an already busy life.

"A woman wants to know that she looks good, and she doesn't want to think about it after she's dressed."

"There's no longer a time when a woman makes a grand entrance," he added. "Clothes must move, work. They have to be attractive and luxurious—but all for a price."

Somehow he combines it all. His designs are interesting, well tailored, luxurious and inexpensive.

His ideas and his colors, he said, "depend on things that are happening around me. I might see a fabric I like or a coloration I want to develop, so I do. The lifestyles of people around the world, and everyone around me here, inspire me, and I can't help but be influenced."

Further, all pieces in his collection, he said, are to be worn. There are no "show"

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If any debutante's "came out" at Birmingham's Hill School in 1869 they probably wore black silk gowns with ruffles and velvet coats trimmed with ostrich feathers. Even though old schools die as Hill did, fashion lives on and this spring Albert Capraro debuts his simple dinner dress and the put together quilted look.