

## The fashion plate

## Designs pure fantasy

By RUSTLE SHAND

Is the wide acceptance of fantasy fashions a silent plea for identity? Are women saying "I have no identity of my own—therefore I assume the identity of another era and play the role for a few hours in order to make it through the hum-drum of daily life?"

Often the woman wearing the vibrantly dramatic costume that gives her a mysterious and dynamic appearance turns out to be more like the girl next door.

And the popularity of the most avant-garde designers, those whose designs say "my clothes wear you" rather than "you wear the clothes," is increasing.

So when London designer Marisa Martin brought her spring-summer collection to Subina's in the Bloomfield Plaza she discovered a whole new world of young, romantic customers.

Marisa designs clothes that, as she says, "make some sort of statement for the beautiful people who are into the very beautiful, quality things."

"TO ME, CLOTHES should appeal more to the fantasy side of a woman's nature because we all need to escape at some time or other," she said. "People's lives are becoming so bound by practical needs that they tend to neglect the fantasy side of their nature."

"Women should attend to their clothes and style, should make the best of themselves in general, and find expression to the more extrovert side of their nature through their dress."

She denies the "plastic throwaway" age in which we live, saying "here in America it's all exterior impression."

"They have beautiful things but they buy them because they look good, not because they recognize any merit in anything," she went on. "Everything is very glitzy—very many replicas, things imitated. In England, when I visit a home and see a Chinese vase, I know it is genuine, not an imitation."

MARISA'S CLOTHES could certainly not be called imitations. Some of the lace she uses to

trim her after-five gowns is from the estate of Lady Jenny Churchill (mother of Winston). Much of the braid comes from turn-of-the-century sari gowns from India. The antique hand embroideries are from China.

She uses silk, matte jersey, chiffon and satin silk—artfully draped and tucked into exotic evening wear. Or she puts you in a carnival mood with her Brazilian muslins.

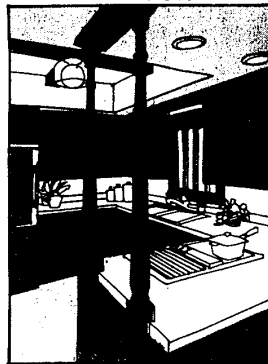
Marisa's inspiration for fashion design comes from travel because, she said, "it is important to get to know the world we live in, to see and experience the great richness of cultures and societies that have developed over the ages."

"I find that I am most influenced by old cultures and the ethnic arts and crafts of these societies," she added. "Clothes are to me a collage in fabric. I love exotic silks, embroideries, trimming, high quality hand-made lace. I search for original Chinese embroideries and Indian braids to incorporate in my dresses. The amount of patient, skilled work that goes into these old crafts is quite fascinating and used on a beautiful dress will make it a very special garment to be treasured by the owner."

MARISA'S OWN costume of the day consisted of black "skousers" (a combination of skirt and trousers with a harem look), with cerise suede cowboy boots, a plum silk shirt and antique embroidered silk jacket.

It was an opulent costume for a woman of the world whose grandmother was a dressmaker in the court of Spain and who, at the age of 11 was transported from her native Spain to a convent school in England where she was very lonely because everyone there spoke only English and she did not.

Marisa earned a master of arts degree at the Royal College of Art in London and started designing and making clothes purely as a means to supplement her income from painting. As the demand for her designs grew, she opened her own shop and later her own design and manufacturing company which supplies 17 countries throughout the world.

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## Volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau, a program of Volunteer Action Center of United Community Services, has weekly listings of agencies needing volunteers. Further information about the agencies and type of volunteer services needed may be obtained from the bureau, 642-7272.

GRANDPARENTS ANONYMOUS is a Pontiac-based organization concerned with promoting the well-being of their own grandchildren and all minors. The group is looking for 30 volunteers 18 and over who enjoy working with children to serve as mentors in social service agencies, hospitals and churches.

The time commitment would be about one three-hour period a week. Also needed is someone interested in promoting the organization's goals through contacts with radio and television stations and newspapers. Time commitment here would be flexible.

CLINTON VALLEY CENTER in Pontiac needs family living teachers to teach one or two classes every four

or five weeks in basic home skills. Topics to be covered include meal planning, simple interior decorating, personal care and budgeting.

Classes are held on Monday and Thursday morning during the school year. Volunteers should have some background in home economics or dietetics, and training is provided.

OPERATION FRIENDSHIP (ROYAL OAK AND BIRMINGHAM) needs drivers from the Royal Oak and Birmingham areas to drive members to and from meetings. The meetings are held on Tuesday, Thursday or Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

BLOOMFIELD HILLS YOUTH ASSISTANCE is looking for volunteers for the program titled People Listening, Understanding and Sharing (PLUS). It provides young people in need from the Birmingham-Bloomfield area with a relationship with a caring adult. Volunteers high school age and older are needed. A weekly minimum of two hours per week is preferred and a one-year commitment is desirable.

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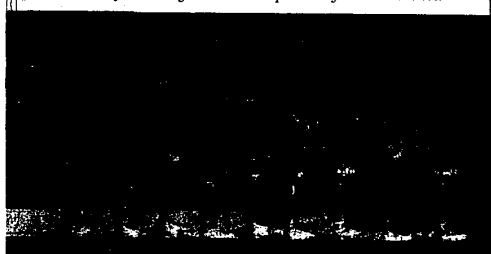
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