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**'Watch the cans, girls!'**

Madelyn Coe, Detroit's "first lady of fashion" and the executive vice-president of the Renaissance Center retail shops, has been translating French fashion panache into Midwestern fashion verve for so many years that she laughs at her own recollections.

Just back from the Paris showings where she previewed the current offerings, Ms. Coe recalled her first trip there in 1962. In those days, she ventured to Paris as the J.L. Hudson fashion director.

"At that time," said Ms. Coe, "the yet-to-bud genius of the likes of Ungaro and Courreges was obscured in the back room at Balenciaga, their famous mentor." The couture clothes of Balenciaga were among the first Paris originals she brought to Detroit 26 years ago.

There have been many changes since then, she explained. Among them, the opening of Detroit's Renaissance Center and the designer boutiques of Lanvin, Valentino, Courreges, les must de Cartier, Halston and Charles Jourdan. It was the designer boutiques which took Ms. Coe to Paris this time to buy merchandise. Nevertheless, with her fashion antennae buzzing, she accomplished a feat of gargantuan proportions when she took in the entire Paris fashion scene. Upon her return, she shared her impressions of the French collections and a patter of amusing, earthy anecdotes at a press luncheon.

No wide-eyed innocent when it comes to the show-biz aspects of designed showings, Ms. Coe ad libbed. "They have cleaned up their act." She immediately took exception to one designer showing, where, she said, all the models came out in feather coats to the accompaniment of "Singing in the Rain."

"Which you can imagine," said Ms. Coe, "was a real crapped-up scene."

"We all knew it was time for a fashion change," said Ms. Coe. "I have been watching the evolution for several years. You knew something was going to happen, but you didn't know exactly what."

And, unlike years before when women decided they would no longer be dictated to, there isn't an "exactly what" this season.

"There is a feeling of an influence



Courreges favors earthtones of beige, brown and camel for his viscose flounced anorak with stand-up collar, left, and separate pairing, above. Knitted sleeveless waist-coat with gathered waist is an alternative to the vest. Renaissance World of Shops.



from the past. But the designers are too much aware of what's going on today. They realize we are all individuals, and we want to express ourselves that way."

The French couturiers are very aware that today's fashionable women express a personal style, she said. Their new influence is very apparent.

"There is a new ambience in fashion. I call it 'Contemporary Chic.' We have been through an era of folklore,

peasantry, layered, casual-sportive and now it is time for a change."

The change, she said, is in new shapes, new silhouettes.

"They have widened the shoulders without making you look as if you have a coat hanger inside your jacket." In keeping with the widened shoulder, bottoms are narrowing.

"Years ago, we had to wear a girle, but today's narrow skirt is

essed so you don't look as if you are strangled to death in it.

"But—watch the cans, girls," she admonished with a waggle of a finger.

"They're going to be showing a bit."

With the silhouette change, predicted Ms. Coe, comes a move upward in hemlines. "When you narrow the silhouette, you have to watch where the length hits the leg. There was every kind of length going on in Paris. They made some short dancing clothes which make sense because it is easier to dance in short skirts." Otherwise, she said, lengths remain pretty much mid-calf.

Fall, said Ms. Coe, will herald the return of the chic woman.

"Women want to look chic, smart and ultra-sophisticated, from the top of their heads to their shoes," she said. Ms. Coe defines contemporary chic as "Drop Dead Chic." A look that

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