



Hattie's personal closet is stuffed with a seasonless wardrobe that dates back many years. She advises adding and updating according to the current look of the season. (Photo by Stephen Cantrell)

'Nothing is forever'

Suit your mood in timeless clothes

According to Hattie, dressing should be approached with a sense of fun, of excitement. "After all," she said, "nothing is forever." Clothes, particularly, should be seen as an extension of your personality, she said, adding, "as your mood changes, so should your clothes."

Hattie Belkin's personal closet in her Birmingham home attests to her belief that nothing is "out" in fashion. "It's all in how you put yourself together," she said. Her walk-in closet doubles as a dressing room complete with built-in vanity. All clothing is within clean, uncluttered reach. One section is devoted to shirts and blouses, another to jackets and furs. Skirts have a separate section as do pants and evening gowns. Shoes, handbags and accessories are all neatly shelved, unboxed—standing ready to make a complete "Hattie statement."

Hattie's seasonless wardrobe dates back many years. She simply adds and updates according to the current look of the season. She demonstrated that merely adding a 1 1/2" belt to last year's unstructured jacket makes it look very Fall '78. "Buttoning-up and belting will update you for fall," she said.

According to the personality who provides the spark for Hattie's, Inc. of Birmingham, the most important look for fall is the jacket. It's an updated blazer, more streamlined, nipped in at the waist, and more feminine because of shoulder padding.

"It is the added touch you will need this fall," she said. "The one indispensable thing in a woman's wardrobe."

"The current trend," said Hattie, "is mixing everything together. You can put a \$12 T-shirt with a \$200 jacket and a \$50 skirt—add a belt at the waistline, textured stockings and a high heel—and you're current."

"THE OTHER MAJOR trend is what I call exaggerated chic," she said. "The return to the glamour girl in a more off-hand way. Big, fake jewels and campy pillbox hats and gloves are all a part of the retro look of the '50s."

Included in the look of exaggerated chic is the extended shoulder with the slimmer waist, which Hattie believes is very feminine. "But," she adds, "the proportion has to be right. It should not smack out at you. The look should be off-hand."

"As far as length is concerned," said Hattie, "Paris is pushing the shorter skirt and the very, very slim skirt. This looks very well on a tall beautiful woman but not everyone is tall and beautiful—length of clothing should balance the body."

What about the return to foundation

garments that is being touted in Paris this fall? "Well," responded Hattie, "I don't think any woman will give up her sense of freedom and return to wearing bras and girdles. We have been liberated." Then Hattie confided, "I think the garter belts and silk seamed stockings are wonderful."

Another important look, said Hattie, is the country-western look as done by Ralph Lauren. "Ralph Lauren," she said, "is probably the greatest American sportswear designer. But, I am against the 3-piece sets that someone else puts together for you. Each per-

son should put their clothes together for their day, depending upon their mood and not rely on a designer's concept of how she should look."

THE WESTERN LOOK adjunct to the country look, she said, simply means you went further west. "The farther we go into the suburbs, the more we find the horses and the cows."

Hattie noted, "What is fashionable each season is not the only consideration." Actually, she said, what has

to be most important is the sense of balance and unity of thought.

"Personally, I hate distinctive colors. The only distinctive color I like is black and that is the only color that should be sharp. I don't like anything that flashes out at me. The femininity of a woman should be very subtle."

Clothes should move with the body and should feel a part of you, maintains Hattie. They should not remain detached. "To this end," she said, "I have tried to eliminate two 'ladies' from the city—'poly' and 'ester'."

Hattie is convinced that there is no one particular way of dressing. "Every woman has about 25 different ways of putting herself together. I don't think anything is out. They say the country look is out and exaggerated chic is in. I don't think the country look is out. Some people wear the country look well and they should stay with that look. If the style works for you and is comfortable, then wear it."

"Style," concluded Hattie, "does not just happen—you have to work at it—you learn."

—By Rustie Shand



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Wide gray suede sashes link Mary McFadden's long, lean Nile green rayon and wool chenille sweater with wool challis skirt printed in Nile and tangerine.