

A STUDY OF THE PRESENT DAY TRENDS IN DRESS FABRIC DESIGNS

by

DOROTHY TREPAL

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INTRODUCTION

Design has an appeal to all of us whether we are conscious of it or not. The appeal of design lies in sensitiveness to line, rhythm, balance, form and color. Textile designs date back to the primitive man who having become conscious of the satisfactions derived from ornamentation, began to dye grasses and fibers, and wove them into pleasing patterns. Down through history, textile designs are found more expertly planned and more subtly executed. Today, as a result of the vast array of textile designers and of the introduction of modern machinery which has made for an all time high in mass production, an ever increasing volume of textile designs is being produced. However, in view of the large volume of designs now found on the market, the number of good textile designs is comparatively small. The quality of some of these designs is definitely better than others. But regardless of the quality, whether good or bad, some of these designs repeatedly return to popularity.

The proposed plan of study was to determine present trends in fabric designs, the influences or events that affect these trends, and how these trends relate to the fabric designs found in past history.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature revealed that some of the same textile designs were being repeatedly used year after year.

According to Marshall (7), good floral design always has an appeal, primarily because it is easy to live with and nearly always gay and cheerful. Hunt (6) said that from the very earliest of times, flowers have been

an inspiration to artists of all kinds, but their forms of art have been particularly associated with textile design. Floral forms for fabrics have played an important part in quantity, if not in originality or purity of treatment. Their presence, absence or style has been for centuries characteristic of the general trend in any specific period.

It is a simple law of art that no element of basic soundness ever dies. It may lie dormant for years, or for centuries, but ultimately its intrinsic merit brings recognition and utilization. (10).

Such had been the case of the Paisley design according to an article written in the 1951 Spring issue of American Fabrics magazine (2). Webster's Dictionary (15) defines the Paisley design as the design taken from a woolen shawl imitating a Cashmere shawl formerly made at Paisley, Scotland.

This Paisley design as described by American Fabrics (9), was most recently in high fashion in 1951. However, the origin of the design goes back several thousand years, and it has risen in popularity time and time again, and has reoccurred often in the history of fabrics. Though it has been modified and adapted throughout the years, the beauty of the first original Paisley has not yet been surpassed.

This design was first conceived in the northwest corner of India by a Naquash (drawing master), and was worked upon by many artists for several years before a satisfactory pattern was composed. The perfection of the Paisley designs was such that no matter to what proportion they were enlarged or reduced, they lose not one whit of their delicately balanced line or form.

According to American Fabrics (9), this continual popularity for the Paisley designs was a result of the basic soundness, the compelling virtue, in the patterns and colorings of the Paisley designs which exert a strong

and positive influence on the consumer public. Almost a century has passed since the era of the Paisley influence, but it must be remembered that the appeal of the Kashmir colors and designs bridged the far greater chasm of several thousand years before it came to Europe. Significantly too, although there has been no concerted effort by the textile industry to revitalize Paisley designs as a universal fashion, it is a fact that every year the consumer continues to buy Paisley-patterned merchandise for personal and home use.

Carolyn Schnurer, one of today's top fabric and fashion designers, states that "every culture, whether primitive or advanced, can feed the fashion industry. It only depends upon the eye that can see and the quick sensitivity that can perceptively adapt". (2 p 36)

This is substantiated by the present day use of metallic thread and the printing of metallic fabrics. Gold and silver are woven in our silks, rayons, and other fine fabrics, and cottons display much of what has been done in the printing and embossing of metallic prints. The introduction of gold and silver in fabrics has been far from recent. Glazier (5) relates that threads of gold and silver have been extensively used in the past, occasionally alone, but more usually in combination with silk and cotton threads, for the production of sumptuous fabrics. The Asiatic kings and nobles of the time of Alexander the Great, wore robes splendid with gold and purple. Thurstan (12) reported that gold thread from Cyprus, interwoven with silk, was very much used in Sicilian fabrics to enrich and beautify the material. Though Babylonia produced nothing significant in textile decoration, Warren (13) mentioned the introduction of gold thread woven into Babylonian fabrics. A note was also made in the York fabric rolls of the time of Edward VIII,

"of two copies of saguines purple clothe of goulde and a redd vestment with lyons of goulde" (5 p 8).

All available records found by the author lead to the belief that up until the time of the Fortuny Prints, use of gold and silver in fabrics was limited to the weaving of gold and silver in fabrics. Not until around the latter part of the Renaissance when the Fortuny Prints came into existence, was either gold or silver found printed on fabrics. As related by Denny (3), these Fortuny prints were the exclusive art fabrics made by Mariano Fortuny of Venice who possessed a secret printing process. The fabrics exhibited rich Renaissance patterns printed with lighter color on dark ground or stamped with gold or silver. Fabrics of cotton, sateen, twill, or velvet cotton or silk, were used. The silk fabrics were used for gowns and evening wraps, while the cotton fabrics were used for wall hangings, runners, and upholstery.

Time was when all a textile designer had to know was the rudiments of turning out an attractive pattern. Today, in a thoroughly packed field, he must be a superspecialist, thoroughly versed in art, chemistry, economics and even world affairs (11 p 21).

Weaver (14) stated that no more interesting thought has been woven into the various textiles, with their many purposes, than motifs taken from historic events and the less significant popular events of today. It is interesting to note that while nature forms, flowers, clouds, snow flakes, stars, and so forth, have furnished the designer with countless motifs, the social, economic, political, religious, and recreational factors have all played their parts in influencing the textile designs at various times. All of these did have a much greater influence on textiles than one would realize on first thought. Every phase of life is so integrated that most persons are not aware of how current events, great or small, may have a far-reaching influence on the decorative motifs of the day.

The last forty years has revealed current events of the day as greatly affecting textile designs. During the period of the first World War, reported Weaver (14), the textiles manufactured were greatly influenced by the depression and the keen suffering of that period. Cannons, coats of arms, the French, American and British soldiers all found places in textiles, along with battleships and all the paraphernalia that signifies war-fare. America was gloomy in those days so the colors were drab, dull and sombre in keeping with the feelings of the people as well as because of the scarcity of dyes. When at the close of the war, excitement and joy ran high, textiles found a most vivid range of color schemes. Lively reds, whites, and blues obviously were popular. A free, bright, happy spirit was shown throughout the textiles used.

The same thing happened in our textiles during the Second World War. In 1942, House and Garden magazine (10) reported that gallant American motifs and proud historic scenes were appearing on new fabrics as patriotism was reaching a new peak. Just as designers in the past had recorded epic current events and patriotic motifs in prints, so the designers during the Second World War translated the upsurge of national feeling into fabrics for fine decoration. This patriotic theme from the time of 1777 to 1942, had never lost appeal. Each generation has interpreted it according to the decorative style of the day. Federal, Victorian and Modern versions all ring out the cry, "The Stars and Stripes Forever!" (10 p 27).

Other historic events have also made their influence felt in textiles. Soon after the First World War much was heard of "King Tut". No discovery in archaeology, Weaver (14) reported, aroused such wide interest as the opening of the tomb of Tutankhaman in the valley of the Tombs, near Thebes, Egypt, in 1922. Tutankhaman became the most conspicuous figure of the

moment, and American designers immediately produced a vast number of designs based on Egyptian motifs.

In contrast to this influence, Weaver (14) continued, there came a movement over the country of an entirely different nature. A dance called the "Charleston" left an impression on the textile designers of the day. Then again on May 21, 1927, American designers were given another inspiration when Colonel Lindberg flew from Roosevelt Field, New York, to Paris in 33 hours and 32 minutes. This was the first time such a mission was successfully accomplished and it created world-wide news. An air craft then furnished a motif.

A prominent silk company presented in the Spring and Summer season of 1929, a series of "Early American Prints" which were inspired by the deeds of our forefathers. Early historical events in the foundation of our country furnished the decorative units and scheme for the collection of designs. Some of the events depicted were the "Spirit of '76", "Paul Revere", "Betsy Ross--Liberty Bell", and "The Covered Wagon".

The Washington Bi-centennial of 1932 brought with it renewed interest in stars and stripes in celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of Washington's birthday. In every American city and village the principles and ideals of Washington were emphasized, re-created and made a part of the people's thinking and feeling and were reflected in fabric design.

A more recent current event was the World's Fair--the Century of Progress. Three of a series of silk patterns designed by Walter Dorwin Teague for Marshall Field were a result of the inspiration received from this national event. The designs inspired by the architectural motifs of this exposition were the "Science Tower", the "Flying Buttresses", and the "Sky Ride".

The Literary Digest (11), revealed the fact that design in any category, and particularly in the textile field, was an accurate, mirrored reflection of the age in which it functions, and that textile patterns can afford to be only a minor quarter beat behind front-page headlines. Designers must keep up with the current happenings. In 1937, when the British Cabinet Ministers were working feverishly toward the coronation of King Edward the VIII, the designers were working just as feverishly producing designs inspired by the coronation.

At the same time of the coronation of King Edward the VIII, another historic event left a mark on our textile designs. The "l'affaire Simpson" lent itself to a trend. The abandonment of the royal throne of England by King Edward the VIII for the love of an American woman, was felt the world around. There were constant demands for coiffures and clothes in the manner of the lady who won a king. A popular fabric with a dark background, sprinkled with bright-colored circles the size of a quarter composed of letters spelling "I Love You", flooded the mid-winter market.

In 1941, Martin (8) related, the textile market found fabric designs being largely comprised of story-telling themes. The designers were seeking inspiration from every possible source and many of their motifs were often found in the current events. It was at this time when our neighbors to the South claimed so much of our attention. It was only natural that the fabric designers should take advantage of this interest. The influence of the tropics and South America gave us no end of "chicos" and sombreros" in our textile motifs.

Sports events, movies, and so forth, of the day can be classed as other design inspirations according to Weaver (14). For example, the circus season,

Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse, the Olympics, the Helen Mills Moody championship, new inventions, automobile shows and the football classics, have all found their way into the creating of fabric designs.

There is no end to the diversified field in which we might find design inspiration. Industry alone has supplied us in recent years with vast textile design motifs.

A few years ago the conviction that art was more than a veneer of refinement and culture, something worthy of the attention of the businessman, began to percolate through our national consciousness. A thought of the unity of the arts began to dawn upon us, that art was not one thing, it was a thousand things well done; that a painting, a vase, a bit of textile design--all were art if good, and none were art if poorly executed. Now we are immersed in another idea--that of the relationship of art and industry; and more than this, their absolute interdependence. Industry could not exist in its present form apart from the art element. Art would soon die from starvation were it not for industry. Recognizing this, the modern designer does not scorn as themes for his patterns the various inventions and commodities of the present day living. The rosebud garland, and the baskets of flowers of former days still hold sway to certain extent in textiles. But the modern American designer, keen to express today's ideas appropriately and forcefully, is not content to dawdle over rosebuds when vital forces are at work in political and industrial life (4 p 16).

In fabric design, Detcham (4) stated, we have beheld the alluring grandeur of the National parks, Pike's Peak, and the Yosemite in patterns of silks. American Indian motifs have also figured in textiles, now and then. The map has had its day as a motif for design. Paris suggested the kaleidoscopic effect and we fell in line, with many excellent and some very unfortunate results. And now, we are ready to tell through the textile patterns, the story of American industrial and social life as it exists today.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The data for this study were secured from library references, fashion magazines, a daily retailer's newspaper on women's wear, and a fabric catalog.

A check list (Appendix) was worked out whereby present day dress fabric motif types, motif characteristics, and motif frequencies could be tabulated. Monthly check lists for each source of information were kept. From this information, monthly trends and months in which the different motif types reached their peak in popularity, were derived. A comparison between these monthly results was made as well as between results from each of the sources used. A final comparison was made between the literature cited and the total results of the check list. All data tabulated were converted into percentages for easier comparisons. These comparisons were then made into graphs for use as illustration.

FINDINGS

Sources Used

The present day industries are becoming more highly competitive, and the business man or woman is having to fulfill greater demands. A fabric designer should be acquainted with the requirements of present day textile designs. For these reasons the author, who intends to enter the textile designing field, has made this study. The basis of this thesis has been an investigation of the characteristics of the fabrics found on the current market, and the factors that influence the type of designs found in current dress fabrics.

The author has attempted to determine any current trends in the type of dress fabric designs now in demand. No record of plain fabrics was made as

the writer was mainly interested in printed fabrics, and the recording of the plain fabrics as well as the printed fabrics would constitute a study too extensive to carry through effectively.

Four sources were employed: the Woman's Wear Daily newspaper published daily in New York; the monthly and bi-monthly issues of Vogue and Harper's Bazaar magazines; and the Welek's fabric catalog compiled by the Charles F. Welek & Company in St. Louis, Missouri. The Woman's Wear Daily newspaper is published for the retailer's convenience, and contains not only advertisements of fabric and clothing designs, but also articles on present and future trends in these fields. Vogue and Harper's Bazaar magazines contain largely advertisements for clothing and textiles. Welek's catalog was the only source used which contained actual fabrics. This catalog is sent out to colleges for use in the clothing departments. It is issued in the fall, and throughout the following months samples are added to it, and in some cases, taken from it as a result of a sellout in the Welek's establishment. The fabrics illustrated may be fabrics which have not sold in a previous season and are put on the market again in another attempt to reduce an over-loaded stock. Thus, as a single source of information for present trends in fabric designs, it may prove to be misleading. Data from this catalog was taken at the end of May 1953.

The author felt that in using these four sources, a wider and more realistic view of the fabrics put on the market today would be obtained than if only one type of source was used.

Data for this thesis were collected daily, from Woman's Wear Daily and in the case of the magazines used, monthly, from October 1, 1952 through May 31, 1953. This covered an eight month period. Daily illustrations of

advertised fabrics were clipped from the Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, and recorded on a check list. Advertisements of fabrics and dress designs in which the fabrics were described or illustrated were also registered on the check list from issues of Vogue and Harper's Bazaar magazines. Welek's catalog provided information from the actual fabrics.

The Woman's Wear Daily newspaper prints illustrations of fabrics which are approximately six months in advance of actual appearance on the market. Hence fabrics that are illustrated in January will begin to appear around June. This affected the author's report in that although most of the data were collected during the winter months, the conclusions resulted primarily in trends of spring and summertime wear. Because of the difficulty in registering information which at times was insufficient, the author was left to decide what information was adequate enough for recording. This resulted in giving only approximate trends in fabric designs.

Vogue and Harper's Bazaar magazines also began to show spring and summer clothes around January, though they continued to advertise winter clothes throughout the better part of the winter. Here again difficulty in inadequate information was encountered.

The check list designed to record information from the four sources used, covered seven topics. These topics were: (1) the type of apparel the fabric was designed for; (2) the texture of the fabric; (3) the motif size; (4) the motif color; (5) the ground color; (6) the type of print; and (7) the influence which inspired the design. The clothing apparel unit included six classifications of clothing: (1) street and afternoon dresses; (2) house dresses; (3) skirts; (4) blouses; (5) resort wear; and (6) lingerie.

Texture was divided into four categories: (1) smooth; (2) rough; (3) novelty; and (4) embossed. Motif sizes were classified as: (1) large;

(2) small; and (3) medium. A small motif was considered as one which ranged up to one-half inch square. A medium sized motif ranged from one-half to one and one-half inches square, while all other motifs were classified as large. These were standards set up by the author.

Motif colors and ground colors were classified as either dark or light. The type of print found comprised twelve categories. These were: (1) abstract prints which the author interpreted as designs which did not consist of realistic forms, but rather of free forms such as were found in abstract painting; (2) realistic prints, as in opposition to abstract prints, in which the design form was portrayed realistically; (3) photographic prints consisting of designs which through certain processes were given a photographic appearance; (4) floral prints which covered all floral designs; (5) metallic prints comprising designs which were printed with a metallic substance; (6) iridescent prints consisting of fabrics printed with the comparatively new iridescent colors; (7) geometrical designs which included all designs which showed geometrical forms; (8) stylized prints which the author interpreted as designs that were altered from their realistic forms to give more design quality; (9) dots; (10) stripes; and (11) plaids. These categories were chosen because of their prevalence on the current market.

The factors which impelled these designs were classified as influences. These influences were considered as having derived from thirteen different sources: (1) modern or abstract; (2) ancient or primitive cultures; (3) Italian; (4) Persian; (5) Indian; (6) Oriental; (7) classic; (8) European in which the exact source was not definitely stated; (9) tropical; (10) recent coronation; (11) sea; (12) nature; and (13) animal. As the influence for the inspiration of the design was not always stated or clearly obvious, recordings in this group were considerably smaller than in the other six groups.

A total of 699 fabric design entries was made. This consisted of a total of 187 from the Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, 140 from Harper's Bazaar magazine, 195 from Vogue magazine, and 177 from Welek's catalog. Results from the data obtained from these four sources proved to have been varied.

Comparison of Results

Woman's Wear Daily Newspaper and Welek's Catalog. A comparison of the data compiled from the Woman's Wear Daily newspaper and Welek's fabric catalog revealed both consistencies and inconsistencies in the results (Plate I). (Only recordings were used in the comparisons in which the numbers were large enough to show any significance.)

This graph reveals that floral prints in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper were found more frequently than any other type of print (46 per cent), and that striped fabrics (35 per cent) constituted the second largest group found. In comparison floral designs (18 per cent) in Welek's catalog constituted the second largest group of designs found, and striped fabrics (23 per cent) resulted in being the largest group recorded.

Both sources revealed different ratings for the texture of all fabrics recorded. Novelty fabrics (15 per cent) rated first and smooth fabrics (11 per cent) rated second in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper. In Welek's catalog, novelty fabrics (39 per cent) rated second and smooth fabrics (52 per cent) rated first.

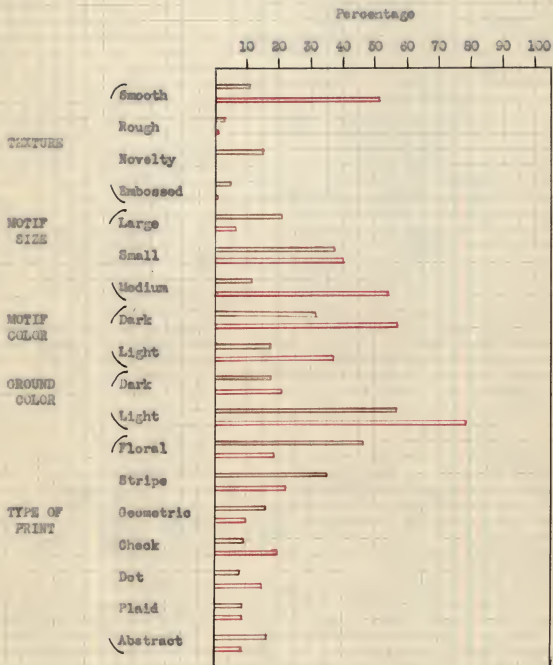
The sizes of the motif most frequently found, in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper were: small motifs (38 per cent), medium motifs (12 per cent) and large motifs (six per cent).

EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

Comparison of findings from the
Woman's Wear Daily newspaper,
and Welek's fabric catalog.

Brown line, Woman's Wear Daily newspaper.
Red line, Welek's fabric catalog.

PLATE I



Both sources revealed that light grounds and dark motifs were the two largest groups found in the most fabrics. Light grounds constituted 57 per cent in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper and 79 per cent in Welek's catalog of all fabrics used.

Woman's Wear Daily newspaper and Vogue Magazine. Woman's Wear Daily newspaper and Vogue magazine compared more favorably (Plate II). Floral designs (46 per cent) found in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper rated as the largest group, and stripes (35 per cent) as the second largest group of all recorded fabrics. Floral designs (25 per cent) found in Vogue magazine also rated as the largest group but constituting a group considerably smaller than the group found in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, and stripes (20 per cent) constituted the second largest group of all designs used. Abstract designs began to make their appearance in Vogue magazine and comprised the third largest group with a comparatively high rating of 15 per cent of all recorded fabrics.

These two sources differed in the type of textures most frequently encountered. Novelty fabrics (15 per cent) were most prevalent in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, and smooth fabrics (11 per cent) were second in prevalence. In comparison, fabrics in Vogue magazine were mostly smooth textured (26 per cent), novelty fabrics constituting seven per cent of all fabrics recorded.

The two sources compared more favorably in the sizes of motifs found in the fabrics recorded. Small motifs found in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper rated as 38 per cent, medium as 12 per cent, and large motifs as 21 per cent. Small motifs found in Vogue magazine rated 35 per cent, medium 34 per cent, and large 20 per cent.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

Comparison of findings from the
Woman's Wear Daily newspaper,
and Vogue magazine.

Brown line, Woman's Wear Daily newspaper.

Blue line, Vogue magazine.

PLATE II



Again in both sources, dark motifs and light ground were more frequently found. Dark motifs comprised 32 per cent in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, and 43 per cent in Vogue magazine. Light grounds constituted 57 per cent in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, and 74 per cent in Vogue magazine.

Woman's Wear Daily Newspaper and Harper's Bazaar Magazine. Information gathered from Woman's Wear Daily newspaper and Harper's Bazaar magazine differed considerably (Plate III). A wider variety of prints came into existence. In view of the clippings taken from Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, floral designs (46 per cent) rated as the largest group found, and stripes (35 per cent) the second largest group. Advertisements from Harper's Bazaar magazine revealed floral designs (32 per cent) also as the largest design group, and stripes (21 per cent) as the second largest group. Other design types which had become more prevalent were abstract designs (14 per cent), dots (14 per cent), geometrical designs (11 per cent), and checks (ten per cent).

Contrasted to the novelty fabrics (15 per cent) found in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper which comprised the largest group recorded, smooth fabrics (25 per cent) comprised the largest group of fabrics recorded from Harper's Bazaar magazine.

Differences again appeared between motif sizes. Motifs most frequently encountered in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper were: small motifs (38 per cent), medium motifs (12 per cent) and large motifs (21 per cent). In comparison, motifs found in Harper's Bazaar magazine were: small motifs (23 per cent), medium motifs (42 per cent), and large motifs (34 per cent).

A third difference was found in comparison of motif and ground colors. Light grounds (57 per cent) and dark motifs (32 per cent) were more frequently

EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

Comparison of findings from the
Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, and
Harper's Bazaar magazine.

Brown line, Woman's Wear Daily newspaper.
Green line, Harper's Bazaar magazine.

PLATE III



encountered in Woman's Wear Daily newspaper. Light grounds (74 per cent) and light motifs (38 per cent) were more frequent in Harper's Bazaar magazine.

Welek's Catalog and Vogue Magazine. A comparison of Welek's catalog and Vogue magazine also revealed considerable variances (Plate IV). Stripes (23 per cent) comprised the largest design group, checks (20 per cent) the second largest group, and florals (18 per cent) the third largest group in Welek's catalog. In comparison, fabrics recorded from Vogue magazine indicated floral designs (25 per cent) as comprising the largest group, stripes (20 per cent) the second largest group and abstract designs (15 per cent) the third largest group.

Both sources revealed smooth fabrics as more frequent. Fabrics in Welek's catalog revealed that 52 per cent of all fabrics recorded were smooth fabrics and 39 per cent were novelty fabrics. Advertisements in Vogue magazine indicated that 26 per cent of all fabrics recorded were smooth fabrics and seven per cent were novelty fabrics.

The two sources compared more favorably in motif sizes. Fabrics in Welek's catalog revealed medium motifs (54 per cent) as the largest group. Advertisements in Vogue magazine indicated small (35 per cent) and medium motifs (34 per cent) as the largest groups.

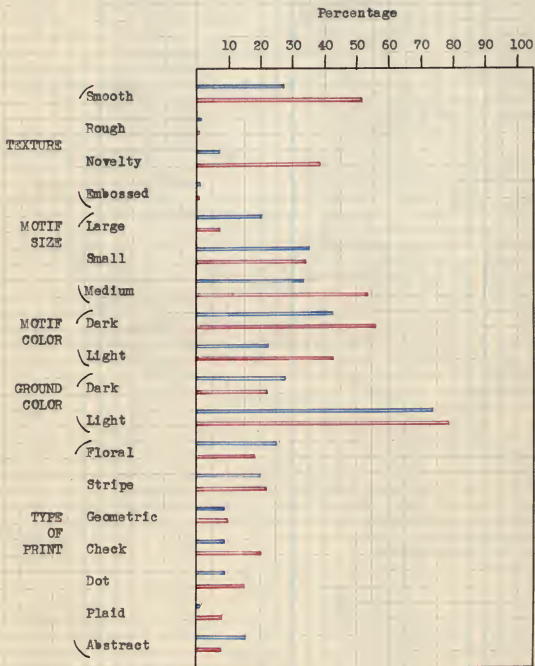
Light grounds and dark motifs were more frequently found in both sources. Fabrics in Welek's catalog revealed light grounds as 79 per cent and dark motifs as 56 per cent of all fabrics recorded. Light grounds found in advertisements from Vogue magazine were 74 per cent and dark motifs 43 per cent of all fabrics registered.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV

Comparison of findings from Welek's
fabric catalog and Vogue magazine.

Red line, Welek's fabric catalog.
Blue line, Vogue magazine.

PLATE IV



Welek's Catalog and Harper's Bazaar Magazine. Information gathered from Welek's catalog and Harper's Bazaar magazine also revealed many differences when compared (Plate V). Information from Welek's catalog placed stripes (23 per cent) in first place, checks (20 per cent) in second place, and florals (18 per cent) in third place. In comparison, advertisements in Harper's Bazaar magazine indicated stripes (21 per cent) as in second place, dots and abstract designs (14 per cent) each in third place, and florals (32 per cent) as in first place.

Fabrics in Welek's catalog revealed smooth fabrics (52 per cent) as the largest group recorded. In accordance, information from Harper's Bazaar magazine indicated that smooth fabrics (25 per cent) were also the largest group found.

Information from Welek's catalog placed medium sized motifs (54 per cent) on top and small motifs (39 per cent) as second. Harper's Bazaar magazine as a source, however, indicated that medium motifs comprise 42 per cent and large motifs comprise 34 per cent of all fabrics recorded.

Both sources revealed light grounds as the most popular. Fabrics in Welek's catalog reveal light grounds (79 per cent) and dark motifs (56 per cent) constituting the two largest groups. Advertisements found in Harper's Bazaar magazine indicate light grounds (74 per cent) and light motifs (38 per cent) as the largest groups recorded.

Harper's Bazaar Magazine and Vogue Magazine. Of the four sources used, Harper's Bazaar magazine and Vogue magazine compared the most favorably (Plate VI). Information from Harper's Bazaar magazine placed floral designs (32 per cent) first, stripes (21 per cent) second, and dots and abstract designs (14 per cent) each third of all recorded designs. Advertisements in

EXPLANATION OF PLATE V

Comparison of findings from Welek's
fabric catalog and Harper's Bazaar
magazine.

Red line, Welek's fabric catalog.

Green line, Harper's Bazaar magazine.

PLATE V



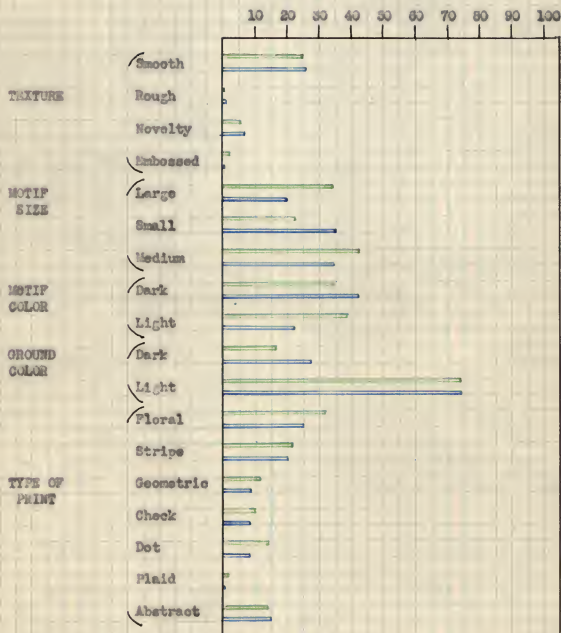
EXPLANATION OF PLATE VI

Comparison of findings from Harper's
Bazaar magazine, and Vogue magazine.

Green line, Harper's Bazaar magazine.

Blue line, Vogue magazine.

PLATE VI



Vogue magazine revealed floral designs (25 per cent) as first in volume, stripes (20 per cent) as second, and abstract designs (15 per cent) as third in volume of all fabrics registered.

Both sources agreed in the type of texture most frequently encountered. Fabrics from Harper's Bazaar magazine advertisements rated smooth fabrics (25 per cent) first and novelty fabrics (six per cent) second of fabrics used. Information from Vogue reveals smooth fabrics (26 per cent) as first, and novelty fabrics (seven per cent) as second of all fabrics recorded.

Some variance was found in the motif sizes. Fabrics in Harper's Bazaar magazine indicated that medium sized motifs (42 per cent) comprised the largest group and large motifs (34 per cent) comprised the second largest group of textile designs. In comparison, advertisements in Vogue magazine revealed that small motifs (35 per cent) were the largest group, and medium motifs (34 per cent) were the second largest group. An important fact noted was that in Vogue magazine advertisements, the small motifs and the medium motifs nearly equaled in number found.

Light grounds were more prevalent in both sources. Information from Harper's Bazaar magazine revealed light grounds as 74 per cent of all fabrics recorded. Advertisements from Vogue magazine indicated that light grounds (74 per cent) and dark motifs (43 per cent) were the two groups most frequently found.

Of the 699 entries of dress fabric designs recorded, six per cent were found to have realistic characteristics, 11 per cent were stylized, seven per cent were either printed or woven with metallic thread or pigment, and two per cent were printed with iridescent colors.

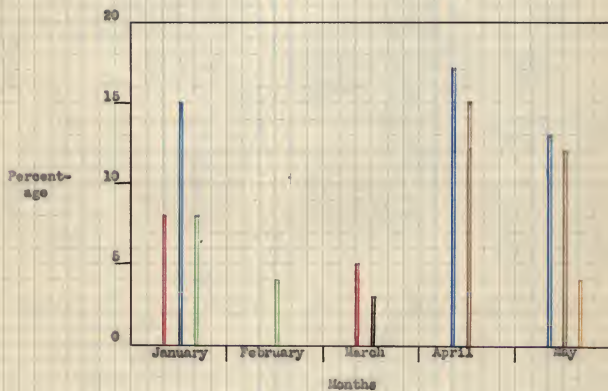
The author's check list also revealed that 30 per cent of the recorded fabric designs were used in street and afternoon dresses, 20 per cent in

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VII

Comparison of monthly peaks in design types.

Red line, abstract design.
Blue line, floral design.
Brown line, stripe design.
Green line, geometric design.
Yellow line, check design.
Black line, dot design.

PLATE VII



sports and resortwear, seven per cent in blouses, five per cent in skirts, two per cent in house dresses, and one per cent in lingerie.

Monthly Peaks in Design Types

The check list revealed that the different types of designs had peak months. Some designs seemed to keep their popularity only a month, but others revealed that they were more constantly in demand (Plate VIII).

Abstract designs seemed to be more prevalent in January, comprising eight per cent of the total fabrics recorded for that month. March showed a much smaller peak, but a peak significant enough to record. In this month abstract designs comprised five per cent of all designs recorded for the month.

Floral designs produced larger percentages than any other design type. They were also popular for longer periods of time and were found to a large extent in all four of the sources used. They appeared to be most popular in the month of April and constituted 17 per cent of all fabrics registered for the month. January produced a peak almost as great as April. In this month floral designs constituted 15 per cent of all fabrics registered for January. This was only two per cent less than the floral designs recorded for April.

The month of May revealed that floral designs appeared to be decreasing in number but they still comprised a percentage that was greater than the individual percentages of all the other design types. They comprised 13 per cent of all fabrics recorded for May.

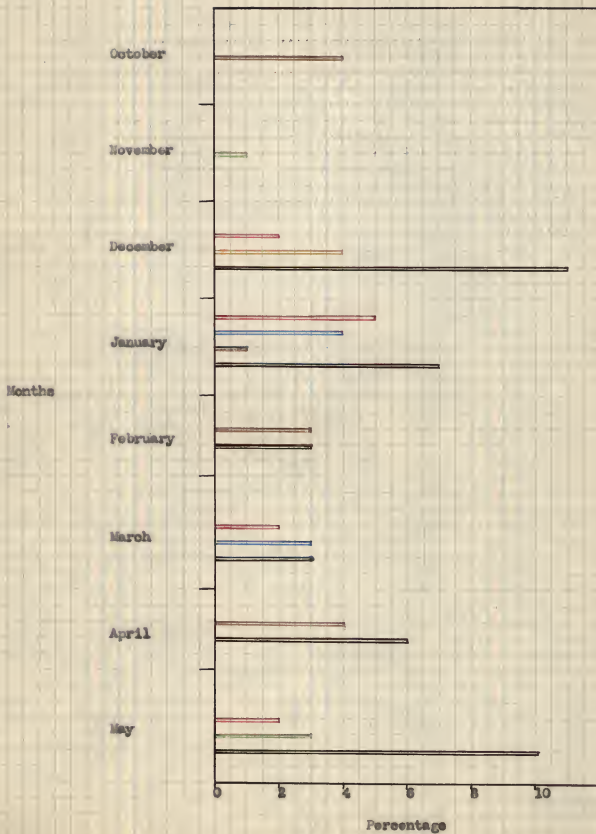
Striped fabrics had their biggest peak in April when they constituted 15 per cent of all the designs recorded. This design was the only other design which appeared to have popularity equal to the popularity of floral designs. The month of May found them still constituting a large portion of

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIII

Comparison of monthly peaks in
design inspiration.

Red line, modern influence.
Blue line, ancient or primitive influence.
Green line, European influence.
Yellow line, coronation influence.
Brown line, Persian influence.
Black line, nature influence.

PLATE VIII



the market when they comprised 12 per cent of all designs recorded.

Geometrical designs never seemed to attain the popularity that the floral and striped designs had attained. January was a peak month in which only eight per cent of all the designs recorded appeared as geometrical. By February, this design type decreased in numbers considerably. Only four per cent of all designs for this month were geometrical. Other months exhibited only a few geometrical designs.

Checked designs also seemed to share nonpopularity. The month of May revealed the highest peak, although in comparison to other design types, it was a very low peak. Checked designs constituted four per cent of all designs recorded for May. This was the only percentage significant enough to record.

Dot designs were found mostly in the month of March, when they comprised three per cent of all designs recorded for the month. This was the only month in which their appearance was great enough to be of significance.

These results reveal approximate monthly trends, but must not be stated as absolute trends since Welek's catalog could not be used in establishing these peaks. As Welek's catalog is published annually and not monthly, it had to be discarded in this particular section of the study.

The Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, Harper's Bazaar magazine, and Vogue magazine were the only sources used.

Sources of Design Inspiration

Inspirations for many of these designs can be traced to some influence. However, this is a difficult task since no statement of a definite influence is usually given to the public by the designer, and in many cases, the original inspiration has been so changed that any correlation between the

design and its inspiration is nearly unrecognizable. Subsequently, the author's record of design influences was comparatively meager.

Six types of influences were found as most prevalent in the sources used. Nature influences which were mostly floral, comprised the largest group. This group constituted 18 per cent of all influences recorded. The influence of modern design which was interpreted as designs not consisting of realistic forms, but rather of free forms such as is found in abstract painting, was the next highest group. It constituted eight per cent of all influences registered. This was ten per cent less than the largest group.

Persian inspirations consisting mostly of the Paisley design, comprised six per cent of all recorded fabrics. The influence of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II comprised three per cent, and was evident in motifs illustrating royal British themes. European influences in which the exact source was not evident but which indicated European inspiration, comprised two per cent, and sea inspirations comprised one per cent of all influences in fabric designs recorded.

Monthly Peaks in Design Inspirations

The author has tried, as with design types, to establish any possible monthly peaks in design influences (Plate IX). This was done to reveal the fact that designs are influenced by current events or even by the time of year.

The modern influence in fabric designs appeared to be fairly constant over several months, though it did not constitute a very large percentage. January was its peak month when five per cent of all designs recorded for the month were influenced by modern design. December, March, and May each recorded two per cent of all design inspirations as reflecting modern influences.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IX

Comparison of all findings from the Woman's Wear
Daily newspaper, Vogue and Harper's Bazaar maga-
zines, and Welch's fabric catalog.

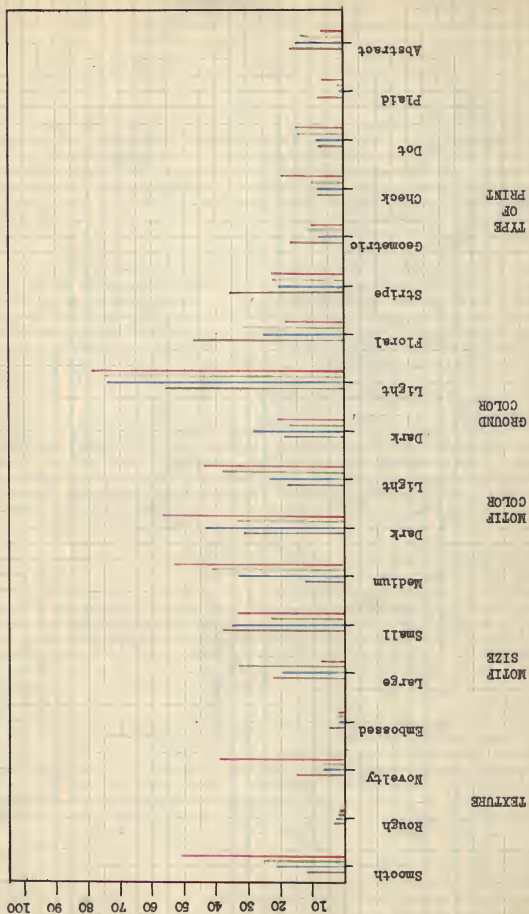
Brown line, Woman's Wear Daily newspaper.

Blue line, Vogue magazine.

Green line, Harper's Bazaar magazine.

Red line, Welch's fabric catalog.

PLATE IX



European inspirations reached a peak in May, comprising three per cent of all designs recorded for the month. In November, European influences were reflected in one per cent of all designs recorded for the month.

Influences of ancient or primitive cultures were more prevalent in January (four per cent), and March (three per cent).

The influence of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was most evident in fabric designs in December. In this month it was prevalent in four per cent of all designs recorded.

Persian influences seemed to be fairly constant over several months. In October this influence was evident in four per cent, in January one per cent, in February three per cent, and in April four per cent of all designs recorded.

Nature as an influence constituted the largest group, and was evidenced over a greater range of months. December was a peak month, when 11 per cent of all designs recorded reflected a nature influence. May was another peak month. Ten per cent of all designs recorded in this month revealed a nature influence. In January seven per cent, in February and March three per cent each, and in April six per cent of all designs recorded showed nature as an inspiration.

Several other influences revealed themselves as reflected in only one per cent of all designs recorded. These were the tropical, the Oriental, the classical, the sea, the Italian, the Indian, and the animal influences which were found mostly in the month of December.

DISCUSSION

"The North American consumer today selects decorative fabrics modified from the designs of many countries and many cultures." (1, p. preface) This

study has revealed that our present day fabric designs are not original designs, but are designs which have roots in past history. "Every designer admits, more or less candidly, that no design is really new". (11, p. 21)

History indicates that floral designs seem to have always been popular since nearly the beginning of textile decoration. Today according to the author's check list they still comprise a large portion of our textile designs. "Of all the designs that have been printed throughout the centuries, flowers consistently form half of each year's crop". (11, p. 21)

Stripes and geometric designs also have experienced general approval down through history. According to Callaway (1) throughout all of the cultural periods, geometric motifs appeared in some form, but some variation made the designs of the different periods distinctive. Simple, geometric forms were most frequently used in early cultures.

The Paisley design appears never to have lost appeal as a design motif. In an article in the Spring 1951 American Fabrics magazine (9), it was pointed out that the Paisley design with all of its inherent beauty, color, and grace, is still a challenge to a designer's ability and imaginative power.

This continual popularity of many of our fabric designs indicates that a designer does not necessarily have to search for new and original inspirations, but can produce some very successful designs from objects which have served as inspirations to designers for many years.

Current events have greatly influenced our fabric designs. One illustration is the recent coronation of Queen Elizabeth II which left a mark in our textile designs as did the coronation of King George VI in 1937. New inventions, discoveries, current happenings and so forth, are continually being experienced in our textile designs.

The evidence of monthly peaks in fabric design inspirations reveal that the time of year as well as current events, appears to exhibit an influence on the type of fabric designs produced in the different months. The author's check list revealed that the coronation influence was at a peak in December, the approximate month in which new clothing designs are being originated for spring wear. Since June was the month of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth the II, fabric designs inspired by this event would in all probability, be at a peak around the month of December. Floral designs appeared to be more prevalent in spring and summer clothing than in fall or winter clothing. Since December is the month when spring clothes begin to appear, it is not surprising that December was the month revealed by the author's check list in which designs influenced by nature were at a peak.

SUMMARY

Establishing design trends in dress fabrics is a difficult task. There are too many variable factors which enter into it. The dress fabric field is far too large and too extensive to make any accurate and detailed survey. Moreover, difficulty was encountered in selecting sources in which adequate information was available.

Nevertheless, a general picture of the type of dress fabric designs that were presently selling on the fabric market, may prove to be of invaluable help to a prospective fabric designer.

This study has indicated a fairly large market in fabric designs for street and afternoon dresses, and resortwear and sportswear. Of the 699 dress fabric designs recorded, 30 per cent of the fabrics were for street and afternoon dresses, 20 per cent for sports and resortwear, seven per cent for blouses, five per cent for skirts, two per cent for house dresses, and one per cent for lingerie.

A fairly constant trend in both floral and striped designs was evident. Three of the sources used indicated florals as the largest volume of designs and stripes as the second largest volume of designs now found on the market. These findings were: Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, florals 46 per cent of all fabrics recorded, stripes 35 per cent; Harper's Bazaar magazine, florals 32 per cent of all fabrics used, stripes 21 per cent; and Vogue magazine, florals 25 per cent of all recorded material, stripes 20 per cent. Fabrics from Melek's catalog revealed stripes (23 per cent) as the largest group, checks (20 per cent) and floral designs (18 per cent) each as the second largest group of fabrics registered.

Textures were generally smooth or of novelty weave. Fabrics and advertisements from three sources found smooth textures more frequent than either novelty, rough, or embossed textures. However, novelty textures comprised a relatively substantial group. The results were: Melek's catalog, smooth fabrics 52 per cent, novelty fabrics 39 per cent; Harper's Bazaar magazine, smooth fabrics 25 per cent, novelty fabrics eight per cent; and Vogue magazine, smooth fabrics 26 per cent, novelty fabrics seven per cent. Information from Woman's Wear Daily newspaper revealed novelty textures as 15 per cent, and smooth textures as 11 per cent of all recorded fabrics.

Motif sizes were usually small or medium. Two sources revealed small motifs as the largest group found, and two sources indicated medium motifs as the largest group encountered. The findings were: Vogue magazine, small motifs 35 per cent; Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, small motifs 38 per cent; Harper's Bazaar magazine, medium motifs 42 per cent; and Melek's catalog, medium motifs 54 per cent.

Three sources revealed that light grounds and dark motifs were the two groups most frequently found. One source revealed light grounds and light motifs as the two largest groups. These ratings were: Woman's Wear Daily newspaper, light grounds 57 per cent, dark motifs 32 per cent; Welek's catalog, light grounds 79 per cent, dark motifs 43 per cent; Vogue magazine, light grounds 74 per cent, dark motifs 43 per cent, light motifs 38 per cent. The number of dark motifs in Harper's Bazaar magazine nearly equaled the number of light motifs encountered.

The check list revealed that several of the different types of designs had peak months in which they experienced their greatest volume. Abstract designs were most prevalent in January (eight per cent of all designs) and March (five per cent). Floral designs were most popular in April (17 per cent), January (15 per cent) and May (13 per cent). Striped fabrics had their peak in April (15 per cent) and May (12 per cent). Geometrical designs had small peaks in January (eight per cent) and February (four per cent). Check designs were greatest in volume in May (four per cent), and dots were more frequent in March (three per cent).

Several of the sources of design inspirations also had peak months. The modern influence in fabric designs was fairly constant over several months. The peak months were: January (five per cent of all designs recorded), December (two per cent), March (two per cent), and May (two per cent). European inspirations reached a peak in May (three per cent of all designs used). Influences of ancient or primitive cultures were most prevalent in January (four per cent of recorded fabrics) and March (three per cent). The influence of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was at a high in December (four per cent of all designs registered). Nature influences were seen over a greater range of months. The peak months were: December

(11 per cent of all designs used), May (10 per cent), January (seven per cent), February (three per cent) and March (three per cent).

There were six types of design inspirations which were most frequently encountered. These were: (1) influences of nature 18 per cent; (2) modern influences eight per cent; (3) Persian influences six per cent; (4) the recent coronation influence three per cent; (5) European influences two per cent; and (6) sea influences one per cent of all recorded designs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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APPENDIX

WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY NEWSPAPER

DATE	APPAREL	TEXTURE	SIZE	COLOR	MOTIF	GROUND	TYPE OF PRINT	INFLUENCE
	STREET DRESS							
2/2/53	X							MODERN
2/3/53								MODERN
2/3/53								MODERN
	HOUSE DRESS							MODERN
	SKIRT							MODERN
	BLOUSE							MODERN
	SPOKE/RESORT WARE							MODERN
	LINGERIE							MODERN
	ROUGH							MODERN
	SMOOTH							MODERN
	NOVELTY							MODERN
	EMBOSSED							MODERN
	LARGE							MODERN
	SMALL							MODERN
	MEDIUM							MODERN
	DARK							MODERN
	LIGHT							MODERN
	ABSTRACT							MODERN
	REALISTIC							MODERN
	PHOTOGRAPHIC							MODERN
	FLORAL							MODERN
	METALLIC							MODERN
	STRIPES							MODERN
	STYLIZED							MODERN
	GEOMETRIC							MODERN
	IRIDESCENT							MODERN
	CHECKS							MODERN
	DOTS							MODERN
	MODERN							MODERN
	ADJACENT							MODERN
	EUROPEAN							MODERN
	CORONATION							MODERN
	TRADITIONAL							MODERN
	PERSIAN							MODERN
	INDIAN							MODERN
	ITALIAN							MODERN
	ORIENTAL							MODERN
	CLASSIC							MODERN
	SEA							MODERN
	NATURE							MODERN
	ANIMAL							MODERN

A STUDY OF THE PRESENT DAY TRENDS IN DRESS FABRIC DESIGNS

by

DOROTHY TREPAL

B. S., University of Connecticut, 1952

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Art

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1953

INTRODUCTION

Today, as a result of the vast array of textile designers and of the introduction of modern machinery which has made for an all time high in mass production, an ever increasing volume of textile designs is being produced. A general picture of the type of dress fabric designs presently selling on the fabric market, may prove to be of invaluable help to a prospective fabric designer.

The proposed plan of study was to determine present trends in fabric designs, the influences or events that affect these trends, how these trends relate to the fabric designs found in past history, and for what types of apparel the fabrics were designed.

PROCEDURE

A check list was worked out whereby present day dress fabric motif types, motif characteristics, and motif frequencies could be tabulated. Four sources of information were employed; the Woman's Wear Daily newspaper published daily in New York; the monthly and bi-monthly issues of Vogue and Harper's Bazaar magazines; and Welek's fabric catalog compiled by the Charles F. Welek's and Co. in St. Louis, Missouri. Daily or monthly check lists for each source of information were kept. From this information, monthly trends in sources of design inspirations and months in which the different motif types reached their peak in popularity, were derived. A comparison was made between these monthly trends as well as between the total results from each of the sources used. All data tabulated were converted into percentages for easier comparisons.

SUMMARY

This study has indicated a fairly large market in fabric designs for street and afternoon dresses, and resortwear and sportswear. Of the 699 dress fabric designs recorded, the largest group of fabrics was for street and afternoon dresses, next sports and resortwear, blouses, skirts, house dresses, and lingerie in this order.

A fairly constant trend in both floral and striped designs was evident. Three of the sources used indicated florals as the largest volume of designs and stripes as the second largest volume of designs now found on the market.

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Three sources revealed that light grounds and dark motifs were the two groups most frequently found. One source revealed light grounds and light motifs as the two largest groups.

The check list revealed that several of the different types of designs had peak months in which they experienced their greatest volume. Abstract designs were most prevalent in January and March. Floral designs were most popular in April, January and May. Striped fabrics had their peak in April and May. Geometrical designs had small peaks in January and February. Check designs were greatest in volume in May, and dots were more frequent in March.

There were six types of design inspirations which were most frequently encountered. These were (1) influences of nature; (2) modern influences; (3) Persian influences; (4) the recent coronation; (5) European influences; and (6) sea influences.

Several of the sources of design inspirations also had peak months. The modern influence in fabric designs was fairly constant over several months. The peak months were January, December, March and May. European inspirations reached a peak in May. Influences of ancient or primitive cultures were most prevalent in January and March. The influence of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was at a high in December. Designs inspired by nature were seen over a greater range of months. The peak months were December, May, January, February, and March.