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/ A STUDY OF THE CREATIVE METHODS OF AMERICAN DESIGNERS
AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO FASHION APPAREL /

by

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//

A PROBLEM

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE CREATIVE METHODS OF AMERICAN DESIGNERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO FASHION APPAREL

by Elaine C. Stauber

This study of a representative group of American designers of fashion apparel was initiated in the interest of interpreting the role of creative designers and their contribution to the apparel industry. An outgrowth of a larger survey of regional markets currently underway at Michigan State University, this study is an exploration of the background, sources of inspiration, methods of creation, presentation and distribution of apparel created by well known designers.

A selected group of designers was chosen from a listing of the Council of Fashion Designers of America which represents outstanding creative leaders in the fashion field. Ten designers were interviewed in their New York showrooms. The structured interview schedule was divided into four parts: the first part sought to obtain information about the designer's background, training, and experience; the second part was designed to gain insight into the role of the designer; the third part concerned the type of apparel designed and its promotion and distribution; and the final part asked for the designer's opinion of his contribution to the American fashion apparel industry.

The findings of the study indicated that each of the selected designers had spent years in the industry before achieving recognition and fame. The educational achievement level of the selected designers

ranged from high school to the completion of art school. All designers interviewed stressed the need for thorough knowledge of all aspects of the fashion business. A period of apprenticeship was considered their most valuable experience. All designers in the group hold management positions in their firms at the present time.

Each designer indicated his own methods of work leading to the creation of new designs. Although inspirational ideas mentioned were many and varied, the majority of designers considered personal experiences, their customers, and awareness of contemporary life their most important sources of inspiration.

Methods of creation varied with each designer, but all are assisted by associate designers, assistant designers, and sketchers. The designers felt it is not always necessary to know the techniques involved in construction of the sample models. Many expressed the role of the designer as a creator and interpreter of ideas. All of the designers stressed that they supervise, edit, and select the final garments to be shown in their collections.

The majority of the selected designers create apparel for both daytime and evening wear; while one designs lingerie. Each designer produces apparel within a wide price range. Dresses are priced from \$50 for a sportsdress to \$4,000 for a formal evening gown. The best selling range for most popular items is from \$50-\$299. The best selling sizes are in the 8-12 and 8-14 size ranges.

The Fall/Winter lines are the most important to the designers since they are the trend setting lines and represent the largest volume.

All the designers, except one, present collections of their seasonal lines in New York showrooms to the press and buyers. All exercise complete control over their collections, nothing is shown without the designers' final approval.

Apparel is sold to fine department and specialty stores throughout the country. Most of the designers' apparel is sold in stores in cosmopolitan areas on the East and West Coasts. The designers are well known to the fashion conscious public and, as a group, have won every major fashion award.

The designers felt they make a major contribution to the promotion of American fashion. Many of the designers in the group stressed the feeling that their greatest contribution was the creation of apparel suited to and reflecting the contemporary American woman.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The American designer has played an important part in the creation of American fashion and the development of the apparel industry in this country. The work of the designer is one of the most crucial elements in the complex of operations involving the successful production of fashionable ready-to-wear. An examination of the methods of creation, sources of inspiration, and production and distribution of fashion apparel would assist in a determination of the role of the designer and an understanding of the contribution of the designer to American fashion.

The designers of fashionable wearing apparel have always enjoyed a certain amount of prestige in the fashion world. In the early part of the twentieth century American women depended upon the French couture for fashion leadership. The native designer developed with the ready-to-wear industry in this country, but individuals were seldom acknowledged and most designers worked under firm names and firm promotions.¹

¹Bernice G. Chambers, Fashion Fundamentals (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1947), p. 159.

During World War II the United States was cut off from Paris and the influence of the French designers. American designers were forced to develop their own resources and to use materials imposed by the government. In spite of war-time restrictions, designers became more creative. As stated by Cain, "the years of the war with all their restrictions were a challenge more than a handicap to our designers."¹ Native fashion leadership developed and designers began to make truly American styles. Since the Second World War the American designer has continued to play an increasingly important part in the production of fashion apparel in the United States. The American fashion industry has grown with the work of a relatively small but important group of designers who create, produce, and publicize their own fashions.

In spite of recent acknowledgement of the creative designer, there is a need for an understanding of the role and contribution of the American designers to the development of contemporary fashion. In the interest of finding out more about the American designer, an investigation of a selected group of creative leaders was initiated.

This study, centering around the American designer, is an outgrowth of a larger survey of regional apparel markets being investigated at Michigan State University. There has been considerable

¹Gertrude Cain, The American Way of Designing (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1950), p. 9.

interest in the designer and the creative ideas which underlie the production of apparel. Golly included the designer in her study of the women's apparel industry in Dallas, Texas.¹ As part of a study of the Michigan apparel industry in progress, Kilbourne investigated the importance of the custom designer within the state.²

This present exploration is focused upon the American designer located in the center of the fashion industry, New York City.³ Such a direction supports Griffen in her research of selected regional markets in which she suggests that a "study of the American designers, their biography, style and method of design would make a contribution much needed by the industry and college alike."⁴

¹Jeanne Marie Golly, "A Study of the Present Status of the Dallas Women's Apparel Market" (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts, Michigan State University, 1966).

²Helen Margaret Kilbourne, "A Study of a Selected Group of Custom Design Firms Within the Michigan Apparel Industry" (unpublished Master's problem, Department of Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts, Michigan State University, 1966).

³Jeannette A. Jarnow and Beatrice Judelle, Inside the Fashion Business (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 75.

⁴Tira W. Griffen, "A Survey of Selected Regional Markets Producing Women's and Misses' Apparel" (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts, Michigan State University, 1949).

Review of Literature

While a considerable amount of literature concerning the apparel industry exists, little has been written about the designer as a creative leader in the production of fashion apparel.

The leading Parisian designers of the 1920's were mentioned by Nystrom in his analysis of fashion economics.¹ During the 1930's and 1940's American designers were encouraged to create for the ready-to-wear industry. Early documented books gave recognition to American designers instrumental in creating typical American fashions.² Elizabeth Hawes expressed her feelings as a creator of fashions in her publications. Hawes' first book was biographical and explained her experience and training for custom designing.³

¹Paul Nystrom, Economics of Fashion (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1928).

²The reader is referred to:
Bernice G. Chambers, Fashion Fundamentals (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1947).

M.D.C. Crawford, The Ways of Fashion (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1941).

Gertrude Warburton and Jane Maxwell, Fashion For a Living (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1939).

³Elizabeth Hawes, Fashion is Spinach (New York: Random House, 1938).

In her later books Hawes expressed a philosophy of fashion and dress reflective of her participation in the ready-to-wear industry.¹ Influenced by Flugel² and Hurlock,³ Hawes adapted ideas presented by earlier writers as a basis for an interpretation of American fashion. Hawes summarized the comprehensive qualities of fashion designing in her statement:

Dress designing is neither psychology nor sociology nor economics. It is not an art nor a craft nor a process of mass production. It is all these things.⁴

The literature focused upon the designer has been directed primarily to a young audience in search of career information. An appraisal of the opportunities in the fashion industry was discussed by Cain.⁵

¹Refer to:
Elizabeth Hawes, Men Can Take It (New York: Random House, 1939).

Elizabeth Hawes, Why is a Dress? (New York: The Viking Press, 1942).

²J. C. Flugel, The Psychology of Clothes (London: The Hogarth Press Ltd., 1950).

³Elizabeth Hurlock, Psychology of Dress (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1929).

⁴Elizabeth Hawes, Why is a Dress? (New York: The Viking Press, 1942), p. vii.

⁵Gertrude Cain, The American Way of Designing (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1950).

Short biographical sketches of the background and training methods of prominent designers was compiled in a publication by the Fashion Group.¹

Books written by designers Edith Head,² Anne Fogarty,³ and Claire McCardell⁴ show their concern for promoting good design and taste in dress. Their books present advice for the care, planning and selection of apparel by the average woman in everyday life.

Recent books by Roscho⁵ and Fairchild⁶ are aimed at the general public and discuss the designer as an interpreter of fashion. Roscho presents a humorous account of the many aspects of the garment industry in New York City and the rigorous life of the Seventh Avenue designer. Fairchild focuses upon the select group of women who influence fashion and the designers who create for them.

¹Fashion Group, Inc. (ed.), Your Future in Fashion Design (New York: Richards Rosen Press, Inc., 1966).

²Edith Head, How To Dress for Success (New York: Random House, 1965).

³Anne Fogarty, Wife Dressing (New York: Julian Messner Inc., 1959).

⁴Claire McCardell, What Shall I Wear? (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956).

⁵Bernard Roshco, The Rag Race (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., Inc., 1963).

⁶John Fairchild, The Fashionable Savages (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965).

The most current sources of fashion information are found in magazines and newspapers. However, the emphasis is upon reporting and publishing the latest styles of dress. The high-fashion magazines, Vogue and Harper's Bazaar, feature expensive and adventurous fashions, but little information is written about their creators. Fashion articles which appear in the women's pages of newspapers usually give the reader some insight into the life and activities of the designer. The most complete source of fashion news is found in Women's Wear Daily, a trade newspaper of the fashion industry. Published five times a week, the paper wields great influence and seeks to promote designers, as well as their fashions. Interviews are published which give the reader insight into the importance of the American designer to the fashion apparel industry.

Jarnow and Judelle¹ realized the need for a publication offering the reader a practical view of the people involved in the fashion business. Articles from magazines, newspapers, and speeches given before the fashion press by business leaders were compiled in a book of selected readings. This comprehensive survey of the fashion industry recognizes the designer as a major force in the production of American fashion apparel.

¹Jeannette A. Jarnow and Beatrice Judelle, Inside the Fashion Business (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965).

Brockman¹ focused her discussion upon the designer as the initiator of the creative process of design. Her presentation of individual creators of fashionable dress was limited to the French couturiers.

An initial study of the style changes of French and American designers was discussed in broad biographical terms by Murray. This study, completed in 1949, pointed to the need for further investigation into the role of the designer.² Griffen, in her survey of regional apparel markets completed in the same year, also discussed the possible value of a special study of American designers.³

Studies of the apparel industry have been completed, but concentrated principally upon the development and status of regional markets throughout the United States and contained little information about the designer. The fashion apparel industry in Alabama was researched by Bourne.⁴ Goodman's study of the California

¹Helen Brockman, The Theory of Fashion Design (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), pp. 1-8.

²Maria Calabrese Murray, "The Development of French and American Designers Affecting Costume of American Women of the 20th Century" (unpublished Master's thesis, College of Home Economics, Syracuse University, 1949).

³Griffen, op. cit., p. 240.

⁴Judith Mayton Bourne, "An Analysis of the Development of the Fashion Industry in Alabama, 1949-1962" (unpublished Master's thesis, Auburn University, 1962).

market discussed apparel and facilities in that area.¹ Hersher explored the Florida industry and formulated general conclusions about the present status and possibilities for future development.²

Recent researchers of the regional markets have realized the importance of the designer in the production of apparel. Golly investigated the status of the Dallas market and included the contribution of the designer to Southwestern fashions.³ Kilbourne discussed the role of the custom designer in the state of Michigan.⁴ Such studies emphasize the importance and contribution of the designer to the development of the regional apparel markets.

Definition of Terms

In the fashion world many terms commonly used have specific definitions when applied to apparel. This study centers around the creator of fashion, the designer. The designer as defined by Picken, "is one who designs a line of apparel by means of sketches or in material or both."⁵ In this study the term designer also designates

¹Charles S. Goodman, "The Location of Fashion Industries with Special Reference to the California Apparel Market", Michigan Business Studies, Vol. X, No. 2 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Press, 1959).

²Barry Jay Hersker, "The Women's Apparel Manufacturing Industry in Florida" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, the University of Florida, 1954).

³Golly, op. cit., pp. 35-39.

⁴Kilbourne, op. cit., pp. 28-33.

⁵Mary Brooks Picken, The Fashion Dictionary (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1957), p. 96.

the person who selects and edits the styles which the firm produces.

The designer usually works for a house or dress house. The term house designates the firm or organization making or distributing a line of wearing apparel.¹ The term dress house refers to a producer or distributor of women's apparel for daytime and/or evening wear. Terms used to designate the designer and dress house in the French fashion field are the following: couture is a collective term describing the French dressmaking houses.² A couturier or couturiere is one who directs these establishments.³

Many definitions of fashion have been formulated in accordance with needs of interpretation and usage. One interpretation of fashion is that:

Fashion is the characteristic expression or taste in clothing which is accepted and shared by the majority of people at a particular time and is subject to ceaseless change within the bounds of custom over a period of time.⁴

Fashion is applied to apparel through the use of the term fashion apparel which refers specifically to apparel in which the fashion

¹Ibid., p. 180.

²Ibid., p. 85.

³Ibid.

⁴Elinor Roth Nugent, "The Relationship of Fashion in Women's Dress to Selected Aspects of Social Change from 1850-1950" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Baton Rouge, 1962), p. 17.

element is a predominate characteristic and in which change is so rapid that it is imperative to keep up with these fashion changes. Apparel itself refers to clothing and other manufactured articles produced for wearing.

Types of production within the fashion industry vary sufficiently that specific terms are used for identification. The terms apparel industry and garment industry include the complex of enterprises concerned with the design, production, and distribution of wearing apparel. When the fashion element is a predominate characteristic, these enterprises are referred to as the fashion industry or fashion business. Mass-production refers to the production of goods in quantity, many at a time, as opposed to one at a time.¹ The term ready-to-wear refers to apparel which is mass produced as opposed to apparel made to a customer's special order.² Seventh Avenue is the location of the center of the garment industry in New York City, but is also used as a synonym for America's ready-to-wear industry.³ In addition, apparel is created on an individual basis. Custom apparel is created for a limited number of persons. The custom designer designs and creates for an individual client either through measurements or by consultation and fitting.

The creations of the designers are designated in various ways.

¹Jarnow and Judelle, op. cit., p. 264.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

In the apparel industry, style refers to type of silhouette, fabric, color or decoration of a garment which distinguishes it from another type of garment. In this study style also refers to fashion features which distinguish an article or group of apparel items. The term line is a collection of styles shown by an apparel producer,¹ while a collection refers to all apparel exhibited at any one fashion showing.²

In this study apparel is loosely classified into categories indicating day or evening wear. General daytime wear includes dresses, suits, coats and ensembles. This category includes sportswear, a more casual style of skirts, dresses, suits, coats, and ensembles. Evening wear designates clothes for "after five" wear. In this study this type of apparel is considered to be dresses and ensembles, worn for informal or formal evening occasions. Some collections include lingerie items such as slips, nightgowns, pajamas, robes and ensembles.

Importance of the Study

The American designer has been recognized as an important factor in the development of the apparel industry, but little is known about the personal expression and influence of the designer

¹Ibid.

²Picken, op. cit., p. 76.

upon American fashion. This study proposes to explore the sources of inspiration, the methods of creation, and the contribution of American designers to American fashion.

It is hoped this investigation will gather and present information which will be helpful in understanding the role of the designer in American fashion. Also, this study could be utilized as a basis for future investigations of the creativity of the producers of fashionable dress.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The designer was considered to be the best source of information concerning the creation of American fashions. Representative designers of prominence in the American fashion field could give reliable information regarding the work of the designer of fashionable apparel. The designers could also give personal impressions and expressions of opinion which would give some insight into the role of the designer. In this way some determination of the influence of the designer could be made.

Selection of the Method

After careful analysis of procurement devices used by researchers of similar studies, the direct interview technique was chosen for this descriptive research. According to Selitz, the direct interview offers greater flexibility and provides the interviewer a better opportunity to maintain complete control of the content areas of the interview by setting up the framework and redirecting the interviewee's responses to keep them within the desired structure.¹

¹Claire Selitz et al., Research Methods in Social Relations (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 242.

Studies conducted by direct interview have an additional advantage over studies conducted by mailed questionnaires in that many people respond more to personal interest and are able to cooperate in a study limited to verbal responses.¹

Development of the Instrument

In developing the instrument, consideration was given to various methods of approaching those selected for interviews. The utilization of fixed-alternative questions as recommended by Golly in a similar study was considered. Since this present research involves a small number in the selected group, this type of question was abandoned in favor of open-ended questions. Such questions could be designed to permit a free response from the subject. As stated by Selltitz, "the distinguishing characteristic of open-ended questions is that they merely raise an issue but do not provide or suggest any structure for the respondents reply; the respondent is given the opportunity to answer in his own terms and in his own frame of reference."²

In an attempt to increase reliability the writer conducted standardized interviews with a fixed set of predetermined questions. Similar circumstances were maintained as much as possible and rapport

¹Ibid., p. 241.

²Ibid., p. 257.

was established by the use of non-directive probes. The interviewer made a verbatim record of the replies.

The interview schedule was divided into four parts: the first part sought to obtain information about the designer's background, training, and experience; the second part was designed to gain insight into the role of the designer within the firm; the third part concerned the type of apparel designed and its promotion and distribution; the final part asked for the designer's opinion of his contribution to the American fashion apparel industry (see Appendix A).

The tentative interview schedule was developed and then submitted to colleagues for criticism. Suggestions were utilized and refinements were made in the instrument to convey the intended interpretations.

To check the validity of the instrument and to gain experience in its administration, the interview schedule was pretested by two prominent designers in New York City. As a result, some of the questions were simplified to allow for greater clarity and logical flow of information. The interviewer formulated a standard method of procedure which was later employed when conducting the interviews.

Selection of the Representative Designers

Since the majority of America's outstanding fashion designers work in New York City, the selected group was drawn from a listing of prominent American apparel designers located there.¹

The researcher wrote for appointments and interviewed two eminent fashion authorities, Eleanor McMillen and Eleanor Lambert, for a suggested list of American ready-to-wear designers (see Appendix B). McMillen is the executive director of the Fashion Group, a non-commercial organization of women active in the many branches of the fashion business.² Lambert is a fashion publicist, and founder of the Couture Group, a New York trade association of established dress manufacturers.³

It was recommended that the selected group be drawn from the Council of Fashion Designers of America. (see Appendix C). The council was organized to work as a group and limits its membership strictly to individuals known for their creative force within a fashion firm. Its charter states as its purpose; "to further the position of fashion design as a vital aspect of American culture, to establish and maintain a code of ethics and practices in professional, public and trade relations, and to promote and improve

¹Jarnow and Judelle, op. cit., p. 56.

²Ibid., p. 263.

³Ibid., p. 663.

public understanding and appreciation of the fashion arts through group leadership in quality and taste."¹ The council represents the designers most influential in present-day fashion.

Fifteen designers of women's apparel were selected from the council members. Ten designers were designated as first choices; and five as alternate possibilities. Letters requesting personal interviews were sent to the chosen designers (see Appendix D). Two of this group were not available for interviews; so two designers from the alternate group were substituted.

The ten designers who granted appointments were interviewed by the writer at their New York firms (see Appendix E). Questions were asked and responses recorded in either showrooms or offices designated by the designers.

Method of Presentation

For the purposes of this study, the information gained from the interviewee's replies has been summarized and presented in descriptive form. Some of the responses, especially those to the open-ended questions, were analyzed in relation to the significance of the work of the designer. This compilation of information from the designers forms a basis for an estimation of the contribution of the American designer to contemporary fashion.

¹Eleanor Lambert, Council of Fashion Designers of America, Press Release (New York: By the Author, 1965).

CHAPTER III

Training, Experience and Accomplishments of American Designers

American designers are creative individuals who come into the fashion field from wide and varied backgrounds. It has been noted that designers may have received training in areas ranging from mathematics, engineering and architecture to the fine arts. The selected group of designers interviewed for this study, however, did not show as much diversity in their educational and experiential backgrounds as might have been expected.

Education and Training

The educational achievement level of the selected designers ranged from high school to the completion of art school. Eight of the group either attended or graduated from an art school. One attended a liberal arts college and one had no formal training beyond high school. The majority of the designers had a strong art background. The major program emphasis in art school was not dressmaking, but a variety of courses including fashion illustration, commercial illustration, design, sketching and the fine arts. Four designers entered art school with ambitions of becoming designers and were able to fulfill their aspirations. Two interviewees studied stage design,

while two others concentrated on commercial and fashion illustration. The majority of this group worked part-time during this period to gain practical experience in designing. Different types of professional courses were taken by the designers who in many cases were trained in more than one area. The professional training courses taken by the designers are shown below:

Professional Training Courses:

	<u>Number of Designers</u>
Sketching	8
Fashion illustration	3
Draping	2
Stage design	2
Commercial illustration	1
Design	1
Drawing	1
History of costume	1

All of the designers who attended art school took sketching courses which were basic for all areas of interest. When asked which courses were the most valuable, the members of the group agreed that their skill developed in courses in sketching was their greatest asset in locating a first job. They indicated a continued use of their training in sketching.

Experience

Each of the selected designers indicated that they had spent years in the industry before achieving recognition and fame. The total years of experience ranged from 25 to 42. All of the selected group members agreed that their work experience was essential to their future achievements.

Of the four interviewees who aspired to becoming designers at the time of their enrollment in art school, two started as sketchers, and two started as assistant designers for women's apparel manufacturers. One who started as an assistant designer trained and continued as the designer in her family's apparel business. Others worked in related fashion fields such as commercial and fashion illustration before becoming designers. Two designers started their careers as saleswomen for women's apparel manufacturers; such beginning positions gave opportunities for observation of designers at work. Beginners, who were able to offer suggestions and improvements in designs, were recognized by management as having sufficient creativity and skill to be promoted to positions as designers.

The majority of designers trained in New York City and worked for well known apparel manufacturers. Each considered a period of apprenticeship their most valuable experience. One designer trained in her family's tailor shop in Paris where she learned all methods and techniques for constructing apparel. Later in America, a period of apprenticeship with a prominent designer preceded her own business venture.

One interviewee trained in Hollywood as a stage designer, and later moved to New York City to work as a sketcher and designer in a well known dress house. The designers took advantage of various job experiences and had no planned approach to their careers. Every designer agreed that a complete apprenticeship was needed to perfect technical training. All stressed the need for thorough knowledge of all aspects of the fashion business. In addition to creative work, designers felt a necessity for observation and study of the production, promotion and distribution of apparel; since all these areas contribute to eventual success.

The importance of the designer is exemplified by the fact that all of the members of the selected group hold management positions in their firms. Five are owners of their firms, four are partners, and one is a vice-president. Aside from the owners, all the interviewees started as designers and were promoted into high management positions.

The designers included in this study create garments for different types of apparel manufacturers. Most of the designers work for dress houses specializing in daytime and evening wear. One designs sportswear and one creates designs for lingerie. A new approach to designing was established by an ex-designer of junior dresses when she recently established a design studio. Under her own name she designs an apparel line, and acts as a design consultant

to commercial and industrial accounts. Her accounts are diverse and include a variety of products such as toys and games, linens, paper products, and household gadgets. These accounts are handled on either a part-time or free-lance basis. Some members of the group had designed for other firms, but had found it too time consuming. Of the three designers that have outside affiliations, two do free-lance designing occasionally. One designer creates children's clothes and one designer designs lingerie and foundation garments. The other designer works part-time for different firms which attach the designer's name to a variety of items such as children's clothes, lingerie, accessories, raincoats, furs, and men's fashions.

As designers receive recognition their names are used to publicize apparel. One way to perceive the position and importance of designers is by the use of names on apparel labels. Designers' names are usually included with the firm name if both are equally well known. The following names appear on garment labels:

Use of Names on Labels:

	<u>Number of Designers</u>
Firm name and designer name	4
Designer and firm name the same	3
Designer's name	2
Firm name	1
Total	<hr/> 10

All except one of the selected group have their own names on the labels of the garments they design. In two cases, the firms preferred to publicize the designer's name alone. Only one designer's name did not appear on the label. However, this was by choice since the designer owned the firm and preferred to use the firm's name.

In the apparel industry there are numerous ways in which creative talent is recognized. Membership in professional organizations is an acknowledgment of participation in the fashion field. Fashion awards are granted to designers who are outstanding and contribute ideas and stimulus to fashion.

All of the selected group are members of the most esteemed professional organization, the Council of Fashion Designers of America. This is a national honorary society of creative leaders in the various fashion fields. Membership in the organization is limited to individuals known for their creative force within a fashion firm. All of the women interviewed belong to the Fashion Group. This is a women's organization established in 1931 which now has about three thousand members. Requirements are rigid, three years actual experience in some phase of the fashion field is requisite, and there must be a record of actual achievement.

Fashion awards are granted by firms and organizations interested in promoting fashion and recognizing specific individual achievements. The most prized award is the Coty Fashion Critics'

Award. This award was established in 1943 by Coty, Inc., the cosmetic manufacturer. A selected group of New York fashion editors and writers select designers whose work in the preceeding year has been the most distinctive and original. The oldest award is the American Design Award which was started in 1937 and sponsored by Lord and Taylor, the New York department store. Four awards were presented annually to four American citizens who made notable contributions to fashion. The awards were discontinued in the late 1940's. The Neiman Marcus Award is presented annually by the Texas specialty store to persons who have made an outstanding contribution to the fashion field.

Of the group selected for study, four designers received the Neiman Marcus Award, three the Coty Fashion Critics' Award, and two designers were awarded a place in the Coty Hall of Fame. Eligibility for the Hall of Fame is dependant upon receiving the Coty Award three times. This honor is achieved by a very limited number of creators of original fashions. The other fashion awards are distributed among the group as follows:

Fashion Awards:

	<u>Number of Designers</u>
Neiman Marcus Award	4
Coty Fashion Critics' Award	3
International Silk Venice Award	3
National Cotton Council Award	3
American Designer Award	2
Camellia Award (Loveman's Department Store)	2
Coty Hall of Fame Award	2
Designer of the Year Award (Fashion Shipping Manufacturer's Guild)	1
Glamour Magazine Award	1
Filene's Department Store Award	1
Harper's Bazaar Medallion of Recognition	1
Mademoiselle Magazine Award	1
NBC Today Show Fashion Award	1
Parson's School of Design Medal of Achievement	1
Philadelphia Crystal Ball Award	1
Philadelphia Fashion Group's Award	1
Sports Illustrated Magazine Award	1

Members of this group of designers have won every major fashion award. Many have received additional awards; but those listed above were mentioned by the designers when interviewed, and are held in highest esteem by the group.

Summary

The education, training and experience of the designers selected for study indicate there are variations in some background factors but similarities in experiences leading to their success as recognized designers.

The personal experiences which were indicated as being significant by the interviewees are summarized in Table I so that the characteristics of each designer's background can be examined.

Table 2 presents items significant in an appraisal of the position of the designers selected for study. These designers represent an experienced group presently in high management positions which are the result of success and achievements recognized by awards in the fashion field.

TABLE 1.--Type, courses and years in school and type and years of experience of individual designers

Designer	School		Experience	
	Type	Courses	Years	Total Years
I	Art	Stage design Sketching	2	30
II	Art	Fashion illustration Sketching	4	42
III	Art	Sketching	1	35
IV	Art	Fine art Sketching Fashion illustration	2	35
V	Art	Draping Sketching Commercial illustration	6 mo.	30
VI	Art	Sketching Drawing	2	30
VII	35
VIII	Art	Architecture Set design Sketching	2	35
IX	Art	Fashion illustration Sketching Design and draping History of costume	1	25
X	Liberal Arts College	Liberal arts	2	30

TABLE 2.--Type and years in present position, other affiliations, labels and fashion awards of individual designers

Designer	Present Position		Other Affiliations		Labels				Fashion Awards
	Type	Years			Designer name	Firm name	Both names	Designer-Firm name	
I	Designer/vice-president (dress house)	5		...			X		X
II	Designer/owner (dress house)	7		...				X	X
III	Designer/partner (sportswear house)	20		...				X	X
IV	Designer/owner (lingerie firm)	35		Children's lingerie		X			X
V	Designer/partner (dress house)	5		Children's, men's fashions Furs, perfume, accessories			X		X
VI	Designer/partner (dress house)	28		...			X		X
VII	Designer/owner (dress house)	25		Accessories Lingerie, foundation garments				X	X
VIII	Designer/partner (dress house)	10		...			X		X
IX	Designer/owner (design studio)	2		Commercial and industrial accounts				X	X
X	Owner/designer (dress house)	9		...	X				X

CHAPTER IV

INSPIRATIONAL SOURCES AND CREATION OF FASHION APPAREL

American designers are the creators, innovators and interpretators of American fashions. Many different methods of work are used by designers and inspirations come from a variety of sources. The designer is responsible for an interpretation of fashion and detection of fashion trends which will be reflected in both present and future apparel.

Sources of Designs

Each designer has his own methods of work leading to the creation of new designs. Sources of inspiration, design influences, and type of apparel vary as the designer's creations respond to the demands of his customers.

When asked questions concerning sources of design ideas, (see question 13, Appendix A) interviewees indicated the inspirational sources which were most helpful. The sources used most frequently were:

Sources of Inspiration:

	<u>Number of Responses</u>
Instinctive creativity as reflective of personal experience	6
Customers	5
Awareness and observation of contemporary life	4
Travel	3
Fabric	2
Theater, movies, plays	1

Although inspirational ideas were many and varied, the majority of designers considered personal experience, customers, and an awareness of contemporary life the most important sources of inspiration used as a basis for designs.

When each of the designers was asked to state the greatest influence upon his designs, a designation of one influence was difficult. The most important influences mentioned were:

Greatest Influence Upon Designs:

	<u>Number of Designers</u>
Customers	3
Fabric	2
Travel	1
Design, line, cut	1
Uncluttered movement in relation to activities	1
No specific influence	2
Total	<hr/> 10

Two designers could not designate the greatest influence upon their work, but for the remainder of the group, customers and fabrics were mentioned as having the greatest influence upon their designs.

It is interesting to note that the members of the sample did not mention European couture collections and designs as sources of inspiration. However, five of the group regularly attended the European couture seasonal showings in Paris. Recently designers have also attended showings in Italy and Britain. Of those designers who did not attend the European collections, two expressed interest, but were opposed to the high entrance fee. Currently the entrance fees for viewing the opening showings range from one to four thousand dollars; however, purchases are deducted from this amount. Most of the group felt that it was no longer necessary to attend the European collections since rapid communication made fashions and inspirational materials immediately accessible. Two in the group emphatically declared that they had never attended European showings and never would. Of those designers who attended the openings, all purchased models to use as a basis for adaptation. The selected designers expressed the opinion that the European designers were less important than they used to be. Most of the selected designers agreed that American designers have surpassed the Europeans and do not depend upon Parisian collections for inspirational material.

Designers mentioned that their perception of trends reflected their own sources of inspiration. Personal experiences such as travel, viewing films, reading and observation of European collections were especially important. Some designers emphasized the factors of awareness and a "keen eye". Others felt that studying fabrics was important, and some expressed the idea that design trends just "hit you". One designer was inspired by the acceptance of new designs by fashion leaders.

When asked in what way trends affect their own designs, (see question 12, Appendix A) respondents conveyed their individual interpretation of trends. The designers made statements such as: "I constantly change designs to move with trends," "not particularly sensitive to new trends, has to look right," "have to feel them myself, then interpret," and "adapt trends to my own needs." The dominant reaction seemed to be that designers had individualistic ways of detecting and responding to trends. One designer stated, "I stay in fashion, not ahead;" another said, "trends do not dynamically affect my designs, I am not a faddist." Designers expressed a feeling for trends rather than an interpretation which could be specified or put into words.

Methods of Creation

The techniques by which designers work to develop their collection differ. Of the designers included in this study, two executed the complete garment, while the others had assistance.

Eight of the designers indicated sketching as a method of initiating their designs. Six draped in fabric and three draped in muslin. Only one designer used the flat pattern technique.

The designer maintains a position as head of the design room where the sample models are created. The number of employees in the design room vary, depending upon the size of the collection and the amount of assistance the head designer requires. The greatest number of assistants are classified as sample hands who work with the designer and are responsible for cutting and constructing the sample garments. The majority of the selected designers are assisted by associate designers, assistant designers, or sketchers. Young graduates of design schools usually start as sketchers, and with experience work up to designer positions. Of the selected group, only two designers completely constructed and executed their design ideas with the aid of sample hands. In some firms the sample hands cut and make sample garments. In others, these employees are supplemented by cutters, tailors, drapers, fitters, and hand finishers. Pattern makers usually draft the sample patterns.

Most of the workers in the design rooms are European or of European descent. Many are of French, Italian, Russian or Czechoslovakian background and trained to excel in technical skill. In many cases the workers specialize in techniques used for either tailored coats and suits or the construction of dresses.

Some designers work closely with their staff, while others do not. Most designers work through rough sketches which are given to their assistants to develop. One considers herself an editor of design ideas. She states, "I verbally convey my ideas - my designers lay out the plans and get the layouts and muslins ready."

Many designers expressed the opinion that the role of the designer is that of a creator and interpreter of ideas. It is not always necessary for the designer to know and execute the techniques involved in making sample models; these are the responsibility of the design room staff. The designers feel there is not enough time to develop and execute their ideas themselves, in view of the many other activities requiring attention when supervising a business.

Sample models are edited carefully by head designers before being sent to production departments. Only one designer in the selected group, the highest-priced in the United States, has a combined factory and sample room operation. The other firms all manufacture apparel in factories located away from the city. The designers supervise production by editing and selecting the final garments to be shown in their collections. Some numbers may be dropped, and others may be reworked to better portray the original idea the designer wished to create.

Summary

The designers in this study indicated their individual sources of inspiration and influence upon their designs. Most important were the personal expressions of the designers themselves, and the customers for whom they design.

Methods of creation varied with the designers, but each firm employed a competent staff to execute the ideas of the head designer. Many designers functioned as creators and interpreters of ideas. Being responsible for the collections, the designers supervise, select, and edit the apparel lines which are produced.

CHAPTER V

Types, Presentation, and Distribution of Fashion Apparel

American designers create a variety of apparel types in price and size ranges suited to their customers who reflect the ideal of the contemporary American woman. Seasonal presentations are featured by the designers as part of the distribution and promotion of individualistic designs. Most designers consider their work a definite contribution to the promotion and development of the American fashion apparel industry.

Apparel Types

Types of apparel are divided into three major categories titled: General Daytime Apparel, Evening Apparel, and Lingerie, as shown in Table 3. General daytime apparel refers to day wear and includes dresses, ensembles, suits, and coats. In this study, sportswear is included in this category and refers to more casual forms of dress. Coats, suits, ensembles, dresses, and skirts suitable for informal wear are grouped as sportswear. Evening apparel is suitable for wearing after five o'clock, for informal or formal occasions. Informal wear refers to short garments worn for dinner and cocktails; formal wear is for formal occasions. In this study

lingerie refers to nightwear such as nightgowns, pajamas, robes and ensembles. The types of apparel created by individual designers are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3.--Types of apparel created by individual designers

Apparel Types	Individual Designers									
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
I. General Daytime										
A. Dresses	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
B. Suits	X	X			X	X	X			
C. Coats		X			X	X	X			
D. Ensembles	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
E. Sportswear										
1. Dresses			X						X	
2. Suits									X	
3. Coats									X	
4. Ensembles			X						X	
5. Skirts			X							
II. Evening										
A. Informal										
1. Cocktail and dinner dress	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
2. Cocktail and dinner ensemble	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
B. Formal										
1. Evening dresses	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
2. Evening ensembles	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
III. Lingerie										
A. Nightgowns				X						
B. Pajamas				X						
C. Robes				X						
D. Ensembles				X						

The majority of designers create designs for both general daytime and evening apparel. Dresses and ensembles were mentioned most frequently as specific garments made for daytime wear. Sportswear, considered within the general daytime category, was the specialty of two designers; dresses were most often mentioned as making up the sportswear line. Cocktail and dinner dresses were mentioned most frequently as being designed for evening wear. The most important lingerie items were nightgowns, followed by ensembles and robes.

Retail Price Range

Each designer produced apparel within a wide price range but could separate out a limited price range for best selling items. Dresses were the best selling items for nine of the selected group, but one designer mentioned nightgowns as most popular in sales. Dresses were priced from \$50 for a sportsdress to \$4,000 for a formal evening gown. The limited price range mentioned was from \$50-\$99 to \$750-\$799 for dresses in the general daytime category. Individual designers indicated their price range and the best selling price range for their most popular types of apparel in Table 4.

TABLE 4.--Most popular types of apparel, price range of garment and best selling price range of garment by individual designers

Individual Designers	Types of Apparel	Price Range	Best Selling Price Range
I	Dress	\$100-\$ 300	\$100-\$149
II	Dress	\$325-\$4,000	\$750-\$799
III	Dress	\$ 50-\$ 75	\$ 50-\$ 60
IV	Nightgown	\$ 25-\$ 65	\$ 25-\$ 49
V	Dress	\$100-\$2,000	\$200-\$249
VI	Dress	\$195-\$ 700	\$200-\$249
VII	Dress	\$200-\$3,000	\$250-\$299
VIII	Dress	\$ 50-\$ 165	\$ 50-\$ 99
IX	Dress	\$ 70-\$ 195	\$100-\$149
X	Dress	\$100-\$1,200	\$250-\$299

Considering the best selling price range for the most popular items of all designers; the majority mentioned best selling prices between \$50 and \$299. The complete range indicates a spread from \$25 to \$799. The following shows the range given by all of the designers:

Best Selling Price Range
For Most Popular Apparel Items:

	<u>Number of Designers</u>
\$ 25-\$ 49	1
\$ 50-\$ 99	2
\$100-\$149	2
\$150-\$199	...
\$200-\$249	2
\$250-\$299	2
\$300-\$349	...
\$350-\$399	...
\$400-\$449	...
\$450-\$499	...
\$500-\$549	...
\$550-\$599	...
\$600-\$649	...
\$650-\$699	...
\$700-\$749	...
\$750-\$799	1
Total	<u>10</u>

Size Range

The size range produced by the selected designers includes Misses sizes four to 20. However, only one designer makes a size four, and the two designers who make up to a size 20 stated that they made very few numbers in sizes above 16. Individual designers indicated their size range and best selling sizes of their most popular types of apparel in Table 5.

TABLE 5.--Most popular types of apparel, size range, and best selling size range by individual designers

Individual Designers	Types of Apparel	Size Range	Best Selling Size Range
I	Dress	6-16	8-14
II	Dress	6-16	8-12
III	Dress	6-18	8-14
IV	Nightgown	pte./sm./md.	pte./sm.
V	Dress	6-16	8-10
VI	Dress	6-20	8-14
VII	Dress	6-20	8-14
VIII	Dress	4-14	6-10
IX	Dress	6-16	8-12
X	Dress	6-14	8-12

The best selling ranges illustrate the trend toward concentration in the 8-12 and 8-14 size ranges. Designers stated that their average customers were wearing smaller sizes since current emphasis is placed upon slimmer figures.

Customers

The designers were asked about the ideal woman for whom their designs are created. In response to the question, "what type of person do you design for?" (question 9c, Appendix A) each of the designers could describe a definite type of woman. As a group, they design for women who are youthful, not necessarily in age, but in attitude and approach to life. Contemporary women who lead busy, interesting lives and like to travel are the designer's best customers. A generally discerning individual who is cultured and prosperous but has other interests besides clothes is a favorite type. The answers included many interesting statements such as: "A young sophisticated matron who already has her first child;" and "An understated, sensible woman, helping her husband advance in his career." More specific replies were also given, for example, "I design for my three ideal customers: tawny blondes of average height, married, have children, travel, like or live in both town and country."

Presentation of Apparel

Seasonal Lines

Traditionally the producers of women's apparel have four basic seasonal lines: Fall/Winter, Holiday/Resort, Spring and Summer. Although the production of apparel is geared to these lines, the apparel designed is not limited to these seasonal appearances. One designer creates a transitional line to be shown in place of a Summer

line. This represents a showing in between the basic seasonal lines and a departure from the basic lines. The schedule of seasonal lines listed for the individual designers is presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6.--Seasonal lines presented by individual designers

Designer	Seasonal Lines			
	Fall/Winter	Resort/Holiday	Spring	Summer
I	X	X	X	X
II	X		X	
III	X	X	X	X
IV	X		X	
V	X	X	X	X
VI	X	X	X	X
VII	X	X	X	X
VIII	X	X	X	
IX	X	X	X	
X	X		X	X

The findings reported in Table 4 indicate that all of the selected group of designers showed both Fall/Winter and Spring lines. Seven of the selected group mentioned that the Fall/Winter line is the most important to their firms, followed by the Spring line. The group agreed that the Fall/Winter line is most important because of its volume. Others mentioned the emphasis during this season on social life which demanded a more extensive wardrobe; others attributed volume to the length of the season. The Fall/Winter line

is considered by all designers to be the most trend-setting line. The lingerie designer felt that her Fall/Winter and Spring lines were equal in volume. A designer who is well known for her summer dresses considered her Spring and Summer lines the most important in volume.

All of the selected group agreed that there is a trend away from seasonal fabrics due to increased travel and mobile living. Many of the designers have found that versatile travel and resort clothes are becoming more important in their lines.

Designers' Collections

Seasonal lines, when they are exhibited by the designer at a fashion showing, are termed collections. All of the designers in the selected group, except one, present collections at fashion shows in their Seventh Avenue showrooms for the press and buyers. Members of the New York press, editors of fashion magazines, and representatives of fine department and women's specialty stores attend the opening collections.

The majority of designers have a preview show limited to the out-of-town press. The designers who are members of the New York Couture Group, invite some three hundred newspaper fashion editors to preview the Fall/Winter and Spring collections. No private customers are invited to the formal showings, although one designer chooses a few customers to attend his preview showing. This designer stated he found his **customers'** reactions to his collections very helpful in developing his future presentations.

The designers show from 60 to 200 new numbers in their largest collection for the Fall/Winter season. When asked what percentage represented new styles (see question 18a, Appendix A), all of the selected group agreed that most numbers were new, but few were radically different. Some of the designers repeated the basic lines of a garment which had sold successfully the previous season, but changed the detail or adapted it in some way for a new collection.

All of the designers stressed the fact that they exercise complete control over their collections. Nothing is shown without their final approval. One designer in the group mentioned that he sometimes withdraws numbers after the collection is shown if, for some reason, the designs fail to portray his image.

When asked if buyers are currently more receptive of new fashions (see question 18c, Appendix A), the opinion of the group was split. Some stated that buyers "are afraid of the very new and think in terms of last years best sellers." Other designers disagreed and believe that "we have an entirely new breed of buyers who are more fashion conscious and willing to experiment.

Distribution

The selected designers sell apparel to fine department stores and women's specialty stores throughout the United States. Stores in cosmopolitan areas on the East and West Coast sell most of the apparel produced by the designers, followed by stores in the Chicago area.

In the larger cities where there is keen competition, one designer creates exclusive lines for stores. Another designer said that he might consider giving "exclusives" if asked to do so, but this was not the usual practice in the ready-to-wear industry. Three designers in the group, however, did confine part of their line to stores in smaller cities where business is less competitive.

Many of the selected designers in this study indicated their firm's interest in establishing international business operations. Four of the business firms in this study have manufacturing operations in foreign countries. Two of the firms originally exported merchandise to Europe. Since the merchandise sold for almost three times the American price, the exportation of apparel proved unprofitable. One manufacturer produces part of his regular line in Canada; the others manufacture in Europe. European customers are most anxious to buy and wear American clothes; they like the workmanship, fit, and fabrics of American apparel. The apparel is usually adapted in styles and fabrics suited to the European market.

Promotional Activities

Fashion shows were considered by all members of the group to be the best form of promotion. All of the designers participate in benefit charity fashion shows; the largest is the annual Cancer Show. Two designers travel and put on fashion shows in retail stores; these designers feel that such public exposure is the best form of promotion.

The names of the selected designers in this study are well known to the fashion conscious public. Great emphasis is placed on advertising and publicity to promote the designers and their apparel. Eight of the group advertise in the following publications:

Publications:

	<u>Number of Mentions</u>
<u>Vogue</u>	7
<u>Harper's Bazaar</u>	7
<u>The New Yorker</u>	4
<u>Town and Country</u>	4
<u>Time</u>	1
<u>Playbill</u> (theater program)	1

Two designers didn't feel the need to advertise; the stores that carried their merchandise featured the designer's name in newspaper and magazine publicity and advertising. The most publicity is given to designers by retail stores, followed by editorial features and merchandise credits in fashion magazines.

According to the designers, much of the editorial space misrepresents their apparel. The common complaint is that magazines often show apparel as "too bazaar and poorly accessorized - our designs are not meant to shock." Some designers find it necessary to personally control publicity; others let their public relations and publicity firms approve. Five designers in the group employ public relations and publicity firms; four others use advertising agencies. Two

designers require approval of all editorial articles featuring their apparel. One highly esteemed designer exercises complete control over editorial features and photographs of his apparel in magazines and newspapers; apparel featured in window displays of retail stores also has to be approved. This same designer requires that only vague sketches and blurred photographs of apparel shown in his collection be printed until he gives a release date. He wants his customers to have time to wear his apparel before it is copied by cheaper manufacturers.

Influence of Designers Upon American Fashion

Each designer was asked specific questions in order to assess the contribution of the American designer to the apparel industry and the influence of the designer upon American fashion. An opportunity was given for an individual reaction and expression of opinion as to the goals and future of American designers. Designers also described the attempts being made to encourage creative talent and to promote an understanding of American fashion.

The first question asked individual designers about their specific goals in designing. The majority of designers stated they wanted to present examples of good taste in dress for the American public through the apparel they create. When questioned further as to what qualities constitute good taste in apparel, the designers mentioned simplicity and good design.

One designer stated her feeling of responsibility for creating good designs and maintaining standards which offered no compromise. Another summarized her goal as an attempt to upgrade the taste level of the public and to be an important part of it. She stated: "of course this is time consuming, but I can't deviate from this goal." Other statements of goals included: "creating good designs," "designing clothes that wear well," and "setting an example of good taste and simplicity." The wish to "create a new look in apparel, but not at the expense of good designs" was expressed by one designer. Another said, "I'm not out to revolutionize clothes, but to have women look attractive."

When the designers were questioned regarding their contribution to the apparel industry, their answers reflected their goals. The designers feel they contribute to the promotion of American fashion, not only in their segment of the industry, but in the industry as a whole. Statements such as, "I set an example for the industry" and "I contribute good design and workmanship" indicate the designers' concern for all aspects of apparel production.

All of the designers' apparel is copied on the mass market by cheaper manufacturers. Members of the group considered this a complimentary acknowledgement of their position in the industry. Such exclamations as "pleased," "flattered," and "gratified" were common. One designer summed up the groups' reaction, "we would feel our influence in fashion was slipping if we weren't copied." Only one designer expressed the desire that a firm have a one-season leeway

before they are copied; this is to protect his customer. Another expressed annoyance when her designs weren't well copied. Many times excess detail is applied to the copies which destroys the good design of the original model. One designer suggested that manufacturers attend a special showing of the designers' collections to see apparel accessorized as was originally intended.

Many of the designers in the group stressed the feeling that their greatest contribution was creating apparel which reflected what American women want. The designers create and promote designs and styles for the contemporary American woman. One stated, "I've made women aware of the younger, sporty, more casual clothes that go with our typical American life." Some designers in the group originated designs which fitted the needs of American women. One designer stated that she "started the sports look in American women's apparel." Another designer had contributed specific apparel items; sportswear such as reversible and short sleeved coats. One designer felt she had revolutionized the junior market. She made it a "size range, instead of an age range." She created styles for women of all ages, not just for the teens. She also stated that she "designs for the many, not the few." Another designer creates designs with a popular figure type in mind. He said that his apparel is proportioned to fit the short-waisted figure which seems to be characteristic of many American women.

The designers promote themselves to the public through their own designs. Most designers want to project examples of good taste through their creativity. They also attempt to show the public the correct way to accessorize clothes. One designer travels to stores throughout the country commentating her own fashion shows. She stated that public appearances let people "see me and my designs." She believes that the public should also be exposed to the philosophy behind her creations.

As a group the designers take pride in the fashion apparel industry. Their businesses are conducted with integrity. Some in the group feel that since the apparel industry is "big business", the image of Seventh Avenue should be improved. One designer stated that "the garment district is too overcrowded and slows down progress." Another in the group would like to see "the area expand and project more of a sophisticated image."

The majority of designers in the selected group actively promote themselves and their fashions. Others do not think promotion is necessary and believe that their "clothes speak for themselves." Some designers lecture to groups; others write articles for magazines and newspapers; and a few occasionally appear on radio and television. There is also considerable promotion by the designers as a group. All the designers are members of the Council of Fashion Designers of America; some are members of the New York Couture Group; and all the women are members of the Fashion Group.

When questioned about the future of American designers and fashion apparel the designers replied enthusiastically that the industry has "never been healthier," is "tremendous," and "has a great future." The designers believe that the American ready-to-wear industry is attracting more young talented designers who are aware of the needs of contemporary men and women, and have the ability to transmit their ideas into apparel designs. Most new talent is directed toward ready-to-wear, since the demand for custom apparel is decreasing. The designers agreed there will always be women who want custom designed apparel for individuality or because of figure problems. However, the interviewees believe that the future for young custom designers is limited due to the limited demand, high prices, and lack of skilled labor to interpret their designs. Many in the selected group of designers take an active part in encouraging young creative talent. Many function as critics and advisors to art schools; some lecture to student groups; and others give financial aid to aspiring students in the form of scholarships.

All designers agreed that the American fashion apparel industry has unlimited future potential. The ready-to-wear manufacturers and their designers are respected throughout the world. Some of the firms included in this study are leaders in establishing international trade. A few firms are members of the American Exporters of Fashion, a group of ready-to-wear manufacturers promoting trade relations. Fashion shows introducing American fashions have been presented throughout the world under the sponsorship of the United States Commerce and State departments.

Summary

The apparel types created by the selected group of designers include daytime, evening and lingerie which are produced in a variety of price and size ranges suitable for the contemporary American woman. The designers' lines are shown to the press and buyers at seasonal presentations. Fine department and women's specialty stores throughout the United States distribute their apparel.

The designers feel they influence American fashion and contribute to the industry as a whole. The work of the designer is recognized and promoted by individuals and groups interested in furthering American fashion.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The American designer has maintained an important place in the development of the American fashion apparel industry. In the interest of finding out more about the role and contribution of American designers to the fashion apparel industry, an investigation of a selected group of designers was initiated. This study, an outgrowth of a larger survey of regional markets presently underway at Michigan State University, is an exploration of the sources of inspiration, methods of creation and the contribution of American designers to the apparel industry.

A selected group of designers was chosen from a listing of the Council of Fashion Designers of America. These designers are representative of outstanding creative leaders in the design field. Ten designers were interviewed by the writer at their New York firms. A structured interview schedule was divided into four parts: the first part sought to obtain information about the designer's background, training, and experience; the second part was designed to gain insight into the role of the designer within the firm; the third part concerned the type of apparel designed and its promotion and distribution; and the final part asked for the designer's opinion of his contribution to the American fashion apparel industry.

The educational achievement level of the selected designers ranged from high school to the completion of art school. Most designers received training in more than one area, but they considered sketching the most valuable course, both for locating their first job and continued use.

Each of the selected designers had spent years in the industry before achieving recognition and fame. The majority of the designers trained in New York City by working in various capacities for a variety of well known dress manufacturers. All the designers stressed the need for thorough knowledge of all aspects of the fashion business. They considered a period of apprenticeship their most valuable experience.

All designers in the group hold management positions in their manufacturing firms. Most designers work for dress houses specializing in daytime and evening wear and one designs lingerie. Some designers create accessories, as well as apparel for other firms, on a part-time or free lance basis.

Each designer has his own methods of work leading to the creation of new designs. Although inspirational ideas mentioned were many and varied, the majority of designers considered personal experience, their customers, and awareness of contemporary life their most important sources of inspiration. The designers designate their customers and fabrics as the greatest influence upon their designs.

Most of the selected designers agreed that Americans have surpassed the Europeans and do not depend upon Paris for inspirational material. However, some designers attend the European collections and purchase original models for adaptation.

Methods of creation varied with each designer but all are assisted by associate designers, assistant designers, and sketchers. Some work closely with their staff, while others do not. The designers feel it is not always necessary to know the techniques involved in the construction of the sample models. Many expressed the role of the designer as a creator and interpreter of ideas. All of the designers stress that they supervise the production, edit, and select the final garments to be shown in their collections.

American designers create a variety of apparel types which are divided into three major categories titled: General Daytime Apparel, Evening Apparel, and Lingerie. The majority of designers create apparel for both daytime and evening wear. Each designer produces apparel within a wide price range. The dresses are priced from \$50 for a sportsdress to \$4,000 for a formal evening gown. The best selling range for most popular items is from \$50-\$299. The best selling sizes are in the 8-12 and 8-14 size range.

The production of apparel is geared to seasonal lines. The Fall/Winter and Spring lines are the most important since they are the largest in volume. The Fall line, however is considered by all of the group to be the most trend-setting. All except one of the

designers in the study present collection showings of their seasonal lines in their New York showrooms for the New York press and buyers. All exercise complete control over their collections, nothing is shown without their final approval.

Apparel is sold to fine department and specialty stores across the country. Most of the designer's apparel is sold in stores in cosmopolitan areas on the East and West Coast followed by the Chicago area in the Middle West.

The designers' names are well known to the fashion conscious public. Members of the group have won every fashion award offered to designers. Their names appear on apparel labels and are included in advertising and publicity promotions.

The designers feel they contribute to the promotion of American fashion. Many of the designers in the group stressed the feeling that their greatest contribution was the creation of apparel suited to and reflecting the contemporary American woman.

Recommendations

This study of the American designer investigates an area which has been relatively unexplored. The American designer, his creative methods and contribution to American fashion apparel have been bypassed by recent research. Suggestions for further study of designers in other segments of the apparel industry may be made.

The interview schedule developed for the investigation obtained the desired information. Replication of this study utilizing the

Interview schedule might yield further information concerning the work and contribution of designers creating fashion apparel. Investigations might be made of designers in other geographic areas, and designers working with other types of manufacturing and production methods. Studies might also be conducted with designers of different types of apparel.

A more detailed study of production methods and techniques would be obtained by augmenting this interview schedule with observations in the workrooms.

A more extensive survey involving a larger number of designers would yield more conclusive results.

APPENDIX A

Date _____

Designer Study

Firm Name _____ Number _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Respondent _____ Position _____

Through this interview we hope to obtain information about the creative methods of American designers and their contribution to fashion apparel. I should like to begin by asking questions about your background.

1. How many years have you worked as a professional designer?
2. Do you have an added interest in the firm besides designing?
No
Yes [If yes] Owner
Partner
Other
3. Are you associated with any other manufacturing businesses?
No
Yes [If yes] Which ones? Part Time Free Lance
4. What work did you do before your present position?
How many jobs?

In the same firm or different firms?
5. In which professional or business organizations, both local and national do you hold membership?
6. Have you won any fashion awards?
No
Yes [If yes] Which ones?
7. Where did you get your training?
Design School [If yes] Where?

Art School [If yes] Where?

As an apprentice to another designer [If yes] Whom?

Other

8. [If design or art school]
 What courses prepared you professionally for your present position?
 Design
 Draping
 History of Costume
 Patternmaking
 Sewing
 Sketching
 Other
9. What type of apparel do you design?
- a. What is your size range?
- b. What is your price range (bottom to top)?
1. What is your best selling range?
- c. What type of person do you design for?
10. Where do you usually get your inspiration, or your design ideas?
 Architecture
 Art
 Customers
 Fabric
 Films
 Historic Costume
 Methods of Creation
 Nature
 Plays and Programs
 Other
- a. Do you attend the Paris and Italian openings?
 No
 Yes [If yes] Does your firm buy any originals?
 No
 Yes [If yes] Do you adapt them?
 No
 Yes
11. What methods do you prefer when creating your designs?
 Draping in Fabric
 Draping in Muslin
 Flat Pattern
 Sketching
 Other

12. In what way do trends, as you see them, affect your designs?
- a. How do you perceive new trends?
13. What do you consider to be the greatest influence upon your designs?
- a. The one most important influence?

The following questions concern the organization of the firm, the collection, and its promotion.

14. Do you design under your own name or the name of the house, or both?
- Own Name
Firm Name
Both
15. I would like to know about the organization of the design department.
- a. Methods of Operation
- b. Position of Workers
Assistant Designers
Sample Hands
Pattern Hands
Hand Finishers
Others
- c. Number of Workers
- d. Training Needed
16. How many collections a year do you show? When?
- For what type of stores?
Department Stores
Specialty Shops
- Do you have a special show for the press?
17. Which seasonal showing is most important to your firm?
- Why?
18. How many numbers to a collection?
- a. What percent represents new styles?
- b. What percent do you consider adaptations of previous styles?
- c. Do you find buyers more receptive to new fashions these days?
No
Yes [If yes] Why?

18. (continued)

d. What is the average percent of discards in a collection?

19. Do you design accessories to show with your apparel?

No [If no] Do you select special accessories?

Yes [If yes] Do you sell accessories?

20. Do you have a franchise program or give exclusive styles to retailers?

No

Yes [If yes] Under what conditions?

21. Does any geographic region in the United States sell more of your apparel than the others?

No

Yes [If yes] Which?

22. Does your firm do any exporting?

No

Yes [If yes] Does it export your regular line of merchandise?

A special line of merchandise?

Where?

23. Does your firm manufacture in any foreign countries?

No

Yes [If yes] Where?

24. Where does this firm advertise?

Nationally

Magazines

Television

Other

Vogue

Harper's Bazaar

New Yorker

Town and Country

Glamour

Mademoiselle

Others

Do you do any local advertising?

No

Yes [If yes] Newspapers

Other

25. Do you have any requirements for your advertising and publicity?

No

Yes [If yes] What are they?

26. Do you use an advertising agency?
No
Yes
27. Do you use a public relations firm?
No
Yes
28. Do you use other forms of promotion?
No
Yes [If yes] What forms?
Fashion Shows
Other

These concluding questions concern your contribution to the apparel industry.

29. Of course every designer aims to sell, but do you as an individual, have any special goal in designing?
30. Are your designs copied in the mass market?
No
Yes [If yes]
a. What is your reaction to this?
b. Would you like protection against copying?
No
Yes [If yes] How?
31. In what ways do you encourage creative talent?
Lectures
Participation in Education
Apprentice Programs
Other
32. Do you attempt to promote and improve public understanding of the designer and the fashion arts?
No
Yes [If yes] In what way?
33. In what ways do you feel that you, as an individual, have contributed to the American fashion apparel industry?
34. In your opinion, what does the future hold for American designers and fashion apparel?
- Ready-to-wear
- Custom

APPENDIX B

March 14, 1966

Dear

A survey of an important group of designers working currently in New York City is planned as part of my Master's program at Michigan State University. I would like to interview selected designers to gain information regarding their training, methods of creation, and specialities.

Since you are an authority in the field of fashion and design, I would appreciate your assistance in locating those designers who would be considered outstanding people in the current fashion world.

I will be in New York City during the week of March twenty-first. I would like to call for an appointment to see you or a member of your staff, if this could be arranged at mutual convenience.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,

(Miss) Elaine Stauber

1

APPENDIX C

Council of Fashion Designers of America

Frank Adams
Adolfo
Geoffrey Beene
Bill Blass
Donald Brooks
Betty Carol
Oleg Cassini
Louis Clausen
Jo Copeland
Lilly Dache
Oscar de La Renta
Florence Eiseman
Olga Erteszek
David Evins
Anne Fogarty
James Galanos
Rudi Gernreich
Sophie Gimbel
Chuck Howard
Mr. John
Mabel Julianelli
David Kidd
Bud Kilpatrick
Anne Klein
Helen Lee
Beth Levine
William Lord
Jean Louis
Tzaims Luksus
Jose Martin
Vera Maxwell

Marie McCarthy
Margaret Miller
Vincent Monte-Sano
John Moore
Norman Norell
Mollie Parnis
Sylvia Pedlar
Anna Maximilian
Sara Ripault
Leo Ritter
Shannon Rodgers
Helen Rose
Roxanne
Pat Sandler
Ferdinando Sarmi
Arnold Scaasi
Catherine Scott
Elinor Simmons
Adele Simpson
Pembroke Squires
Stella Sloat
Karen Stark
Gustave Tassell
Jacques Tiffeau
Pauline Trigere
Chester Weinberg
John Weitz
Andrew Woods
Sydney Wragge
Ben Zuckerman

APPENDIX D

August 22, 1966

Dear

American fashion is being recognized as an important part of American art and culture. Michigan State University is interested in the contribution of the fashion apparel industry and has undertaken several studies of the regional markets throughout the nation. Because of the important role of the designer, a study is also being conducted to gain information regarding the contribution of the American designer to the fashion apparel industry.

As a result of attending a panel meeting last March in conjunction with the National Council of the Arts, I have become interested in the leading designers in New York City. For my work towards my Master's degree, I wish to interview a selected group of creative leaders. Miss Eleanor Lambert has suggested that you might contribute information regarding your work in fashion design. My questions are brief and should not take longer than fifteen minutes. Your participation would be of great value to the Michigan State University study.

I will be in the New York area until September twentieth. I would like to have an interview with you sometime during this period, at your convenience. I will telephone your office for an appointment, on Tuesday, August 30, 1966.

Thank you for your consideration. I am looking forward to talking with you.

Sincerely yours,

(Miss) Elaine Stauber
8 Dorset Road
Great Neck, New York

APPENDIX E

List of Cooperating Designers

Bill Blass

Jo Copeland

Anne Klein

Norman Norell

Mollie Parnis

Sylvia Pedlar

Shannon Rogers

Elinor Simmons

Stella Sloat

Pauline Trigere

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