

Sexy is out, Practical is in

Owner of the Village Boutique in Acton, Marilyn Ottaway has this rule of thumb for women to follow when choosing their summer wardrobe: Sexy is out, practical is in.

Gone, thank goodness, are the inhibiting fad clothes of the sexy 60's, which kept a girl constantly busy keeping her mini down, keeping her plunging neckline up, and at the same time trying to balance on her platform shoes.

Exemplifying the new trend are below-the-knee skirt lengths, modest blouses, and ever-popular pant suits, designed to give a woman optimum freedom of movement.

"I really like women and I can relate to where they're at in society," said Marilyn. "Today's clothes reflect their changing social position. The modern woman likes many looks - she's moving fast into many different situations."

Fashions 1976 are versatile enough to move with her.

Illustrating this is the latest in tennis apparel, the short jumpsuit. Comfortable wedge shoes are acceptable with any outfit, with the single exception of formal evening gowns.

Bikinis are passé, which will relieve many women who really aren't built to wear them although they renewed their annual cetery and yogurt binge at the first sign of spring. The slimming, one-piece suit has made a big comeback.

To explain the contemporary conservatism of clothing, Marilyn has a theory, "Because money is not as free-flowing, people's lifestyles are less daring and flashy, and today's fashions reflect this."

Further supporting this statement are the fabrics and colours for summer. Toned down earth hues, brown and beige, predominate over the traditional basics of white and navy. Replacing bold, colourful prints are soft, pastel shades. The convenience of what Marilyn describes as "maintenance free" materials has won out over the sophistication of finer, more expensive fabrics. Even in the line of evening wear, wash 'n wear synthetics are in greater demand than velvets, knits, chiffons and satins, which require dry-cleaning.

Politics have been another major influence on style. "Because both Kissinger and Trudeau examined China this year, so did the rest of North America, including the fashion designers," pointed out Marilyn.

Thus, the advent of the "Chinese Worker" look: mandarin collars, wide three-quarter sleeves, loose flowing blouses and skirts. Light weight nature cloth, in pale or

earth shades, is used to manufacture these easy to wear peasant garments.

Other ethnic looks this year include gaucho pants and safari suits. Dresses feature cap sleeves and full skirts; the tent is still in; pants and shorts are uncuffed, and sport thin snake belts as do the latest skirts.

Bright shades of lipstick, nail gloss and rouge are in vogue, to contrast with the neutral colours of clothing. Simple, easy to care for hair styles are practical alternatives to frivolous curls.

However, Marilyn advises against being a faithful fad follower.

"There is no good look except your own good look," philosophized Marilyn, adding, "Be you - then you'll look good and be comfortable at the same time. The emphasis in fashion '76, and I think it will continue for quite awhile, is whatever is becoming to you as an individual. Classics, are always basic and they always will be."

Classics, plain clothes which never go out of style because they can be easily updated by the addition of accessories.

For summer '76, choose scarves in various sizes and prints to wear around your neck or protect your hair from the damaging glare of the sun. Super-skinny belts or wide ones woven out of hemp are popular.

The grass-roots of fashion theme has also invaded the jewellery industry, which features simple chains, novel pendants, metal bangles and wooden beads.

Since Marilyn became the proprietor of the Village

Boutique six months ago, she has stocked an interesting selection of accessories which co-ordinate with her predominantly Montreal manufactured line of clothes.

There's something for everyone from students to seniors, although most of her customers are in the 25-plus age bracket.

Many Toronto women are lured to the Village Boutique because Marilyn's specialty is "personalized service."

"If someone comes in at quarter to six with a dress to be altered because she found out at the last minute that she had a big night ahead, we'll stay open late to do them for her then and there," Marilyn promised.

Staff members Rita Goodwin, Marianne Bacchus, Anne Warwick (model), Sue Murray, Marilyn and her daughter Kim Ottaway let people browse, but know the stock well enough to help them colour co-ordinate separates and choose accessories.

"Everyone involved in sales here is keen to make people satisfied, and that's unique," said Marilyn, who is sympathetic to the needs and problems of shoppers, and recognizes the importance of community involvement.

All related activities and the store itself reflects Marilyn's attitude: "Fashion is fun."



Marilyn Ottaway displays one of her newer fashions.

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