


FASHION

For Spring



Filly and feminine

Lace details spark spring fashions

By Mary Martin Niepold

For hundreds of years, lace has been a mark of luxury.

Aristocrats no longer sell their land to acquire this sumptuous fabric, but today lace is regaining its popularity. Spring collections are already using more lace, and the handmade netting will gain even greater prominence in styles for fall.

Already we're seeing lace as a leading embellishment from influential designers on both sides of the Atlantic. Christian Lacroix has led the way with lace ruffles that peek from beneath the petticoats of his short, sassy dresses. In Karl Lagerfeld's showing of the Chanel spring collections, silhouettes were curved and lengthened, and blouses with lace-bordered collars were matched with tailored day suits.

Lace-inspired spring collections by major American talents like Calvin Klein and Geoffrey Beene are already en route to stores. Beene has trimmed flirty party dresses with lace on necklines and scalloped borders on hems. Klein, in a more tailored vein, has created silver lace in three enviable evening styles: as a long "mermaid" body-hugging evening dress; a snug, long-sleeved T-shirt worn with wool trousers and sat-



in balmacaan; and an ever-so-slight little slip dress.

"Lace is on the horizon," says Brenda Rosenberg, vice president of fashion marketing for Burdine's 27 Florida stores.

"For spring, we're seeing it just as a touch, as edging and borders on dresses, skirts and camisoles underneath jackets, and also as scarves that can be worn with suits. I think it's going to be much stronger for fall — lace dresses, skirts and placements on blouses."

Designer Ann Lawrence, whose collections of eveningwear and party and special-occasion dresses are in their third year, has always loved lace in her creations.

"I wouldn't say I'm using lace more this season than last," she observes. "But I am using it more as an accessory to the dress — on the sleeves, at the torso and at the hemline."

Lace, always a natural for lingerie, is finding new interpretations in spring collections. Carole Hochman, designer for Christian Dior lingerie, enthuses, "We're using tons and tons of lace, and in many different ways."

Dior spring collections include lace as ruffles and applique and in lace-to-lace tiers.

"Lace," says Hochman, "is very popular in lingerie all the time. I think this year women are seeing a lot of lace as detail on ready-to-wear, in collections like Lacroix. So as people are buying more of these clothes, they are more receptive to buying lace in lingerie."

Industry experts see lace as an emerging trend because of the new romanticism sweeping fashion. Spring collections are literally spilling with roses; feminine floral patterns are gathered in full skirts or draped into tight-fitting cocktail dresses.

Lace's feminine appeal doesn't stop at dresses or blouses. Accessories designers are also lavishing their spring and fall offerings with lace touches. French accessories designer Isabel Canovas has tapped her Spanish heritage to embellish her shawls, bags, shoes and gloves with lace.

"Lace is a continuing trend," offers Canovas, "because it is very feminine

CHIC black tuckered silk organza bloomers with pink and gray "crosses" from Christian Lacroix (\$4,265).

CHIC black tuckered silk organza bloomers and sequa lace top bolero from Ann Lawrence (\$1,320).

and suggestive. It covers, yet it is transparent. Also, it is romantic, but very sexy."

American accessories designer Michael Abrams is already incorporating lace into his fall collection of handbags.

"We will be doing a special grouping of very practical, hard-edged totes that will be softened with lace trim," he explains. "I feel this is a very timely way to bridge the practical with the romantic side of the lace trend for fall."

Function plus femininity, in fact, is one of the nicer aspects of the way designers are modernizing the use of lace. Today's woman can go two different routes with the new lace interpretations: She can choose the unadorned sexiness of Klein's short, low-cut lace slip dress; or she will be just as feminine in a full, ankle-length lace skirt by Romeo Gigli topped with a T-shirt and casual blazer.

Antique lace can be found in flea markets and vintage clothing stores. With a little imagination, it can be added as trim or tied softly under a business suit.



BLACK and white taffeta strapless dress with pink and gray "crosses" from Christian Lacroix (\$4,265).

Tips and trends

Learn what to look for in a diamond

By Mary Martin Niepold

Diamonds, as they say, last forever, and they can make hearts flutter in anticipation.

However, more and more women may not be waiting for Prince Charming to put that sparkle around their fingers or throats.

"In the last five years, more career women have been buying diamonds for themselves — they understand the intrinsic value of diamonds, their potential growth and their everyday enjoyment," says William Underwood, president of the American Gem Society. It is a non-profit organization of more than 3,200 jewelers and suppliers.

"We are in an age where people are buying and wearing fine jewelry," says Laurie Hudson, the society's market manager. "Back in the 1960s, there was a reluctance to wear jewelry of substance. But now we are seeing women who want to wear a fabulous piece of jewelry that is actually a piece of art."

The jewelry itself exhibits this self-indulgent attitude.

The biggest trend in precious and colored gemstones is "larger, finer stones, clean-lined styling with a lot of baguettes accenting larger stones," says Hudson. Also, settings in 18-carat gold and mixtures of colored gemstones with diamonds are becoming more popular.

"I know the whereabouts and availability of every diamond of consequence on this planet," Elizabeth Taylor has said.

Most women may not be connoisseurs, or buyers, of diamonds in the ranks of Taylor. But most probably wouldn't mind a carat or two of the crystalline carbon mineral that's been adorning women ever since it was first discovered in India some 3,000 years ago.

When you're actually purchasing a diamond, emotion can easily overtake rationality. As with other major purchases, the more you know, the better chance you'll be satisfied.

"Many people don't shop carefully enough," warns Lloyd Jaffe, chairman of the American Diamond Industry Association, a trade organization of more than 3,000 cutters, importers, dealers and distributors.

"Go to a reliable jeweler," Jaffe urges. Customers should be wary of discounts of 50 percent or more. Many times, these "sales" simply mean that the merchant has inflated the original price beyond its true value and then discounted it back down to what the diamond is really worth. Shop and compare different jewelers, but always look for reliability and trust.

In diamond shopping, knowing the Four C's is also important. They are — in order of importance — cut, color, clarity and carat weight.

• **Cut:** This is the single greatest determinant of a diamond's beauty. The ideal cut is called just that, signifying that the stone has been shaped to proportions for maximum brilliance.

The diamond's shape — round, oval, emerald-cut, heart, marquise, pear — is a purely personal decision. A fully cut diamond has 58 facets that are carefully placed to maximize the stone's "fire." Less than 1 percent of all diamonds are cut to ideal proportions, but ask your jeweler to see an ideal cut as a gauge for comparison.

SPRINGTIME MAKEOVER

Aris Isotoner, makers of Isotoner Comfort Slippers, suggests the following fashion and footwear tips to prepare your feet for the months ahead:

- Look for shoes with feminine detailing: Ankle straps, inset straps, narrower wedges and the oval toe.
- The newest fabrics for spring are delicate wovens — in floral patterns and pastel colors — perfect to soften any look.
- Wear shoes that are made of absorbent material — such as leather — to let your feet breathe. And make sure to wear slippers at home, to protect your feet from bedroom bumps and bruises.

Isotoner Comfort Slippers provide the perfect amount of protection and comfort, while treating your feet to a massage-like feeling.

• What else is hot for shoes, this spring? Costume jewelry to accessorize! Shoe clips are the newest in fashion statements. Look for bows, pins and antique-inspired shapes featuring rhinestones, animal skin designs and lace.

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Fabulous fashions that flatter the feminine form

Spring is in the air, as stylish women step along in sprightly fashion, in the newest bare fashions, whose very absence of excess fabric makes their presence known. Short skirts reveal knees already exposed to the winds of winter. And, form-fitting tops — flirty bustiers, and their more subtle sisters, shapely and softly draped jackets and blouses — reflect a renewed flattery of the feminine form, with an emphasis on curves.

There is, of course, a sprinkling of longer skirts, as well — not every woman welcomes the opportunity to display calves, knees and even thighs — but they, too, are feminine, softly flowing and romantic.

The other option to the short skirt — one for which designers are markedly enthusiastic — is the draped trouser, with wide legs, which offers a feeling of classical simplicity meant to appeal to women who are younger in spirit than they are in shape.

Among the short silhouettes, the hems-up, hands-down winners are the full, flir-

short — a kicky alternative to the skirt which can be worn for leisure, but which also can look right in considerably more structured situations.

The key here is the blouse, sweater or jacket that's worn, plus the appropriate accessories — a cleverly arranged scarf, for example, or a striking pin or oversized gold earrings — and, what's absolutely essential, the correct hosiery and shoes. All of these options combine American verve with European chic — a pairing which incorporates the best of both fashion worlds.

With a passing salute to spring's traditional nautical colors of red, white and blue, crisp as ever, and a quick stop at the candy store for the Easter egg-jelly bean pastels, the color story for spring '88 seems to focus on the new, dark, rich neutrals.

These add a note of sophistication to even the most youthful styles — as once-traditional play clothes make a dramatic move in the direction of the boardroom.

How complete the takeover by short skirts and shorts will be remains to be seen — however, a peek ahead at fall '88 indicates that designers and manufacturers will be dropping hemlines, at least to some extent.

That's good news for those who have opted to remain faithful to their long skirts.

On the other hand, those who have embraced the new-again short skirts can feel confident that these pert, perky and slightly impertinent styles will be flattering youthful figures and attracting attention — if not forever, at least for several seasons to come.



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ALL THAT GLITTERS — From Mary Jane Marcasiano, for spring '88, stylish eveningwear which features a very cropped sweater jacket over a strapless miniskirt with gathered, dropped waist.