AN ASSESSMENT AND CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF A CONTEMPORARY LONDON COUTURIER, VICTOR EDELSTEIN

NIALL TYRELL,
DEPT OF FASHION AND TEXTILES,
NCAD, 1991

NIALL TYRELL

AN ASSESSMENT AND CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF A CONTEMPORARY LONDON COUTURIER, VICTOR EDELSTEIN

4TH YEAR DEGREE THESIS

FOR

DR. NICHOLA GORDON BOWE

NCAD, 1991.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig 30. Victor Edelstein - Hello (UK), September 1990

Fig 31. Victor Edelstein - Authors collection, February 1991

Fig 32. Victor Edelstein - Royal Monthly (UK) May 1988

Fig 33. Victor Edelstein - Authors collection, July 1988

Fig 34. Victor Edelstein - Hello (UK) September 1990

Fig 35. Victor Edelstein - Authors collection, February 1991

Fig 36. Victor Edelstein - Vogue (UK) October 1990

Fig 37. Victor Edelstein - Hello (UK) March 1990

Fig 38. Victor Edelstein - Hello (UK) March 1990

Fig 39. Victor Edelstein - Hello (UK) September 1990

Fig 40. Victor Edelstein - Vogue (UK) August 1988

Fig 41. Victor Edelstein - Vogue (UK) October 1990

Fig 42. Victor Edelstein printed chiffon - "Authors collection, February 1991

Fig 43. Victor Edelstein - Vogue (UK) October 1990

Fig 44. Victor Edelstein - Harpers & Queen International (UK) September 1990

Fig 45. Victor Edelstein - Drapers Record (UK) February 1991

Fig 46. Victor Edelstein - Drapers Record (UK) February 1991

Fig 47. Victor Edelstein - Sunday Independent (UK) January 1991

Fig 48. C. Balenciaga - Balenciaga, London 1988

Fig 49. C. Balenciaga - Balenciaga, London 1988

Fig 50. Victor Edelstein - Hello (UK) July 1989

Fig 51. Victor Edelstein - Authors collection, February 1991

Fig 52. Balenciaga - Balenciaga, London 1988

Fig 52 A Victor Edelstein - Authors collection, February 1991

Fig 53. Victor Edelstein - Vogue (UK) August 1987

Fig 54. C. Balenciaga - Balenciaga, London 1988

Fig 55. Victor Edelstein - Tatler (UK) February 1990

Fig 56. Victor Edelstein - Authors collection, July 1988

Fig 57. C. Balenciaga - Balenciaga, London 1988

Fig 58. Victor Edelstein - Authors collection, July 1988

Fig 59. C. Balenciaga - Balenciaga, London 1988

Fig 60. C. Balenciaga - McDowells Directory of 20th Century Fashion London 1988

Fig 61. C. Balenciaga - Balenciaga, London 1988

Fig 62. Chanel - Vogue (Paris), February 1989

Fig 63. Victor Edelstein - Authors collection, July 1988

Fig 64. Chanel - Tatler (UK) December/January 1987/88

Fig 65. Victor Edelstein - Authors collection, July 1988

Fig 66. Anouska Hemple - Hello (UK) March 1991

Fig 67. Bruce Oldfield - Elle (UK) February 1991

Fig 68. Hardy Amies - Hello (UK) March 1990

Fig 69. Xenia Folkes - Tatler (UK) February 1990

Fig 70. Lady Brocket - Tatler (UK) March 1990

Fig 71. Christian Lacros - Vogue (UK) October 1989

Fig 72. Christian Lacros - Harpers & Queen International, October 1989

Fig 72 A Claire McCardell - Elle (UK) June 1990

Fig 73. Ruching detail on a dress - Authors own, February 19991

Fig 74. Ruching detail of a dress - Authors own, February 1991

Fig 75. Boned bodice in the making - Authors own, February 1991

Fig 76. Boned bodice in the making - Authors own, February 1991

Fig 77. Cartier of Paris - Authors own July 1988

Fig 78. Victor Edelstein and Model Catrina Skepper, Tatler (UK) February 1990

Fig 79. Video scenes, J. Conran, R. Ozbeck, Vogue (UK) September 1990

Fig 80. Make-up artists, hairdressers, - Authors collection, July 1988

Fig 81. Final checking of dresses - Authors collection, July 1988

Fig 82. Last minute run down - Authors collection, July 1988

Fig 83. Model on catwalk - Authors collection, July 1988

INTRODUCTION

The work of any designer of prominence deserves discussion and analysis. Even more importantly, the work of a very successful designer requires analysis and critical assessment in order to understand what his or her work is about.

Victor Edelstein is one of London's most respected and celebrated couturiers, who grew up relatively humbly in Hendon, North London. He now dresses the privileged and his clients include some of Europe's and America's wealthiest and most distinguished women. His most famous client is the Princess of Wales. As a designer, he is conservative and traditional and his creations are simply refined, sophisticated classics. Like Balenciaga, (a main influence on his work), Edelstein designs in the true French tradition where clothes mean elegance, beauty and glamour, as well as being symbols of status. His clothes are expensive because of the traditional couture methods used: boned bodices, silk linings, hand finishing and the elaborate use of trimmings.

When compared to the ever-changing London fashion scene his clothes are timeless and unique because they are in the tradition of haute couture and are aimed at a different market. Therefore, it would be irrelevant to compare his work with that of his more inventive ready-to-wear contemporaries, like Vivienne Westwood, John Galliano, Workers for Freedom, Arabella Pollen, etc. Although couture experienced a revival during the mid Eighties, Edelstein and his fellow couturiers: Hardy Amies, Catherine Walker, Anouska Hempel, Franko, Lachasse and more recently Marc Bohan for Hartnell, are un-noteworthy in their influence on fashion trends. They are more likely to appear in 'after - six' features in Vouge and more extensively in high society magazines such as Hello and Tatler.

Victor Edelstein is not a celebrity nor is he a fashion personality, furthermore, he does not wish to be. Although he enjoys his work immensely, he treats it as a business and practises a totally professional relationship with his clients. Like the policy of his business 'by appointment only', he does not seek attention and has no burning desires to become the next Calvin Klein or Ralph

Lauren of Britain. Despite this attitude Edelstein is an acknowledged success and as such his career shows, that you do not have to be a whimsical prima donna to be a successful designer.

His success is largely attributed to the revival of couture. I begin my discussion by pinpointing the demise and the reasons for the revival of haute couture. I plan in the course of my discussion to give a biographical account of Victor Edelstein as well as a detailed critical chronology of his work dealing specifically with his own specific design style, his use of colour, line and silhouette and his use of fabric. Analysing a designers work can often become tedious and technical in its execution. I believe it is important however, to give a detailed account, as it reveals Edelstein's technique and approach to design. I will also assess his personal qualities as a couturier. I will devote some discussion to the main influences that have affected his work and compare this in relation to his contemporary couturiers. Furthermore, I intend to clarify and define what haute couture is and discuss how it differs in relation to ready-to-wear. The final section of this dissertation deals specificatlly with Edelstein's relationships with his clients. Finally, a documented account is given of the couture process from sketch to presentation, to the all important fittings for the clients.

In my research, Victor Edelstein has been by far the greatest source of information. Much of the following is a direct result of many interviews with him during the period I have worked for him: the summer months of 1988, 1989 and 1990. I feel I have gained an insight into his work which I hope has helped me in my discussion of his distinctive brand in the time honoured haute couture.

SECTION 1

FRON HENDON TO HAUTE COUTURE

As recently as eight years ago, there was very little hope of couture surviving into the next decade. The demise of haute couture began in the mid Sixties when fashion, for the first time, began to focus on teenagers. The fashion and youth explosions were centered in London. The British designers and firms such as Mary Quant, Barbara Hulanicki of Biba, Jaegar and Dereta were making sophisticated and young ready-to-wear clothes for the mass market. While the couturiers like Normal Hartnell, Mattli and Hardy Amies among others, became design consultants to large companies, Italian designers such as Emilio Pucci were producing separates and prints in bright colours which were popular throughout Europe and in the States. Even the French couturiers were turning to ready to wear. In 1959, to the immense disdain of the Chambre Syndicate, (the powerful governing body which organises and the licenses couture shows) Pierre Cardin became the first couturier to launch a successful ready-to-wear range. Back in 1948 Jacques Fath was one of the earliest who tried without success, to launch a ready-to-wear range. Cardin was also responsible for introducing 'unisex' fashion which also had a major influence on fashion in the mid Sixties. Ready-to-wear industries became increasingly popular, and that many manufacturers found it difficult to produce stock fast enough. The Sixties obession with youth and utilitarianism made couture look hopelessly out-dated. In 1964 fashion journalists like the late Clare Redlesham of Queen announced the demise of the most elitist form of frock making. In Queen on a black bordered page, she ran an obituary of Balenciaga and Givency: "The mood was fiftyish. The colours were drab. The evening clothes were dreary'. A new Paris designer appeared to take the place of the great couturiers. This designer was Andre Courreges whom with Queen was the first to publicise his amazing 1964 space age collection with its miniskirts, trouser suits, short square cut jackets that stood away from the body, square lines and flat-heeled white ankle boots with squared-off peep toes and ankle bows (Fig 1).

Meanwhile, Balenciaga, the great architect of elegant Fifties couture, closed his doors in 1968 and Yves Saint Laurent, by then was running his own house

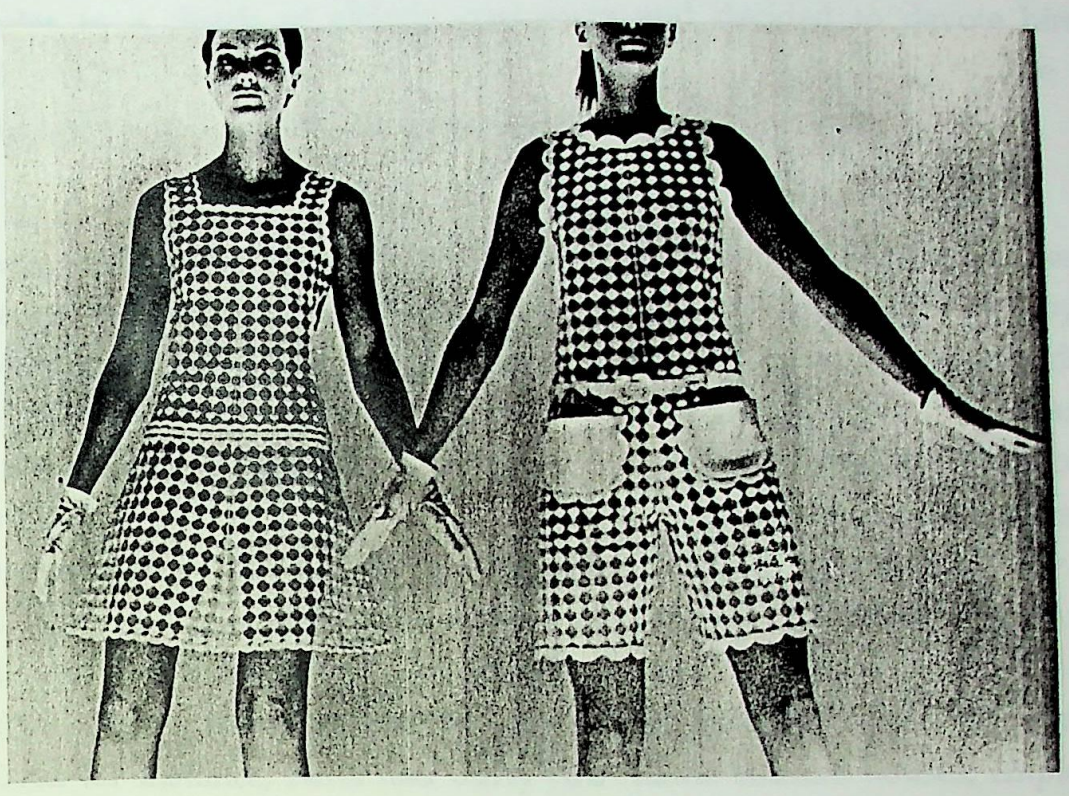


Fig.1

after having left Dior, announced in 1971 that he had better things to do than pander to a clutch of elderly customers and decided to devote himself exclusively to ready-to-wear. By the end of the Seventies, couture was considered a sickly spectre on the sidelines of fashion.

It was a sad decline from the days, before the first World War, when wealthy women flocked to Paris from all over the world to be humiliated by the autocratic whims of such temperamental early couturiers as Charles Frederick Worth, Paul Poiret, Madeline Vionnet and Cristobal Balenciaga. Even as late as the Forties and Fifties, haute couture was still a seminal influence. It spawned Dior's New Look, one of the most potent post-war images and considered to be one of coutures greatest moments. Balenciaga's semi-fitted look and Yves Saint Laurent's Trapeze line, which he devised as a youthful designer while still at Dior were also created in the Fifties. Patrons were loyal and plentiful. Pierre Cardin employed 400 people on his haute couture alone. In 1962 for instance, Paris had thirty-two haute couture houses, employing 6,000 staff with 12,000 private customers. These numbers had drastically fallen in the late Seventies and early Eighties to twenty-two couture houses in Paris with client numbers about 3,000 worldwide. Astute financiers recognised that couture, even if it can no longer survive by frocks alone, is unsurpassed as a glamorous publicity machine for multiple licensing deals: the sunglasses, scarves, hoisery and cosmetics.

In the early Eighties a renaissance began to take place which eventually led to the revival of couture. Women more than ever before were concerned with pursuing a career. Women were now aiming for better jobs and were more determined to succeed. A new generation of professional women and female financiers had spawned. A more lavish and formal style of dressing was adopted in comparison to the 'laissez-faire' approach to dressing in the Seventies. An increasing number of women in the professions and the media, for example women politicians, were competing with their male counterparts. For day, women wore conservative styled fitted suits (Fig 2) and for night 'the dress for success' spirit was translated into lavish evening gowns. As the worldwide economy improved, a new social climate dawned. For the leisured female classes, a lifestyle similar to that in the Fifties was pursued. Once more, there was a dazzling array of functions, charity lunches, gala benefits, polo etc. Each occasion demanding a specific kind of outfit.

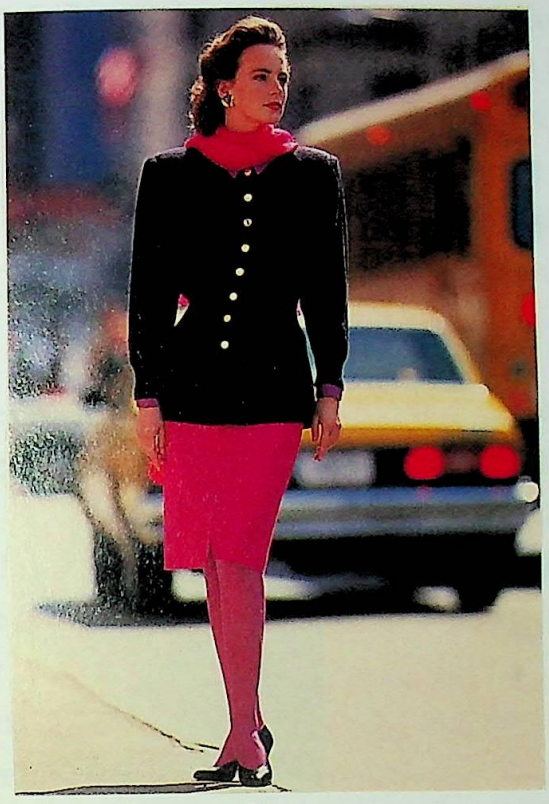


Fig. 2

Fig 3

Suddenly wealthy and influential women were competing for front-row positions at the haute couture shows. In Paris, the clientele within eight years has metamorphosed. Instead of the dowager duchesses and Middle East petroleum princesses, there are pop stars, Grace Jones at Lanvin, and their associates, Lucy Ferry at Chanel and Lacroix, actresses Marisa Brenson, Catherine Deneuve and the wives of many American billionaires.

Social changes which led to the promotion of couture were interpreted in the early Eighties by designers in the fashion capitals of the world. In Milan Giorgio Armani led the way in producing a version of what became known as 'power dressing' with Marlene Dietrich trousers and straight cut jackets for women. Power dressing also from the USA, took a more flamboyant turn in the mid-Eighties under the influence of TV soap operas, Dallas and Dynasty with Joan Collins summing up the look of the Eighties with her severely styled, broad shouldered fitted suits. Millions around the world watched these fantasies of American wealthy lifestyles and many of these fashions were adapted in modified form for the High Street. Padded shoulders and big jackets together with shiny materials, matching hats, tight skirts and high heels were all reminiscent of Fifties haute couture.

In Paris, in 1987, Christian Lacroix, with the backing of the Moet-Hennessy Louis Vuitton Empire, set up Frances' twenty-third couture house. His designs were contemporary couture designs which attracted world-wide attention (Fig 3). Prior to this in 1984, Karl Lagerfeld was appointed to Chanel, partly in the hope that his reflected glory would boost sales of Chanel No.5. It did, moreover it transformed a moribund house in to a must-have label. In the early Eighties, London experienced a 'youth explosion' in fashion and music, similar to that of the Sixties. The British economy was booming. British social life too was a dazzling array of functions. Couture version of power dressing were worn by the Princess of Wales, who emerged as a fashion leader. The Princess deliberately associated herself with the promotion of British fashion. London fashion design saw a renaissance developing through the decade with new names emerging: John Galliano (Fig 4) Jasper Conran (Fig 5), Bruce Oldfield, (Fig 6) Rifat Ozbeck, Arabella Pollen, Vivienne Westwood (Fig 7), Betty Jackson, Bodymap and two new couture houses Anouska Hempel and Victor Edelstein.

Fig b

Fig.7

Victor Edelstein was born in 1946 in Hendon, North London. He spent his formative years growing up on Hendon in the midst of the Jewish rag trade. His grandfather, a Russian Jew who fled Warsaw and his grandmother, a Polish Jew who fled Odessa, came to London in the nineteenth century. His grandfather manufactured women's coats and suits, first in the East End and later in Great Portland Street, London. Victor's father (who died when Victor was nineteen) followed him into the business, manufacturing ready-to-wear coats and suits.

Edelstein is six foot five and lacks all the showy attributes which Hollywood, amongst others, has led us to expect from fashion designers. He does not swagger or mince or shriek. He does not run a dismissive eye over non-couture outfits. He does not fall into rapture over fabrics and he very rarely throws tantrums. Instead, his manner is laid back with a touch of sophisticated camp. His accent is Anglo-Saxon with a touch of stockbroker belt. Behind his fine Jewish features, one can detect laughter. He believes in a sense of humour and he uses it cleverly by telling comical jokes as a device to relax the frantic atmosphere of his couture house before a collection deadline.

As a child, Victor describes himself as "one of those boys who drew frocks "(1) Of course, within the Jewish ragtrade, there was nothing odd in a small boy drawing frocks. Edelstein as a child, however, was not drawn instinctively to the workrooms. He kept away as much as he could "I didn't like the smell of steaming cloth. Even when I decided I wanted to be a dress designer, I never associated it with what they did"(2) Obviously, at this stage of his life, Victor had romantic visions about becoming a fashion designer. His first major female influences were the contemporary screen goddesses: like Jane Russell, Marilyn Monroe, Doris Day and his favourite - Audrey Hepburn, whom he longed to design for.

To study architecture has become a romantic desire associated with many of the great couturiers of the Twentieth century, e.g. Andre Courreges and Christian Dior; Victor Edelstein was no exception. Prior to commencing his career in fashion, he wanted to study architecture. However, his desire to design clothes was soon stronger and further steps in pursuit of an architectural career were soon abandoned. Victor has never clarified his

situation to the press. As far as the press is concerned, he studied architecture prior to his fashion career.

He left grammar school in Hendon at the age of sixteen with six O-Levels and a pile of reports quoting that well known phrase "could do better". For the next twenty years of his life, Edelstein was to embark on a journey, working for various fashion companies before finally setting up his own successful haute couture business at the age of thirty-six in Stanhope Mews West, South Kensington, London.

In 1962, his first job was when he joined the mass manufacturer, Alexon. Alexon was a brand name used by the Steinbergs company which was founded in 1904. By the 1960's Alexon was and still is, an established name not only in Britain but also abroad. Fig 8 shows two outfits from the Alexon range for Spring / Summer 1972. Edelstein trained for two years in the workroom. His duties involved sewing and pattern cutting. After two years, he was dismissed for being too dreamy. Between 1964 and 1966 he worked for Clifton Slimline, a fashion company dealing with the craft, skills and subtleties of French dressmaking. Again, he was dismissed for being too dreamy. He then moved on to Nettie Vogues, a pattern cutting company who supplied patterns to the mass market. He worked with Nettie Vogues cutting patterns for twelve months. Soon however, he was given the sack, in fact, he was fired about six times during his early career. He himself explains why, "I was a bit of a dreamy twerp, but getting the sack didn't make me feel bad. Instead, I always though 'Fine, I will improve on that job'. In my mind all the time, was to have my own couture business, although I didn't have any idea how I was going to achieve it"(3) Despite so often getting the sack, Edelstein obviously developed the right frame of mind, and a positive and patient attitude towards eventual success. By working in the various fashion companies, he was also in the fortunate position of being exposed to different skills and methods as well as the running operation of each company.

In 1967, at the age of twenty-one, he became an assistant pattern cutter to one of the most important fashion designers of the Sixties, who helped to make 'swinging London' the envy of the world. This designer was Barbara Hulanicki of Biba. Along with her husband, Stephen Fitzsimon, Hulanicki

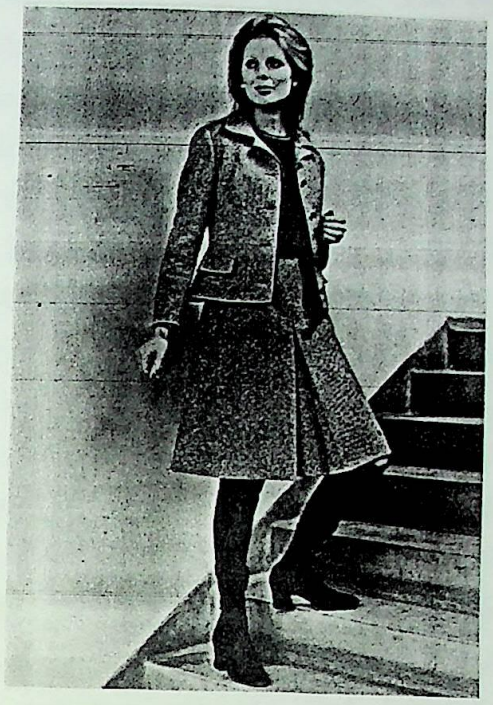


Fig 8

started a mail order business in the early Sixties. The clothes were cheerful and easy clothes (Fig 9) which were feature in magazines appealing especially to young readers. The success of her mail order designs encouraged her to open a boutique called Biba in 1963 in Abingdon Road London. From the beginning it sold not just clothes, but a life approach to style. Its success was so so considerable that in 1969, after several moves, the Biba organisation took over the Art Deco building that had formerly been Derry and Toms department store in Kensington High Street. Here was sold a lifestyle and an attitude which were very individualistic and very much a reflection of Barbara Hulanicki's tastes. Biba was important because it caught the mood of the late Sixties which was moving towards an aesthetic, different from the space age brightness of Courreges, or the Mondrian primary colours; black, white, acid yellow, and the red and blue of Yves Saint Laurent in 1966. Already, there had been a trend in interior design for Art Noveau and Art Deco; Hulanicki decorated her shops in sombre colours and furnished them in period bentwood and ostrich feathers in Victorian vases. Soon, instead of little shift dresses, she was creating sleazy Jean Harlow satin evening wear (Fig 9). She popularised 'off' colours reminiscent of the 1930's or even of aesthetic dress in the 1890's. T-shirts, canvas and suede boots, and rubberised canvas riding macs were long-term bestsellers in slightly weird colours; flesh, brickdust, and augergine. Meanwhile a whole cosmetic range brought back a forgotten era of the silent movies, when lipsticks were maroon and eyeshadow sepia.

Edelstine had a 'wonderful' time at Biba, having never really liked any other job before he went to work for Hulanicki. It was at this stage in his life that the fashion world seemed to have serious appeal "The clothes were young, I was young and we were designing inexpensive clothes to be delivered to the shop by the lorryload"(4) As Hulanicki was primarily responsible for all the clothes designed for Biba, Edelstein's contribution as a designer must have been of little relevance. To begin with, he was employed as a pattern cutter, not as a designer.

After three years with Biba, work satisfaction soon began to diminish. Eventually he realised "it was a bit of a getting nowhere job"(5) While he was working with Biba, he attracted a growing clientele of his own. Through friends and contacts while with Biba he would work in the evenings in his studio in Airlie Gardens in South Kensington. This studio was rented by

The dress that started it all

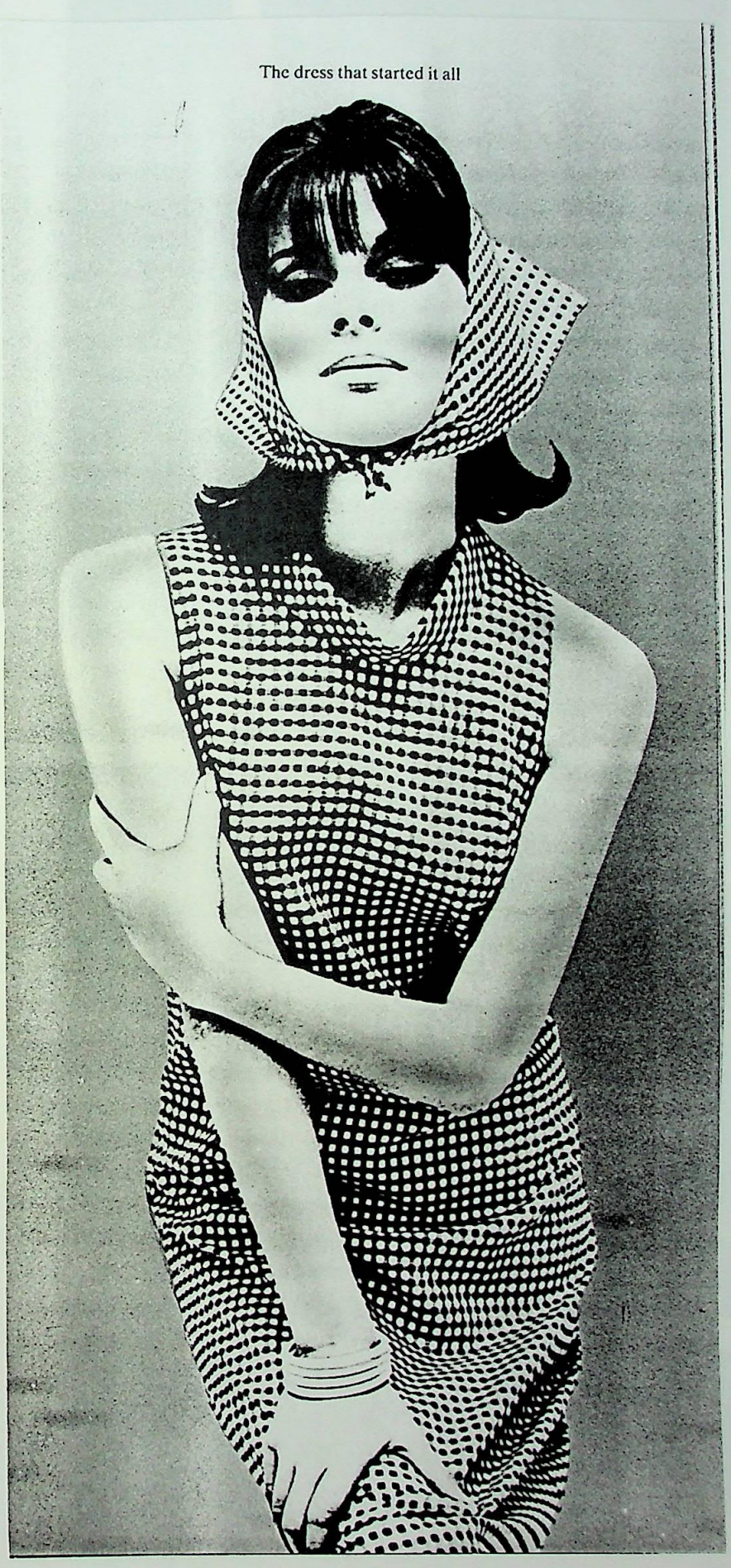


Fig. 9

Fig. 9a

Victor who earned enough money at Biba to afford it. In 1970, after three years with Biba, he decided to leave and concentrate full time on running his studio. He primarily designed ready-to-wear with a little couture imput. His clients included friends and minor pop groups like 'Traffic'. After three years on his own, he decided to close the studio, due to his failing financial position. As a result, he relentlessly returned on his journey as an employee yet again. This time, he joined another London based design company, called Salvador. This company had a well-deserved reputation for finely embroidered and beaded special occasion clothes and were aimed at the top of the de-luxe ready-to-wear market. This company was small and had no major influence. Victor was hired as a designer and was responsible for designing elegant and sophisticated clothes. This job was responsible for introducing him to the art of embroidery and beading which, in later years, he would develop to become part of the Victor Edelstein signature.

In 1973, Edelstein married an Italian Catholic who he met through friends in London. She is from a wealthy Italian background and is a dealer in old Master drawings. However, marriage did not go according to plan and after seven years, they were separated. They have never divorced and remain good friends, although they have no children. She has an influence in his work to the extent that he is often wary about what she thinks of the latest collection and he believes that she has a very good eye.

In the mid 1970's, he experienced another setback. This time he was dismissed from Salvador for being docile and unconscientious in his attitude to work. However all was not forsaken, as he applied for an assistant designer's job at Christian Dior's London couture branch of the French house and was successful.

The Parisian designer Christian Dior was born in Granville in France in 1905. He originally wanted to study architecture but his desire to follow a career in fashion was stronger. At the age of thirty he began his career in fashion as an illustrator. He was then hired by the house of Piquet before finally, at the age of forty two, he set up his own couture house under his own name in September 1946. In February 1947, Dior presented his first collection, the 'Corolle' line (Fig 10). Named the 'New Look' by an American journalist, it

was instantly and spectacularly successful. Dior's name became a household name overnight. He brought back femininity and glamour after a war-time period of unprecedented privations. The padded hips, nipped in waists and tight boned bodices (Fig 11) were anachronistic. They could satisfy only briefly. The amount of material used in skirts, as much as fifty yards a dress in some cases, brought condemnation from Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the British Board of Trade, but the French government supported Dior, happy to see Paris re-established as the fashion leader. The New Look was widely copied by many couturiers.

At the time of his death in 1957, Dior was a leader of the vast multimillion dollar international merchandising organisation producing haute couture, ready-to-wear, jewellery, scarves, gloves, stockings and cosmetics. The London couture branch of the French house was set up in the early Fifties when London couture enjoyed a period of success. The stars then of British couture were Ronald Patterson, John Cavanagh, Michael Sherrand and John Boyd while the pre-war houses such as Hartnell, (Fig 12, Cocktail dresses by Hartnell 1952), Lachasse, Charles Creed and hardy Amies continued with great success. By the 1960's however, British couturiers were struggling with the exception of Amies who managed to diversify by producing a menswear collection. There were now fewer clients, most of an older generation. So serious did the financial problems become, many designers closed their houses. Unlike the Parisian houses, they lacked financial backing and the opportunities to expand into licensing deals and ready-to-wear. The underfinancing and consequently lack of international status continues today.

The London Dior branch continued to have financial backing from Paris even during the Sixties and Seventies and continues today. Subsequently, it provided the fortunate opportunity for Edelstein to become an assitant designer. Like every branch of the motherhouse, certain haute couture rules had to be adhered to. Accordingly, Edelstein designed obeying these rules and in the process acquired advantageous work experience which further enriched his fashion legacy. (Haute couture rules will be further discussed in the next section.)

In 1978, enough was enough, and he was fed up with being employed. He

Fig 10

Fig 11

Fig 12

decided once again to set up his own business dealing specifically with up-market ready-to-wear. This company was based in Convent Garden. He supplied small boutique type shops with evening wear, which although had hand finishing, the dresses were ready-to-wear and were simple, wearable and uninventive in design.

This proved disastrous as Victor frankly concedes, "It went under, I got my costings all wrong".6 His great friend and ex-codirector Anna Miller explained why: "Cash flow, it is the problem with any small company".7 Edelstein obviously failed to appreciate the amount of capital required up front to operate in a business which is so seasonal and suffers from such big swings in income. Undoubtedly, this was a traumatic stage in his life - "It was awful when it happened, but in a way the worst that could happen. I could have either slunk away with my tail between my legs and got a job as a pattern cutter and never been seen again, or taken whatever what was left and tried again".8 And that is what he did do. He managed with his savings to buy back his machinery. He then borrowed a small amount of money from the bank and decided to set up the business again. This time he decided to concentrate only in haute couture dresses.

He learned the hard way that the cost structure of ready-to-ear was much more awkward than that of the couture business in which clients pay a fifty per cent deposit when they place their order following a fashion show. Subsequently, production should be self financing.

In 1982, after fours years of his fatal ready-to-wear attempt, he reformed the company concentrating solely on haute-couture. Victor Edelstein Ltd, Stanhope Mews West, South Kensington was to be, and still is the company's base. The transformation from ready-to-wear to couture which was really Edelstin's only option given the original company's predicament, has been the businesses salvation. As soon as he started his haute couture business, he no longer used synthetic fabrics. Quality was of the utmost importance in fabric and construction. He now used the highest quality of silk fabrics from Italy and France. His dresses were now made in the haute couture tradition: elaborate boned bodices, linings of pure silk, hand finished details and elaborate use of trimmings. As he was virtually unknown when he started the

house, his clothes were less expensive. His clients, numbering between fifteen and twenty in total had patronised him from his ready-to-wear business. In the early Eighties his haute couture house became more successful by his increasing reputation for making simply designed, well made dresses. His fashion shows would take place in his small studio with models descending from the stairs.

Cash began to flow in steadily and gradually, he began to build up his staff, from three to nine, to fifteen within four years. As the demand for his clothes grew stronger, his studio could not cope, very little space and more staff were required. When a building four doors up the same mews became available for rent. Edelstein took it and moved the business into 3/4 Stanhope Mews. This building, originally two separate buildings was rolled into one.

Today, he employs about twenty four staff. Under the skylights, his loyal pattern cutters and dressmakers are constantly busy from 9.30am to 5.30pm. The workroom staff produce about 300 dresses a year, which can cost between £3,000 to £13,000 each. The present company lost £500 in its first eighteen months but is now making a profit with an annual turnover of about £900,000. 'By appointment only', is the system used to operate his business. This system allows him to fit and tend to clients one at a time. The house makes clothes to measure for individual clients, who make their selection by viewing his Spring and Autumn collections. His two annual shows are usually held at the Hyde Park Hotel, his preferred venue. If this hotel is not available, Claridges in Bond Street is used.

His main concern as a designer is to produce flattering and alluringly sophisticated clothes made to fit the individual wearer. His clients are high profile like the Princess of Wales (even her waxwork at Madame Tussaud's wears an Edelstein), Lady Sarah Armstrong-Jones, Princess Yasmin Aga Khan, Jeffries, Isabel Goldsmith, Mrs. Robert Sangster and Emma Sergeant, the artist to mention but a few. After each collection, he brings it to New York twice each season. First a seasonal showing in the Plaza Hotel then later for the fitting, operating with the aid of a video form his hotel suite. His American clients include Victoria Newhouse, wife of the Conde Nast Chairman Si Newhouse, Tina Brown, Editor of Vanity Fair, Anna Wintour, Editor of Vogue,

Jean Vanderbilt and Basis Johnson of Johnson and Johnson products.

Despite designing for some of Europes and Americas most glamourous and influential women, Edelstine's success has not turned his head. Fashion is not the be-all and end-all for him. His charm, humour, affability and discretion are well chronicled. Nicholas Coleridge has said of him "I have heard Victor Edelstein described as the best mannered man in London.[9] Over the last eight years, Edelstein has emerged along with Burce Oldfield, as the couturier most trusted by the establishment, the master of the English thoroughbred look, confirmed by his client list. Customer relations are important to him. His relationship with his clients is formal and professional "I don't get lionised. I never call a client by their first name, never do that".[10] What he believe is that the responsibility of a couturier is to make a woman individual, not silly. "You mustn't make them look like a cabaret when they go out. You must bring fantasy and invention to clothes but not so that they are demanding to wear. Why shouldn't a woman want to look totally ravishing and turn every head at a dance".[11] (Clients will be further discussed in Section III).

His rise to success can be traced back to the mid Eighties. As for his contemporaries, Catherine Walker of the Chelsea Design Company, Hardy Amies, Anouska Hempel and Bruce Oldfield, (which will be further discussed in Section II) Royal Patronage has been primarily responsible for his success. In Edelsteins case, the Princess of Wales decided to endorse him as one of her main designers for a maternity dress in the early Eighties. The question automatically arises as to why the Princess of Wales has such a profound effect on the success of a designer and that is why she is so important to the British fashion.

The truth of the matter is that she is much more important than either Nancy Reagan was to America or Raisa Gorbachev is to Soviet Fashion. The Princess of Wales is the first member of the British Royal Family who does not subconsciously consider her designers as 'trade'. Consequently, she is prepared to lend time to the British fashion councils' gala dinner for foreign buyers and benefits like Bruce Oldfield's Barnado's annual benefit at the Grosvenor House Hotel. Furthermore, she has made two less quantifiable contributions through her role in establishing London's position as the worlds

fourth fashion capital and by providing an accessible global focus for British fashion with photographs and merchandising of designers appearing relentlessly in W in New York, An-an in Toydo and L'officiels Arabic edition in Riyadh.

The influence is remarkable, her clothes, particularly her hats, collars and accessories, have been copied at every level, her endorsement of particular designers really does sell clothes.

The range and sheer number of designers the Princess patronised in 1984 were proof of her increasing familiarity with the small print of British fashion. It would obviously have been more convenient to restrict herself to three or four designers (as the senior royals do with Hardy Amies and Hartnell) rather than explain what she wanted to a multitude of diverse London designers.

Anna Harvey, senior fashion editor of British Vogue, came to her rescue. She devised a clever system of introducing the Princess to clothes by new designers, whom one was Edelstein. Harvey and her assistants called the clothes into Vogue House in Hanover Square, in other words she contacted the designer's publicity offices, Sandwich Communications in Edelsteins case, and asked them to deliver samples of their work, implying that they were being considered for a fashion shoot. The Princess would then slip into the Vogue fashion room, frisk the rails of outfits and with the advice of Anna Harvey, try them on. She would then select the chosen few, whose clothes suited her best. An Edelstein evening dress was chosen; no doubt his elegantly simple, clean cut and unfussy style endeared him to what would become his most celebrated customer. This system absolved her of the embarrassment of visiting a designers showroom and raising hopes before deciding that the clothes did not suit her. Now the Princess's principal stops are Stanhope Mews West for Victor Edelstein, Beauchamp Place, for Bruce Oldfield, the Kings Road for the Chelsea Design Company (Catherine Walker) and Great Marlborough Street for Jasper Conran.

Inevitably Edelstein's rise to prominence was dramatically boosted overnight. To date he cannot remember how many dresses he has designed for the Princess - "I lost track, it all happened with a maternity dress and we've

worked from there"(12) When the Princess decides to endorse any particular designer, automatically prestige centres around the designer and his / her success is ensured. As prestige is also important to many fashion conscious English women, they in turn often choose the Princess's designer. This is the case with Edelstein and it has been mainly responsible for his success.

The Royal tour to France in December 1988 further ensured that creations with the Edelstein label would be among the most sought after. The dress in question was an evening gown (Fig 13) with a train of duchess satin extending from the hips. The dress was exquisitely beaded with a matching bolero jacket in ivory satin. I happened to be working on the collection that this dress was part of . The embroidery, like all Edelstein's embroidery was carried out in a Paris workshop called Hurel. Most probably her hosts were unaware of the fact that the embroidery was carried out in Paris. When the embroidery returned it was not quite up to Edelstein's standards. The colour of the glass beads was more of a bronze colour than the required gold. No changes could be made at this stage, as the deadline for the show was pressing. After the show the Princess bought the model dress (as she was then a perfect size 10). On recollection the dress cost about £7,000, but generally she is given a discount. Edelstein described the dress as being a 'milestone dress' - her first really grown up ballgown. That was the first time she had worn an evening dress with formal beading" (13)

Edelsteins name was etched firmly on the fashion map when she wore another of his gowns - a full length, off-the-shoulder midnight blue velvet gown for the night she danced with John Travolta at the White House in Washington in 1987. Today, the Princess wears an Edelstein dress quite frequently, promoting his name in magazines, television and the daily press. (Fig 14).

In fashion, trends can be divided into three categories; trends which last for two or three months, trends which last for a season ie. shape and silhouette and finally trends which last between one and five years where the fashion scene is not being developed, but copied by designers who categorises their work as classics. Edelstein fits into the last category. He has very conventional ideas on how women should dress. As a result his work is

conservative and traditional. In London, he is respected as a haute couturier and has a reputation rather than fame. His increasing popularity reached a high point in February 1990 when he was featured on the front cover of Tatler magazine. Ambitious enough to start his business, he was fed up of going from fashion company to fashion company as an employee. He does not work particularly hard like his fellow couturiers e.g. Bruce Oldfield, but ensures that his work is perfect by inspecting every detail before a dress leaves the studio. Prior to setting up his haute couture house, he never achieved anything momentous. Ironically he stayed in London to learn the skills of French dressmaking. He twice tried to start his own business. First in the early Seventies with a studio in Airlie Gardens, Kensington and then in the late Seventies in Covent Garden. Both attempts eventually failed. Undeterred by failing twice, he tried again, with a desire to succeed, a small clientele, a little money, confidence and a methodical approach. The cliche of 'third time lucky' certainly worked for Edelstein. He believes in the future of haute couture, maintaining that there will always be a demand for anything 'custom made' be it a fitted kitchen or ballgown. He is supported by his customers whose only wish is to be beautifully dressed in a refined an elegant manner.

It is important to note that Edelstein has qualities that are undocumented which, I believe, are strongly related to his success. Despite being reared in Hendon, North London, he always had the ability to associate in the right kind of circles. For instance, at one stage in his early life, when he was receiving unemployment benefit, he was invited to stay with the Rothschilds in Paris. As his career progressed within this environment, he managed to acquire his clientele, people who lent him money to start his businesses and essential contacts. The expansion of his market into New York was the result of a contact, (Cece Kieseltein-Cord, the wife of the society jeweller Barry Kieseltein-Cord) not a demand for his clothes, which he later developed.

Fig. 13.

SECTION 2

THE WORK OF VICTOR EDELSTEIN

Before I proceed with my discussion on the work of Victor Edelstein, I feel it is important to clarify what exactly haute couture is in relation to ready-to-wear.

Haute couture refers to custom built clothes. It has been often confused with very expensive 'boutique' or ready-to-wear ranges from the same or comparably famous design houses. This confusion has originated due to the fact that during the period between the mid Sixties and mid Eighties, very little attention was paid to couture. In the Sixties, for the first time, fashion began to focus upon teenagers. Styles changed so fast that manufacturers found it difficult to produce stock fast enough. Compared with the calmer Seventies, the Sixties seems one frantic dash, by girls to buy the latest 'look' and by designers to produce the next. Couture's death was only slightly exaggerated. A few wealthy ageing dowagers continued to patronise houses, which kept their couture lines going for the sake of perfume sales.

Couture clothes contain a thorough, thought-out individuality that distinguishes them from ready-to-wear. Additionally, couture clothes are always distinguishable, not only by the quality of the fabric used, but by the finess of the trimming. 'Trimming' includes all aspects of decoration on a dress, whether this includes buttons, braiding, decorative as opposed to purely functional seamlines, pockets, belts, embroidery, applique and so on. The principle secret of couture design is to suit the level of craft to the concept of the garment, for example, some evening dresses designed by Worth, one of the first couturiers of the late nineteenth century, are positive canvases of net, chiffon, ribbon, bows, beads and tassels applied in a glorious array of colour and texture - worked onto the dress in exactly the same way that a painter would give life to the surface of a canvas. With ready-to-wear, manufacturers have to pare down an exciting line and use trimming with modest limits so as not to price a garment out of the average consumer's pocket. The couturier, on the other hand, works with little or no restriction with fabrics and trimmings.

The interior of a couture dress is as well finished as the exterior. In ready-to-wear, it is obvious that manufacturers are not concerned if raw seams

are left to unravel or it seams are must finished with a machine made overlock stitch. "Quality in fashion" says Valentine "is determined by beautiful fabrics, the finishing and details".14 With haute couture come garment where zips are concealed , pleats lie immaculately, bodices are boned, linings are silk, and buttons are hand selected. When you make an appointment with the couturier, you get his or her undivided attention. If you are at all insecure about how to wear it you can get expert advice on what tights, hats, gloves, handbags and belts to wear with your creation. You will be attended to in peace and quiet your figure faults discretely disguised and you will have at least three fittings when you place your order. When your dress eventually looks a little tired, the house will repair, alter and generally give it a new lease of life.

The quality of individual attention is a part of a couturier's work. Christian Dior was one of the few men in the field with an ability to express this designing process in words:

"Everything created by human hands expresses something above all the personality of the creator. The same thing is true with a dress. But since so many people are working on it, the real job is to get all the hands that cut, sew, try on and embroider to express all that I have felt. In this profession, where taste is everything, I have to consider the personality of each worker at each different level. Into each hem, a worker puts a bit of his or her heart and soul".15

A couture design is only included in a collection if it can be made to look good on any individual without sacrificing details or complications, which is the procedure with ready-to-wear when they are styled. Couturiers put 'looks' together and create their work like an art not merely a technique.

The right to the title couturier is the gift of the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne. The governing and licensing body run by the Parisian Jacques Muiclier. Founded in 1868 the Chambres main job is to organise and oversee the twice-yearly Paris collections. In order to qualify for official classification a couturier must fulfil these six criteria.

1. Maintain a workroom in Paris

2. Employ a minimum of twenty workers. (These are full time workers. Larger houses like Chanel and Saint Laurent employ more than a hundred, but for the smaller ateliers, twenty staff is a grave financial burden. There is continual discussion over what exactly constitutes 'full-time', particularly for satellite and outworkers.

3. The clothes must, of course, be entirely made to measure. This is strictly interpreted. The fabric should not be part-cut before the customer has been measured.

4. A couturier must show twice a year, in the last week of January and the last week of July.

5. There must be a minimum of sixty-five garments each season. (This too has become a controversial stipulation. Many houses do not, frankly have 130 good new ideas a year, nor can they afford to make them. They would prefer to show thirty or forty dresses. The successful houses are anxious to keep the base-rate at sixty-five since it prevents new underfunded houses from enjoying the privileges of the Chambre Syndicale.)

6. They must, in theory at least, give their customer forty five opportunities a year for a private show. This has been considerably undermined by video and is not much adhered to.

These laws are strictly Parisian, in other countries, like Britain for instance, the laws of couture are not as strictly adhered to. Although Edelstein does not have a workroom in Paris, he does employ 24 workers, his clothes are completely made to measure and he does show twice a year. The number of outfits in any of his collection are between forty four and forty eight. His

intention is always to produce fifty outfits each season, but as of yet, he has never achieved this. Because he takes a video recording of his shows, his clients are allowed to view his collections whenever they want to. However, he does not show in the last week of July. Instead, he shows along with his fellow couturiers, Hardy Amies, Anouska Hempel, Marc Bohan, Franka and Lachasse in British couture week. This allows press and clients the freedom to go to Paris if they wish to do so.

At the Edelstein show, clients, numbering about sixty in all, scrutinize each outfit and eye the designs, not as a journalist or store buyer does looking for fashion directions and breadth of appeal, but purely subjectively. As the models follow each other along the catwalk, a trail of little asterisks and ticks line the margin of each customers printed running order (Fig 15). It is this subjective element that Edelstein is most sympathetic with;

"The essence of clothing is to flatter. As someone once said, to feel that one is well dressed gives a feeling of confidence that even religion cannot bestow" [16]

A conservative designer, he designs with a woman of thirty in mind. He visualizes the clothes being worn to an opera, a gallery opening, etc. His ex-wife Anna Maria, has been an important influence on his work. "She's tall, loves dresses and has great flair. She criticises me and criticism is very valuable - I always take it!"" In his fashion drawings women have long high legs which makes the very chic and sophisticated figure look weightless and french (Fig 16). He draws in a spontaneous manner, making notes and adding sketches as he goes along. When the design is finally decided on, the sketch (not a technical drawing) is handed to the pattern cutter who has learned over the years to interpret exactly the required fit, length, drape and design details.

When designing for a collection, he does not use any themes to serve as inspiration. Instead he considers particular lifestyles. He visualizes a woman wearing the garment and where she will be wearing it. He has a very conservative but realistic approach to design. "When designing a dress one must think of a woman getting in and out of cars. When she goes out to dinner she wants to go out comfortably and look attractive. That means no ridiculous collars and if there is anything going on at the back of the dress, I arrange it so the woman wearing it can sit down. Anything that doesn't work

is bad design, no matter how beautiful. What's the point? Any designer would be fool not to consider the practicalities in the first place, because the client will".18 Because of his attitude, his clients trust him. They know he has considered very carefully the function of each outfit he designs. His aim is to flatter a woman and to make her appear pleasing and sexy in a sophisticated way, but not tarty. "Allure" is a word he uses to describe the sexy element in his work.

Each collection is divided up into categories; day wear to begin with (generally seven outfits). Then short styled dresses for afternoon into evening wear consisting of about thirty one in all - the houses speciality and finally, at most, six long evening gowns. Despite what fashion may dictate elsewhere, there will always be a demand for serious big ball gowns for parties in the mansions of Britain.

Unfortunately, I am unable to assess Edelstein's early work from the Sixties, Seventies and early Eighties as there are no visual references recorded by the press or by Victor Edelstein. Edelstein has never been conscentious enough to keep references of his earlier work. From the mid Eighties onwards however, his office staff have been collecting press coverage, etc. The earliest visual references I acquired, are dating from 1987 onwards, when the designer began his rise to prominence. I first plan to discuss his use of line and shape, then his use of colour and fabric and conclude with a discussion on his main influences.

As I have already mentioned, Victor Edelstein has much to consider as a designer . In particular, a main consideration of his is simplicity of line. This has most probably been acquired during his time working for Biba and Dior. These fashion companies, in particular, concentrated on producing clothes that were simply designed but well shaped. They taught him the importance of good shapes combined with a simple use of line which can result from an impeccable cut. When designing a garment, he allows the garment only one area of interest. The rest remains free from the least amount of detail - thus complementing the interesting area. An example of his clear use of line is evident in Fig 17 a two piece duchess satin cocktail suit from Spring 1987. To begin with, the cut is very conventional as is the styling. It is, however, in

Victor Edelstein

3 & 4, Stanhope Mews West, London, SW7 5RB
Telephone: 071-244 7481

AUTUMN 1990 COUTURE COLLECTION

1. Chocolate brown wool suit with long jacket. (16)
   Chocolate brown wool cape with velvet collar. (21)

2. Pink flecked tweed suit with burgundy velvet collar and pockets. (17)
   Plum wool cape with gold buttons. (22)

3. Olive green flecked tweed jacket with matching green velvet skirt. (18)
   Olive green wool trapeze coat with draped collar.(19)

4. Short red wool crepe dress. (44)

5. Short black wool crepe dress with white collar. (43)

6. Black wool ottoman suit with long jacket and white silk shirt. (27)

7. Purple wool suit with long jacket and black velvet trim with white silk shirt. (37)

8. Emerald green silk drap short dress with draped skirt and gold buttons. (47)

9. Short red silk drap dress with knotted front. (20)

10. Short purple crushed velvet dress with knotted front. (29)

11. Burgundy crushed velvet dress with off the shoulder bodice and draped skirt. (30)

12. Short brown crushed velvet dress with square neck and draped skirt. (33)

14. Red and green rose brocade dress with square neck. (39)

15. Bottle green velvet short dress with draped skirt. (36)

16. Black barathea double breasted coat dress with diamante buttons. (48)

Victor Edelstein Ltd. VAT Registration Number 340 8922 56. Company Registration Number 160 8212 England.
Directors: Victor Edelstein, Sara Studd. Registered Office: 871 High Road, London, N12 8QA

Fig 15

Fig 16

Fig 17

keeping with fashion trends at the time, a close fitted jacket with board padded shoulders. There is no ostentatious use of fabric or trimmings. The suit is styled with a belt by Vogue which was not intended by Edelstein. Subsequently, the mood is changed by a young racy woman as opposed to a thirty year old more discreet Edelstein ideal. The simple cut and elimination of detail has in turn allowed the fabric to take precedence as the most attractive feature of the suit.

An impeccable cut is achieved again in Fig 18 where the model wears a black wool crepe bolero over a high waisted short skirt of the same fabric and doubled ivory silk crepe T-shirt. Again, there is no innovative cut. The three garments are simple and conventional, understated but confidently well shaped. The image projected is chic with a sophisticated elegance. The high waisted skirt is further complemented by the bolero. Edelstein designs boleros quite frequently and in the same collection for winter 87/88, another bolero appears. This time however, he has manipulated it by the use of a trimming. Fig 19 shows a long floor length fitted velvet short dress with matching bolero trimming with fox. In 1989, he designed a dress with a matching bolero (Fig 13) which the Princess of Wales wore to Paris. Since then, boleros have become part of his signature.

Likewise, he generally uses the same silhouette season after season but each time treating it differently by use of fabric and colour. To further prove this point Figs 19, 20 and 21 depict three garments with the same silhouette from Winter 87/88, Spring/Summer 88 and Winter 88/89 consecutively. Each dress has the same cutting features - a strapless fitted bodice to the hips continuing straight down to ankle length. In Fig 20 and Fig 21 attention is drawn to the bust area. Also in Fig 21 the dress is interestingly cut with false pockets and edging trimmed in grosgrain. The diamante buttons are not functional and serve as an embellishment only - subsequently the dress is visually deceptive. On first observation one is led to believe that this garment is a fitted jacket - like dress by the visible cross-over button stanch. In fact, is has a side zip opening. It is a clever touch that makes the dress visually interesting. To demonstrate further uses of the same silhouette Fig 22 and Fig 23 are outfits from the same collection for Winter 89/90. Although the outfits are for two separate occasions, day and evening, the silhouette is remarkable the same. While the top section of each outfit is relatively fitted, the cut of fabric over the

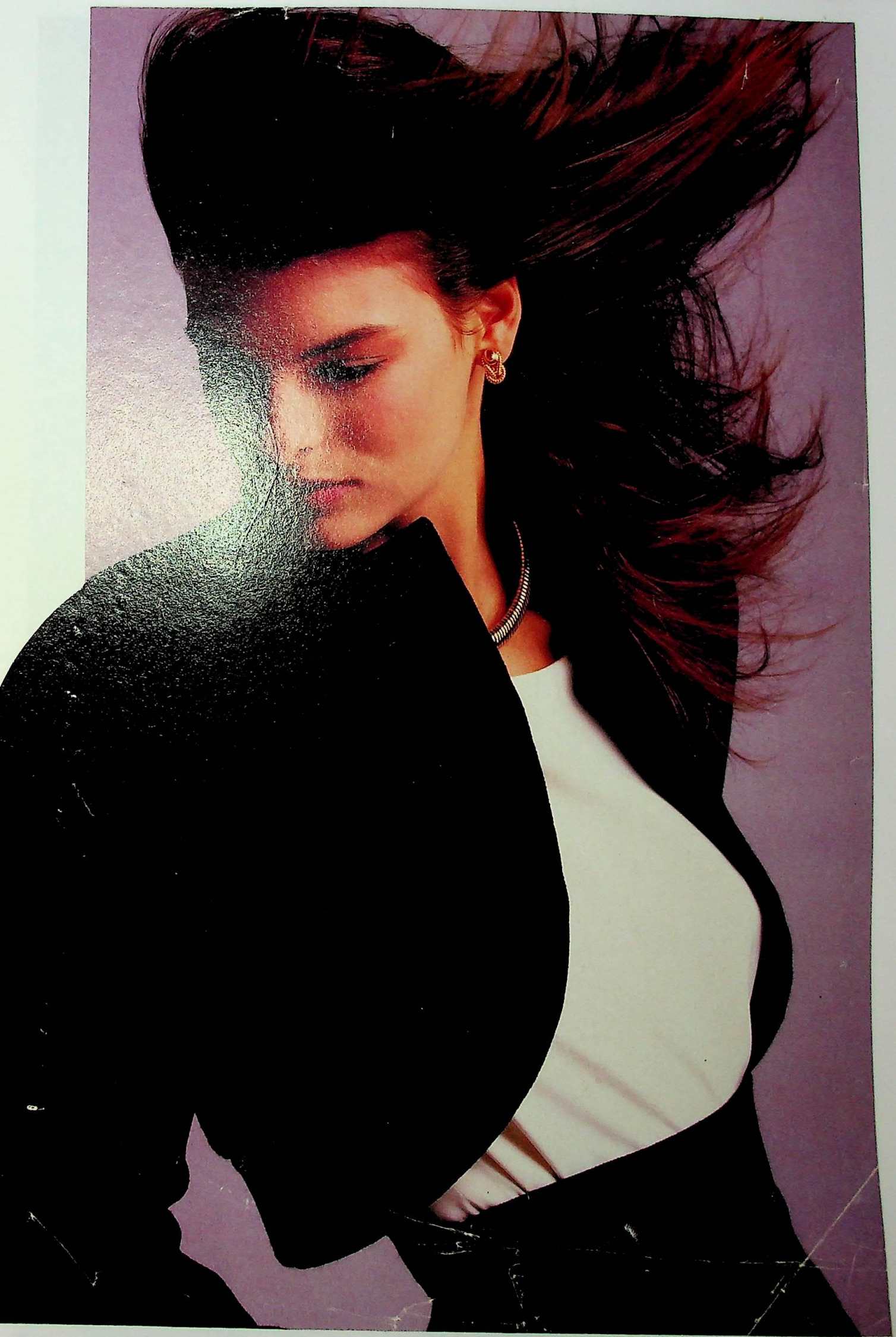


Fig 18

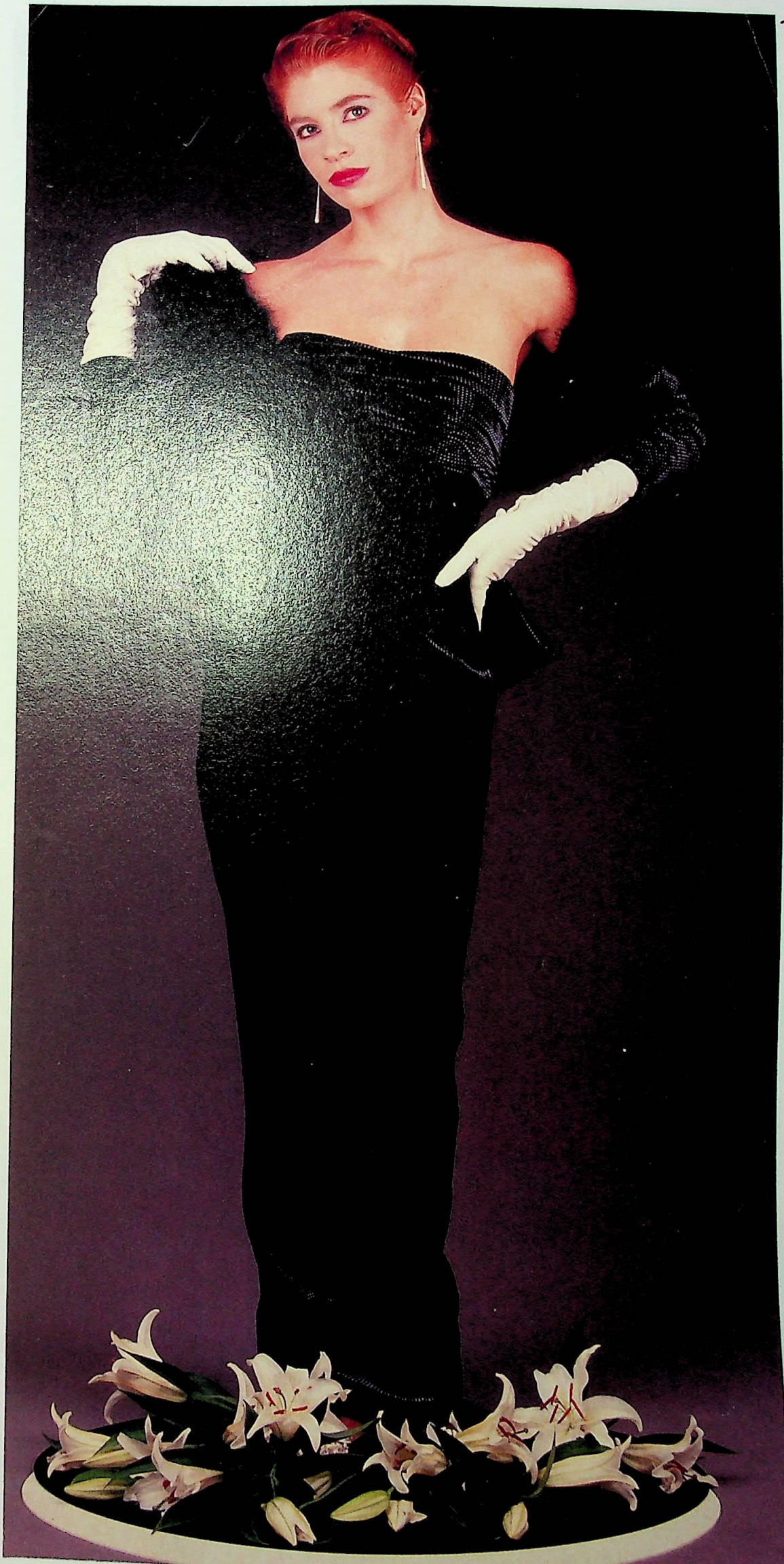


Fig 19

F. 20

Fig 21

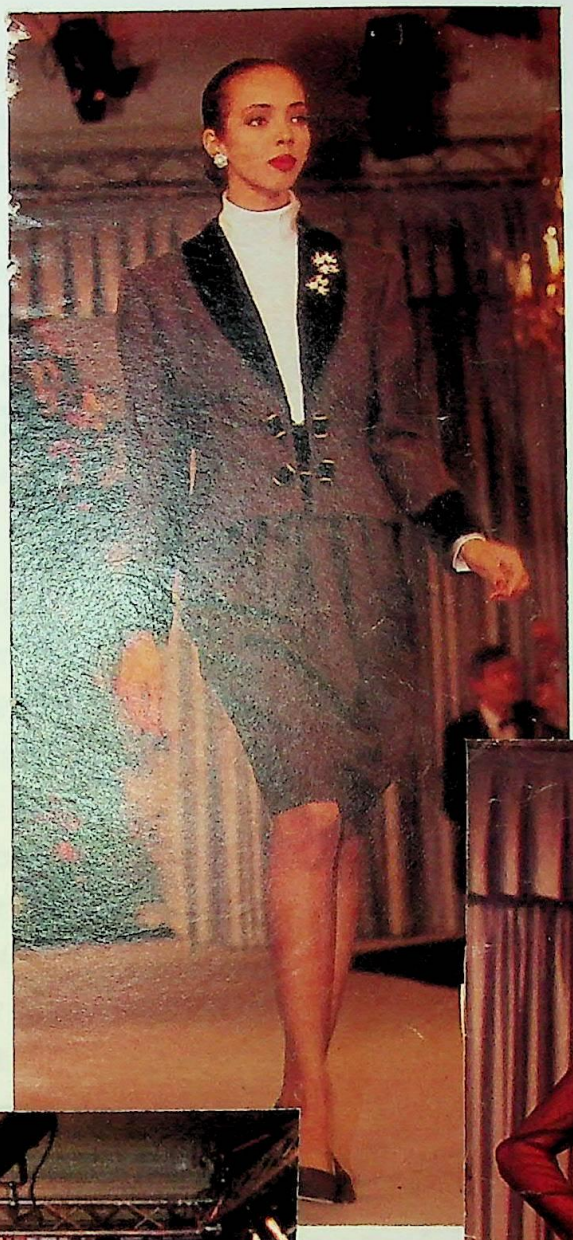
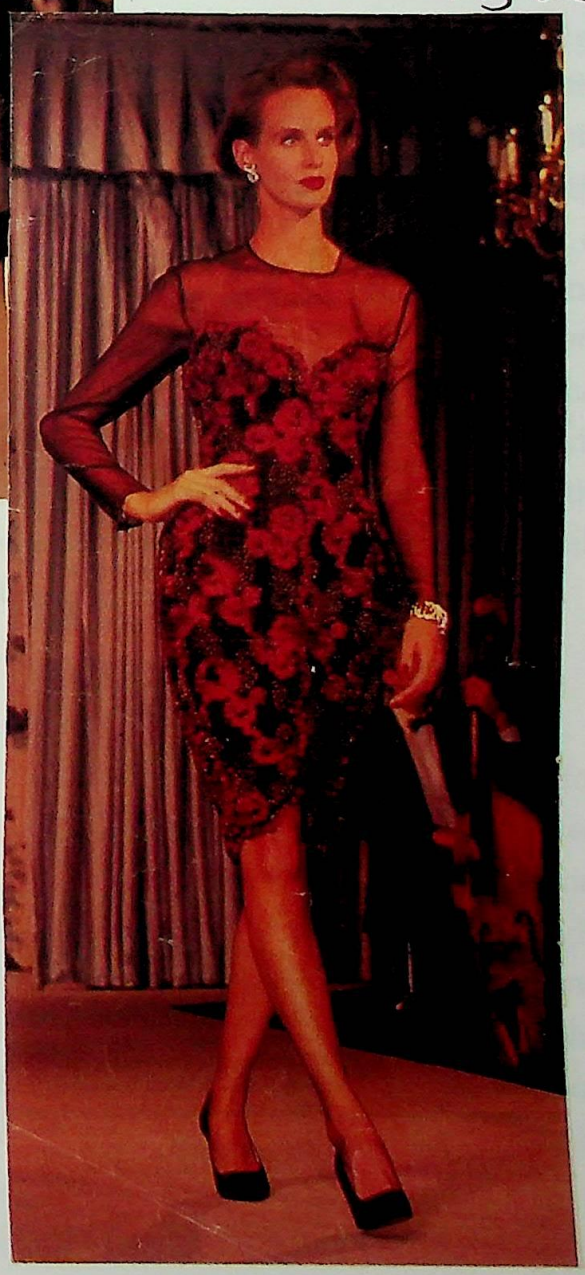


Fig. 22.

Fig 23



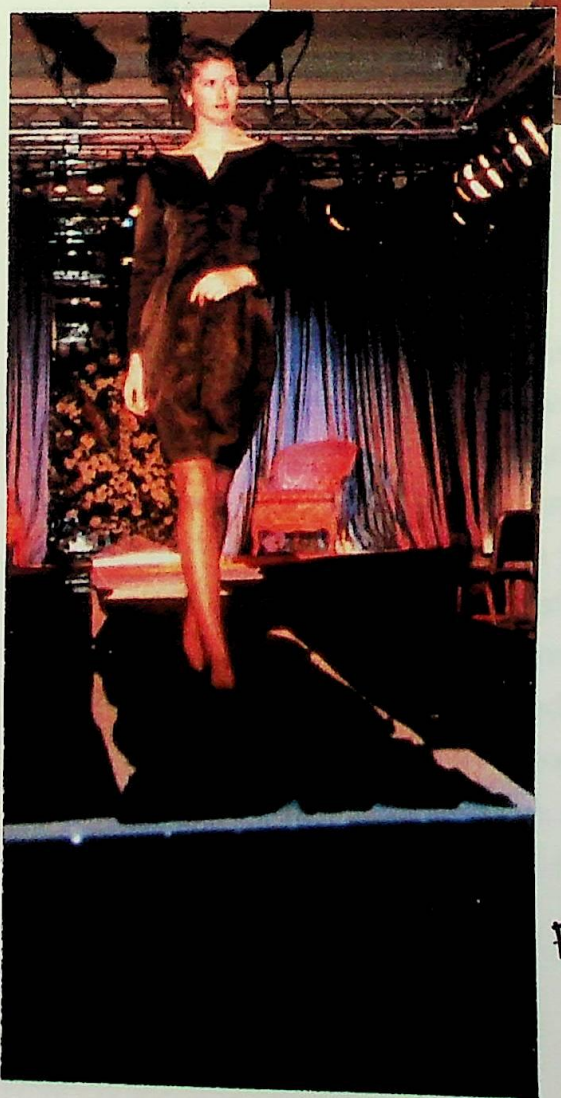


Fig 24.

hips has been exaggerated and emphasised further by the clipped in waist. The use of line is kept to a minimum in both outfits. The outfits demonstrate Edelsteins ability to be versatile with the use of line and fabric type within a similar silhouette. The cut is successful because the proportions work. If for instance, the length were to be extended to mid-calf, I feel it would be less successful. It is an interesting cut and would most benefit clients with small waists and big hips. The same cut was used the year before for Winter 88/89 (Fig 24). Figs 22, 23 show the extent of further development one year later with more interesting use of fabric for day and evening.

Edelstein likes to design clothes that have a well-defined waist as he believes his clients like to show off their waists as much as possible. Not all his clothes however have a well defined waist. His day wear is a little more casual but very smart. In Fit 25, a two piece suit is worn over a short skirt and high necked patterned blouse. The very simple line of the jacket complements the barrel buttoning details. The velvet rever of the collar exquisitely set off the silk patterned blouse. This box style jacket is conventional in cut and is the basis of all Edelstein's day jackets. Sometimes it is perhaps more fitted or slightly elongated. Incidentally, in the same collection he has used the same cut but this time, he has manipulated it by cutting away the shoulders, changed the fabric to velvet and by the use of intricate embroidery has transformed the look into evening wear (Fig 26). The plainness of the skirt under the embroidery allows the eye, with little distraction, to appreciate the very fine embroidery. This emphasises the Edelstein concept of having only one main area of interest in each outfit.

A further example of this concept is clearly demonstrated in Fig 27, a poppy-red pleated shoulder slipping silk dress with draped sarong skirt for Spring/Summer 90. The area of interest is on the bodice where the pleated fabric runs in the direction of the rose. The simplicity of the sarong skirt allows the eye to focus on the bodice. The amount of line is used sparingly and the effect is very pleasing. The dress is very practical and wearable and extremely elegant, demonstrating Edelstein's original use of fabric. Not surprisingly, Edelstein used this similar silhouette again the following season (Fig 28). A coral pink pleated dress with off the shoulder detail and again the sarong skirt. However, in my opinion, the proportions of this dress are not as successful as those of the dress in Fig 27. The skirt is lengthened to drape

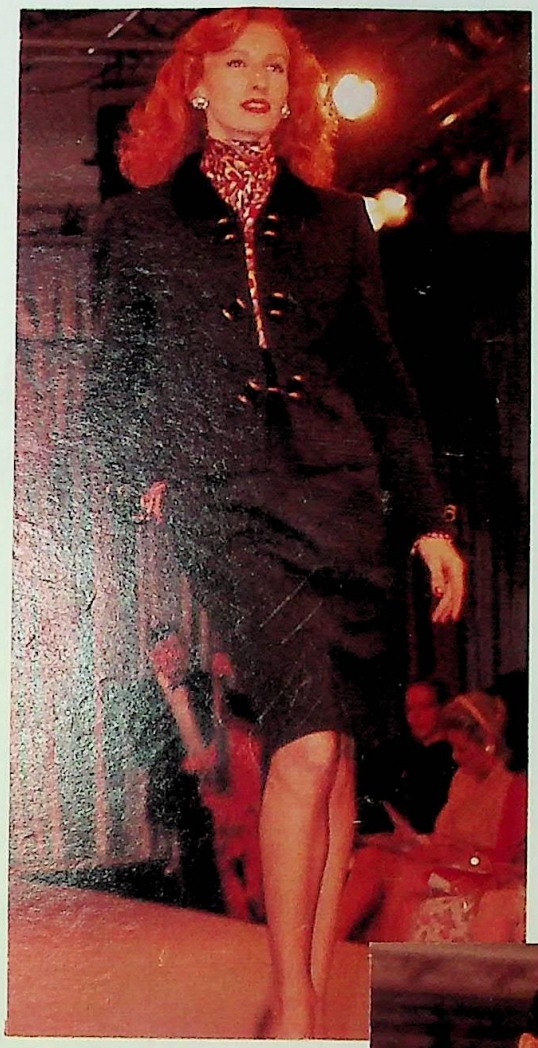


Fig 25

Fig 26

Fig 27

Fig. 28.

along the ground, thus not balancing well. Further to this, the dress in Fig 28 does not complement the models figure as does the dress in Fig 27.

Each consecutive season, a similar silhouette of any one design is further developed. Simplicity of line is always a prime concern. His work consisted of such a simple cut in the mid to late Eighties (Figs 17 and 18), that their design in my opinion, had almost become boring even though their shape and cut remained impeccable. His work from 1989 on, particularly his winter collection for 1989.90, (Fig 22,23,25 and 26) demonstrates Edelstein's more confident use of line, fit and silhouette. It is interesting to examine examples of his earlier work from his Spring collection of 1988 in Fig 29. The two models wear two silk faille strapless short cocktail dresses. Although there are interesting elements like the pleated waist, the shapes are quite unflattering when compared to his most recent work. The skirts of faille are draped unattractively and the array of pleats is very contrived and lacks any natural flow. I feel the cut of both garments are not very successful when one considers the designer's criteria on design: creating elegant and beautiful but practical clothes.

On the other and, Edelstein has designed dresses which are impeccably cut and very flattering. In Fig 30, the model wears a damson velvet ball gown set off by a silk poult taffeta wrap. The cut is formal and the line is graceful and free flowing. The knotted swirling detail on the bodice slowly guides the eye down along the dome skirt by use of the sarong cut. The proportions balance exceedingly well and line is clinically clean. The swirling lines of fabric on the bodice are complemented by the long graceful cut of the sarong. In Fig 31, the back is further simplified. The bodice with diamante buttons is fitted to the hip from which, extends a full skirt. In Fig 32 the model wears a light green zibeline strapless ball gown with a wrap from Spring 88. Again the cut is similar, a strapeless fitted bodice of hip length with a wide dome shaped skirt. As with the gown in Fig 30, the bodice is pleated but this time, the lines start and lead the eye into the cowling * (*Cowl - softly draped or folded material which falls in a loose semi-circle) detail on the skirt. The lines on the bodice and on the cowling detail run in the same direction. The remaining area on the skirt remains free from detail, complementing the overall dress. This silhouette is the basic shape for all of Edelsteins ball gowns. His use of colour, fabric and cutting details distinguishes each one and provides great variety

Fig 29

Fig.30.

Fig 31

Fig 32

Fig 33

which avoids repetition. In Fig 33, the silhouette is exactly the same, only this time, off the shoulder, short sleeves have been added which, like the bodice, are pleated in damson velvet. The striped A-line full skirt, picks up the colour of the bodice on various stripes. The parallel lines of the neck and hip line as well as the parallel direction of the pleated lines, combine beautifully with the visual vertical lines on the skirt. The overall effect is very refined and simply elegant. Each ball dress of the one silhouette is made to look very individual which further, demonstrates the versatility of Edelsteins manipulative abilities with fabric, cut and colour.

Edelstein has a very refined, almost decadent colour palette. His preferred colours are greys, navy, dark greens, scarlets, burgundy, camel, chocolate browns and yellows. His summer collections sees the use of lighter versions of the above. He does not believe in fashionable colours - "A woman must wear colours that suit her"[19]. Quite often a client choses a colour which differs from the model dress because it suits her best. His collections include a wide variety of fabrics. For day, he uses wool alpaca, silk crepe and jersey, etc. For evening and late afternoons, he includes gazar, zibiline, ribbon lace, faille duchess satin, chiffon and poult de goie.

He has a strong creative ability to create interesting textures by using colour, fabric and trimmings. An example of this is seen in Fig 34, and off-the-shoulder lilac silk satin and black lace cocktail dress (Winter 1990). The use of lilac under the black lace is very effective when combined with the spontaneous pleating of the poult de goie cumberband. The scalloped neckline balances well with the scalloped hemline. The skirt is slightly high-waisted with gathering detail. A close up detail of the back (Fig 35) shows the zip opening and rouleau buttoning - another Edelstein signature which is used extensively on cuffs. Although all fabric types used are different weights they work well co-ordinating together. When confined to one fabric type per outfit (Fig 36) the fabric to begin with is usually visually interesting as is the case with this dress of shimmering velvet. To make the dress even more interesting, the fabric is hand ruched and has pleating details, and yet the dress remains very refined and chic.

Layer upon layer of chiffon is used in abundance in Spring/Summer

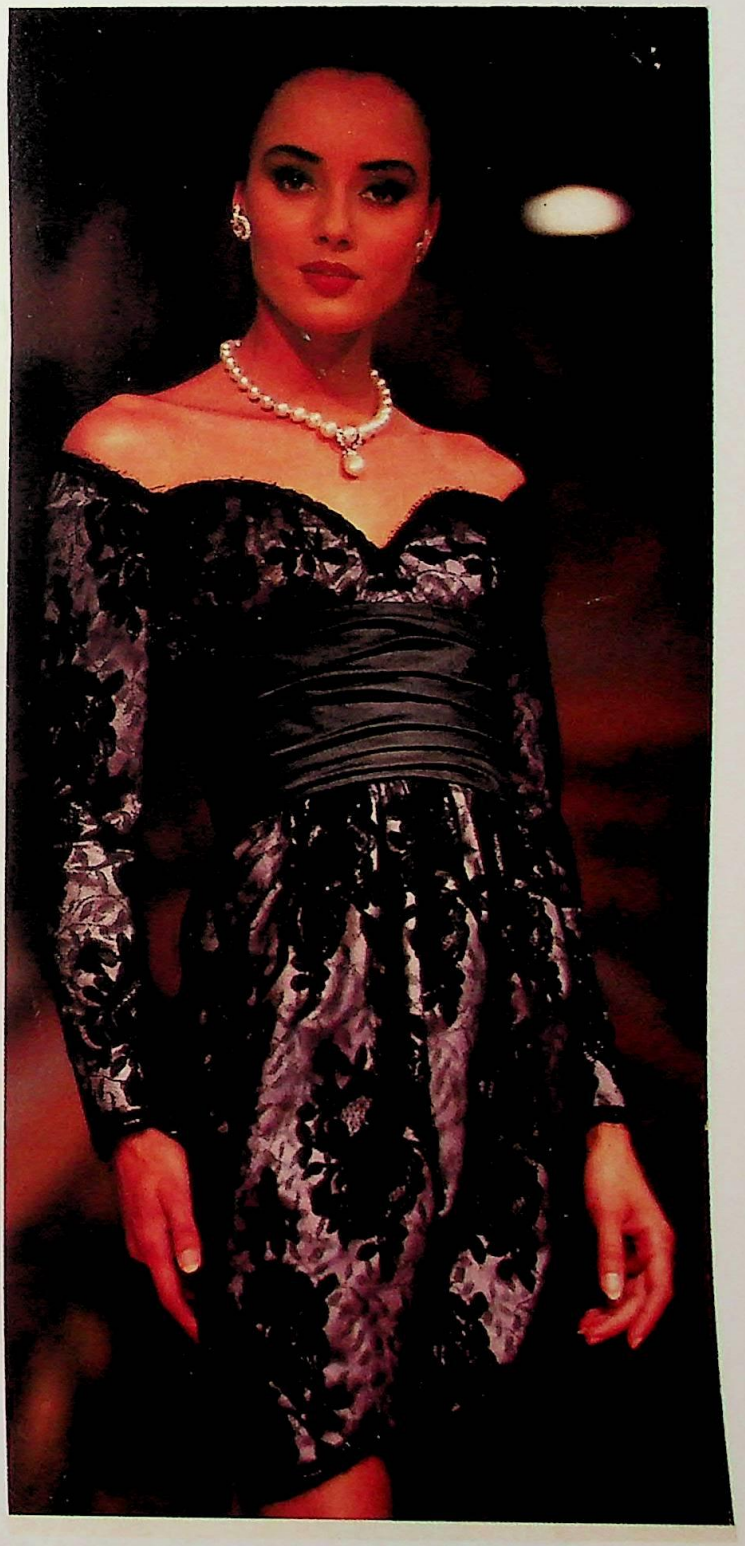


Fig 34

Fig 35

Fig. 36.

collections. In Figs 37 and 38, chiffon is used successfully in draped skirts and cross-over pleated bodices. In Fig 38, it is interesting to notice how he uses in difference ways the same fabric type. A single delicate layer is used for sleeves, shoulders and neck area, over the bodice, it is hand pleated in a cross-over fashion. On the skirt, he lets the chiffon flow by drapping it asymmetrically. The silhouette is extremely simple; it is the use of fabric that brings it to life and makes it a very interesting dress. It is this individual touch that distinguishes couture garments from ready-to-wear.

In dealing with colour, Edelstein prefers to use variations of the same colour or else he contrasts it dramatically. The simple cut of his clothes allows him to do so successfully (Fig 39). His day wear is generally of very subtle colouring; mulberry, camel, grey (Fig 40) and navy. Sometimes, as in the case of Fig 25, the jacket is lined with the same fabric as the blouse. Recently, however Edelstein has been a little more adventurours with his day wear by using interesting coloured flecked wool suits which provide interesting texture. Further to this, his presentation of his day wear at the shows has become more zestful and much more youthful, through the use of quirky hats by Philip Tracey and matching gloves (e.g. Fig 41).

Over the last three seasons, he has begun to use print more confidently. Prior to this he used print for blouses and some linings only. Again, his prints create texture in contrast to his one coloured creations. The prints he uses are usually large and bold and of contrasting colour. (Fig 42 colour photocopy of a chiffon print from his Spring, Summer 91 collection.)

Every season Edelstein includes four or five embroidered garments in his collection. He was introduced to embroidery when he worked for the Salvador fashion company in 1977, a reputable company specialising in finely embroidered dresses.

Embroidery too has become part of the Edelstein signature and is commissioned from Hurel in Paris. He uses it subtley for day wear, on waist bands and cuffs. For evening, it is used extensively but with restraint on jackets, dresses and tunics. He prefers to use subtle, delicate ornamentation, tone on tone (eg. Fig 5 and Fig 12 and Fig 43 and 44). Not surprisingly, the

Fig.37.

Fig 38

Fig 39

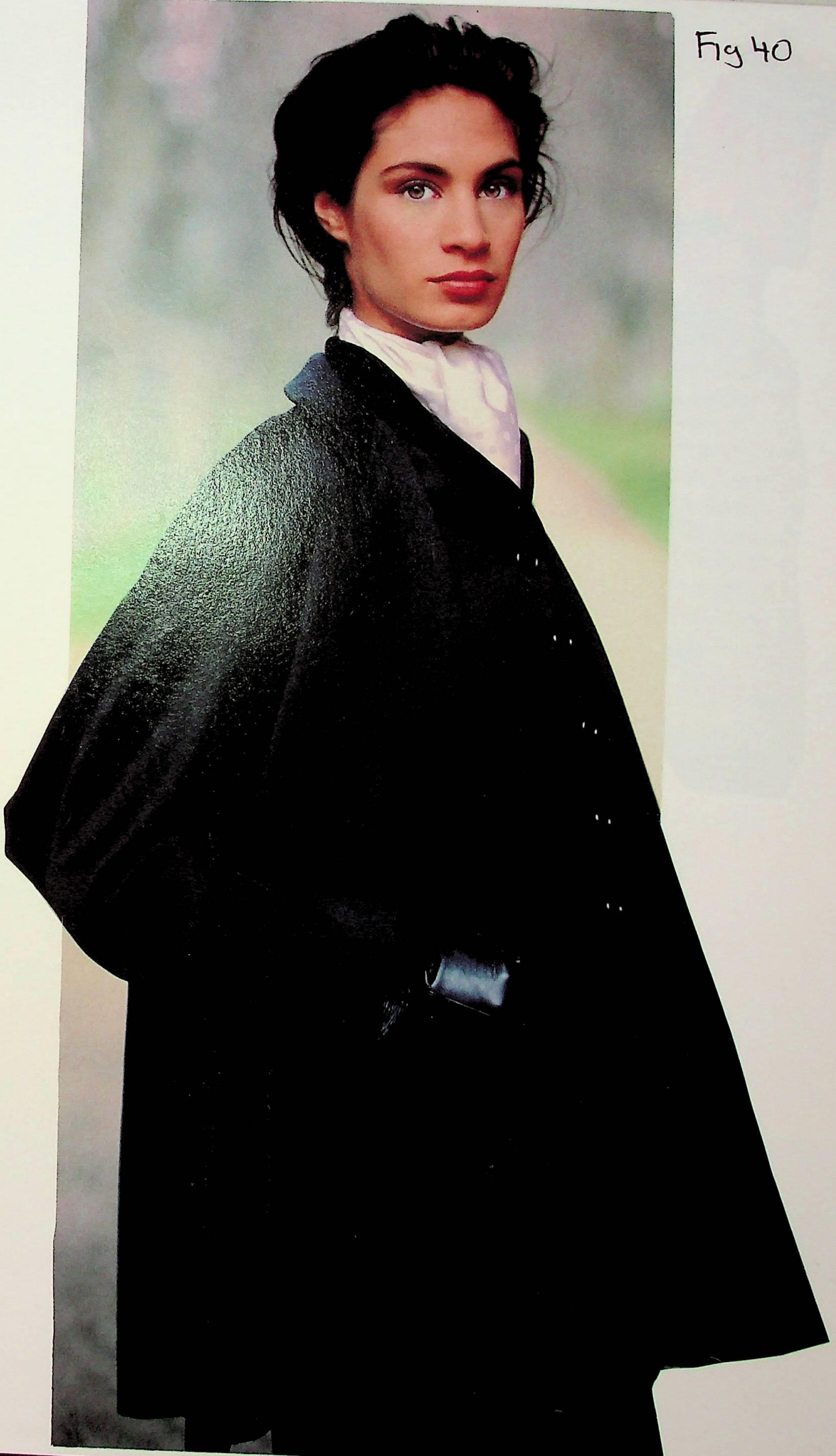


Fig 40

Fig. 41.

Fig 42.

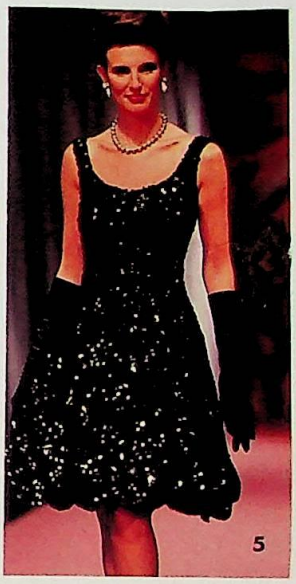


Fig 43

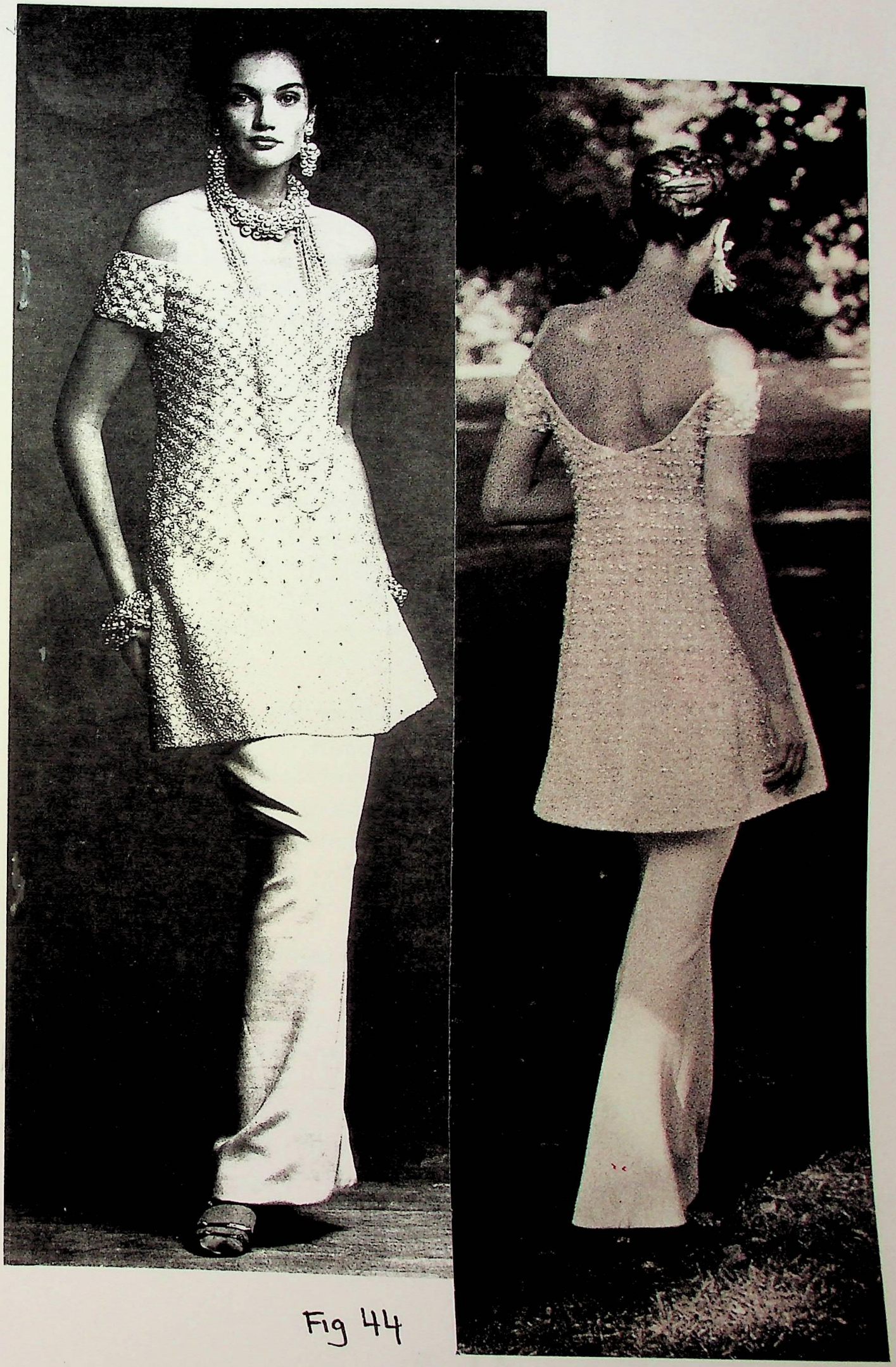


Fig 44

cost of embroidery is expensive and a dress like the one in Fig 43 would cost £10,000.

For Spring/Summer 91 Edelstein has designed a collection that is slightly more casual and younger than ever before, combined with cheerful and lively colours. His styles are younger and less severe in their styling. He has achieved this by softening his tailoring and adding young, short, flared skirts which give a young racy image. He has been more experimental with colour than ever before and refrained from using black, which was always a priority in collections prior to this. One would be right in presuming that Edelstein has really excelled himself.

The reason why Edelstein decided to take such an approach is attributed to the depression in London after the economic recession caused partly by the Gulf War. "I felt we were living in such a depressing time, that it was time to show a short, fun and full of colour, very young collection rather than show the usual collection of navy and greens."(20)

One must also remember that Edelstein's position as one of Britains most respected couturiers was rivalled by the arrival of Marc Bohan, who was recruited to the House of Hartnell last July after thirty years of working for Dior in Paris. Only last July Edelstein said on Bohan's arrival, "There now is going to be so much more interest in London in couture that I really want to do a spectacular collection for Spring"(21)

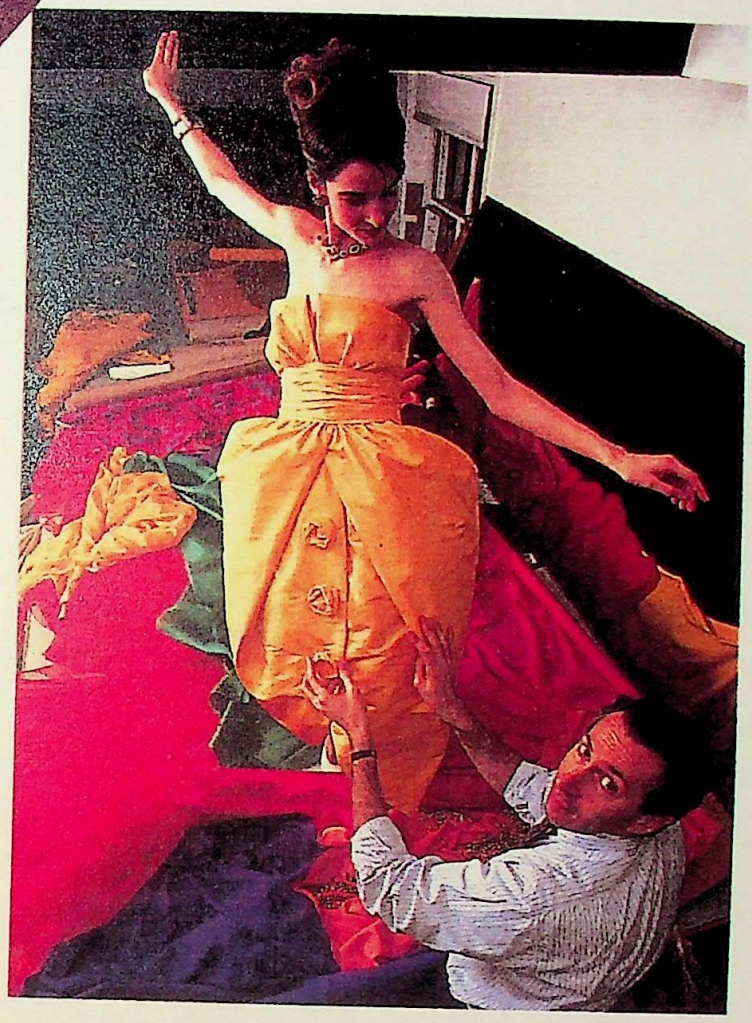
This fresh approach by Edelstein for Spring/Summer 1991 is evident in Fig 45 - a light saffron coloured box style jacket of silk tweed over a short circular flared skirt. The ornate gold-coloured buttons distinguish the two piece suit from ready-to-wear. This style is typical of his day wear which he produced extensively more so than ever before. He has a logical reason for doing this. "I don't think people will be giving very big parties this summer unless the war ends. It may end by the end of March, in which case the summer season will be better than ever. If it does go on, it really wouldn't be appropriate for people to throw big parties. In turn people, like me, who sell a luxury will suffer"(22)

Fig. 45. Victor Edelstein

Fig. 46. Victor Edelstein

HE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDA

FASHION



A VERY BRITISH COUTURE

Fig 47

The softening of severe styling details, e.g. shoulders, and collars, and the very relaxed tailoring combined with young short racy skirts are his most youthful day suits to date. Incidentally, the standaway boat-collars are remininscent of those used by Balenciaga and Cardin in the late Fifties. For an extra indulgence in colour, Edelstein presented his day suits with contrasting colourful gloves and colourful hats (Fig 45). The effect was quite witty, advancing dramatically from his serious sombre suits of the past.

Although the Gulf War has ended for the time being, Edelstein anticipated when designing the collection that his clients would be wearing more day wear during the season if the war continued. Hence the large number of day wear outfits, sixteen as opposed to the usual seven to eight. As the Gulf War has ended he is anticipating a very good season with his cocktail wear. His cocktail wear is smart and short, again in bright fresh colours, raspberry, red, coral, purple, violet and yellow. His evening wear emphasis, short draped and swathed dress as in Figure 46. A favourite silhouette repeated was a layered tulip full skirt and fitted bodice (Fig 47) (which also shows the fabrics used in the collection). What is interesting about the yellow dress in Figure 47 is that the skirt of faille is draped in an unusual manner, unlike any of his full skirts before. It is a new cut and no doubt will be developed for next season.

The finale included a bridal gown which added an element of fantasy to the show. The showing of his Spring / Summer 1991 collection took place at Claridges Hotel in Londons Bond Street on 30th January 1991. The decadence of the Hyde Part Hotel with its formal setting was in stark contrast to the white screens of the background and olive coloured catwalk at Claridges. This international setting, combined with Edelsteins exciting collection, gave a cosmopolitan atmosphere to the show, despite comments from clients concerning the lack of space.

Without doubt, the major influence on Victor Edelsteins work has been Cristobal Balenciaga. Balenciaga was born in Guertaria, Spain in 1895. "He is considered to be the greatest fashion designer of the century" (23) although frequently his work was too subtle or radical to be understood by the press and his fellow designers. He has been considered by most fashion creators as their most profound inspiration. Victor Edelstein also concedes to this fact (24).

At the age of eighteen, Balenciaga opened a shop in San Sebastian and followed this by setting himself up as a couturier under the name of Eisa in Madird and Barcelona. In 1937, he abandoned Franco's repressed Spain and arrived in London. He very quickly moved on to Paris and opened his fourth house to mixed response. From here on, Balenciaga began his twenty year climb to fashion supremacy. His work was completely in the couture tradition and each collection made crisp clear fashion statements. Loathing publicity and refusing to compromise, this stiff taciturn man, who closed his doors in 1968 with the words "It's a dogs life"[25] created the most marvellous clothes of this century. Balenciaga said of himself "Designing to me is a in art in itself with all the arts participating. You must be an architect for your sense of measure, a sculptor for your silhouette, a painter for your pallette and a musician to realise the rhythm and movement of the dress"[26] (Fig 48 Balenciaga's precision at work).

Edelsteins design philosophies are based on the design principles of Balenciaga, where an attractive feminine feature of the feminine form is used as a starting point for a design. Simplicity, nevertheless, remains the chief preoccupation. I have chosen examples of both designer's work which I consider support my discussion. It is interesting to note that Balenciaga's published sketch books are main sources for Edelstein's inspiration. A page from a Balenciaga sketch book (Figure 49) indicates a fitted tunic style dress with button and waist details, can be compared to a tunic designed by Edelstein from his Autumn/Winter 1989/90 collection (Figure 50). Comparable designs are very similar in cut although Edelstein has not fitted the tunic as Balenciaga has done. The sketch indicates a contrast in the use of colour with the underskirt and belt of one colour. Edelstein has adopted exactly the same approach with his colour way and has also included pleating detail originating from under the belt. By eliminating the fitted area around the waist as well as the buttoning and seam detail, Edelstein has further simplified Balenciaga's tunic for a more up-to-date modern look. Of further interest on the same sketch book page, Balenciaga has drawn on the right hand side a large oversized evening jacket over the long fitted silhouette. The same concept appears in a selection of Edelstein sketches (Fig 51) in his Autumn/Winter 1990/91 collection. This time, Edelstein has manipulated the style by adding a wide collar and deep set cuffs of black velvet.

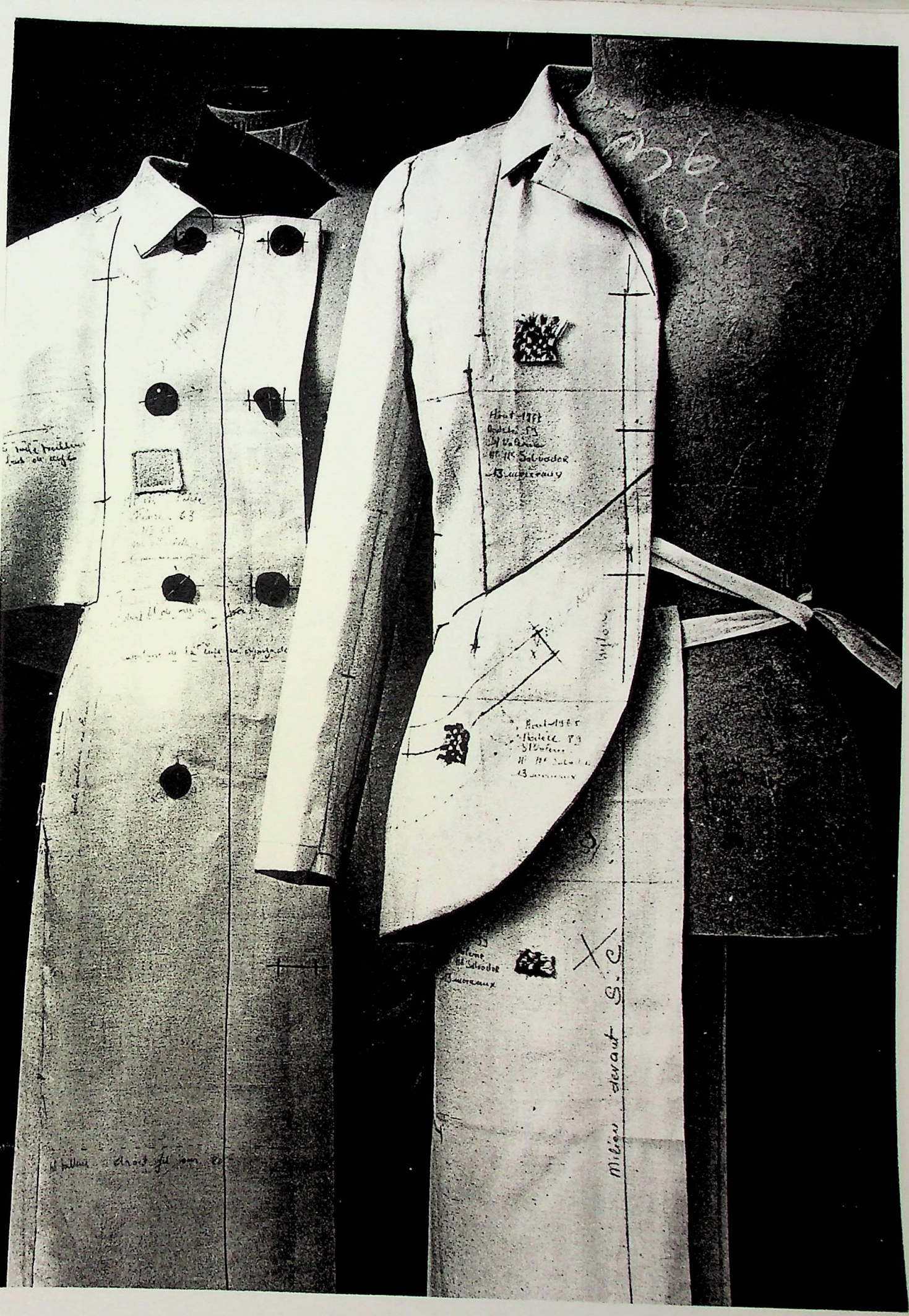


Fig 48

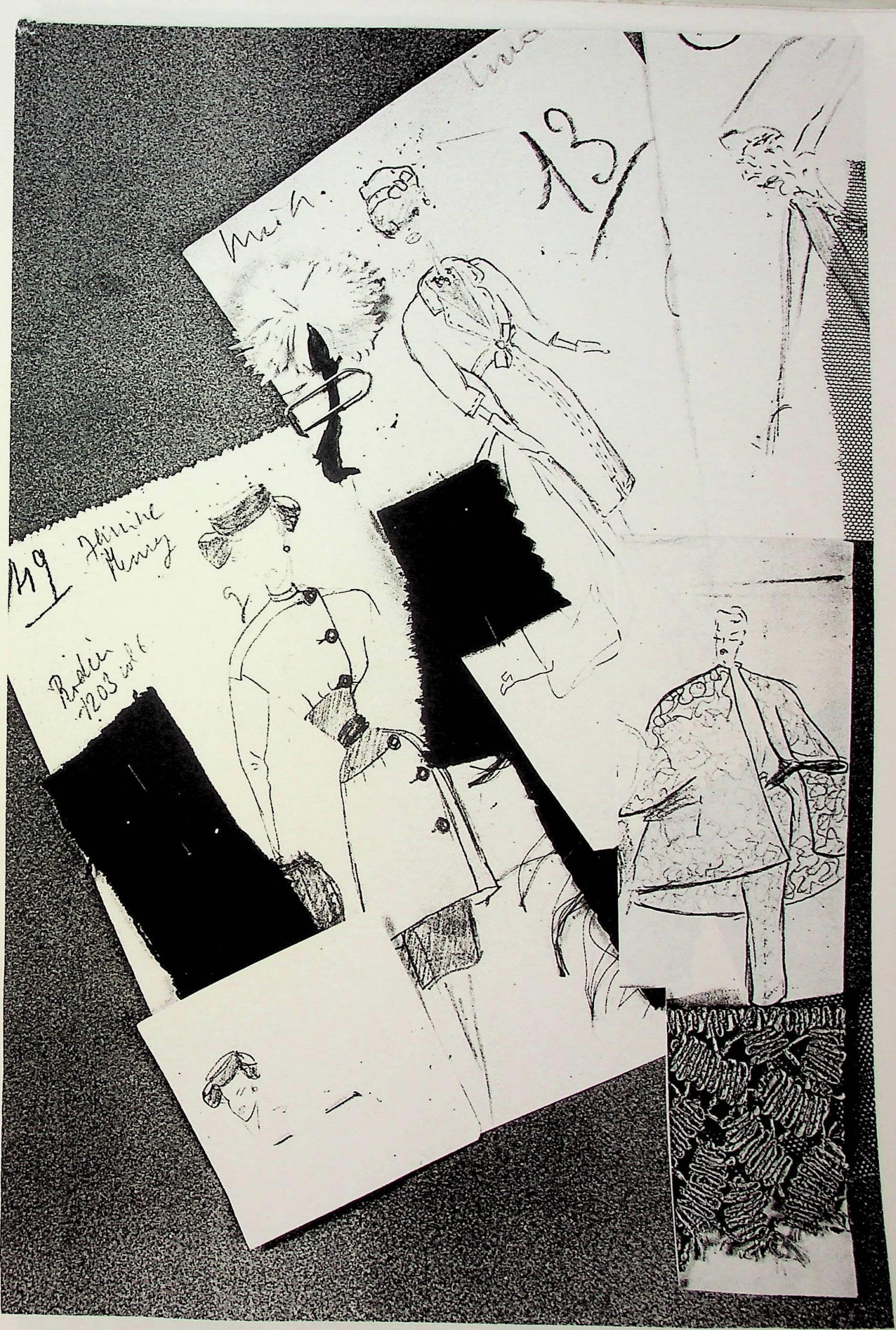


Fig. 49.

Fig 50


Autumn 1990
Model 2646
Autumn 1990
Model 2649
Autumn 1990
Model 2641

Fig .51.

Balenciaga's ideas are used as a starting point by Edelstein who further eliminates or adds details where he thinks is necessary to modernise the design for a contemporary lifestyle. Balenciaga's approach to sketching has also been adopted by Edelstein (Fig 51) with spontaneous but chic poses including notes and swatches of fabric.

Another dress by Balenciaga influenced Edelstein for his Autumn/Winter collection 1989/90 collection. In figures 52 and 52a Edelstein's designs again have strong comparable details. A long fitted bodice to the hips from where gathered fabric protrudes to create a short circular skirt. Edelstein has manipulated Balenciaga design by adding another similar layer to the skirt and adding sleeves with cutaway shoulder detail. Edelstein's interpretation of the Balenciaga tunic displays good thought out use of line and good sense of proportion. Like the great French couturier, Edelstein's silhouettes are always strongly graphic. Very defined, crisp clear lines are apparent in both designers work. Their colour palettes are similar, Balenciaga, like Edelstein worked with scarlet, deep violets, greens, mustard, golds, hot pinks and always the intensity of Spanish Black. Edelstein up until his Spring/Summer 1990 collection included on average ten black outfits in his collections each season.

Other inspired Balenciaga cuts include many of his necklines. Edelstein considers the cut of necklines to be of great importance. "The neckline is very important because most women spend a lot of time sitting at a dinner table where the only thing seen is the top of the dress"(27) Accordingly when Edelstein is designing his cocktail/evening wear, the neck line and top half of a dress are nine times out of ten particularly decorative. A good example of this can be seen in Figure 53, where a model wears a short box style velvet jacket with a turned down collar of silk satin (Autumn Winter 1987). Likewise, in Figure 54 (top right, hand corner) Balenciaga drew a collar of this style in 1954. Edelstein, has also designed evening coats using this style as a starting point, e.g. a purple and yellow duchess satin one which was featured on the front page of Tatler in February 1990, (Fig 55). On the same sketch in Figure 35, appears a drawing of a ball gown (top left hand side) by Balenciaga. This silhouette has a remarkable resemblance to the silhouette used by Edelstein for all his ballgowns: a fitted bodice to to the hips from which extends a long circular skirt. The pleated fabric effect, sliding off the shoulders, has also been adopted by Edelstein (Fig 56).

Fig 52

Fig 52A

Fig 53


TION INTERDITE
Croquis
REPRODUCTION INTERDITE
Prière de retourner
le Croquis
BALENCIAGA
COUTURE
Prière de retourner le croquis - Reprodu
1950
BALENCIAGA
COUTURE
10, Avenue George V
FRS-8e

Fig. 54.

TATLER

f Society

£2.00

VICTOR'S LAURELS

Edelstein and his princesses

VICTOR EDELSTEIN PHOTOGRAPHED BY TERRY O'NEILL

MARQUESS BRISTOL

yle

n Jermyn

GHT PASSION

nes Goldsmith's

DUCHESS YORK

ns, the flak,

ure

ANNIVERSARY OF A FATWA

Marianne Wiggins on St Valentine's Day

02

716000

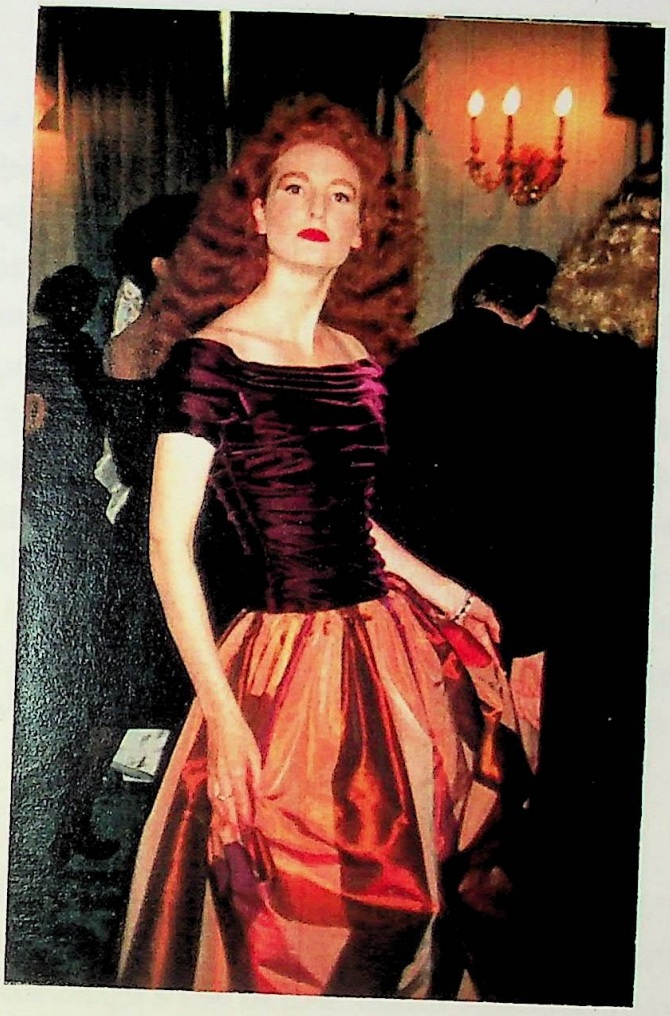


Fig-56.

Creative uses of fabric by Balenciaga included hand pleating bodices and gathering on the hems as in Fig 58 and overlapping flimsy fabrics in a contrasting colours background. Edelstein (in Fig 59) also uses fabric in a very similar way, particularly his pleated bodices which appear every season - another Edelstein signature. During the course of my research, I found a most interesting comparison concerning the work of Edelstein and Balenciaga. This concerns an exquisitely beaded evening gown by Edelstein worn by the Princess of Wales in 1988. There is an unmistakable resemblance in the detail on both these gowns. The fitted bodice and bolero are of the same cut. Although the skirts of both gowns are different, there is no denying that the silhouette from the hips up and the use of embroidery are very conspicuous when compared. This reflects the extent of the influence that Balenciaga has on the work of Victor Edelstein: very similar uses of line and cut, embroidery, fabric treatment and thinking process.

As with Balenciaga, Edelstein also has the ability to cut, tack and sew a complete dress together; he is a technician as well as a designer. As I have already stated, Balenciaga's use of line, colour and fabric have been adopted to a great extent by Edelstein as a starting point for many of his designs. The dramatic colour ways and sculptural graphic qualities of Edelstein's work is particularly reminiscent of Cristobal Balenciaga. In addition, both designers are at their most glamourous when designing for evening wear where colour, fabric and trimmings are used dramatically for entrance-making gowns. Yet there are however, major differences between the two designers, Balenciaga was an arbiter of styles, he was responsible for the dawning of a new ear in fashion from 1950 onwards to the mid 1960's, e.g. the arrival of the extremely narrow elegant tunic of 1955 (Fig 60 in red). He was also responsible for inventing the semi-fit in the mid Fifties (Fig 61).

Each season several of his creations reappeared but always treated differently, e.g. after he created the tunic in 1955, the following season demonstrated how the tunic now blousoned out at the back and was fitted a little tighter below the hips with a band of the same material. As I have discussed already, Edelstein's work follows the same progression, a repetition of styles but always treated differently. However, Edelstein is not as prolific as a designer when compared to the creative genius of Balenciaga. Although his work is

Fig 58

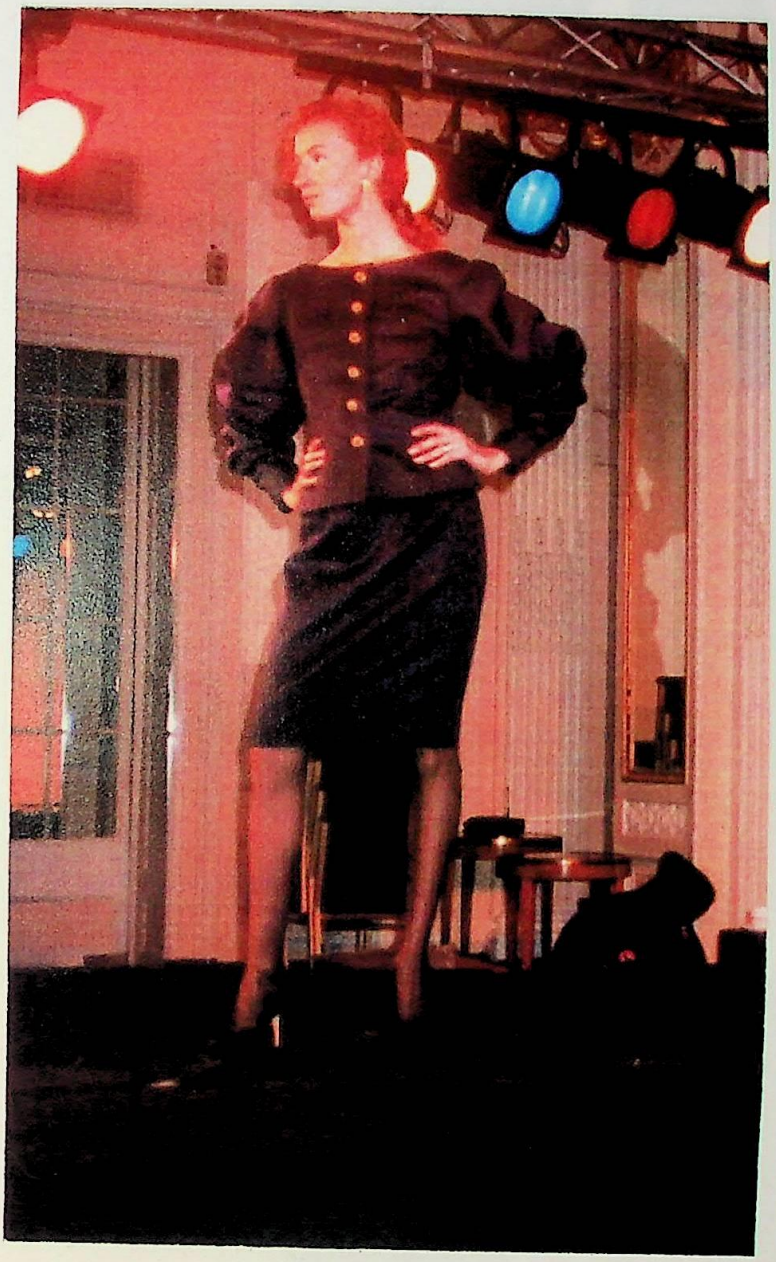


Fig. 59.

Fig 59A.

Fig 60

Fig.61.

simple, chic, practical and wearable, he so far, has never pioneered a particular cut or design concept.

He has never set a trend in shape, but has preferred to follow the styles and shapes that are established by his main influences like Balenciaga and his more inventive contemporaries, like Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel.

Karl Lagerfeld was born in Germany in 1939. At the age of fourteen, he moved Paris. At the age of sixteen in 1954, he had won along with Yves Saint Laurent, an international wool Secretariat competition. He then went on to work for Balmain. After three years, he left to became a freelance designer for various fashion firms including Krizia. In the early 1960's, he joined Chloe, a Paris ready-to-wear firm. His expensive, exquisite clothes for Chloe were almost couture standard. They had terrific shape and were noted for hand work and extravagant embroidery. Subsequently, they were at the top of the de-luxe ready-to-wear market. However, in 1983, he produced his last collection for Chloe and took-over responsibility for Chanel's ready-to-wear in addition to the couture. In March 1984, he presented his first collection under his own name, KL, by Karl Largerfeld. He describes his clothes as having an 'intellectual sexiness'. His influence is considerable because he is not afraid to make a real fashion statement. He is uniquely confident, taking new directives courageously and never looking back. His collections show a total concept and when he takes a new point of view or introduces a changes silhouette, he does so boldly and with complete conviction.

The short box style jacket used by Edelstein for almost all his day suits is synonymous with the typical short Chanel jacket (Fig 62 1989). The typical styling features of a Chanel suite are demonstrated. The short neatly tailored, close fitting jacket with a row of gold coloured buttons, pocket details with welts in contrasting colour and the above the knee fitted skirt. These styling features have also influenced Edelstein and are particularly prevalent in his work in figures 41, 45 and 63.

Finally a favoured detail used by Edelstein in all his collections, can be

Fig. 62.

Fig 63.

Fig. 64.

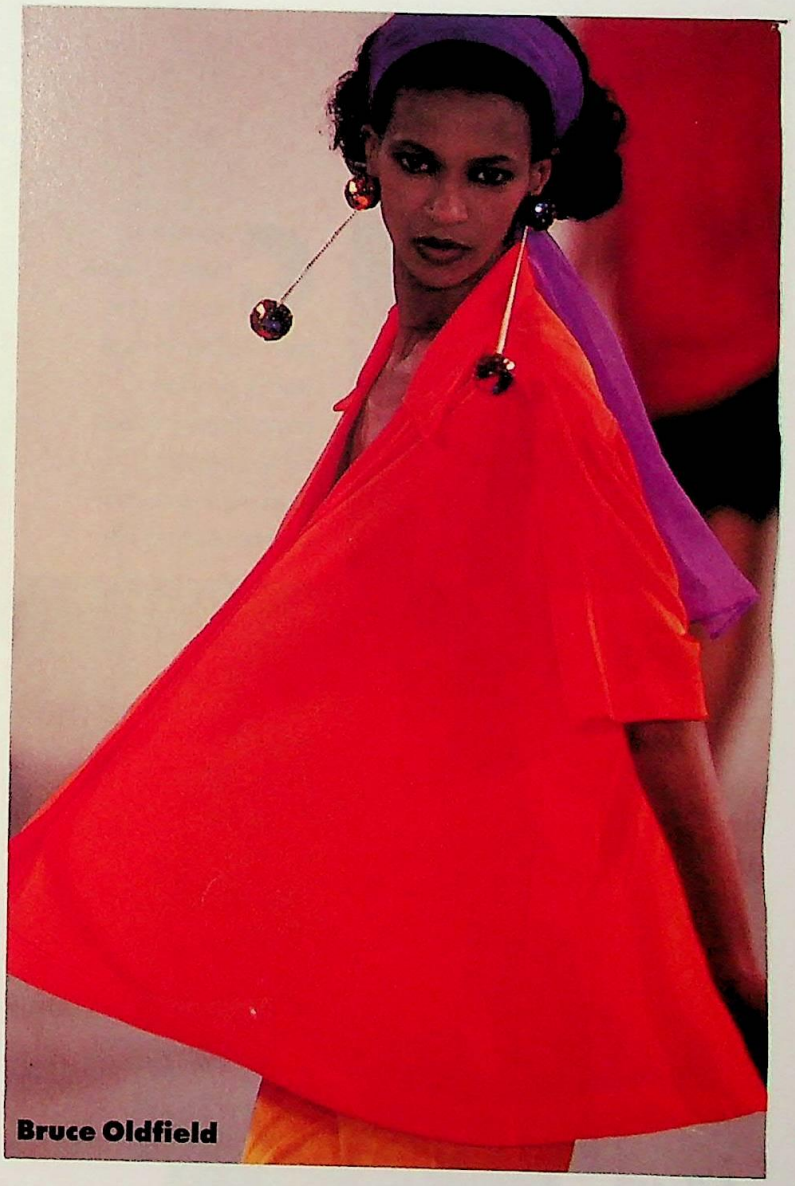
Fig b5

interestingly compared to a cut favoured by Lagerfeld for Chanel. This is the cut away should detail in Figure 64. The model in Figure 64 wears a cut away semi-fitted dress with contrasting white collar and camellia detail. Again, Chanel details, contrasting fabric on cuffs, pockets, and shoulder band, the row of gold coloured, buttons and the interesting use of pearl jewellery are evident. Figure 65 demonstrate Edelsteins similar cut and design details, such as the attention-seeking buttons, binding details of a contrasting fabric - satin and crisp clear use of line. The dramatic black and white, a favourite combination of Karl Lagerfeld, is also used and treated in a very Chanel like manner by Edelstein in Figure 63.

When compared to his contemporary couturiers, Anouska Hempel and Bruce Oldfield,, Edelsteins style is the most conservative and conventional. He does not have much admiration for many of his fellow couturiers as he feels their work and their approach to design is not in the true couture tradition where a woman is meant to dress in an elegant and glamourous manner. Edelstein's approach is more practical than that of Anouska Hempel, who has a more contemporary approach to couture. Hempel is more experimental with colour and fabric (Fig 66 - Spring/Summer 91). Her colour palette is more daring than that of Edelsteins. She aims to present her clothes in a contemporary manner i.e. separate sleeve pieces, elasticated waist bands in satins, and separated top stitched collars which add a touch of wit to what is basically a classical silhouette. Her clients include the Sixties model Twiggy, Sharika Caine, wife of the actor Michael Caine, Princess Michael and Countess Debbie Bismarck.

As well as his ready to wear range, Bruce Oldfield also designs a range of couture each season. Oldfield is the most contemporary of all British couturiers. His clothes are modern and versatile and reflect the current fashion direction (Fig 67 Spring/Summer 91). When compared to Edelstein, Oldfield designs clothes that are sexier. His evening dresses are sequinned and ruched, draped and often slit to the waist. Like Edelstein, Bruce Oldfield is often spoken of as an English thoroughbred designer. Unlike Edelstein however, Oldfield does not construct his clothes in the true couture tradition, but Oldfields clothes are very well made, top of the ready-to-wear market. The clientele is also different. Oldfields customers are faster, more glamourous and considered to be more wealthier than Edelstein's. He dresses

Fig 66



F.67

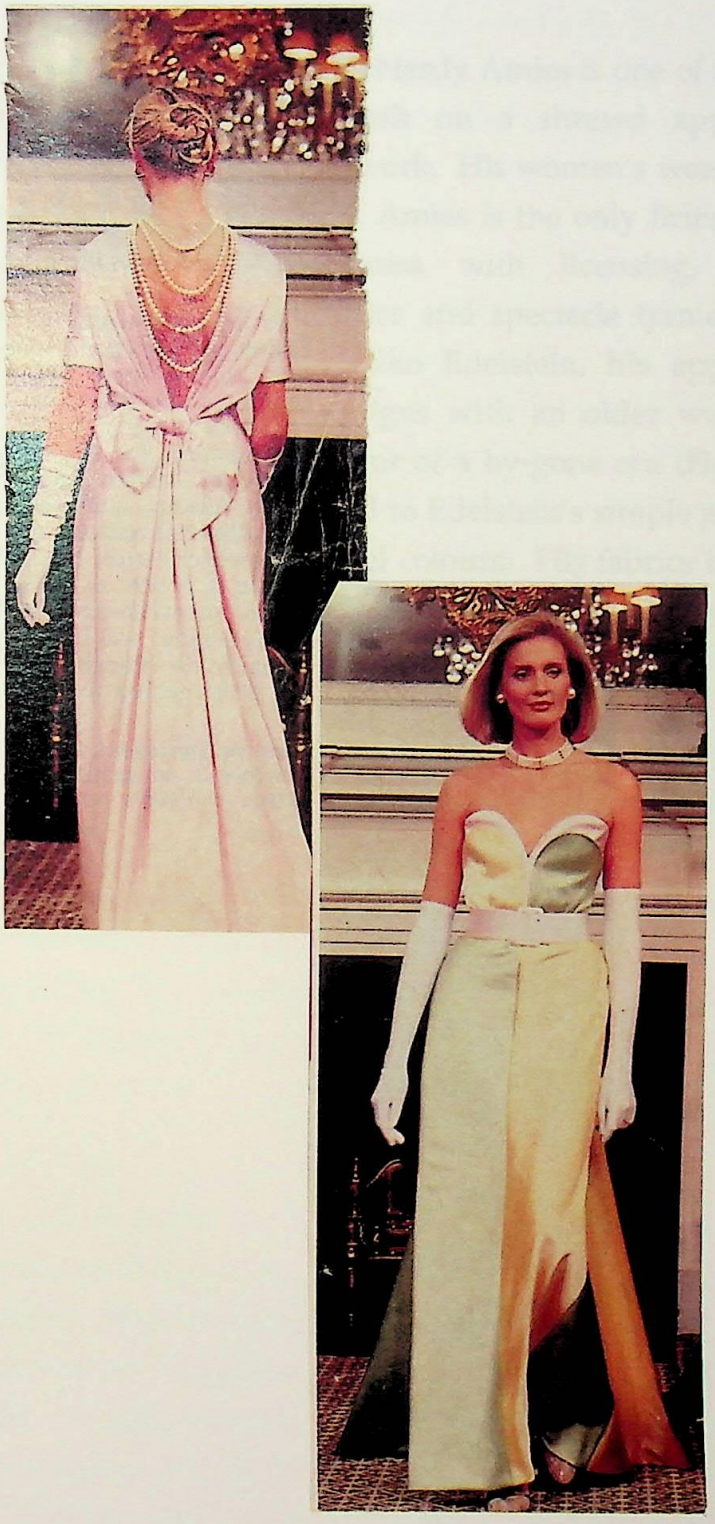


Fig 68

Charlotte Ramplin, Liza Minnelli, Joan Collins and model Marie Helvin as well as the Princess of Wales. He has a less intimate relationship with his customers than Edelstein and has no inhibitions about calling women by their Christian names.

Between all the British couturiers Hardy Amies is one of the most famous and successful. His success is built on a shrewd approach to business, considerable ambition and hard work. His women's wear is now designed by Ken Fleetwood. At the moment Amies is the only British designer who has had major uncelebrated success with licensing, with twenty-three concessionairies for umbrellas, ties and spectacle frames in Canada, Japan, South Korea and Australia. Like Edelstein, his approach to design is traditional, although Amies designs with an older woman in mind. His clothes are formal and reminiscent of a by-gone era (Fig 68). However, his designs are fussy when compared to Edelstein's simple approach. His colour palette is refined, favouring pastel colours. His fabrics include wools, velvet and satins. Amies is also respected for his well made couture clothes and his most celebrated customer is the English Queen.

SECTION 3
THE PROCESS OF COUTURE

"The cherishing of a clientele is the most important function of a designer. He must never lower the standards of his advice to the customer but he must always respect, her wishes. Experience will bring a knowledge of her lifestyle. It is the lifestyle which sparks her desire for a new new dress"[28]

Hardy Amies.

At Victor Edelstein, the average customer is between the age of 25 and 45 and orders on average three or five dresses a season: one suit, two dinner dresses and an evening dress. Occasionally some clients have five or six dresses made a season When someone is prepared to spend at least £3,000 on an Edelstein dress, a percentage point on the mortgage rate is not going to make too much of a difference. His clients are wealthy women who can afford this couture clad Christmasses in Gstaad and St. Moritz. These women care so about fashion that they have time, patience and vanity enough to stand for long fittings and wait for weeks for delivery. They are in willing co-operation with Edelstein in a joint search for the perfectly lying collar and the perfectly cut armhole. Theirs is a creative partnership which, although it may have sprung from vanity, produces beautiful clothes and develops an art form, albeit a minor one. In Figure 69 Xenia Folkes (in the ballroom of her medieval house in Herefordshire) wears a 1988 Spring suite by Edelstein. A loyal client, who has being buying his creations since his ready-to-wear days back in the late Seventies. In Figure 70 Lady Brocket wears a fichu neckline dress from his Spring 1990 collection.

However, not all clients are beautiful and model size. Edelstein also dresses less attractive and large sized women. The largest being about a size fourteen. When dressing these women, he strongly advises them to wear certain dress styles which do not emphasise the larger areas of their figures. These dresses are usually his most simple cuts with the least amount of detail, which discreetly disguise figure faults. Edelstein does not have a criteria for choosing clients. The very philosophy of his couture house: to create understated elegant and beautifully made clothes, attracts the sort of woman he wishes to dress - "If for example, someone wants a tarty vulgar dress or

Fig. 69.

LADY BROCKET, Cream silk poult de soie dress by
ICTOR EDELSTEIN, to order, at 3-4 Stanhope Mews West, SW7

TATLER

Fig. 70.

something overbeaded, I tell them that unfortunately we do not have what they are looking for and advise them to try elsewhere."(29)

The women Edelstein designs for all have an influence on him: "Every client teaches me something. I like to discuss what the dress is for so I design for a woman in every way, not just for her figure, but for her style, her being".30 His ideal client is one who is very sure of herself and really knows her own style; "Then it becomes a real collaboration"(31) Most women believe that if they buy couture it will help to solve many of their figure problems, big hips being the most common. Edelstein regularly gives advice to his customers. As regards weight "I have occasionally told people to put on weight - no one ever minds being told that. The truth is that if you are young and too thin you can still have a nice figure, but it's not true when you're older"(32) He emphasises that women should not believe in miracles - the most difficult client he finds is the one who comes for one outfit every two years and expects a complete metamorphosis with a couture dress.

His clients number about sixty in all "I never count my clients", he says, "I know some designers do, but really to me it seems like an endless stream of women who need things made in a hurry for Ascot or a wedding or a dance they have been asked to at the eleventh hour"(33). Edelstein practices a very formal and professional relationship with his clients compared to some of his contemporaries, such as Bruce Oldfield, who socialises quite frequently with his clients "I don't get lionised at all, maybe I've got BO or something, but really, I don't get lionised. One does get on terribly well with the clients, but do you know they never become friends. Unless they were a friend in the first place, I'd never call a client by her first name, never do that",(34) says Edelstein.

A client can expect to pay between £3,000 and £13,000 for an Edelstein creation. When dealing with the press, Edelstein treats money as a 'vulgar issue'.(35) The press is aware of his unwillingness to talk about money. There is a logical reason for this, as he explains "We have to be very discreet about prices, as we do not normally give them out. If we give prices out people will know who all the clients are, we do not want everyone to know who we are selling to as some clients prefer it that way."(36).

His ballgowns cost approximately £5,000 in contrast to Paris prices, where £10,000 only buys the simplest little number. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that only last year Ivana Trump revealed with disarming candour that she had spent £24,000 on a beaded top. A Givency made-to-measure suit will set its purchaser back as much as £6,000. An evening gown will cost as much as £20,000 and a wedding dress £100,000. Additionally, in Bond Street and Sloane Street of London, Valentino, Gigli and Chanel all charge well over £1,000 for a dress and £2,000 to £5,000 for an evening dress. These dresses are off the peg and are not made to measure.

For their investment, an Edelstein client can expect a degree of exclusivity not possible with ready-to-wear. The clothes are made to measure and you have the luxury of choosing a different colour fabric or length for a dress that you like in a couture collection. Furthermore, the length of sleeves and skirts, etc can be altered. Seams can be taken in or taken out to suit your requirements. and "you really get a dress that's absolutely you".37 What pleases Edelstein most about his success is seeing the same names again and again. "That is the real seal of success. I'm very sorry if I design a dress for someone and she never comes back".38 Clients return to Edelstein because they 'know' he has considered the function of any outfit they choose. They are only too familiar with his sympathetic and considerate attitude when he designs a collection for them. His firm intention is to make a woman look beautiful. "The main consideration is that a dress must be flattering. You want to be able to put it on and there it is - without having to start yanking it".39 He is aware of a womans needs when she wears clothes because he discusses and always listens to his clients attentively. In turn, he designs around their life-style, taking into consideration the woman travelling, sitting down, dancing and ultimately a dress in which they can live in. Clients listen to his advice and appreciate it. This control over the quality of production is very important to him. That also includes his insistence on being present for every clients fitting. In 1989, the demand by American clients for his clothes was so great that the control over his method of production proved too strenuous. Consequently he was faced with no other choice but to raise his prices, rather than acquire a reputation for turning clients away. This cleverly eliminated borderline and unreliable customers, who were primarily responsible for the demise of quality control. As a result, those clients who genuinely wished to wear Victor Edelstein paid the extra amount, thus allowing Edelstein to run his business with firm control again.

As he has a great capacity to be charming, talkative, and humourous, he makes the laborious task of fittings enjoyable for his clients. He also exercises prodigious amounts of patience and tact ensuring that his customers make no expensive mistakes. "All couture clients are demanding, no one is casual about couture",40 says Edelstein.

To most of his clients, discretion is important. Edelstein has a well respected reputation for his discretion. He does not sit around dissecting the riches of his clients, or telling people with notebooks whether the Princess of Wales pays by Access or Visa. It is such qualities and those I have mentioned above that have led to the constant loyal return of his impressive clientele and his continuous success.

When compared to the flamboyance of Parisian couture, where couturiers keep their workrooms running just to create the name that sells the perfumes (Fig 71 and 71A) English couture is more concerned with lifestyle than fantasy. In Paris few couture collections make money in direct sales to private customers, but that is not the point. What the French have realised is the value of couture as a magnificent loss-leader. For a house to have a couture collection is the ultimate proof of its own prestige. The headlines and photographs it makes in the press have an incalculably profitable effect in burnishing the desirability of all the products that appear under its label, in selling its ready-to-wear lines, its cosmetics, and its scent.

In 1987, for instance, Bernard Arnault, chairman of the might Moet-Hennessy - Louis Vuitton empire, set Christian Lacroix up in Frances 23rd couture house at an initial cost of £6.5million, gambling a further £22 million in 1990 on the inevitable perfume launch, after losing £8 million net loss in 1988. However, this is not say that the couture season is not more than a cynical operation media hype.

Couture is also a laboratory of fashion ideas that will have a filter-down influence on ready-to-wear ranges in the months to come. It also allows the designer to express himself to the limits of his imagination and is the

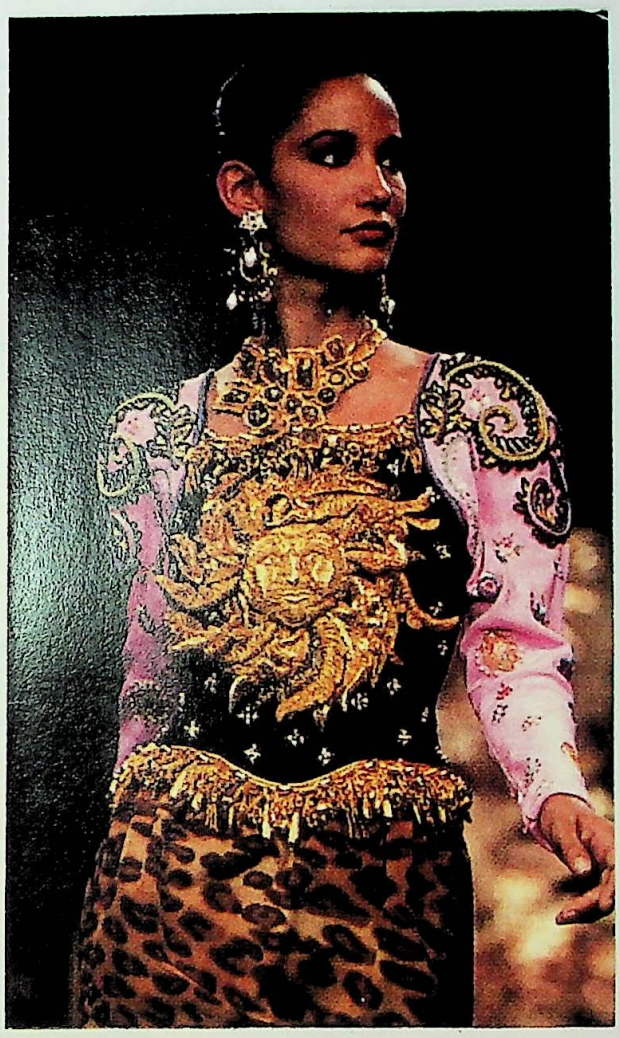


Fig. 71.


C'est la vie!
CHRISTIAN LACROIX
PARIS
C'est la vie!
CHRISTIAN LACROIX
PARIS
C'est la vie!
CHRISTIAN LACROIX
PARIS
C'est la vie!
le parfum de CHRISTIAN LACROIX

Fig. 71A.

opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of the hand constructed garment over the computer programmed cut of the machinemade article. In Paris, haute couture pieces often remain the highest examples of the state of the art for arts sake.

In London, Victor Edelstein and his contemporaries do not compete with Paris on innovation or on embellishment, but then British women tend to be looking for something that will not be short enough to cause a stir in the Royal Enclosure. In Britain, designers must sell what they produce, as Edelstein explains "We're a bit more practical over here where the couturier must provide what the buyer needs"(41) His couture finances itself, with each order comes a deposit, half the price of the garment. When he is about to design a collection, he has to consider, himself, his client and his employees. "Every collection one always worries. However, established you are, you can still do a collection that people don't like and then have a very quiet season but so far it hasn't happened to me".(42) He has not had a quiet season yet because he successfully designs his couture clothes to suit a specific market and adheres accordingly the to criteria of couture design rules (which I have discussed in Section 2) which suit that market.

Unlike many of the French couturiers (e.g. Givenchy and YSL), who regard their couture creations as art, Edelstein rarely refers to couture as being an art. "It always sounds pretentious, when you call couture art"(43) His attitude to couture as an art form is more realistic and practical "There is a lot of artistry in it, you have got to have an eye for proportion. It is certainly a highly skilled craft."(44) He further elaborates on the subject aiming to define and analyse the subject by using examples. "I suppose the reason where one argues about couture - being an art is that generally speaking art is something that goes on forever. A Leonardo Da Vinci or a Michaelangleo painting is always in fashion. Where as a dress as Chanel said is "born beautiful and dies ugly" and goes out of date and becomes a despised object a year or two after it is made."(44)

He concludes this argument with a self convincing and confident statement "Couture is not an art form because it is so transient, such a passing thing because its fashion."(44)

Most of Edelstein's clients wear many of his creations over a period of many seasons, some even years. Consequently, his dresses are considered to be classics. He, however, does not agree, "There is no such thing as a classic dress really. Some dresses date less quickly than others, so you can get three or four years wear out of it, but eventually everything dates. There are very few items of clothing that are dateless, except perhaps for some sportswear ie. the work of Clare McCardell".[45] Clare McCardell was born in 1905 in Frederick, Maryland USA. She was the pioneer of American sports wear. McCardell looked to a womans body and needs for inspiration, evolving new forms and promoting unusual fabrics. Her famous Diaper swimsuits Fig 72 designed 50 years ago, could have been plucked from a wardrobe today. Compared to the uplifted, padded swimsuits of the day, her black, grey or sand pieces were shocking in their simplicity. Moreover this exact style was revered in the Seventies in Spandex by Halston, an American sportswear company. McCardell said of her clothes "Good fashion earns the right to survive."[46]

Victor Edelstein plans within the next two or three years to design ready-to-wear again. The last time he designed and manufactured ready-to-wear was in the late Seventies with his own company.

That folded up due to his inability to get costings and volumes right. His ultimate aim now is to build up a name that he can market internationally. "If you build up a name it would be silly not to capitalize on it".[47] With his ever-increasing reputation in Britain and America, he has begun to do this. He aims to have a ready-to-wear licence as well as the couture business on condition that he works with the right manufacturer. The right manufacturer would be capable of producing well-made clothes of an international standard. This may prove very difficult in London, as designers like Edelstein find it increasingly hard to convince manufacturing companies to produce a small orders of high quality dresses. The reason for this is because the major manufacturing companies that now produce well made clothes will only supply major chain stores, like Marks and Spencer, the Burton Group, Principles, Miss Selfridges, Jigsaw, Whisthies and C&A. These manufacturers are not prepared to disrupt their production lines to meet the small demands of independent designers.

Fig. 72.

In Britain there are not enough small factories producing clothes of an acceptable standard to cater for designers like Edelstein, who only wish to produce small ranges. Furthermore, the government is not interested in the modernisation of the fashion industry. There is also a great scarcity of skills factory workers and pattern cutters. For instance, in London, it is an open secret that there are as few as five pattern cutters who service the designer studios. They are much in demand, yet poorly paid for their work. This is why designers such as Jasper Conran, Betty Jackson, John Galliano, Alistair Blair and up until recently, Katherine Hamnett for all their knowledge and creativity are still struggling and comparatively little known in a world market where Giorgio Armani, Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren have become international stars and millionaires.

Italy and Japan have made billions in the Eighties by taking an enlightened long-term view of the value of contracting designers to develop well made, high profile collections which, properly marketed, can dominate world markets. The designers mainly affected by the inability of British manufacturing are the survivers of the young London fashion boom in the early Eighties. They have had no choice but to adapt to current conditions. What they've learned to do is either to stop manufacturing here, or to give up trying to produce and sell clothes themselves and to work on licensing contracts to large foreign manufacturers. Such designers include Keith Varty and Alan Cleaver of Byblos, Betty Jackson, Andrea Sargent and Maria Cornejo, Workers for Freedom, Edina Ronay, Caroline Charles and Paul Smith. Edelstein knows why there will never be a British Escada (ie an internationally successful British ready-to-wear house) and why British designers will never have the prestige or worldly rewards of the French, Italians or Americans. "Britain is a man's country", he says "and men don't really like women. Ask an Englishman what his wife wore to dinner last night and he cannot remember"(48) It annoys Edelstein to see top international designers coming to London, going into colleges and looking for inspiration at young peoples work as well as what they are wearing. They then take what they see, polish it and make money out of it. "If only the British money men were capable of understanding what a resource they are squandering"(49) If Edelstein does not find a suitable manufacturing company in the UK within the next two to three years, he will probably, like many other British designers resort to signing a

deal with a foreign manufacturer.

Preparing for the collection is the most frantic time of the season in all fashion houses. Nobody who has not witnessed the day to day running of a middle sized successful fashion house like Edelstein, can have any idea of the number of conflicting elements that have to be dealt with simultaneously, or how many problems need instant solutions in a single day. Fashion designers need to be Janus faced, one head turned back to watch the running of the business, the other focused forward on the current collection with his long list of deadlines not just for the clothes, but also the shoes, hats, bags, gloves, belts, hoisery and jewellery. In larger fashion companies, like Bruce Oldfield and Hardy Amies, there are the licensed lines to worry about, the licensing contracts, press previews and international television. A successful designer is required to give his / her undivided attention to all aspects of the business.

Selecting the fabric is the first step in starting any new collection. This is where for the first time, ideas meet cloth and begin to take shape in the designers mind. For most European designers, fabric fairs such as 'Interstof' in Germany, and 'Premiere Vision' in Paris, provide a wide variety of directional fabrics. Edelstein acquires his fabrics from individual shops and wholesale companies. Abrahams in Paris and Italy. His loosely woven tweeds are usually acquired from Scottish mills. Selection of fabric takes place about seven weeks before the show. Rigorous toiling is then carried out for the next five weeks and finally the collection is born in 'Couture Week'. No matter what has happened in the preparation or what happens in the future, the British and international press as well as the clients judge the collection during those crucial thirty minutes when the clothes are paraded on the catwalk.

Edelstein balances every collection by giving a representative selection of lines, styles and garments to suit various functions. He fills many sketch pads before deciding on the complete range. When he decides on a sketch, it is automatically handed to his pattern cutter, David with notes and fabric swatches. At the haute couture end of the fashion business, toiles will be produced for some of these designs, especially if the cut is unusually complicated or the designer and his technical staff are concerned about how a

particular design will appear when made up. At the pret-a-porter level, this happens less frequently. Paper patterns will be cut and when the fabrics arrive, the garments will be made up directly after they have been ordered. The pattern cutters are, in many respects, the most important members in Edelsteins design team. They are the people who really make possible his ideas. Highly trained and experienced they shoulder a considerable responsibility. On their patterns all production is based, and if they do not get everything right there will be problems with the garments that eventually will be noticed by public or clients.

Edelstein's clients are quick to tell him if they feel the dress is not draping or fitting properly. A pattern cutter's work demands skill and precision along with a full understanding both of the designer's mind and of the potential of the fabric he or she is using. Whether the production is in the designers own factory of couture house, the shape of the garment reflects what the cutter has decided is the solution to the problem of interpreting the design correctly in the most suitable material. Edelstein and his pattern cutters work closely together to achieve their ends and in the event of a disagreement, the wise designer bows to the wisdom of his cutters.

As each model is cut and then made up by the trusted and long-serving seamstresses, it is brought before the designer for a fitting. Edelstein has one head seamstress Maria, who allocates work to suitable dress makers numbering 19 in all. They are of various nationalities, South American, Spanish, Portugese, German and Italtian. They receive an average wage of £14,000 a year. This is the first time the designer has seen his idea made reality and it is only now that he knows whether it is wearable. The garment is worn by a house model who is hired by Victor for two to three weeks before the show. She is of standard shape and size and has a rare degree of patience. She must stand for many hours while sleeves are ripped out and re-pinned, hemlines altered and pocket-placings changed. Exactly the same things may be done on the same dress the next day, and indeed for many subsequent days, until the designer and his team are satisfied. The fittings are intensely creative: everyone is concentrating, everyone has a particular role, sketching, pinning, noting down alternation, and at the same time, everything is looking at the garment in the most critical way possible. Once passed, the dress returns upstairs and details are finished off. Figures 73 and 74 show details of

Fig 73

Fig. 74.

Edelsteins favoured ruching being created. The tiny pleats of fabric are held into position by pins and are hand stitched into place. The visible seams on the dress are sewn up by machine and the interior of the dress is literally sewn together by hand: hems are rolled, canvas is sewn in, raw edges are bound carefully, zip and covered fasteners are sewn in by hand and finally, the lining is carefully tucked and sewn into place. A ballgown as in Fig 30 would take one dressmaker approximately ten to fourteen days of constant work.

If a dress is strapless or has off-the-shoulder sleeves a fitted bodice or corset is sewn into the waist and midriff of the dress. Figs 75 and 76 show a fitted bodice in the making. The bodice of fine metal supple boning provides the firmness that the silhouette requires. It is the principle of all couture work (Fig 76 - a Dior bodice). The boning of the bodice fits an individual wearer's frame like a second skin. It also ensures that the fullness of the overbodice, deep neckline, or draped back will fall with precision.

There are as many as sixteen fine metal bones incorporated into an Edelstein bodice. The covered ones extend to about 2 inches below the waist at the sides and back only. It is usually referred to as the 'bullet proof' vest in the workroom. The fabric of a typical bodice made in the house comprises of two layers of silk backed by two layers of organza. In other contemporary couture houses, such as Anouska Hempel in South Kensington, the bodice is not made up in the traditional manner. She uses a stiff interfacing applied by heat to the underbodice fabric. The bones are not metal but plastic called 'Rigiline'. Hempel's bodices equally serve the same purpose, but because of their quality, they do not last as long as an Edelstein bodice. At Edelsteins', every garment piece when cut out is backed with organza (like the pieces of a bodice) if the fabric is particularly light, two layers of light silk are used. This gives volume to the garment as well as long life.

Edelstein's staff are very experienced and competent technically. So far they have never let him down. "We have never had a design that we were never able to put together" says Theresa, a long time serving Portugese seamstress - "We see the sketch and zoom"[50] explained Carla, also a seamstress of Italian origin. Edelstein is very easy to work with, he listens, takes advice and constantly discusses technical problems with his staff. He has a good

Fig 75.

F. 76.

Fig 76A

relationship with his staff and they in turn have great respect for him. The methods of construction used by Edelstein make his clothes different from those of other London couture houses. As I have mentioned, some techniques, such as the traditional boned bodice are not strictly adhered to by other couturiers. Designers like Bruce Oldfield call what is basically a well made ready-to-wear dress 'couture' because it may have a hand rolled hem. Other so called couturiers such as Lachaisse, do not even use a fitted bodice. Instead bones are sewn directly onto the lining of the dress. Couturiers like Edelstein and Hardy Amies produce clothes made in the true haute couture manner.

Edelstein has created an excellent reputation by producing clothes that are very well made. He is a traditionalist, but he does not go to the trouble or extremes that a great designer like Christian Dior went to when he was about to start his collection.

At Dior, to start a collection, he himself would make series of 'petites gravures' which he would then hand out to his three key assistant, Mmes Marguerite Coure, Raymonde Zehnacker and Bricard. Where necessary, Dior would give an instruction about the cut of the cloth, the lay of the material, the desired effect to be made. Mme Marguerite Coure would then be responsible for handling the sketches to the appropriate 'premieres' (heads of workrooms) attempting to suit the idea of the dress to the woman concerned. She would be the one responsible for cutting out the muslin model, keeping as closely to the inspiration of the petite grovure as possible. The showroom assistants sewed up the muslin ready for submission to Dior again. The toile would then be subjected to close scrutiny, torn apart and criss-crossed with French chalk marks to indicate where alterations should be made. For one collection, sixty or more toiles would be assembled.

Mms Raymondes job at Dior was to go through the successful toiles and map out a collection balancing the quantity of dresses with suits, evening gowns and so on, and give some working plan for the physical completion of the collection.

In all, Christian Dior would work up about 170 individual models from the basic toiles - altering, adding and re-interpreting. The next step would be to choose the fabric for each of the toiles accepted. When the dress had been made up in the actual fabric, Dior would see it again, and make further adjustments to the design on the model. Finally the dress would be taken away and stitched to return for vital decisions about buttons, bows and other trimmings. This long and laborious method was used by Dior for every dress in each collection.

In the day's leading up to Edelstein's show, cutting and fittings continue with increasing momentum. Long hours are worked by everyone, tempers fray, irritation and jealousies surface, Edelstein himself is often frustrated and irritated by non-delivery of vital delivery of materials such as gloves and belts. However, he always manages to be calm and humorous reassuring everyone that everything will be all right on the day. At the same time, he prepares the running order of the show and with the help of Sarah his PR (cum secretary) and design assistant, send out invitations , organizes seating, accessories and models. Sarah faces the task of organising the seating for the show in order to give the journalists the places that reflect the importance of their publications and their status as individuals. Vogue, Harpers and Queen, Hello and Tatler are always represented by a fashion journalist. Fashion journalists have powerful egos and can spot a slight at twenty paces - or two places. They are acutely aware of their status and they know that the seat they are given at the show reflects their significance from Edelsteins's point of view. Clients seating arrangements are equally important. Those who bought well last season are allocated good seats.

Like Edelstein, designers have a range of hats, shoes, and jewellery to accessorise the collection. Hats and belts are created specially by accessory designers for Edelstein. The function of these accessories is to make the show visually interesting and memorable and to set off the clothes in a way that makes them new, interesting and covetable (Fig 26). The accessory designers, Philip Tracey, (hats) and Cingula (belts) talk to Edelstein and look at the proposed designs for his collection. This allows them to understand the spirit of the collection, which is most important for the overall look. Accessory designs are approved by Edelstein before any production begins. Shoes are sponsored by Manolo Blahnik for the day of the show. Jewellery firms also

allow pieces of jewellery to be used as accessories. Notable companies are Cartier of London and Verdura of New York. In the Autumn/Winter 1989/90, Cartier exhibited a gold turquoise, amethyst and diamond bib necklace by Cartier Paris of 1947. This was worn by the Duchess of Windsor during her life (Fig 77).

For the show itself, the two most vital elements, after the clothes and accessories are the music and the model girls. The presentation of clothes has changed considerable since the heyday of Paris couture. Up until the late 1950's garments were usually shown in silence. The model girl held a card giving the number of the garment or the compere gave its name and number. The change came with pret-a-porter. Now music is very evident - usually loud, usually disco and usually aimed at exciting the audience while stimulating the models to show the clothes with style and abandon. The type of girl chosen to show the clothes depends very much on the designers personal taste and the way in which he wishes his clothes to be projected. But it also depends on the prevailing attitudes towards fashion generally. For example, in the late 1970's, the clothes and the designers seemed to demand a very aggressive sensual movement on the runway and this was often provided by black models moving to black music. By the beginning of the 1980's everything had softened. White girls, preferably bland and boyish, showed the new fashion to the accompaniment of much more gentle sound.

The mid Eighties experienced models and music that were severe - the age of power dressing. The Nineties are returning to a more relaxed mood in music and particularly fashion. Black, white and half-caste models are equally popular. What Edelstein requires in a good professional model is here ability to walk and move elegantly and a look which reflects the sophisticated and chic spirit of his clothes and a figure which by normal standards might appear rather bizarre. He chooses his models from an agency; some are French but the majority are British. A good model can inspire and influence a designer and most of the couturiers have one or two favourites. One of Edelstein's favourite models is the English model Catrinna Skepper (Fig 78). For music, Edelstein has always used a Jazz band. For Spring/Summer 91, however he opted for lively South American music. The more than usual lively music helped to create a younger feel to the collection.

The Duchess favoured bold mixes of coloured stones. This amethyst and turquoise lattice necklace sprinkled with diamonds was made by Cartier in September 1947 using stones believed to have been given to the Duke by his grandmother Queen Alexandra. The Duchess later had earrings, a dress ring and two pins in matching colours.

Fig 77

Fig. 78.

Fig 79

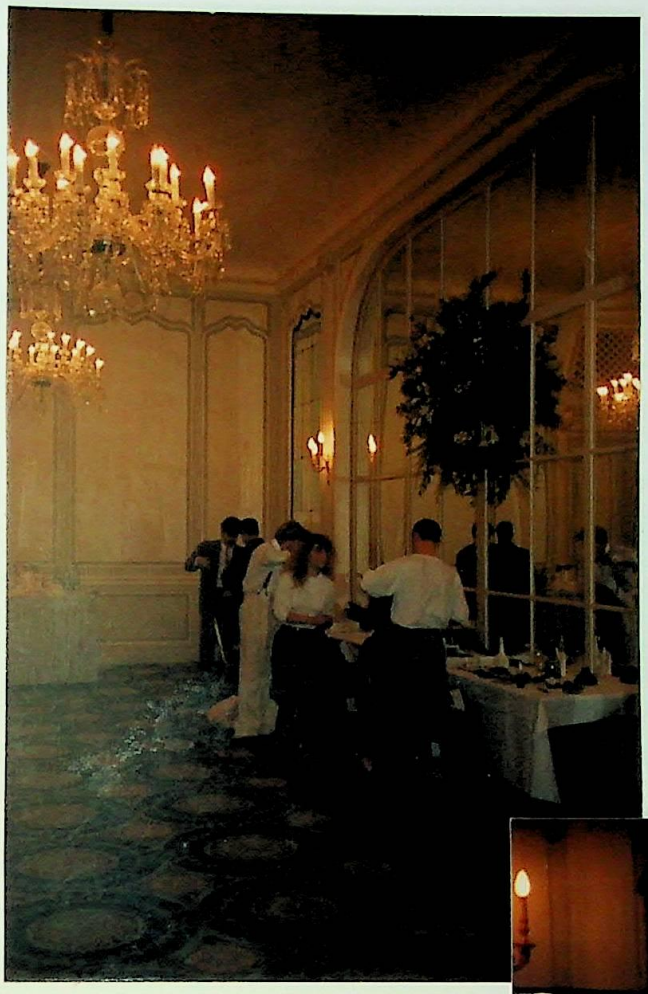


Fig 80

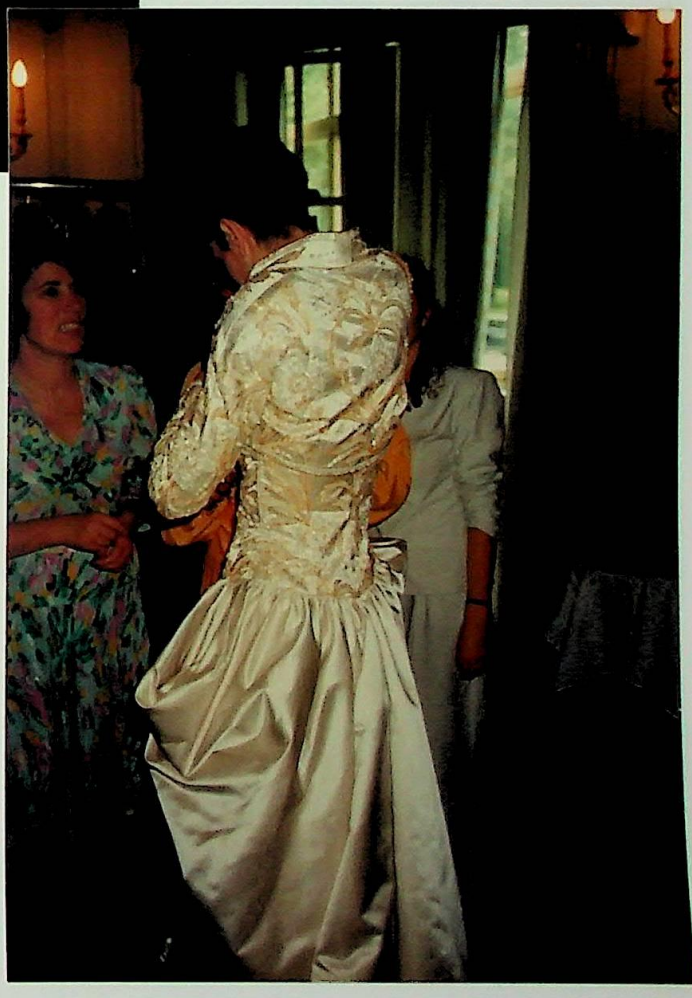


Fig 81.

Fig 82

placed in their chairs; publicity material is also put on all seats and flowers are arranged. The important video recorder is also being set up. The customers begin to flow in steadily; fifteen minutes later it is time for the show to start. Edelstein stands behind the curtain, ready to check each girls appearance to make last minute adjustments to hats and belts before they go out. The music begins and the frenzy commences (Fig 83). Fast as they are all working behind the scenes, they are not so involved they cannot listen and respond to the encouragement of applause from the audience. Thirty minutes later, the applause reaches a crescendo, the model girls drag Edelstein on to the runway to acknowledge the crowd.

Two hours later, there is a repeat performance. Then the model girls rush off and the clearing up begins. In six months time, Victor has to repeat the whole performance only it must be even better next time.

During the days following the show, clients make appointments and come one after the other to order the dresses they were most impressed with at the show. Two weeks later the dresses are neatly packed into boxes and the collection is taken to New York by Edelstein and Sarah. They stay for one week operating from a suite at the Plaza Hotel. Returning to London with orders, Edelstein sets his workroom to work once again, producing dresses for American and European clients. For the next six months, he will spend his time fitting his clients and practising his philosophies. At the end of a day's fittings, Edelstein can often be heard quoting Balenciaga "The life of couturier is the life of a dog".(52)

With the arrival of the Nineties, a decade ostensibly bringing more relaxed attitudes to dressing, logic suggests that couture will once more seem an anachronism. So far however, a decline in its interest by its relatively new patrons seems unlikely. Furthermore in February 1990, British couturiers united for the first time since the Fifties to present British Couture Week. In 1991 they were joined by Dior's ex-designer Marc Bohan for Hartnell. As 'quality' and 'individualism' have been considered key works for the Nineties, I believe couture and its creators like Victor Edelstein will be much in demand and perhaps it will continue to survive into the next Century.

Fig. 83.

CONCLUSION

Londons fashion position is unique and rests on two foundations. First, and most famous, is the classic, high quality clothing which has always symbolized British excellence throughout the world. The second major contribution of London to the Fashion world is directly opposite to the traditional English classic look. This is the 'avant-garde' design with which the young break the rules of taste quite deliberately and produce clothes of great vulgarity and great originality.

Victor Edelstein is a true representative of the traditional English classic look, which springs from the tradition of mens tailoring which made Savile Row a byword of all that was excellent, elegant, seemly and understated in male dress. ~~He takes the very best of natural dress.~~ He takes the very best of natural materials such as cashmere, lambswool, woven tweed and a variety of silks and treats them in a traditional way to produce classic looks that hardly vary. In fact, so perfectly are they conceived, that variety often becomes totally secondary.

As a designer, Edelstein has never pioneered a particular cut or design concept. Instead, many of his designs are structurally quite simple but achieve their effect because of the imaginative and manipulative use of fabric combined with a refined colour palette. If eventually he designs ready-to-wear collections, I feel they would be less successful than his couture collections, because his strength as a designer lies in his ability to produce various 'looks' by manipulating fabric and colour uses when confined to the one silhouette. This thorough thought-out and individual approach, which is an integral part of Edelstein's work, would be dramatically restricted in the manufacturing of ready-to-wear.

He is admired for his discreet qualities as a couturier and for his perfectionism. His luxurious clothes are very expensive because he uses superb materials combineed with flawless cutting and a high standard of tailoring and construction. He is successful not only because of his designs but also because of his association with the Princess of Wales. He was also in the fortunate position of running a couture house during the mid 1980's, when

worldwide social and economic improvement fostered a climate for the revival of couture.

He is a designer of lasting quality who, without gimmicks or vulgarity, creates clothes in the great traditions of haute couture.

LIST OF REFERENCES

SECTION 1

1. Interview by author, 5th February 1991.

2. Levin, Angela, You Magazine, The Sunday Mail, July 1990. P.59

3. Ibid., P.60.

4. Ibid

5. Maxtone Graham, Ysenda, Tatler P.78

6. Levin, Angela, op. cit.

7. Maxtone Graham, Ysenda, op. cit.

8. Levin Angela op. cit.

9. Coleridge, Nicholas, The Fashion Conspiracy, Richard Clay Ltd, Suffolk, Gt. Britain P. 137

10. Ibid P. 138

11. Interview op. cit.

12. Royal Monthly, January 1989 P.25

13. Ibid

SECTION 2

14. Coleridge, Nicholas op. cit P.180

15. Kennett, Frances, Secrets of the Couturiers, Orbis Publishing Ltd, London, 1984 P.11

16. Interview by author, 5th February 1991

17. McHugh Fionnula, Allure Couture, Country Homes and Interiors, December 1990, P. 98

18. Interview. Op. cit.

19. Royal Monthly, January 1989 P.26

20. Interview op.cit.

21. Hume, Marion, 'The ladies who are lunching', London, The Sunday Times, News International Ltd

22. Interview Op. cit

23. McDowell, Colin, McDowells Directory of Twentieth Century Fashion, First published in Great Britain in 1984 by Frederick Muller. P.88

24. Interview Op. cit.

25. Jouvre Marie - Adree and Jacqueline Demornex, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London 1988 P.154

26. Ibid P.162

27. Interview Op. cit.

SECTION 3

28. Amies, hardy, Still here, George, Weidenfield and Nicolson Ltd, London 1984 P. 149

29. Levin, Angela, You Magazine, The Sunday Mail, London; July 1990 P. 62

30. Drinkwater, Ros, Women in my life, Victor Edelstein, Journal Magazine London October 1990

31. Interview Op. cit.

32. Drinkwater, Ros, Op. cit.

33. Coledridge, Nicholas Op. cit. P.137

34. Ibid P.138

35. Hume, Marion. Op. cit.

36. Interview Op. cit

37. Ibid

38. Maxton Graham, Ysenda, Op. cit. P.81

39. Interview Op. cit.

40. Pollen, Brenda, The Independent on Sunday, A Very British Couture 20 January 1991

41. Vogue (UK) Spy, Cutting it Fine, October 1990

42. Ibid

43. Interview by author August 1990

44. Ibid

45. Ibid

46. McDowell Colin, Op. cit

47. Interview Op. Cit

48. Pollen Brenda Op. cit

49. Ibid

50. Interview by author. July 1990

51. Ibid

52. Howell, Georgina, Sultans of style, Thirty years of Fashion 1960 - 1990, Ebury Press, London 1990. P. 42

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Amies, Hardy, Still Here, Beorge Weidenfield and Nicolson Ltd., London, 1984.

2. Armstrong, Lisa, What is Couture?, 'The Independent on Sunday Gr Britain, 29 July 1990

3. Coleridge, Nicholas, The Fashion Conspiracy, Heinemann London, 1988

4. Howell, Georgina, Bruce Oldield's Season, Pan Booke Ltd, London, 1987

5. Howell, Georgina, In Vogue, Six decades of Fashion Butler & Tanner Ltd, London, 1975

6. Howell Georgina, Sultans of Style - Thirty years of Fashion 1960 - 1991, Ebury Press, London 1990

7. Hulanicki, Barbara, From A to Biba, Hutchinson & Co Ltd, London 1983

8. Hume, Marion, 'The ladies who are lunching London' The Sunday Times, News International Ltd, 18 February 1990

9. Keenan, Brigid, Dior in Vogue, Octopus Books Ltd, London 1981

10. Kennedy, Fraser, The Fashionable Mind - Reflections on Fashion 1970 - 1981, Alfred A. Knoff, Inc, 1981

11. Kennett, Francis, Secret of the Couturiers, Orbis Publishing Ltd, London 1984

12. Laver, Angela Costume & Fashion, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London 1982

12. Levin, Angela 'At Home - Victor Edelstein' The Mail on Sunday, July 1990

14. Jouve, Maire - Andree & Demornex, Jacqueline, Balenciaga, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London 1988

15. Maxton Graham, Ysenda Victor Ludorum Tatler, London February 1990

16. McDowell, Colin, McDowells Directory of Twentieth Century Fashion, Published by Fredick Muller, London 1984

17. McHugh, Fionnula, 'Allure Couture' Country Homes & Interiors, London December 1990

18. Pexton Murray, Maggie, Changing Styles in Fashion Who What Why, Fairchild Publication, New York, 1989

19. Pollen, Brenda, 'A very British Couture,' The Independent on Sunday, Gt Britain 20 January 1991

20. Wilson, Elizabeth and Taylor, Lou Through the Looking Glass, A history of dress from 1860 to present day, BBC Books 1989