

Femininity revived in current fashion trends

By Lisa Stankus
Staff Reporter

First, there was the return of the mini-skirts.

The fashion world rediscovered the curves and sensualities that had been buried and draped by the anonymous look.

The fashion forecast for spring/summer 1990 will be a return to this rage for the "femme fatale" look. This glorification of the woman will include pretty silhouettes, delicate patterns and refined coloring that will dominate the racks of every major design line around the world.

The shape of the designs will be body conscious. More specifically, the '90s will be starting with an emphasis on the neckline. But even more specifically, all eyes will be turning to the exotic allure of a scantily clad bustline.

Elaborations on the corset and the underwire bra-look familiarized by Madonna and entourage both will be shown in public.

The influence of bra-dresses will be used to reshape the bosom to uplift

and pronounce, just as in the '40s and the days of the cinema-screen vixen. Let's face it, the Jane Russell look is "it" this season.

New York designer Donna Karan adheres to this fitted look in her new, lower-priced line, Donna Karan New York (DKNY). The line is carried exclusively in Lincoln by Ben Simon's. Karan uses body suits and clingy materials in her '90 collection. The one-piece smoothness will be joined by the wraparound-style knit top to follow the natural line.

"This body-wrap dressing seems to be a popular addition to this season's line," said Melanie Bell, manager of Ben Simon's at Gateway Shopping Center. "Also, the sarong skirt will be popular along the lines of the fitted wear."

And as the Twiggy-thin figure is passé for women, a new logic to fashion has arisen: Clothing is worn to please the wearer, impress associates and express sexuality, though not necessarily in that order.

Enter the look of "slouch" dressing. Rather than looking sloppy and unkempt, this brand of dressing allows the woman a degree of comfort

with the relaxed fit. The clothes reveal a subtle, sensual swagger.

The design lines of Giorgio Armani, Donna Karan and Louis Dell'Olio for Anne Klein all are showing this smooth fluidity of slouch dressing by combining long, flowing jackets over full trousers or wider-cut skirts.

The polite gathers and tucks give the impression of informal tailoring to the separates. Shoulder pads will still be worn with this genre of styling, but will be rounded and usually only about half an inch thick.

Spring and summer dressing also will see a return to specialized dressing.

"One of the most dominant looks this year will be the nautical look," said Karen Wilson, manager of Dillard's at Gateway. "This 'sailor look' began last season and continues to grow stronger. The navy/white and red/white combination will be seen in shorts, dresses and culottes of many design lines."

The look of Santa Fe will be an influence this season. Again, this style began last season, but continues to grow in popularity. The denim-washed

flavor and Aztec patterning are relaxed in nature. This comfort can be seen in the design lines of Calvin Klein, Giorgio Armani and Norma Kamali, as all three have opted for the influence of the American Indian to personify the "wrangler look" -- in everything from faded blue jeans to oversized tops.

The warmer summer weather also will be reviving the polka dot, and according to one local salesperson, polka dots "will be everywhere."

"The rayon shirts and weekend knits will be showing the dots as an exciting and fun addition," said Chantel Biester of Ben Simon's.

Color and patterns will be making a strong impact of their own. Since the majority of fashion shapes are simple, the pattern and color accents can make an ensemble a vibrant statement.

Floral prints will, in a variety of ways, add their own level of femininity. New York-based designer Adrienne Vittadini, known for her dramatic use of knit dressing, is doing the majority of her spring line with a nostalgic, floral print. The cut is comfortable, with the bright color of

the print making a splashy look.

The inspiration of ethnic dressing can be seen in the lines of Tangiers, Esprit and Generra. Aimed at the younger market, this look is bright designs, and plenty of them. The impact is startling, but the feel is earthy -- not to mention comfortable -- with the majority of pieces being oversized rayon tops and matching swingy, short skirts.

Internationally, the look is sheer drama.

The couture collections of Gianni Versace, Sybilla, Roland Nivelais, Yves Saint Laurent and Katherine Hammett are all worshipping the god of cleavage and provocative dressing.

The body-hugging designs are reminiscent of the early screen stars, and their brand of glamour via curves and corsets. Strapless dresses, with the bustier being very sculptured, also are common among many designers overseas.

However, the common line to all shores is the unrelenting interest in reviving the pretty femininity that has been sacrificed for many fashion seasons.

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