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EC423 Planning the Costume

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PLANNING THE COSTUME

The desire to be attractive, to feel the assurance that one is correctly and if possible, beautifully dressed, is inherent in almost every individual and especially in every woman. There are tricks and rules which with intelligent thought and practice will bring about this desire, but it requires skill, watchfulness, and a close observance of the rules if every effort is to be a success. People who spend time and thought on their dress show wisdom for after the good effect is obtained, the mind is free for other subjects, rather than having that worried and dissatisfied feeling which comes from being improperly dressed.

Taking the Inventory

The problem of what to choose to give the most satisfactory and pleasing wardrobe comes to every one of us. First, it is important to take an inventory and see what clothes we have on hand that might be used, providing they were renovated or re-made in some way. A re-made dress can be just as attractive and serve the purpose as well as a new dress and saves money which may be used for a dress of another type or some accessory we wish to add to our outfit to make it more complete.

Then, too, by taking this inventory it is possible to know before the purchasing is started what undergarments will be necessary and the kind of a hat, shoes, and hose needed. In this way all the available money will not be spent for the one dress but plans may be made so that all our needs may be satisfied.

Art Principles Applied to Dress Design

A knowledge of art principles is helpful for people in designing or in judging whether a design is beautiful and suited to herself or another individual. The art principles help us to recognize a well proportioned figure, to apparently improve the poorly proportioned individual; to understand line and its many uses; to determine the effect of certain materials on individuals; to understand the relation of color to the individual and to visualize a finished costume as it is to be worn.

The lines of a woman's figure have as great a bearing upon what she may wear becomingly as color. To be able to clothe herself beautifully in the idea of fashion, it is essential that she know the proportions of her own figure, so that she can apply the underlying design principles. There are five things that make good design. Proper unity and center of interest, rhythm, correct balance, subordination and proportion.

Design Principles

Unity means that nothing can be added or taken away from the picture without altering its meaning. It is necessary to have a main idea or center of interest and around this build the design.

Rhythm is the means of securing unity in a design by leading the eye thru regular repetitions of certain shapes, lines, and colors.

Balance means rest or repose and should be imparted to the costume as a whole. There are two kinds of balance; - formal and informal. Equal and the same attractions on each side makes formal balance and suggests dignity

and strength. Informal balance is shown in dress when the two sides differ but still retain a feeling of equal weight. This gives interest and variety to the dress and suggests gracefulness.

Subordination is gained when there is one dominant feature produced with the arrangement of lines and colors. Everything in the costume should be kept subordinate to the wearer, so that she will be the most interesting part of the whole.

Proportion is the pleasing relation of an object to others and to the whole, and is said to be the breeding of good design. Interest in a picture, room or costume comes from having pleasing proportions. It is the arranging of objects or parts so that enough likeness is present to make them seem related and enough difference is present to avoid monotony.

Harmony in the costume is attained when the other laws of design have been carried out.

Selecting the Design for the Costume

That vital thing, personality, is emphasized in color and line when rightly applied to the human figure. Line expresses strength and beauty, or weakness. Straight lines give strength and dignity and are best suited to the dress which is to give service or for the person who wishes to appear dignified. They should not be worn by the person who already has severe features and lines of her body. Beautiful soft materials soften the harsh lines of the figure or features.

The purpose of line is to draw one's eye to a point of interest. Very often those of us who are tall wish to be shorter and those of us who are short wish to be taller. We cannot change ourselves but we can dress to appear more nearly our ideal by emphasizing correct lines in our dress.

To make the proper choice for the design, the following rules may serve as a guide.

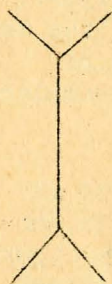
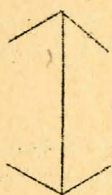


Figure 1.



1. A vertical line with ends turned down appears shorter than with ends turned up. Figure 1. For example, a tall woman who wears a turned up hat adds to her height or a short woman who wears a drooping brim tends to look shorter.



Figure 2.

2. A line broken at the ends seems shorter than a plain, straight one. Figure 2. A woman can shorten her height by adding a contrasting collar and placing a tuck or band around the bottom of a garment.

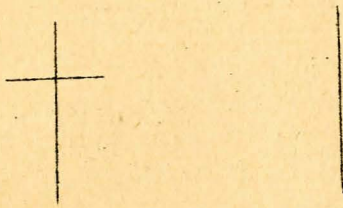


Figure 3.

3. A broken line appears shorter than an unbroken one. Figure 3. A short woman can tend to shorten her appearance by wearing a conspicuous belt. A tall person can appear shorter by the use of a breaking line.

4. A straight vertical silhouette makes one appear more slender; horizontal lines cause the eye to travel from side to side and thus give the impression of width.

5. Repeating equal space divisions tends to produce monotony. For example, equal tucks with equal spaces between do not appear as interesting as those which are wider or narrower than the spaces.

6. Repeating a line emphasizes it. A neck line which repeats the roundness of the face or the sharpness of the chin emphasizes these points. Fig. 4.

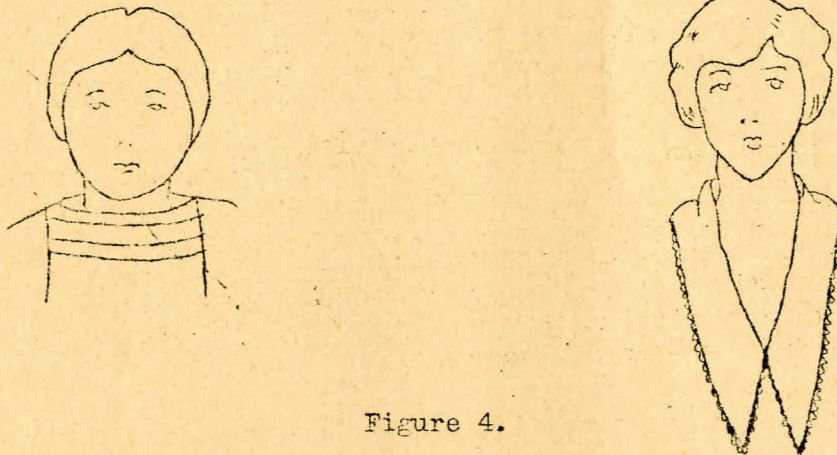


Figure 4.

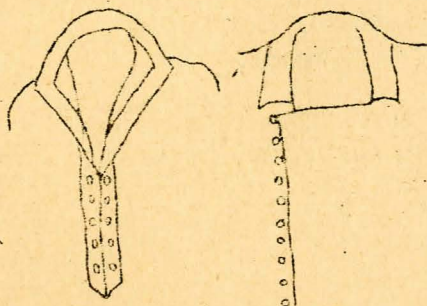
The following suggestions may be helpful to the different types of women:

A. For the short, stout woman.

1. Choose a design with the lines extending the full length of the figure.
2. V-shaped necks or those with straight lines are better than the curved.

Figure 5.

3. Hair worn high and close to the head adds height.
4. Crosswise trimmings are not for the short woman as they emphasize the breadth and tend to shorten the figure.



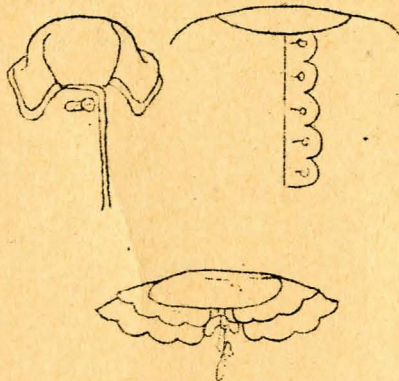


Figure 6.

B. Tall, slender type.

1. Choose lines which lead the eye from side to side.
2. Avoid vertical lines.
3. Keep decoration on the sides rather than in the center of the costume.
4. Clothing should be of medium fit, not too tight nor too loose.
5. Wear hair full at sides.
6. Choose round necklines, rolling collars, and yokes rather than v-shaped necks and long straight collars.

Figure 6.

C. Angular woman.

1. Choose curved lines which soften the straight, severe lines in the face and figure.
2. Soft materials tend to soften the angles.
3. Avoid shiny, hard finished material.
4. Tailored, mannish clothes should not be worn.
5. Rolling collars, soft frills and lace will be good around the neck.

Selection of Material

"Sufficient unto itself is the rich fabric." This is a good maxim to follow. It is not economy to buy cheap, poor materials thinking in this you may have more clothes. A garment made in good style and of good material is much more credit to you even tho half worn out, than a cheap new garment could be. The most becoming colors are found in the good fabrics; we want them soft and rich not dull and lifeless like brownish black, neither do we want them bright nor loud like red or red orange.

There are certain general rules to follow in choosing the fabric for an individual.

1. The stout woman should avoid taffetas and organdies because it sticks out and only adds the appearance of weight.
2. Shiny materials reflect the light and give the appearance of roundness.
3. Large figured or wide striped materials likewise tend to add size and make the large women more conspicuous.
4. Coarse weaves, rough surfaces or plaids increase apparent size.
5. Soft materials such as Canton crepe, bengaline, voile, crepe, bolivia, wool crepe, serge, dull charmeen, fall in graceful vertical folds and make one look more slender.

Dress "smartly" no matter how old you are. There is no need for a woman to become careless as she grows older. In fact, the older you grow the more urgent is the need for clothes that will make you look attractive. Dress to suit your needs and circumstances, of course, but keep always on the alert for whatever will add youthful charm as well as womanly dignity. Remember a woman is as old as she looks, a man as old as he feels. Wells says, "By her dress, the woman of today can prolong her youth and at the same time take on that poise and dignity which the accumulation of years and experience has bestowed upon her, provided she accepts these years and experience in the right spirit."

(Prepared by Theresa L. Judge)