

The National Press Week Files from the Couture Group of the New York Dress Institute
Press releases, news articles, correspondence, photos and bio.s of designers and
manufacturers, 1941, 1945-46 and 1960-70
9 linear feet

Fashion Institute of Technology library, Special Collections, X-200

Processed by Whitney Blausen, Summer, 2005

Access: Open to qualified researchers by appointment

History:

THE NEW YORK DRESS INSTITUTE

The New York Dress Institute was founded in the early 1940's by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and a consortium of ladies dress and cloak and suit manufacturers.

Both groups were united by the fear that if the U.S. entered into WWII sales would plummet and jobs would be lost.

As part of the initial agreement, each Union manufacturer agreed to contribute one half of one per-cent of gross sales to a common advertising fund.

The idea was not well thought out.

Jobbers, like the J.D. Dress Company, who contributed \$75,000 to the fund, received nothing in return because they sold to other manufacturers or to stores who put their own labels in the J.D. garments.

ELEANOR LAMBERT

Eleanor Lambert, already a rising star in the world of fashion public relations, was Press Director of the Institute. Ms Lambert fully understood the value of name recognition. She successfully argued that designer names might generate publicity not only for themselves, but also for the Institute as a whole. Thus, the Couture Group of the New York Dress Institute was launched in 1942 or 43.

(For more information on Eleanor Lambert, see her obituary in the October 8, 2003 edition of the *New York Times*).

Initially the paid membership of the Couture Group numbered about eleven designers and upscale manufacturers including Nettie Rosenstein, Jo Copeland, Maurice Rentner and Adele Simpson.

Throughout the 1960's, membership ranged from twenty to thirty clients per season.

NATIONAL PRESS WEEK

As Press Director for the New York Dress Institute, Eleanor Lambert, (who had already inaugurated the International Best Dressed List and the Coty Awards), introduced the concept of Fashion Weeks in 1943.

Held twice a year, primarily for out of town buyers and the international press, Fashion, or Press Weeks, presented the Spring and Fall collections of the Couture Group's members in a single week (with plenty of parties as well). It was an efficient way to showcase a great deal of merchandise and talent. Standard practice today, but a novel approach in 1943.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The National Press Week Files and related documents contain photographs with accompanying press releases of the clothing produced by the members of the Couture Group of the New York Dress Institute. Ten years documenting the clothing of the 1960's as designers and manufactures wanted their clients to dress. The burgeoning youth market, which defined the dress of the 1960's, is conspicuously absent.

Additionally, there are photographs and short biographical sketches of many designers and manufacturers. Some, like Donald Brooks, are still well known. Others offer information about an all-but-unknown designer who was the creative force behind a then major manufacturer—Karen Stark for Harvey Berin, for example.

Other nuggets include photographic documentation of the first use of African-American models in the 1960's, clippings related to Charles James's brief venture into the world of ready-to-wear (for Samuel Winston) and important information about Claire McCardell and Anne Klein.

RELATED MATERIALS IN FIT SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Eleanor Lambert oral history: TT 139.073. V13

Designer files for:

- Larry Aldrich, X17
- Harvey Berin, X15
- Donald Brooks, X184
- Jo Copeland, X41
- Davidow, X6
- Gothe, X70
- Arthur Jablow, TT139.073. v36
- Charles James, X56
- Claire McCardell, X38
- Monte-Sano, X36
- Molly Parnis, X8
- Maurice Rentner, Y7 and TT139.073 v.30
- Nettie Rosenstein, X13
- Abe Schrader, TT139.073 v4 parts 1 and 2
- Herbert Sondheim, X50
- Samuel Winston, X48
- B.H. Wragge, X27

Other designers and manufactures who are represented in the collection, (some for one year, some for ten) are:

Edward Abbott
After Six
American Institute of Men's and Boy's Wear
Ronald Amey
Arbe Originals
Barrack
William Biddle
Anthony Blotta
Paul Blumenstein
Branell
Burke-Amey
Cameo
Carlye
Carmel
Hattie Carnegie
Oleg Cassini
Ceil Chapman
David Chrystal
Lee Claire
Coty Cosmetics
Countess Alexandra
Oscar de la Renta
Jane Derby
Morton Digney, Ltd.
Christian Dior
Luis Estevez
Exquisite Bridals
Anne Fogarty
Harvey Frechtel
Sam Friedlander
Ben Gershel and Co.
Granele-Roberts
Robert Hall
Chuck Howard
Jeunesse Boutique
J.H. Bridals
Jobere
Jr. Sophisticates
Nat Kaplan, inc.
Harold Levine
London Fog
Mancrini
Mardi Gras
Marquise
Mignon
Miss Betsey Wedding Fashions
Montgomery Ward

Leo Narducci
Charles Nudelman
Originala
Parnes Feinstein Knits
Paul Parnes
Piccone Bridals
Ben Reig
Rembrant
Rodrigues for Peter Clements
Rudolf Gowns
Sacony
Jack Sarnoff
Shoe Fashion Guild
Townley
Teal Traina
Pauline Trigere
Hannah Troy
Twentieth Century Fox
Vogue-Butterick
Werle'
Widder Brothers