Focus on Fashion

By Paula Brooks

1983 has been dubbed "The Year of The Dress" by the fashion industry. A strong element of drama pervades designer collections, as they take a page from eras gone by.

Huge padded shoulders, and waists tightly cinched with just the right wide belt, show a new fascination with '50s dressing.

Gloves are hot once again, and available in more brilliant colors, length, and textures (lace, angora, leather), — than ever before. The addition of a sharp little hat will give you a smart, head-turning look. There is a beautiful profusion of business-like day dresses, soft flowing day into evening looks, and slinky, glamorous evening wear.

This is also the year for suede, leather, and fur! Dresses, jumpsuits, tunics, and tee-shirts, are among the best new leather looks. Leather pants are still fall staples — but they've been up-dated, and the tight, above the ankle, Marilyn Monroe version, appears to be this season's star.

There are gorgeous, sensously soft suedes, with beautiful colors, and geometric patterns worked in. there are also fabulous combinations of leather, snakeskin, and suede — as well as hand-painted, and metallic versions. this hand crafted artwear is museum quality.

Short, tight suede and leather minis look great paired with nubby, hand-knit sweaters. Colors to watch for are luscious pinks, and lilacs that give suede an even softer appearance. Although black leather is still a favorite, especially with "Punkers", soft olive and tan are among the best new colors.

Knits seem to get stronger every year, as Americans opt for unique, and interesting texture, that invite touching. A word of advice to those buying knits — they are generally not cut as full as other garments. This means you'll be missing out if you insist that you can only wear a certain size.

People who lock themselves into one size, and refuse to wear anything but an 8½, or whatever, are on the wrong track. Ready-to-Wear clothes simply must be tried on, as each manufacturer cuts to different specifications.

If you usually wear a 12, and a 16 fits, there should be none of the neurotic insecurity, and rigid resistance seen so often by salespeople. If it fits well, and looks good — buy it! Size is totally irrelevant! Who but you is going to know what size you have on — the labels are on the inside — remember?.

Another favorite theme coming down from some of the most contemporary designers, such as Ralph Lauren, Norma Kamali, and Eugenia Worthington is the ankle length, full skirt.

Most all are pleated and several are even layered. It's a look that needs a medium to high heel, to offset the fullness of the skirt, and give the body a longer, leaner look.

Twins Leavette and Lavern in sister outfits by GRS. Leavette wears color-block silk blouse, dyed to match midcalf dirndle suede skirt. Lavern prefers suede mini with Dolman sleeves.

Classic wool plaids and geometric stripes are among the best dresses of the season. They will last and look good practically forever, as long as they're kept away from moths. You'll be sick of them long before they wear out — and then you can always take them to a thrift store to sell for you.

For those who love the ease and comfort of sweat suit dressing — you're in for a wonderful surprise! Sweats are now hand-painted, studded, cut into zig-zag "Rag" look, as well as with holes cut in various strategic places.

Whatever your preference, mini, maxi, or classically tailored, you'll be able to find just the look that's you.

Lavern shows funky 100% wool coat and knee pant can convert to a simple jacket, simply by snapping off the bottom. Shoes by Kazin.

Two-piece grey wool coat with matching ¾ pant by Tric Trac. Coat has roomy leg-of-mutton sleeves and is distinguished by a pointed hemline.

Norma Kamali's Western look in Bordeaux and black. Shirt is classic Western—updated by shoulder pads. Skirt is yoked at hip and both layers are crystal-pleated all around.

Classic wool knit dress in grey and black, worn by Lavern. Kimono sleeves and straight body makes for ultra-chic look. Shoes by Kazin.

All photos by Thunder.

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