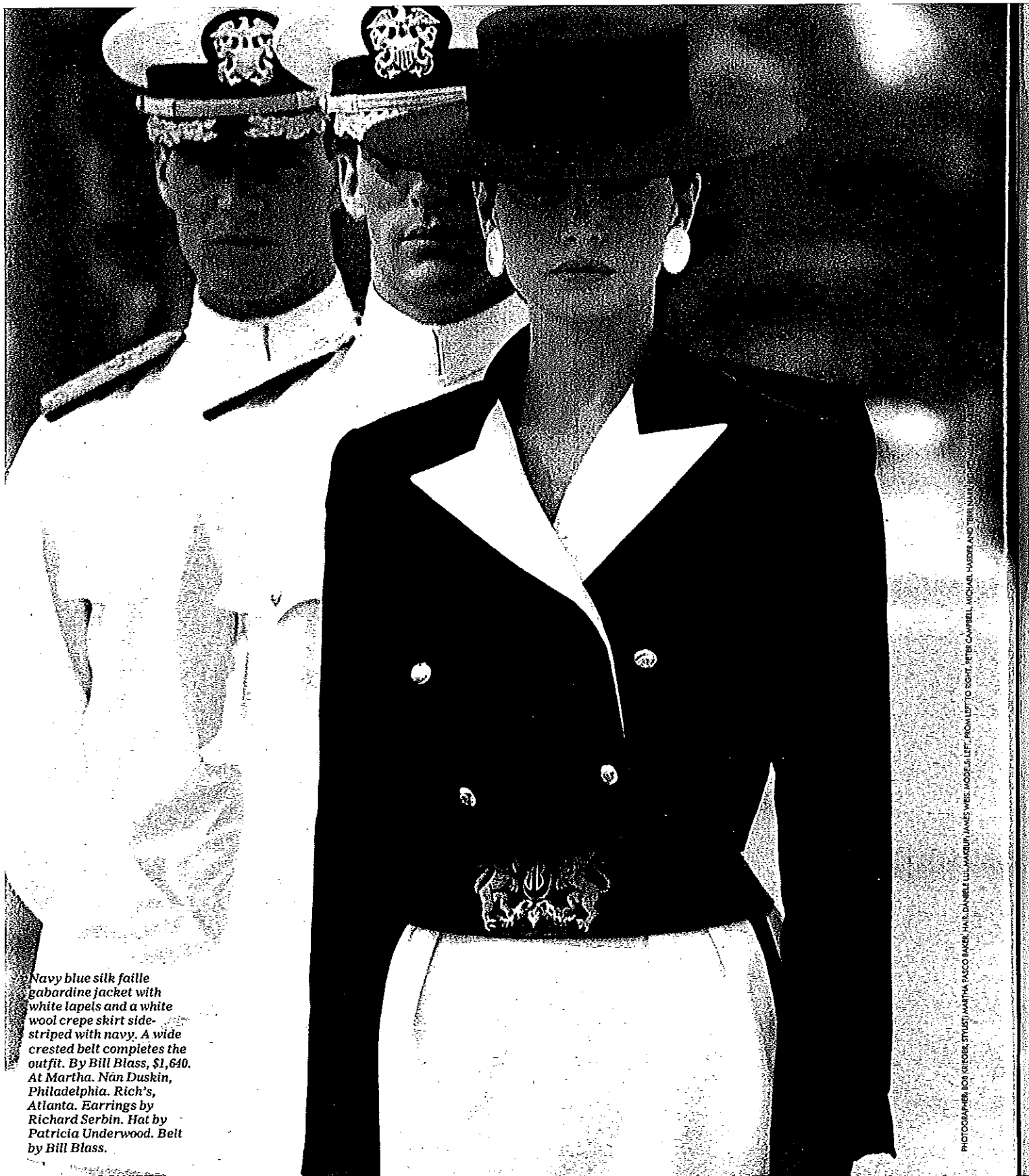


Times Mag 1983



Navy blue silk faille gabardine jacket with white lapels and a white wool crepe skirt side-striped with navy. A wide crested belt completes the outfit. By Bill Blass, \$1,640. At Martha. Nan Duskin, Philadelphia. Rich's, Atlanta. Earrings by Richard Serbin. Hat by Patricia Underwood. Belt by Bill Blass.

PHOTOGRAPHER BOB RIEGER STYLIST MARTHA PASCO BAKER HAIR DANIEL LEE MAKEUP JAMES WEIS MODELS LEFT FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PETER CAMPBELL MICHAEL HARDER AND TERRI NAYLOR

THE APPEAL OF MILITARY detailing

**Women in
fashions
adapted from
male uniforms
evoke some
provocative
effects.**

By Anne Hollander

One of the interesting trends in fashion this year is the fact that designers have moved on from taking ideas from civilian men's wear for women's clothes to borrowing from men's military uniforms. Here, a fashion historian takes a look at some of these new clothes and offers her opinion on what, exactly, is the appeal.

Whenever women of the past helped themselves publicly to men's garments, the effect was truly sensational. In 1840, Parisians were both horrified and attracted by the sight of George Sand wearing well-cut trousers and a top hat — it was the way a notorious woman could deliberately cut a figure of erotic daring in the middle of the 19th century. Lately, of course, since most forms of ordinary male dress have become routinely available to women in the 20th century, such a move has lost most of its acute sexual charge.

But a uniform is something else. Ever since Joan of Arc, the sight of a woman in martial gear has continued to produce a shiver not entirely attributable to patriotism. The suggestion of unthinking, unwavering discipline that accompanies a formal masculine uniform is strikingly at odds with what are still considered the most cherished female interests: the awareness of individual feelings, of personal qualities and emotional states and the appreciation of subtle social meanings. For generations, women's clothing itself has developed the option to express these concerns in a very flexible range of modes — often including pointed borrowings from men's wear. Meanwhile, men have been supposed to enjoy



Wool and silk knit suit with a contrasting double-breasted vest. By Adolfo, \$1,100. At Saks Fifth Avenue. Lou Lattimore, Dallas. Miss Jackson's, Tulsa. Obba Montalvo, New York.

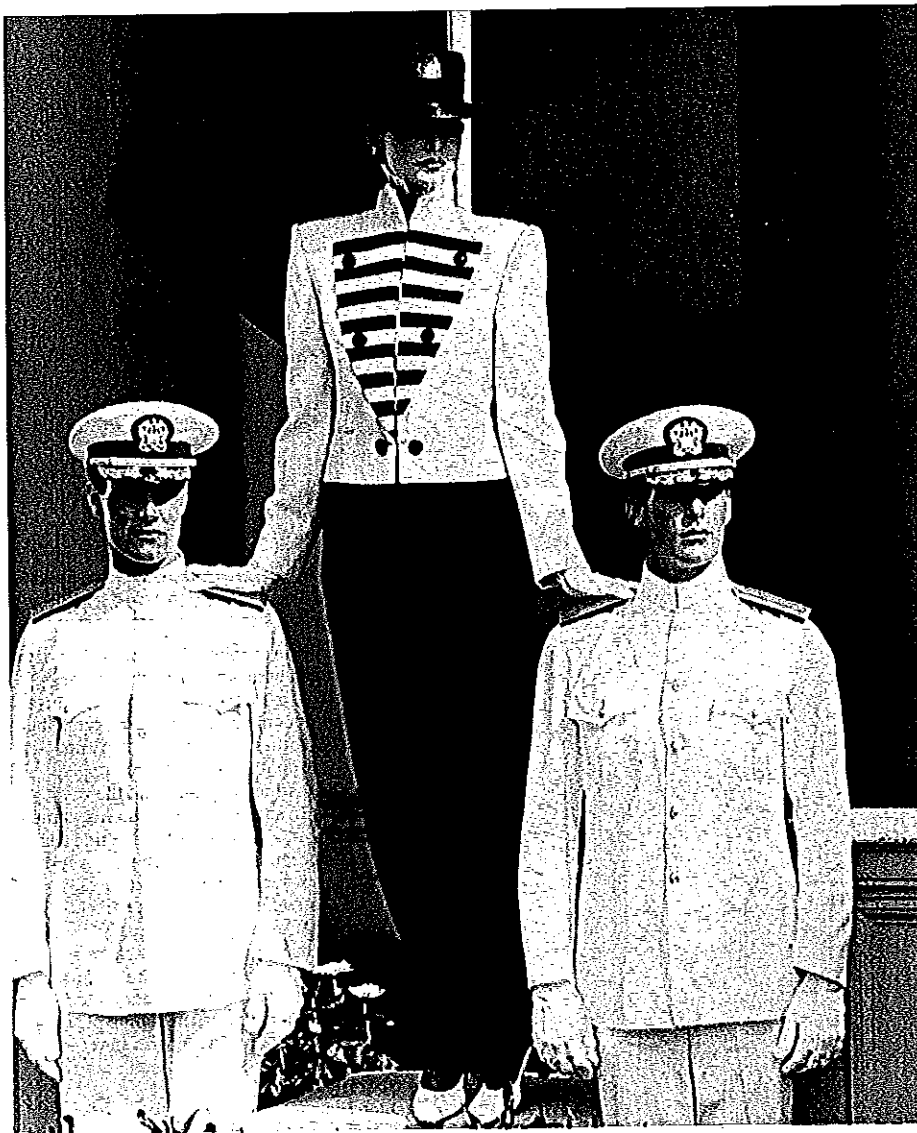
regimentation, and to relish the honor and glory of forming a bond with other men to submerge the wayward self in furthering a common cause. For centuries, not only men's military dress, but their ordinary clothes, have shown this impulse, while women's apparel has continued to emphasize the distinctive caprice of the individual will. In such a context, when a woman puts on a uniform, she appears to set aside her interest in the persuasive flux of meaning and feeling and to opt suddenly for strict rules.

The immediate effect can be quite erotic. The woman instantly appears maddeningly unattainable, unsexable, domestically intractable and a bit dangerous. The uniform, after all, is designed to convey a readiness for war, a direct challenge to battle, not to pleasure. There is the suggestion in a uniform that the challenged party may lose not just a round of the game, but life or limb.

Fashion is necessarily alert to such effects. The basic suggestive tension between soft flesh and severe clothing comes nicely into play whenever strict military dress and its crisp trim are translated into fashionable terms. The flavor of war is somewhat muted and enhanced by other interesting suggestions — of regimented schoolgirl innocence, waiting to be released from bondage and taught to live; or of schoolboy energy under restraint, seeking dangerous outlets. There is a strong provocation in all of this that the actual uniform worn by military men cannot approach.

In her time, Joan of Arc wore real armor into real battle, and her cutting edge was real. Modern fashion, on the other hand, conveys its themes obliquely, by allusion and apt reference,

Anne Hollander, the art and fashion historian, is the author of "Seeing Through Clothes."



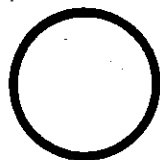
Left: Cream-colored flannel jacket with black striped lapels and black flannel pants. By Calvin Klein. Jacket, \$500. Pants, \$190. At B. Altman & Company, Bonwit Teller, Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, New York only. Bullock's, Los Angeles. Camille, Coconut Grove, Fla. Frost Bros., San Antonio, Tex. Hat by Patricia Underwood for Calvin Klein. Shoes by Manolo Blahnik. Earrings by Ben Amun.

Right: Red cashmere sweater jacket with black flannel skirt. By Calvin Klein. Sweater jacket, \$380. Skirt, \$150. At Bergdorf Goodman, Bloomingdale's, Bonwit Teller, Lord & Taylor, I. Magnin, San Francisco. Kaufman's, Pittsburg. Hat by Patricia Underwood. Shoes by Walter Steiger. Earrings by Maria Buck.

never in a perfect replica. One appeal in the martial style for women arises from the daring liberties it takes with sacred things, its coy violations of the ritual forms so long hallowed by naval and military history. A slight tinge of unseemly parody gives the style an added emotive power.

In its modified fashionable versions, the military look always keeps its most exhilarating visual traits: brilliant contrasting colors rendered in a matte finish, set off by vibrant white and gleaming brass. Such components form the glittering array of men and officers on parade wearing the historic insignia of honor, the symbolic gear that straightens the back, lifts the chin and firms the step. Formal military uniform has been evolving since the time of Cromwell to have just that function—to impose a proud bearing and aspect on the body, so as to

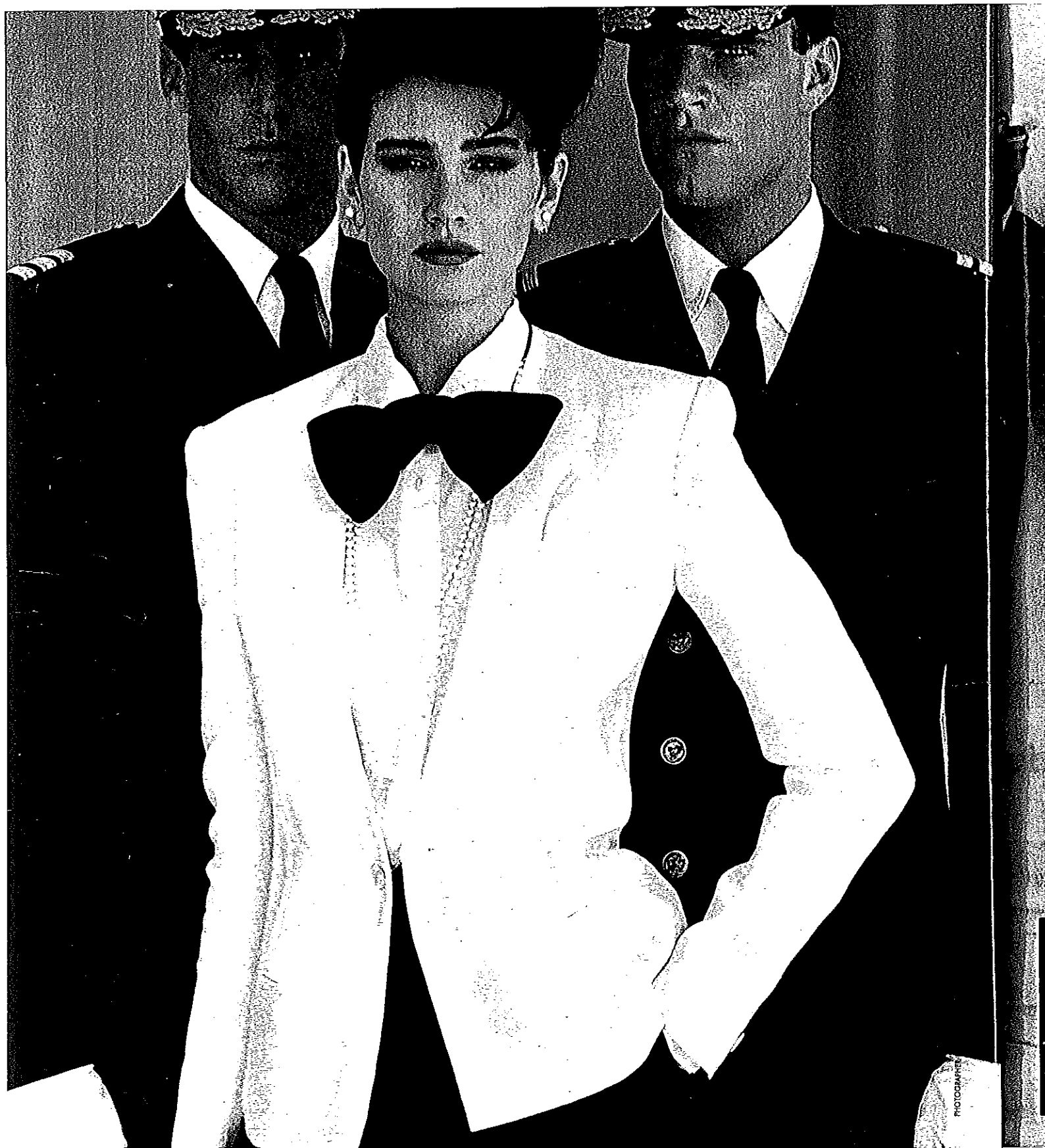
rouse an inner echo of pride in the wearer's own heart, further confirmed by the pride of the cheering crowd. The physical restraint of tight collars and stiff headgear is willingly borne as the outward sign of control in the face of chaos, the concerted maintenance of traditional order in a disintegrating world. Frail flesh and bone and malleable soul are strengthened by the firm garment of resolve.



Over the centuries, the history of masculine tailoring in general has been one of progressive refinement and improvement. It was and is a craft consistently relying on the highest standard of taste, skill and materials, and has been since the days of Beau Brummell. This has become all the

more noticeable since feminine dressmakers began to expand their visual scope instead of following a similarly exacting path. Conservative male tailoring gained in prestige by contrast when women's clothes took out a license for fantasy, often at the expense of craftsmanship, in the beginning of the 19th century. And within the tailoring profession, the military tailor has held the highest rank; his work has been subject to even stricter limitations and more exacting rules. The spread of extreme military dandyism that came into being in Napoleonic times demanded an exquisiteness of cut, fit and execution for dress uniforms that has kept their look tighter and trimmer than civilian clothes ever since. When women adopt the military mode, they invoke its great sartorial heritage along with its other effects. Women's looks are all the better

**'In its
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**'Women's
looks are
enhanced
by perfect
tailoring
and clarity**

enhanced by perfect tailoring and uncompromising clarity of line, especially with the extra emphasis of braid, buttons and bright color. It makes women look serious without looking drab, and meticulous but unfussy.

In our present atmosphere of perpetual self-expression through clothes, not every fashion succeeds equally in satisfying the eye. Some results are confusing or abrasive, others lack force or coherence, still others dazzle without pleasing. In the universal roar and buzz of all our efforts to communicate through our clothes, the bracing military message strikes an astringent and invigorating note. Its many connotations give a certain underlying richness to its jaunty air, a sharp bite to its smooth finish. The mock-military is also a style of dress that adroitly combines several motifs not easy to reconcile, such as audacity and self-discipline, nostalgic reference and brisk modernity. It manages to unite sober formality with cheerful zest. Although serious feminine ideals of energy and purpose are expressed in such clothes, they are thoroughly leavened with the humor that allows for the pleasure of absurdity — which, indeed, is one of the keenest joys of any fashion at any time. ■

Far left: Linen tuxedo-style jacket and black silk tie worn with a white linen shirt and black linen pants. By Ralph Lauren, \$438. At Henri Bendel, Lord & Taylor, Saks Fifth Avenue, J.L. Hudson, Detroit. Polo/Ralph Lauren Shops, Washington and Short Hills, N.J.

Left: Navy-and-white striped silk floor-length evening sheath. By Bill Blass, \$2,400. At Lord & Taylor, Fifth Avenue.