

# ILLUMINATING ACCESSORIES

*An art historian ruminates on the part accessories play in the current mode of mannish fashion.*

BY ANNE HOLLANDER



Large leather handbag by Barbara Bolan, about \$225. At Henri Bendel. Macy's. Jere Scott at Stanley Korshak, Chicago. Small alligator clutch bag by Maud Frizon, \$625. At Maud Frizon, 49 East 57th Street. Steel and gold nautical watch from the Corum Watch Corporation, \$2,690. At Tiffany & Company. Nineteenth-century French enamel and paste earrings, \$300. At James II Galleries, 15 East 57th Street. Coat and shirt by Gianfranco Ferré.

**F**ashion always symbolically preserves a dialectic of the sexes. Therefore, to insure the straightforwardly glamorous appeal of clothes inspired by men's wear and to keep at a distance any touch of the silly or the scandalous, they are worn most effectively with traditional female adornments. The straight shapes of coats and pants in wool acquire an emotional dimension from the attendant flow of silk scarfs and the gleam of occasional jewels. Such effects have enhanced the beauty of women since antiquity, and they carry an enormous cumulative sexual charge.

Gabrielle Chanel was the first to demonstrate that adult female sexuality is enhanced, not suppressed, by simple clothes based on the model of male tailoring. She insisted on the erotic dimension in women's clothes — and she usually achieved the effect by the adroit use of decidedly female accessories with her unassuming and easy-fitting garments. Big, bright pins and bold bracelets worn with flannel and jersey were already part of her legendary method more than 50 years ago, at a time when artfully draped silk crepe usually signaled the feminine woman in her daytime appearances.

It is no accident that today's suits and coats are usually worn with vivid earrings — a pair of earrings with any costume gives it extra female emphasis. The new strongly designed ones worn with men's wear for women are simple but not crude. They suggest the classic forms of ancient civilizations, not the delicate confections of rococo or Victorian days, but they are far from barbaric.

The look of a shining brooch controlling the drape of thin fabric was a standard effect for women in Greece and Rome, and it has maintained its charm throughout the later history of fashion. When feminine clothes became heavy and static, a gauzy veil might be freely cast like a cloud around the head or neck and delicately caught with a pin or nosegay. Or a brilliant, fragile shawl might slide lightly over the shoulders of a stiff, dark dress. Today, shining scarfs temper the restrained stability of modern men's wear. A bright scarf strikes a note of freedom in any traditional scheme; but, more shrewdly, it echoes the seductive shawls and veils of the female past. Silk folds in subtle colors never fail to suggest pleasure, and scarfs evoke sensuality. In earlier days, a shawl's free play offset the confinement of tight stays and heavy

Ropes of faux pearls worn with a black-labeled dressing gown and blouse, all from Chanel. Pearls, \$120 to \$170. Gown and blouse with tie \$1,750. Both at Bergdorf Goodman. I. Magnin. Nan Duskin, Philadelphia.

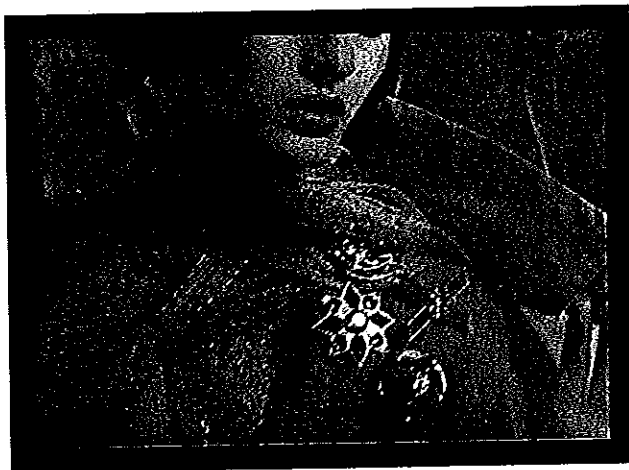
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skirts; today, scarfs serve as counterpoints to discreetly worn matte-finished, straight-cut and concealing coats and trousers.

There are still conventional male prerogatives in dress, and the relevant one here is the hat. When women adopt men's wear so as to be feminine, they must eschew the hats that match it. Male hats naturally play a large part in the female theater of masculine imitation — women look thrilling in male caps and hats if they are wickedly impersonating gauchos and pirates or stevedores and miners. They also look ravishing in men's hats when they are otherwise wearing dresses and skirts. And they naturally look wonderful in the whole range of women's hats, which have their own feminine meanings. But in Western history, the hat is a male symbol as ancient as the female veil, and with the new women's men's wear, a casual fedora overstates the case. It tips the balance toward mockery and perversity, just as a formal masculine necktie does.

**T**he potent alternative remains that other female symbol, the uncovered head adorned with shining hair. In keeping with the classic base of all the other female elements in the men's-wear costume, the crowning coiffure should display great lack of hysteria. No frantic wayward mop or difficult construction should interrupt the harmony of easy shapes and bright accents. Now that a short, shingled cut is no longer restricted to the male domain, a smooth cap of hair merely strikes a deliberately modern note, unhampered by intrusive boyish overtones. All adolescent resonance is, in fact, silent in these clothes. They are for adults at home with experience, not for the uncertain, the rebellious or the experimental.

These are ancient feminine programs for allure. They now work as effectively with the elegant and casual forms of modern men's wear for women, which in itself retains all the advantages of its past glories in the wardrobe of the other sex. The vocabulary of pants and jackets that has long worked for men now works as well for women, so long as female symbols are smoothly integrated with their basic forms. The result proves that there is nothing intrinsically male about men's wear. ■



Left: Metallic silk tulle scarf by Kazuko Oshima, \$950. At Artwear, 409 West Broadway. Antique silver Scottish pins, \$200 to \$500. At James II Galleries, 15 East 57th Street. Jacket by Bill Blass.

PHOTOGRAPHER, DOROTHY TUBERVILLE; STYLIST, TINA BOSSIDY; HAIR AND MAKEUP, RICK GILLETTE. MODELS: LEFT, ROSANNA; INSET, NASTASIA.

