1938

Your Fortune in Fashion

Ruth Hubley Thayer

Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker

Part of the Home Economics Commons

Recommended Citation

Thayer, Ruth Hubley (1938) "Your Fortune in Fashion," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 18 : No. 6 , Article 5.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol18/iss6/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Homemaker by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
This authoritative article presenting the ins and outs of the field of fashion is reprinted from "The Matrix," official publication of Theta Sigma Phi, with permission of Lucy Rogers Hawkins, editor, who visited Iowa State recently.

Your Fortune in Fashion
by Ruth Hubley Thayer

SO! You want a fashion career. You think there are fortunes in fashion.

But look. Let's stop jangling our bangles and get down to cases. Let's see what potential jobs there are for women today in the fashion world—jobs, specifically, that call on your ability to write. And let's see if you and you and you will fit into the world.

Start with retail stores. They need advertising managers, fashion copywriters, women to handle promotions, direct publicity. They need women to produce newspaper and magazine copy, to build catalogues, to write stuffers to go out with the bills. Occasionally, as with Bonwit Teller's "Smart Woman's Angle," there is a store magazine to edit.

Take manufacturers of apparel and fabrics and accessories, of luggage and handbags and shoes and jewelry. They need advertising managers, publicity directors, stylists, sales promotion managers. Wholesale houses like Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck draft whose armies of copywriters adapt a cramming three lines of caption with three tons of selling dynamite. Trade magazines and papers of the field like Women's Wear Daily, Dress Accessories, and Infants and Children's Review need reporters to comb the market's, interpret trends. Consumer magazines and newspapers need fashion editors, fashion columnists, fashion feature writers. Advertising agencies need fashion copywriters, liaison people to work between manufacturer, retail store, and agency.

A New Field

Those are some of the established jobs—jobs that are pretty much earmarked "For Women Only." But the boundaries are being forced out little by little! You hear of some pretty amazing jobs these days, jobs like running fashion shows over the air, directing the fashion activities of a World's Fair, handling promotion and publicity for a gargantua like the Chicago Merchandise Mart.

News—new products, new designs, new business, new events—all hold potential jobs for enterprising women. But they're not defined. They can't always be spotted by the inexperienced. The smarter ones birddog them out, make something of them, often to the tune of a five cipher annual salary.

All right. Sounds rather exciting. But where do you break in? What do you do first?

Breaking into Fashion

Well, I've been talking lately to some of the smartest women in fashion—women like Mrs. Ethel Kremer, executive secretary of the Fashion Group, and Elizabeth Chadwick, fashion representative for Procter and Gamble and the Compton Advertising Agency. And from such women, women who've climbed all the way up through one of the most competitive and demanding careers open to women, come some suggestions worth listening to. That is, if you want a job!

First, they advise, a little self-analy- sis! Why do you want to get into fashion work? Are you merely be-glammed by the tales of success you've read about? Do you really conduct a campaign of job-hunting, or unless you can afford to stay for several months and really conduct a campaign of job-hunting. Or unless you can afford to take a low-pay, stepping-stone job as a starter?

She Rose to Success

And her views are checked by Elizabeth Chadwick of Compton, who came into fashion via a very unconventional and exciting chain of circumstances. Miss Chadwick, you see, started as a Seattle Junior Leaguer, with not a career idea in her head. One fateful day, however, she was roped in to sell space for a Junior League program and that year the program made more than ever before. So when Harper's Bazar started organizing its Deb bureaus she was set to selling subscriptions, and such a flood came through from Seattle that the home office fell off its chair. When the Deb bureau organizer got herself married in mid-trip, there was not much time lost before Betty Chadwick got the job. And there she was, travelling up and down the coast with nothing else to do in the lonely evenings except write opuses to the home office.

For that fate she was rescued by the advertising manager, who saw a much better saleswoman than author in the girl from the west. And for quite some time following Miss Chadwick travelled in the East, selling space to manufacturers.

(Continued on page 15)

January, 1939
Our Fortune in Fashion

(Continued from page 4)

and tie-in promotions to stores. When the advertising manager moved to Calkins and Holden, advertising agency, Betty Chadwick went with him.

And she went to Europe, the fashion centers, to Vienna, where she went to a textile school, and to every continental town and city that would hold interesting accessories to blend with American fashions. If what she wanted wasn't available, she designed them, had them made up specially. For she was buying for a number of manufacturers and stores by this time. When she returned, she went to Franklin Simon's as copywriter, to Nieman Marcus as buyer, subsequently to Lord and Taylor and James McCreery in merchandising capacities.

But at this point Miss Chadwick started blazing a trail. She began to sense the possibilities in cooperative merchandising of different types of products. What resulted was a job with Procter and Gamble and the present famous Ivory-washable campaign with its diversified manufacturer tie-ups. She's now at Compton Advertising agency carrying on this work and handling one of the smartest and most intricate liaison jobs in the country. In another agency it's taking three strong men to manage a similar assignment.

Well, a job like that's really something when you get it, but they don't hire neophytes to carry that kind of gun. And Miss Chadwick's among the knowing executives who put their finger on the reason why it's so hard for inexperienced girls to get their first job, to break into a field such as fashion.

Why Experience?

Here it is—in a capsule. Most new-comers don't regard a job as a job. They think it's self-expression for pay. They come to a job brimming with new ideas, impatient of existing ones. They know what's wrong with everything, want to introduce great innovations. They're often impatient and expect success fast. So fast that they disdain the beginning job they've got, concentrate only on the one they want to get. They're too personal. They can't sublimate themselves in the job, become a part of the smooth-functioning machinery. They thrash around trying to be an individual and manage to upset the routine of an office in the process. Now all that's pretty bad. For most bosses haven't time to play nursemaid to a girl's ego till she battens down and starts clicking in place.

So while fresh ideas are fine, they're valueless unless they come out of a thorough familiarity with the problem, which no novice has. So, advise these successful women, master existing methods before you try to improve on them. Figure that the people in the big jobs wouldn't have them or keep them—if they didn't know a thing or two. Not in this day of stiff competition! The quickest way to climb toward such jobs is to perform daily on every small job that comes your way. Really perform. And no matter how hard you work at it, don't talk about it. It's results that interest the boss, not how you got them. Good performance brings added responsibility—and, Q. E. D., more pay.

Prerequisites to Fashion

And preparation for this field? A good cultural background, first, plenty of history and art and economics. Any merchandising theory that you can get. Textiles. History of costume design. Advertising production, journalism. A close knowledge of what's going on in the world of books and plays and wars and explorations. They all have their influence on fashion. If possible, a good school like the new Tobe-Coburn School for Fashion Careers may give you some short-cuts.

But you really won't need them. If you have, or develop the qualities they seem to need in this strange business of fashion, they'll find you out, bring you in, even if they have to cross a continent to get there!

From the waiters at Memorial Union comes a helpful hint for the institution field. Glasses are always sent with bottom up from the dish washing department. When a tray of glasses is to be used, instead of turning each glass over separately the Union waiters place another tray bottom side up on top of the glasses, grasp the two trays between the thumbs and forefingers and with a flip of the wrist the glasses are turned over. With the removal of the top tray the glasses are ready to be filled.