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Fashion

The Empire State

by
Etienne

"Simply delightful! I'll have another spot of sherry, if it's convenient."

He was one of those rumpled roués who seem from another time, his cufflinks tarnished, lapels curled, and shirt speckled with faint reminders of beverages past. His eyes rolled as he spoke, all aflutter, of his triumphs and conquests. Jewelry was everywhere, quality items to be sure—gifts, trophies, souvenirs of endless evenings and scented summer days.

I had met him through Sylvie. Recently, after one of her particularly disastrous attempts to return to the runway, I saw her crying on his shoulder as the two of them tottered down Seventh Avenue.

"Why, what's wrong, my dear?" I sputtered.

"I can't believe it. I was just so embarrassed. I have my pride, you know."

It seems that one of the latest up-and-coming designers had contacted her to appear in an extravaganza at some downtown postage-stamp of a performance space. But it wasn't his comment that she had "aged well" that upset her.

**It's the single most
unflattering garment
that exists today.**

He wanted her to wear an *empire waist*.

It's been around since the toga. As part of the Bacchanalia, women accented their endowments with sashes wrapped close to the bust. They looked smashing. But those were flowing gossamer and asphodel times, quite unlike the stilted, machine-shop, assembly-line age.

With the Napoleonic era came its resurgence. Ruffled and starched, cross-stitched and silver-buttoned, it was all the rage with the ruling classes.

The Space Age brought yet another renewal and with it the beginnings of go-go plasticity. Geinrich and Courreges and Quant and little Leslie Hornsby all served to usher in the era of the Child-Woman. Curiously, what once had amplified amplexness now accentuated androgyny. Pre-pubescence gamboled freely in a seemingly bosomless universe of tykes.

So it was only natural that as flower children, Earth Mothers would gravitate toward the empire waist (under the new rubric, "granny dress"). Oddly enough, these were buxom times again, and it was perfect for the back-to-the-earth/Renaissance Fair spirit of things.

So why do women continue to wear such an abomination? There is a certain comfort level to the empire, to be sure, and maybe it returns fond memories of girlhood and cheap wine, but my, oh my! The empire waist is certainly the single most unflattering garment that exists today. It guarantees an aura of dumpiness and transforms the most sensual body into something resembling a lumpen potato.

Generally, the empire waist comes with a scoop neckline in a faint attempt to restore curvature. Long sleeves make it slightly more attractive, but pockets add a distinctly dowdy effect. And earth tones are particularly matronly. All in all, it is a style that reminds one of a bulbous middle-aged science teacher with his slacks hiked up to his chest.

"It's part of that retro bell-bottom thing," he sighed, emptying his fourth snifter in less than twenty minutes. "I guess that we'll be

seeing wide white belts and floppy hats soon, too."

As he sat there, batting his eyelashes with obvious ennui, I recalled a distant July evening in a candlelit apartment furnished with nothing but a mattress, some orange crates, sangria, and a poster of Che.



xylostyle is a creative conglomerate

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