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LIVING

FASHION

The many faces of lace

This flirty fabric can be innocent or seductive

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Perhaps no other fabric can conjure up so many different personas. Lace can suggest purity and innocence when used in bridal wear, blatantly titillate with come-hither lingerie or portrayed as wholesome arts-and-crafts when used as doilies.

You can add chic cocktail dresses to the list because this holiday season, the lace sheath is giving that other after-five standby — the little black dress — a run for its popularity. There is something romantic about lace but it can also be edgy, says Gemma Weddle, co-owner of RAC Boutique in Yorkville. "Lace can look sexy and risqué, but it doesn't reveal too much," says Weddle of the popularity of lace dresses for the holiday season. A little black dress of cobwebby lace proved so popular, she said they reordered it twice this year.

You can thank the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, for making the case for lace and introducing this old-fashioned material to a new generation.

It started with the most anticipated dress of the year — the royal wedding dress. One of the first details noticed about Middleton's wedding dress was the lace bodice and sleeves. She made lace in bridal wear look modern and youthful. Then this past summer as she embarked on her first royal tour — to Canada — the first outfit, from a wardrobe that was breathlessly chronicled around the world during the tour, was a navy lace dress by Montreal designer Erdem.

But if Kate put a fresh youthful spin on lace, it is also designers who seemed to rediscover the feminine appeal of this flimsy fabric.

Miuccia Prada ignited this lace love affair with her fall 2008 collection, which featured heavily textured Swiss lace.

Fast forward to this fall and other influential designers from Marc Jacobs to Tom Ford featured the peek-a-boo material in their collections.

And you can expect the lace race to continue into next year as various merchants — such as Banana Republic, which previewed next season's collections to the press this week — featured lovely lace dresses in pale springtime colours.



Kate Middleton turned heads in navy lace, her first dress of her first royal tour.

SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE PHOTO



White lace dress, \$99, Jacob



Red lace dress, \$69, Jacob



Lace dress by Moon, \$89, The Bay



Lace dress, \$29.95, H&M



Lace dress, \$60, Reitmans



Lace dress, \$275, Banana Republic

DAVID COOPER PHOTOS/TORONTO STAR

Petite Feet
SAMPLE SALE