

SD people 

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

I was surprised at how

It is not

any day I
get invited
~~to~~ into the
world of high
Fashion.

Grate Dams.

J

Alumni Association

of the **FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

7th Ave. @ 27th Street • C-204 • New York, NY 10001 • Tel (212) 217-7170 • Fax (212) 594-9206

TO: Eric Massey
FAX #: (202) 456-2581
FROM: Tamara Robin Jasper
DATE: Feb. 9, 2000
PAGES: 2, including this one

No wonder you didn't have this, it went to Janna. Please call if you need more information

The Fashion Institute of Technology, part of the state-wide network of SUNY colleges and universities, offers degrees in business and technology and in art and design. The school is in the Chelsea area of New York City in the heart of the fashion district and avant garde art scene. Founded in 1944 as a college to develop talent for the fashion industry, the college now offers its students programs that range from toy design to furniture restoration and from museum studies to photography. Students can study for AA, BA and MA level degrees. Its 12,000 person student body is drawn from all walks of life and can take classes full-time, part-time, days or evenings.

The annual FIT Alumni Association gala, the Star Salute Dinner, which honors leaders in the field of design and industry, will take place on March 1, 2000 at the United Nations. Over the years, the school has honored alumni and distinguished industry leaders representing virtually every area of the fashion-relevant and design world.

This years honorees are Tamotsu, the well-known eponymous designer of the *Tamotsu* label; Bud Konheim, CEO of *Nicole Miller*; Carl Goldstein, Senior Vice President of *S. Lichtenberg* and Nancy Marino, President of *Linmark Westmark Group*.

Financial support from both the city and the state have eroded to the point where FIT must raise its own money in order to help the many FIT students who require it. Star Salute revenues go into scholarships for those who bring their talents to the school, but are unable to bring much money.

Further, because the association has long recognized the lack of adequate housing on campus, we sponsor *Alumni Hall*, one of only three FIT dormitories. Part of the money from the dinner and journal goes to pay off our ongoing commitment to this building. In

addition, because dormitory rooms are at a premium on campus, we also help with housing stipends for those students who are unable to find on-campus housing (and unable to pay for it if they could).

Lastly, our Star Salute funds go toward the Alumni Association's challenging plan to de-map 27th Street, close it permanently to traffic and establish a campus green for the benefit of the FIT student body and our neighbors in the greater Chelsea community.

ERIN (Dinner co-chair)

If you own a piece of Tamotsu clothing, you own something of elegance and quality. There is no more excellent example of the customer who appreciates Tamotsu's work than our next presenter, who will speak to us on video. Ladies and gentlemen, the First Lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

TAMOTSU

This is the
letter I sent!
It may help!

Janna Pascahl
The White House
Washington,

Dear Janna,

It seems that more and more, mentoring is becoming a vital ingredient in our education system and professional communities. Internships enables students the opportunity to investigate their field of interest and a mentor gives a student a role model, someone to look up-to. These are two very important elements in a student's education and they can have a huge impact on the student's career path.

Though many universities are accustomed to having monetary relationship with their alumni, The Fashion Institute of Technology (F.I.T.) in Manhattan, is one of the ever-increasing breed of schools to receive and depend upon alumni contributions of a much higher value: personal time and support. Whether through internships, public speaking occasions, or serving on scholarship boards and awards committees, F.I.T.'s important and strong relationship with its graduates enables current students to gain exposure, advice and experience from professionals who once were F.I.T students themselves. Mentoring is slowly evolving into an institution within the F.I.T. community as more students depend upon the alums' knowledge and the alums' are able to give back to the school that gave so much to them.

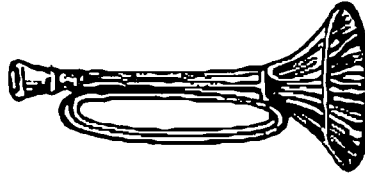
The dedication of these graduates does not go unnoticed. On March 4th, at the United Nations building in NYC, F.I.T. will host a fund-raising awards ceremony to publicly recognize four individuals whose contributions have been immeasurable. Those honored that night include: **Carl Goldstein**, *Senior Vice-President of S. Lichtenberg*, for his loyalty to the Home Fashion Products Association, his creation and development of F.I.T's annual scholarship breakfast and the dedication of his personal time to mentor and educate the future generations of home fashions professionals. **Bud Konheim**, *CEO of Nicole Miller*, for his service as Director of the Educational Foundation for the Fashion Industries. **Nancy Marino**, *President of Linmark Westmark Group International* and long-time F.I.T. board member. Lastly, the classic women's designer, **Tamotsu** for his service on awards committees, tours of his showroom and lectures to F.I.T design classes as well as the internship positions he has made available to F.I.T students for a smooth transition into the fashion world. All proceeds from this dinner will benefit the Educational Development Fund at F.I.T.

Mentoring has provided incredible groundwork for young students to achieve success post-graduation. F.I.T, though a relatively small college in New York, has provided inspiration to designers worldwide. Now, thanks to the successes of the F.I.T mentoring program, this fabulous industry (the industry that keeps *People*, *In Style* and *Vogue* in business) will be kept alive and thriving for generations to come.

For more information on the F.I.T. awards dinner or Tamotsu, please feel free to call me. I would be happy to contribute to a story on mentoring, its impact and its future.

Warm Regards,

Charly Laura Rok
212-979-2700 extention 217



Kratz & Jensen Inc.

920 Broadway, 10th floor
New York, NY 10010-6004
212.979.2700 fax 212.979.2869

FAX COVER SHEET

Date: _____

To: Enc Mosey

From: Charles Ro X

Re: _____

Number of pages: 10 (includes cover sheet)

If you do not receive all pages indicated or if transmission is interrupted, call 212.979.2700

MESSAGE

It was great speaking with you yesterday. We are
thrilled that Hillary will be doing this introduction

Here are a few pointers

1. Tomotzu has been to the White House for numerous functions
(holiday parties) + he has done personal fittings w/ Hillary
2. She wears his clothing.
3. This event is a fund-raiser to raise \$ for scholarships at F.I.T. and
New York Institution
4. Tomotzu plays an active role with F.I.T.

5. Tomotai is a very noble, sincere and honest man. People who work for him "stay" with him. It is like a family atmosphere with an immense amount of loyalty.
6. The Company has been around for twenty years
7. We have a website: www.Tomotai.Com that might give you more insight.
8. Regular VHS Tape would be perfect

please call if you need anything—

Charly

212-979-2700x 217

ⓧ

or

917-912-2863

TAMOTSU

214 WEST 39TH STREET, ROOM 305

NEW YORK, NY 10018

PHONE: (212) 921-0326

FAX: (212) 768-8147

HRC

Janna
Alan
Boer
video
Fall

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: Capricia Marshall	FROM: Ellen Mullman X 103
COMPANY: The White House	DATE: 12/10/99
FAX NUMBER: (202) 456-6771	TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 3
PHONE NUMBER: (202) 456-7064	SENDER'S REFERENCE NUMBER:
REF: F.I.T. Star Salute	YOUR REFERENCE NUMBER:

☐ URGENT ☐ FOR REVIEW ☐ PLEASE COMMENT ☒ PLEASE REPLY ☐ PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

I sent you the copy of the original letter received by Tamotsu from F.I.T.

We were informed yesterday that Rudy Guilliani will speak for Bud Konheim, Alan Hevesi will speak for Carl Goldstein and Zach Soloman will speak for Nancy Marino.

This will be a big industry event with lots of press. We would be honored to have Mrs. Clinton introduce Tamotsu. Would she be interested?

We have a video from last year to show the format if she's interested.

Please call me.

Ellen

Ellen

Copy to
Pls. run by
Alan
Boer
video
Fall
But he is a
great guy.
That
C-

TAMOTSU

214 WEST 39 STREET, THIRD FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10018
(212) 921-0326
FAX: (212) 768-8147

December 10, 1999

Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton
Office of the First Lady
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

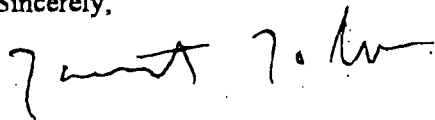
Dear Mrs. Clinton:

The Alumni Association at the Fashion Institute of Technology has chosen me to receive an award at their Star Salute dinner on Wednesday, March 1st, 2000.

I would be honored if you would present the award to me. I know how busy you are, but I would be delighted if you could fit this event into your schedule.

Best Wishes for a Happy Holiday season!

Sincerely,



Tamotsu Toda
President

Alumni Association

of the **FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

July 26, 1999

Tamotsu
214 W 39 St.
New York, NY 10018

Dear Tamotsu:

On behalf of the Alumni Association, I want to congratulate you upon being chosen as one of our honorees at the upcoming Star Salute Dinner on March 1. We are so very happy that you will be part of our evening.

It is our custom to honor four people at each dinner. This year, in addition to you, the executive board has voted to give awards to Carl Goldstein, SVP of *S. Lichtenberg*, Bud Konheim, CEO of *Nicole Miller* and Nancy Marino, former CEO of *Frederick Atkins*.

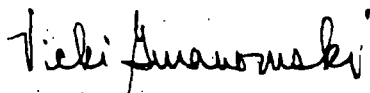
The Alumni office will do everything necessary to make the Star Salute a cost-effective yet supremely elegant event - designing, printing and mailing invitations; tracking reservations; recording money received; sending bills; designing and printing the journal; making seating plans; dealing with the caterer; arranging for goody bags; in fact, virtually anything that's needed to make the dinner a success will be done through this office.

We ask you to encourage as many friends, family and business associates as possible to purchase seats and journal ads. The more money that comes in, of course, the more our students are helped. Please give some thought to a list of potential seat and ad purchasers and if you could send it to us on disc, that would be a marvelous help.

Also, when you have a minute, please consider who you would like to present the award to you at the dinner. It can be anyone you want and since the speech is limited to only two minutes, it won't be too much of a burden on the presenter.

During the next few months, I'll put together a time line for you to use as a guide and will send you a copy as soon as it's ready. Have a relaxing and enjoyable remainder of the summer and don't forget to mark your calendar for March 1, 2000.

Sincerely,



Victoria Guranowski
Executive Director
FIT Alumni Association

- Post team) in r. to FIT or Fedman

a man who
has clipped
wonder
Aves
one shoe,
nine inches

HRC is staying to Tambo

2 min

- Elyot Chuby
- Ann. m

Capitols to anyone

Fedman is at about 100
but about 100

* Tambo - has info from FIT *

Super

humble man

his clothes are a reflection of his
gut, elegant & stylish.

Alumni Association

of the **FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

7th Ave. @ 27th Street • C-204 • New York, NY 10001 • Tel (212) 217-7170 • Fax (212) 594-9206

TO: Eric Massey
 FAX #: (202) 456-2581
 FROM: Tamara Robin Jasper
 DATE: Feb. 9, 2000
 PAGES: 6, including this one

Hi Eric,

The order of the presentations isn't finalized and the mayor's participation was always iffy, which is why there are two versions of that speech.

DINNER SCRIPT **2000 Star Salute Dinner**

VICKI GURANOWSKI

Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention please so that we can begin our program?

Good evening, I'm Vicki Guranowski and I'm the Executive Director of the FIT Alumni Association. It's my pleasure to welcome you to our annual night of stars.

On this evening, the Alumni Association honors four luminaries in both the creative and business parts of the design field. But we also pay tribute to all of you who came to share the night with us, you alumni, friends and supporters of our very special school. Each of you is another thread woven into the tapestry of FIT. We salute you and are honored by your connection to us.

The dinner chairs of tonight's gala represent two paths that FIT alumni take. Erin Killoran is a vice president of marketing at Jockey International and also an esteemed member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors. We began our relationship with Erin when she was at KPMG, where she was instrumental in establishing the annual FIT/KPMG seminar.

Donald Ziccardi is the President and CEO of Ziccardi and Partners, the ad agency that now numbers FIT as one of its clients. He sits on our Foundation board and last year he stood on

this very stage as a Star Salute recipient himself.

Please give a warm welcome to Erin Killoran and Don Ziccardi.

ERIN

Thank you, Vicki and hello ladies and gentlemen. Don and I are so happy to welcome you to the United Nations on this first day of March. Your being here helps us pay tribute to four people who allow FIT and the fashion industries to be so fascinating. They are part of what makes New York the exciting and ever-changing place it is.

DON

If this is your first Star Salute Dinner and you're not familiar with our school, your first hint of who we are will be the centerpieces on each table. All of them are student creations and they represent some of over 30 programs that the college offers. Under the guidance of Display and Exhibit Professors Ann Kong, Elizabeth Jacobsen and Mary Constantini, the students have designed a completely different project for each table.

ERIN

Not to put too commercial an edge upon it, but we always offer the centerpieces for sale. Each is a special reminder of the evening and money made from the sale of these sculptures are put into FIT's technology fund. This is just a small example of how at FIT design and technology walk hand in hand.

DON

Let me now introduce the vivacious president of the FIT Alumni Association, who is herself a Star Salute award winner. She's a proud alumna of the college and she works hard to make an FIT education available to as many students as possible. Ladies and gentlemen, the effervescent Jan Strass.

JAN

Thank you Don and congratulations to all of our award winners. It is my pleasure to join you once again for our annual evening of recognition and to bring you greetings from the Alumni Association of the Fashion Institute of Technology.

As members of the FIT family, you have every reason to be proud. You're a perfect blend of trend and tradition. Trends - those new directions our industry is famous for - are what many of you in this room create. Traditions - such as timeless style and enduring good taste - are what all of you embody. We applaud your talent and your hard work and the sense of vitality you bring to both FIT and our industry. As members of the FIT community you carry our school's name forward and insure our continued well-deserved reputation.

It's now my privilege to present Dr. Joyce Brown, the president of FIT. She is a woman of grace and style with a sense of business so necessary in academic life today. Ladies and gentlemen, may I present the dynamic and gracious president of the Fashion Institute of Technology, Dr. Joyce Brown.

DR. BROWN
(SPEECH)

RUDY GIULIANI, PRESENTER TO BUD
ERIN

The first award winner this evening is Bud Konheim, who serves as a member of our Foundation board. He is also the CEO of *Nicole Miller*, an instantly recognizable name in the field of fashion elegance. To present the Star Salute award to Bud is a man with an instantly recognizable name himself. Ladies and Gentlemen, His Honor, the Mayor of the City of NY, the Honorable Rudy Giuliani.

RUDY GIULIANI

Did you know that Bud Konheim gives his time to nine organizations that enhance life New York City? His connection to your first love - FIT - and my first love - The City of New York - meet here tonight.

I am most familiar with Bud in his role as a member of my Economic Advisory Committee and I know how well he's served the citizens of New York City. His grasp of what's needed to improve things in the fastest and most cost effective way always impresses me. He can look at a problem and come up with solutions in less time than it takes most people to size up the situation. I think that's why so many organizations want him on their team.

Although *Nicole Miller* is a company Bud founded, he's the fourth generation of his family to have worked in the fashion industry. As CEO of *Nicole Miller*, one of fashion's most substantial names, he allows both men and women to be clothed in beautiful, upper-end clothing and accessories. As a member of fashion-related boards, the fashion industry has received his direction and guidance. As a member of New York-related boards, our city has also been well-served by Bud's strong, clear thinking.

Ladies and gentlemen, my friend, your friend and a friend to the people of the City of New York, Bud Konheim.

PHIL SILBER, PRESENTER TO BUD

ERIN (Dinner co-chair)

The first award winner this evening is Bud Konheim, who serves as a member of our Foundation board. Bud is the CEO of *Nicole Miller*, an instantly recognizable name in the

field of fashion elegance. To present the Star Salute award to Bud is a man who has served with him on the Foundation board and is himself a supporter of our school. Phil is an alumnus of FIT and also a recent Star Salute award winner himself. Ladies and gentlemen, Phil Silber.

PHIL SILBER

Did you know that Bud Konheim gives his time to nine organizations that enhance life New York City? He helps Lincoln Center and the New York City Art Commission and the Conventions and Visitors Bureau and is a member of the Economic Advisory Committee, all this in addition to serving as a member of fashion-relevant boards. Both the city and the industry have been well served by the time and energy he contributes.

I am most familiar with Bud in his role as a member of the board of the Educational Foundation for the Fashion Industries, on which, as Erin mentioned, we both sit. The goal of the Foundation is to provide support to the college in as many ways as possible.

Bud's grasp of what's needed to improve things in the fastest and most cost effective way always impresses me. He looks at a problem and comes up with solutions in less time than it takes most people to size up the situation. I think that's why so many organizations want him on their team and I know that's why we're grateful that he's on ours.

Although *Nicole Miller* is a company Bud founded, he's the fourth generation of his family to have worked in the fashion industry. As CEO of *Nicole Miller*, one of fashion's most substantial names, he allows both men and women to be clothed in beautiful, upper-end clothing and accessories.

Ladies and gentlemen, my friend and a friend both to New York City and the fashion industries, Bud Konheim.

BUD **(SPEECH)**

DON

Carl Goldstein, Senior Vice President of *S. Lichtenberg* is our next honoree. This award will be the second honor that Carl has recently received since he just become a first-time grandfather, so tonight we offer him double congratulations. Presenting the award to Carl is a long time friend: ladies and gentlemen, the Comptroller of the City of NY, the Honorable Alan Hevesi.

ALAN HEVESI

Carl Goldstein is a perfect example of how far you can go in life with a good work ethic and the will to succeed.

As a beginning salesman, his territory included 11 states and involved spending 40 weeks a year on the road. Every Sunday night or early Monday morning he'd set out from home and not return home again until midnight on Friday. In the evenings on the road he did two things: he wrote letters to the companies he'd been to that day to thank them for seeing him and he mapped out the route for the next day's appointments were so he wouldn't waste time getting lost.

That same spirit and dedication to getting ahead makes him a strong believer in helping others to succeed. Carl's connection to FIT began in the early 60's when, in his spare time (probably from midnight to 4 in the morning) he attended college.

For the past eight years Carl has been the chairman of the scholarship committee for the Home Fashion Products Association. Through Carl's good offices, FIT students are awarded six scholarships annually. Carl is also a member of the FIT advisory board and was instrumental in the creation of FIT's annual Home Products scholarship breakfast, attended by 800 executives during Market Week.

Although active in his company and at FIT, he's also generous in donating his time in other ways. He is a recipient of the Human Relations Award from the American Jewish Committee and has been named Man of the Year by both UJA and the Samaritan Foundation.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of FIT's and New York City's shining stars, Carl Goldstein.

CARL
(SPEECH)

ERIN

With Intro by HRC

If you own a piece of Tamotsu clothing, you own something of elegance and quality. There is no more excellent example of the customer who appreciated Tamotsu's work than our next presenter, who will speak to us on video. Ladies and gentlemen, the First Lady of the United States, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

VIDEO

TAMOTSU
(SPEECH)

DON

Our next award recipient, Nancy Marino, is a part of FIT in many ways. She's an alumna of the school and a member of both the Foundation and Alumni Association boards. We are thrilled to honor her and to welcome Zachary Solomon, CEO of *Finity*, who will present the

Star Salute award to her. Ladies and gentlemen, Zachary Solomon.

ZACHARY SOLOMON

When the world thinks of FIT, it tends to focus on the school's art and design areas and indeed FIT has produced many design graduates who became household names. The school's other side doesn't have the glamor that the creative divisions have, so graduates in these majors are rarely thought of when FIT comes to mind.

Nancy Marino represents the business and technology half of the school. Without the skills of people like Nancy no company, no matter how gifted its designers or magnetic its leader, would be able to succeed for very long. The business part of a business is what makes it thrive.

Unfortunately, very few women graduates have been able to rise very high in this part of the fashion industries. Nancy Marino has. She has made it to the top of an industry which has historically only been welcoming of women as long as they didn't want to be in charge. The old-line motto of the fashion industry might well have been: sew the clothes, sell the clothes, even design the clothes, but don't expect to be at the forefront of the decision-making process.

Nancy's first job was in the executive training program at A&S and from there she moved rapidly up the ladder. Now she has taken on the formidable task of starting a new company, Linmark Westmark Group. Her skills and creativity and her ability to effect changes will make this a company to watch.

It is my honor to stand here tonight before her family and friends to present this award of merit to my deserving friend. Ladies and gentlemen, Nancy Marino.

NANCY MARINO **(SPEECH)**

ERIN

As our program draws to a close, we thank Mayor Giuliani, Comptroller Hevesi, Mrs. Clinton and Zachary Solomon for their participation this evening. We also want to say one last word of congratulations to Carl and Bud and Nancy and Tamotsu for career achievements that led them here tonight.

DON

Thank you again for your support of the Fashion Institute of Technology and for your participation in our annual celebration. Have a lovely evening and we look forward to seeing you again next year.

An Elegant Spirit:

Tamotsu

THE MASTER OF UNDERSTATED ELEGANCE—A PERENNIAL FAVORITE OF VOGUE SEWERS—IS INFUSING HIS ESTABLISHED FORMULA FOR SUCCESS WITH A YOUTHFUL NEW SPIRIT.

BY DONNA GOULD



He has long been associated with a very specific style: soft, simple, and elegant clothes that are coveted for their wearability—and their timelessness. And at this point in his career—after twenty years in the design industry—Tamotsu still considers these elements the foundation of his design philosophy.

"Fashion is always changing. That's one of the things that makes working in this business so exciting. But my customer is still my customer. No matter what, she always wants to look pulled together and elegant. So for me, that part of what I do will never change."

And indeed, his Fall collection continues to feature spare, softly-tailored separates and dresses in his signature mix of muted patterns and textures. However, beginning with the new Resort line, Tamotsu has started to inject more variety into the collection—in both color and fabric—reflecting what he refers to as a "younger spirit." "Women are looking for something different now—something besides career clothes. They want looks that have a familiar feeling, but are clearly new."

The designer has set about to deliver exactly that. The new collection will feature silhouettes that look very familiar—in colors and fabrics that are decidedly new. His color palette runs from earthy neutrals and black-and-white to oceanic blues and shimmering pinks. He is also using a deliciously eclectic mix of fabrications, with textures that range from delicate, embroidered sheers and luxurious silks to crisp stretch cottons.

Tamotsu is excited by the challenge of creating clothes that are more relaxed and embellished—without losing the elements that have kept loyal consumers coming back for so many years. "In the past I would try to do different things, but the fans didn't

always accept them. Now they are giving me more freedom to experiment, and I'm very happy about that. It gives me the opportunity to discover something new, something different."

His customers have expressed a desire for options that will allow them to create their own look. "It used to be that women just bought coordinated suits. But now they don't always dress that way. So we will offer things that some women can wear to work, some can wear for more casual times—and some women can put together in whatever way works best for them."

Tamotsu is quick to explain that his traditional customers will not be alienated by what they see. "Fashion always pushes you to change, but I have never cared about that. Changing completely is dangerous. Whatever I do has to be representative of my company—because my customers still want me." He will add newness a little at a time, so that women will find the clothes they expect—plus a few things that are unexpected. "I want my customer to say 'Oh! That's new—I want that too!'", he says, flashing an infectious smile.

He has gained the trust, respect and loyalty of customers—as well as retailers and his own employees—by remaining consistent in an industry famous for constant change, and by standing behind his work. Since starting his business in 1979 with \$2,000 in savings, he has been involved in every aspect of it—from fabric selection and design through sales and production. However, this self-described "control freak" also empowers his staff with full responsibility for what they are hired to do. "This has always been my relationship with my staff," he says. "Many of them have been here for a long time, so I guess they must like it! I like it, too. It makes it easy for me to maintain the business, and focus on what I need to do."

A minimalist at heart, Tamotsu believes that keeping the business contained has been the secret to his longevity. He has had numerous opportunities to expand over the years, but has chosen to grow slowly and steadily. "I don't have a big ego, so I don't need to see my name on lots of different products. But I want to be involved in designing and producing anything that does have my name on it." He confesses that he has his hands full running the business and designing the lines he has now—which include his signature collection as well as highly-successful Plus Size and Petite collections. "If I expand, I would have the chance to make more money.

to collecting "obsessively." He says he "loves the contrast of this sleek structure with warm woods and exotic prints."

Vogue sewers have made Tamotsu's designs best-sellers for over ten years. His first pattern—a simple, unlined coat—graced the pages of the catalog in 1984, and was an instant hit. Today, his wardrobe packages rank consistently among Vogue's most popular patterns. Asked why he thinks that is, the designer says, "A lot of different women sew, and there are many reasons why they buy patterns. I think sewers like my patterns because they are simple. I don't put in much detail, so they are easy to make."

But there is more to his popularity than ease of construction. Vogue's Design Director, Reg Fairchild says, "Sewers tell us they love the versatility of his clothes—which can be endlessly mixed and matched. And I think he owes a great deal of his success to the confidence his designs inspire in the women who wear them." Notorious for his attention to fit and finishing, his figure-flattering designs are suitable for women of all shapes and sizes. "My job is to make women look pretty and feel happy," says the designer. "No matter what size they are, my customers know they can wear my clothes and always look good." He also knows that the understated elegance of his designs is what allows women to express who they are. "As a designer, you can be too fancy—and too plain. Finding a balance between the two is difficult, but it is the secret to creating clothes that my customers want to wear. For me, the greatest reward is to see a woman in my clothes and see the woman—not the clothes."

Although he is too modest to say so, it comes as no surprise to discover that Tamotsu's customers have included numerous high-profile women, including Rosie O'Donnell, Star Jones, Joan Lunden, and Beverly Smith. However, it is surprising to find that his most famous client is the one woman he is least likely to talk about: First Lady Hillary Clinton. Legend has it that she saw a friend wearing one of his suits, and wanted one for herself. "She called the store, and the owner told her to call me directly. So she did! I will never forget the day my receptionist announced that the White House was on the line!"

Mrs. Clinton—who Tamotsu says "really knows what she likes"—chose two of his pantsuits, and the designer was overjoyed when he later saw her wearing them on television and in photos—not just once, but on several occasions. "I

"AS A DESIGNER, YOU CAN BE TOO FANCY—AND TOO PLAIN. FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO IS DIFFICULT—BUT IT IS THE SECRET TO CREATING CLOTHES THAT MY CUSTOMERS WANT TO WEAR."

But it means I would also have less private time. And I want time to enjoy that other part of my life!"

It is clear that Tamotsu relishes his down time as much as he does his work. "I need time away to forget about everything. Every few months I force myself to take a week or two off—I consider it part of my job! And when I come back, I'm relaxed and ready to work again." He loves the theater, and is an avid traveler with a preference for Asian locales, including his native Japan, Thailand, and the island of Bali. Two years ago he resurrected his childhood love of painting, and eagerly shows off the works that fill his office. He is equally excited about sharing the plans for the house he is building in the hills of Connecticut—an ultra-modern glass and concrete structure that he will fill with the authentic Balinese furnishings he admits

never thought about the First Lady wearing my clothes," he confesses, "but now I have to say it is a dream come true!" And she has remained a faithful customer—a fact which Tamotsu doesn't advertise. "She never mentions the names of the designers whose clothes she wears, and I like that. So I reciprocate by not mentioning hers. And I think that's one of the reasons she's comfortable wearing my things."

The boyish enthusiasm with which Tamotsu tells this story is indicative of a man who is continually delighted by the adventures life has to offer. He considers himself "a lucky person"—yet he also knows he has benefited from being quick to capitalize on the opportunities that have come his way. "When life gives you a sign, you have to see it—and take it. If you don't, someone else will!" •

TAMOTSU

Tamotsu

To see Tamotsu shop for fabric is to witness a lifetime of experience at work. Deftly, his educated fingers twist, pull, snap and tug dozens of Italian fabrics displayed for his attention. "I have a good eye," says Tamotsu, "I know fabric and I look very quickly. I catch the little things people miss." And yet, to see Tamotsu calmly sewing buttons in the cutting room of his successful business is to see the young man who started his designing career in the living room of his small Westside apartment in the late 1970's.

After graduating from the Kuwazawa Design School, Tamotsu went to work as a fabric designer for Itida, one of Japan's largest textile producers. Later, his boss encouraged him to visit New York City where he planned to stay for three months or longer, provided he found a job. Tamotsu simply fell in love with New York City and, although he had not yet found employment, he decided to stay despite his dwindling resources. Soon after, he began working for designer Norma Kamali and later sewed Karl Lagerfeld uniforms at home. Tamotsu's creativity compelled him to hone his skills by independently designing and sewing jumpsuits for his friends.

One day, a local retailer noticed one of Tamotsu's friends wearing a Tamotsu suit and, delighted with its simple elegance, began placing orders regularly. What started as a small home business quickly grew to warrant an office, complete with a pattern maker, a cutter, a sewer, a saleswoman and, of course, Tamotsu, who kept a hand in all stages of the manufacturing process. By the early 1980's, he sold as many coats as he could manufacture to "Ann Taylor" in New York. In a few short months, Tamotsu's growing reputation for quality and style spurred national demand for his designs without any advertising on his part. His collections, which were very popular in the Plus Size category, sold at bridge prices and could be found in better department stores, such as Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdale's. In 1987, Tamotsu became the top designer of Vogue Patterns' Wardrobe category. In addition to holding this rank for ten years running, Tamotsu has also been one of Vogue's best-selling designers overall.

Tamotsu, the man, is much like Tamotsu, the fashion: simple, understated and elegant. Adverse to "too much design," Tamotsu is a purist who enhances the harmony of the human form with the subtlety of soft, drapery, richly textured and patterned earth-toned

-more-

fabrics. In designing, he strives to create minimal, classic lines that endure trends and are considered "keepers" by all standards. "Sometimes," says Tamotsu, "I see people wearing my designs of ten years ago. They still look good. I like that."

Tamotsu's minimalism pervades his business style. Rather than build a financial empire, he prefers his company to grow slowly and steadily. "I ask myself," he says, "'how much do I need?' not, 'what more can I get?'" This approach has earned him the solid reputation of being an honest and reasonable company, albeit somewhat surprising to his contemporaries. Tamotsu has been known to refuse orders that would overwhelm his company.

Tamotsu's managerial style is to run his company like a "happy family." Similarly to his employees, he works from a small corner desk, and can be found designing or sewing just about anywhere in the office. He doesn't believe in corporate hierarchy and considers all his employees equal to one another, regardless of their functions. Much of his staff has been with him for 10 or more years and he attributes this loyalty to the implicit trust he has in them. "I don't ask them too many questions," Tamotsu explains, "as long as they are doing business. And if something goes wrong, I take the responsibility because I trust them. This way, they feel safe and free." Despite this unusual latitude he gives them, Tamotsu cuts a ubiquitous and omniscient figure among his employees. And he's also famous for unexpectedly handing out bonus checks to them. "If I make a profit," he says, "I like to share it. It's not just my work, but theirs too. And also, I don't like to be happy by myself." ■