

Foreign flower child

By RUSTLE SHAND

In the designer room of Saks Fifth Avenue Tropic store, recent customers sipped tea and nibbled on Japanese rice cakes and were caught up in the flower inspired designs of Chicago-based designer Noriko.

Noriko's Japanese heritage is artfully transferred to American ready-to-wear through flower forms and colors. Her spring-summer collection, inspired by the orchid, is soft and fluid, following the graceful petal form of the exotic orchid.

Her colors, too, reflect the distinction of the orchid in unlimited shades from soft-muted tones, to brights, to blacks.

Noriko creates clothes you put together the way the occasion suggests. A scarf may be worn as a family-wrap or tied over one shoulder. A tunic may be worn over pants or as a cocktail dress, cinched at the waist and touched with a silk flower.

"While other designers have continually tried to amaze and surprise, Noriko has remained consistent to her philosophy of fashion and her line remains consistent," said Susanna, the Noriko fashion representative. "Every year she contributes things to her collection which the customer may add to her own growing wardrobe of Noriko timeless, seasonless clothes."

Susanna also explains the continuing excitement over Noriko's fluid designs, pointing out that "on a slender woman they seem to cling but on the heavier woman, they actually cover the lumps and bumps."

NORIKO'S 1976 collection was based on her excited reaction to the dogwood she found blooming in Alabama. She attributes her inherent love of natural forms to her childhood spent on the southernmost island of Japan where, like most Japanese girls, she was taught flower arranging and how to brush paint on fabric. Her eye was being trained to appreciate the colors of nature—flowers, the sea and the shell.

Her clothes reflect her philosophy of less is more elegant. "The solid color has a quieting effect on the eye," says Noriko. "It is more peaceful than a riotous print outfit which gets tiresome after a few wearings. The Japanese believe that one perfect flower in one marvelous color is a joy to behold. The same principle applies to fashion."

Noriko is also credited with focusing the fashion eye on Chicago. In the recent prestigious Gold Coast Award competition, held in Chicago for American designers, Noriko won over 11 other designers who competed, including Mary McFadden, Halston, John Anthony, Holly's Harp, to name a few.

IT IS REMARKABLE enough that Noriko, a Chicago fashion designer, would gain national prominence in a world dominated by New York's Seventh Avenue. But perhaps more remarkable is her success story, which began with a fierce battle against centuries of Japanese tradition and became marked by the stamp of her indomitable will.

Judged by Japanese standards of beauty, Noriko was a disappointment to herself and to her family. Wishing to compensate, she became obsessed with the idea of designing clothes but met with much resistance from her family. Her parents finally agreed to let her attend fashion school. In return she promised not to pursue fashion as a career.

Then came a lucky break—the man her parents had arranged for her to marry was living in Chicago. She came to the United States in 1964 and for several years led the life of a model housewife.

But her ambitions never diminished and so, with her husband's consent, she returned to school. Six months later she was on her own.

Momentary disappointments were followed by triumphs and today Noriko fashions are carried exclusively by Saks Fifth Avenue.

Volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau, a program of Volunteer Action Center of United Community Services, has weekly listings of agencies needing volunteers. Further information about the agencies and type of volunteer services needed may be obtained from the bureau at 642-7272.

MARILLAC HALL in Farmington, a home for expectant mothers, is looking for volunteers to work in their arts and crafts or sewing programs. The duties include teaching basic craft or sewing skills to the girls, assisting in the completion of a craft or sewing item, working on projects for Christmas and spring boutiques. The time commitment is two to four hours a week.

The home needs people who enjoy working with adolescents, can work with a limited budget and can maintain a non-judgmental attitude toward the unwed expectant mother. There is also a need for a volunteer who can tutor third year German.

SOUTH DISTRICT COURT IN PONTIAC is looking for volunteers to work in several programs. Volunteer job developers make direct contact with employers to find positions open to probationers. Retired businessmen and active service groups are preferred for this position. Four hours a week is required, as well as a knowledge of business, personal practices.

Volunteer pre-sentence investigators gather information about the offender's family, health, employment and educational background through an interview. The investigator then writes a report and recommendation to the judge to supply additional background material. Someone with a basic interview process and some writing ability is preferred. Students in human science fields are welcome; training is provided.

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The Lively NEEDLE

By MARY KAY DAVIS

Only one topic is possible for a St. Patrick's Day needlework column. Irish embroidery, like the Emerald Isle itself, has had a turbulent and sometimes sad story.

Throughout Ireland's history, Catholic nuns have taught and worked embroidery. Convents were and still are needlework centers.

Various types of embroideries developed in different geographic areas. They were all based on forms copied from nature. In "Mountmellick work," for instance, outlines of fruits and flowers were stitched with thick white cotton yarn on a smooth fabric. French and bouillon knots provided accents. It was heavy duty embroidery used, for instance, as bedspreads.

On the lighter side, the crafts of lace and of embroidery came so close together in Ireland that they overlapped. Limerick lace is chain stitch on a fine net background. Carrickmacross lace has muslin forms applied onto net with simple embroidery stitches. And Cluny lace is one example of heavy, crocheted lace that became very popular in America after our machines found that they could do a good job of copying it. Alas, the poor Irish lacemaker.

UNLIKE THE English, the Irish were never interested enough, or affluent enough to buy their own embroideries. Irish stitchers have had to work for an overseas market.

This kept them subject to the whims of foreign subjects which they could not influence, and while their technique was excellent, their designs usually stemmed from Italy, France or England because that's what the market demanded.

For Ireland was poor. About 1,830 peasant women were recruited by foreign merchants to do white work embroidery in their homes for pay. Thousands began laboring in the poor light of small cottages. They worked 16-hour days for the magnificent pay of one penny per hour.

The materials for pre-designed collars, cuffs and bodices were given to the stitchers. They had to produce



By MARY KAY DAVIS

their quota or all income stopped. One woman in a village would do all the satin stitch on a piece, and then pass it on to another stitcher who would specialize in needle lace. Then it was passed on again to someone else until it was finally finished. Production lines are nothing new.

Damaged eyesight was an inevitable result. One of the horrible home remedies of the time was whiskey as an eye wash. It stung terribly, but then anesthetized the sore eyes so that the woman could stitch on and on.

THE INVENTION of machine embroidery by the Swiss in 1853 brought an end to all of this. But it also ended the money that stitching brought in. The years that followed were harsh and hungry.

Soon various philanthropic ladies began small embroidery organizations to provide work for local women. Each taught, promoted and sold its own type of needlework. These organizations never seemed to get together or to benefit from each other's experience, and usually lasted only as long as the lady in charge lived or stayed interested in the project.

Many types of embroideries and laces were thus developed during the last half of the 19th century, but few have lasted until today. Those that have survived can be seen at the Royal Irish School of Art Needlework and the National Museum of Ireland. Both are in Dublin and are well worth a stop on your next trip. The embroideries will be such a sight for sore eyes that you won't need whiskey eyewash.

Gift Ideas for Everyone...
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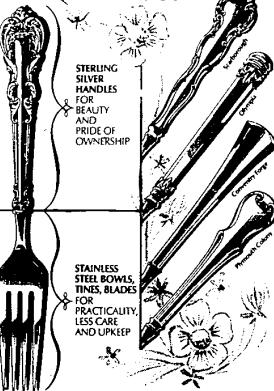


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B. Refreshingly new... Heller Ovenproof Glass Bakeware in pure and simple shapes. Situations around the sides give it a sophisticated, elegant look when it gets to the table. All dishes have a continuous rim that acts as a handle... the casserole covers become au gratin dishes. Pieces shown: 1 qt. Casserole with au gratin cover, \$9.95... 2 qt. Casserole & cover, \$13.95... 1 1/2 qt. deep loaf pan, \$5.95... 2 1/2 qt. baking dish, \$11.95.

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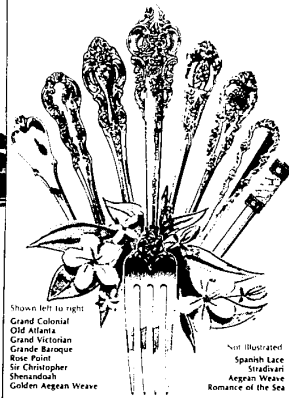
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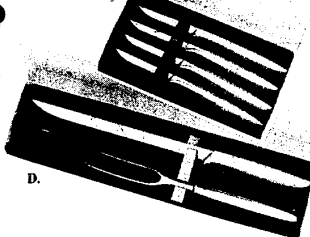
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