

## Entirely feminine

# Designs sell for under \$200

By CHRISTINE WALDEN

Tracy Mills just might make it, and

In the fashion business, that's no easy trick.

Of course, it's really too early to tell, but if sales figures indicate anything, then the success signs are there. In one year, Mills has increased his accounts from 33 to 110.

"Two hundred more to go and I'll be happy," he said recently while at Davidson's in Birmingham. Mills doesn't seem terribly unhappy right now. His perception of the fashion industry, which often perpetuates snobbery and egotism, is refreshing and far from the norm. He doesn't seek publicity, his offices are not on Seventh Avenue, and aside from all that, he's a nice guy.

About industry snobs, he commented, "They really don't bother me and I sort of feel sorry for them. But sometimes they can really wreck my day."

Looking younger than his 39 years, Mills has a history in the fashion business, designing under labels other than his own. Once successful in the now defunct suit and coat business, Mills started his one business last year to fill a gap.

"I just felt there was a need for a good, good dress at a respectable price," he said. "I try to stay under \$200."

He does and, within that range, Mills designs matte jersey gowns that are uniquely styled and entirely feminine. The dresses, for fall in dusty colors of grey, mauve, blues and greens, are often trimmed with lace or satin and have matching scarves and flowers.

"I really like fluid things," he said. "Things that move and that are subtle and speak for themselves. I don't design for an age but for someone who has kept themselves together."

He continued, adding that he once saw a woman "who must have been 75, wearing one of my dresses and she looked fantastic. If I wouldn't have had on crummy blue jeans, I would have gone up to her and told her how great she looked. But since I looked so bad, she would have thought I was a mugger."

Mills also designed for resort, a series of cotton dresses which he wanted to do three years ago.

"Several years ago I went to Portugal to export to the U.S. I knew then that t-shirt dresses would be fabulous but I just couldn't get it together."

Next fall he plans to include some

## a la mode

woven fabrics in the line as suits and coats.

But right now he's concerned with making his business work. "Before when I was designing, they always said, 'Well, he can make something pretty, but he doesn't know about business.' But I am making this business work and I'm really happy about that."

In the beginning, Mills recalled, he did everything himself, from the cutting to the pressing to, finally, shipping the goods.

"I started with myself and one other person. I would press, pack and ship and I really worked hard and it was so exciting to get that first check. We were off Seventh Avenue. It's nice to be away from that pressure, and we just moved to a nice office, which is good. Before, I would be embarrassed when I was talking to a buyer and a mouse would run across the floor."

One of the differences Mills has discovered between working for yourself and someone else is the ego.

"That's what you have to fight with. When I was working for someone, the

boss had his ego and I had mine. I knew when I started my own business that the ego would have to take a back seat.

"An ego is a driving force, but it can wreck you. It can constantly get in the way, especially when I worked for other people. We should have listened to each other."

With his ego in the back seat and his office off Seventh Avenue, Mills hopes to expand his fledgling company. But, he said, he doesn't want to overexpand.

"I don't want to sell to everybody. I can only produce so much, and in smaller towns, I want to protect the people that started with me. I've seen a lot of companies expand so fast that they couldn't fill their orders and they went out of business. But you must take care of the people that stuck with you."

Mills is thus far satisfied with his business and his lifestyle, but, "I might take up something else," he said. "I'm not interested in becoming rich, but I don't know what I'd do if I didn't work."



Pleated bodice, also in matte jersey.

Gunmetal gray dress with lace cap sleeves.

## fashion

Oct. 6-8—Personal appearance by Ruth Frank and her jewelry collection at Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Mall.

Oct. 6-11—Informal modeling of Alexandra de Markoff costumes at Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Mall.

Oct. 8—Walton-Pierce at Somerset Mall will have an open house to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Informal modeling will be done from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the store.

Oct. 8—Chudik's in Birmingham presents "A Taste of Fashion," a luncheon fashion show examining "What Should You Wear to the Wedding?" at noon at the store. The seminar includes

luncheon and reservations must be made by calling the store.

Oct. 8-9—Informal modeling of evening gowns at Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Mall.

Oct. 11—Informal modeling of the Puell collection at Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Mall.

### CLUB SHOWS

Oct. 8—The Women's Division of Project Hope will have a fashion show luncheon at Wabek Country Club. Call Kay Savage Kennedy at 961-8416 for further information.

Oct. 9—The Altar Guild of St. Hugo of the Hills Church will sponsor a luncheon and fashion show at 11 a.m. at the Raleigh House in Southfield. Fashions will be presented by Chudik's. Proceeds will be used to help fi-

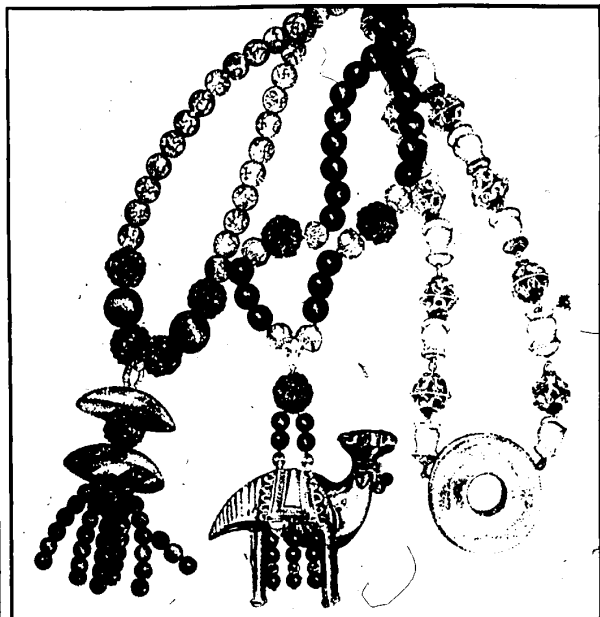
nance the renovation of the church's community house. Chairman of the event is Dorothy Desmond. Call Marie Doyle at 334-5526 or Lu Simela at 642-4525 for reservations.

Oct. 9—The Women of St. Fabian will sponsor a "Fall Festival of Fashion" show at room at the Holiday Inn of Farmington at Ten Mile Road and Grand River. Fashions will be presented by Claire Kelly of Northville. Chairman of the event is Grace Joyce. Call Mrs. Joyce at 477-9672 for reservations.

Oct. 15—The Huxley Hospital Auxiliary will have a fashion show and luncheon at the Detroit Athletic Club. Fashions will be by Lilly Pulitzer of Bloomfield Hills.

For consideration of listings write: Fashion Calendar, Observer & Eccentric, 1223 Bowers, Birmingham, 48012.

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Just a glimpse into Ruth Frank's treasure chest. Left, delicately patterned old Chinese beads from a Mandarin's necklace, with Buddhist lacquered walnut prayer beads interplay with large rare stones excavated in Iran, a cluster of antique carnelian beads, 1950. Center, a composition of Iranian agates, Ceylonese silver and Buddhist lacquered prayer beads provides the setting for an exquisitely worked silver camel from India, 1400. Right, antique ivory archer's thumb and bead ends from Tibet, artfully arranged with beautiful filigreed beads from Ceylon, 1550.

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Somerset Mall, Big Beaver at Coolidge, Troy

## Hospital volunteers to meet

The Michigan Association of Hospital Auxiliaries will hold its 27th annual fall conference Monday through Wednesday (Oct. 6-8) in Troy Hilton Inn.

The group is composed of the 45,000 women in Michigan who belong to hospital auxiliaries and perform a variety of services for the hospitals. The group's theme for the year is "Service to Others Brings Self-Fulfillment."

Area women to attend the conference include Mrs. Albert Kuhn and Mercedes Lichtward of Children's Hospital, Mrs. Bennet Gardner of Sinai Hospital and Mrs. Albert Burrows, all of Bloomfield Township. Mrs. Raymond Ross, Mrs. Lois Nichols and Mrs. J.F. Fitzsimmons, all Beaumont Hospital volunteers from Birmingham; and Mrs. Herman Resnick and Mrs. Trube Resnick, Sinai volunteers from Southfield.

Workshops to be presented at the conference in Troy are designed to tell auxiliary members what new activities are being introduced throughout the state to help them improve techniques.

Workshops are covering subjects including: •A model gift shop display; •Hospital security to be discussed by James Lynchee of the Greater Detroit Area Hospital Council; •Financial planning for auxiliaries discussed by Marie Paquette, financial consultant from Delray, Fla.; •Washington scene with Michael Greenwald, Michigan regional legislative assistant of American Hospital Auxiliaries, Washington, D.C., speaking; •Malpractice crisis, including speakers Forrest Neumann, president of Edward Sparrow Hospital in Lansing, and Richard Surberich of Kitch and Surberich, attorneys in Detroit; •New services that can be applied in such departments as the emergency, psychiatric and recovery.

The conference will include exhibits and demonstrations of newsletters, tray favors, medic alert and holiday crafts.

Keynote speaker of the conference will be Dr. Karl S. Kicks, executive director of Peoples Community Hospital Authority, Wayne.

The banquet speaker will be Dr. David H. Jenkins, acting director of the Department of Natural Resources in Lansing.

About 650 women from all six districts of the Michigan Association of Hospital Auxiliaries are expected to attend.



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