

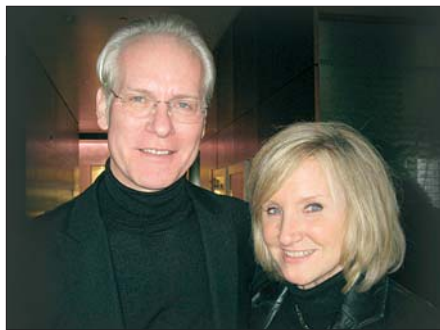
"MAKE IT WORK" WITH TIM GUNN

by Jean Haas

If Tim Gunn of "Project Runway" came to your hometown to give free fashion advice while hosting a fashion show, would you go to see him? Of course you would! That's exactly what our Chicago, Ill. Chapter's Desperate Stitchers Neighborhood Group did as we quickly jumped at the opportunity to see this fashion guru demonstrate his talents.

Tim Gunn, now chief creative officer for Liz Claiborne, inspired, educated, and wowed us with fabulous garments that he presented for the "real" woman. The models he utilized in his fashion show were not only the usual young, slim models that you would expect but also the plus-size and mature models as well. What a welcome sight that was! We are finally seeing a fashion expert who is paying attention and addressing everyone's needs. The fashion show was arranged so that the audience could easily see that you don't have to be young or slim to look stunning wearing his Liz Claiborne collection. After seeing the clothing on these "real" models, it was easy for us to visualize how each piece of clothing would look on ourselves as well.

So, how can *you* achieve this look? It's all about who we are as women and how we want to be perceived by the world. Show them the real you and wow them! It can easily be done when you work on three main ideas: proportion, silhouette, and fit. Once



Tim Gunn and Jean Haas

you have all three components, Tim says "you will blow people's socks off." He claims that getting the proper fit is the biggest problem for everyone. Since we are all hung up on a comfort trap, we mistakenly think that wearing oversized clothing will hide our figures flaws and make us look thinner while at the same time allowing us to feel more comfortable. Gunn says it's a fallacy. He emphasizes there is no reason a woman should look dowdy, dreary, and stodgy—*ever!* "If you want to feel as if you never gotten out of bed, then don't get out of bed!"

His collection showed how he is winning the war against "the schlubbing down of America." He encourages women to interject more color, as well as more dresses and skirts into their wardrobes. Then, for an added touch, women should highlight and accessorize with printed scarves and colored shoes and handbags.

Tim's Pet Peeves

So what are Tim's fashion pet peeves?

1. Once you are out of your 20s, forget wearing mini skirts.

2. Never have your skirt or pant hem length stop at the mid point of your calf (which is your widest part). Always end your hems just below/above or at the knee.
3. Avoid wearing oversized garments. They only add volume to your figure. Instead, choose fitted jackets which end at the hipline. It proves to be a more flattering look.
4. Avoid wearing tight-fitting clothing that accentuates unflattering parts of your body. Alter the areas that are too tight.
5. Women whose styles are stuck in a previous decade need to update their look with a classic blouse and jacket.

Also, he tells his students: If you can't get into a taxi wearing it, then it's not clothing—it's just wearable art.

Tim's Fashion Advice

During the fashion show, Tim and his assistant illustrated how to dress their models up and down to show the versatility of a garment. You then could see how merely changing a pair of shoes and adding a fitted jacket with colored belt and purse accessories would bring a new look to a once-casual outfit.

Tim's "must haves" for this season:

1. Black patent leather belt (wide or narrow)
2. Shirt or shift dress
3. Fitted jacket
4. Scarves
5. Colored shoes and handbags

Tim also said that if you buy only one thing this season, get a belt! Wider



belts look better on women with longer torsos; slouched belts look great on thicker-waisted women. This simple touch will give a more graphic dimension to the total silhouette.

Once the fashion show was over, Tim offered to answer questions from the audience. During this time I had the opportunity to ask him a question about sewing, saying "What advice would you give to those who sew for themselves?" He answered, "For anyone who sews... I applaud you all! I am so proud and happy for all of you because you have the knowledge and opportunity to be your own creative designers. That is just wonderful because you have the ability to 'Make it Work' and keep at it!"

Jean Haas, owner of Classact Designs, educates sewers with online classes and videos for custom dress and pants forms, as well as draping and pattern fitting (www.dressformdesigning.com). Join her for a Sewing Makeover Weekend this fall (www.sewingmakeover.com). Jean is a member of the Chicago, Ill. Chapter.

Editor's note: To see a video of Tim Gunn's fashion show, visit www.patternfitting.com. And to learn more about Tim's fashion philosophy, check out:

"A Guide to Quality, Taste & Style" by Tim Gunn, Abrams Image, 201 pages, black & white illustrations, hard cover, ISBN 0-8109-9284-1, \$17.95