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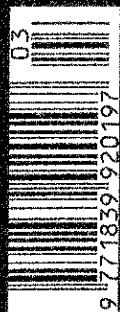
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BACKSTAGE CONFIDENTIAL
PARIS HAUTE COUTURE
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COUTURE IS THE STATE OF MIND
EMBRACE IT

Timothy Pope

LIVING A LIFE OF PASSION AND ENTHUSIASM FOR QUALITY, TIMOTHY LLOYD POPE IS A SUCCESSFUL CONSULTANT TO MANY AN AFFLUENT AND SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC FIGURE IN BUSINESS AND PHILANTHROPY THROUGHOUT NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA, ASIA AND EUROPE. A WELL-BALANCED MAN OF GREAT EDUCATION, INTEGRITY AND HUMILITY, HE AND HIS SELF-TITLED CONSULTANCY ORGANISATION, TLP CONSULTING, WORK WITH MEN AND WOMEN IN CURATING VALUABLE, TIMELESS AND TASTEFUL HAUTE COUTURE ARSENALS TO WHICH THEY CAN HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE AND EXUDE ELEGANCE FOR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIFE. HIS KNOWLEDGE, NETWORK OF SEEMINGLY ENDLESS CONNECTIONS UNSURPASSED AND PASSION INFALLIBLE. CIELO WAS THRILLED TO SPEAK WITH TIMOTHY AT LENGTH ABOUT THE HAUTE COUTURE WORLD, HIS WORK AND HIS LIFE. www.cielomagazine.com

What has set your reputation?

If I have a reputation, I owe it to the following; over the course of my thirty-year career, I have had the opportunity to learn the elements of extraordinary design and craftsmanship. Whether it pertains to crafting a perfect garment or an exceptional piece of jewelry, it is that level of perfection that imbues the client with a feeling of confidence in addition to allowing them to project true elegance.

One of the first questions I ask a client is, "When wardrobing yourself, are you receiving value for your investment?" At TLP, we work diligently to purchase items that add not only a fresh perspective and sophistication to a client's wardrobe, but also add intrinsic value.

I thoroughly enjoy the process of collaborating with both my clients and the designers to create the best possible product suited to the client's lifestyle. Needless to say, in all the services we provide our clientele, discretion is of the utmost importance.

The benefit of working with Haute Couture pieces is...?

There are many misconceptions regarding the world of Haute Couture. First, let's establish that it is not for everyone nor is it about the ability to afford these exquisite garments, although it is a very expensive endeavour. It is a commitment to attaining the closest thing to perfection pertaining to one's personal appearance. It is not about fashion, it is about elegant wearability; a way of life, if you will.

Another misconception of the Haute Couture world is that one would encounter a crushing level of "Hauteur" when the reality is the exact opposite. The level of professionalism and craftsmanship is incomparable. It is a world of the utmost graciousness. Every aspect is one of refinement; from the flowers that grace the tables of the salons to the lady of gentleman who greets one at the door. One is immersed in a world in which all of one's personal dreams can come true.

It is important to remember that the style of an Haute Couture garment is never about a trend, it is about customisation to the individual, thus it is a style all its own and ultimately enduring, often having very little to do with what one sees on the runway.

A few years ago, I was in fitting with Maria Martinez, the Directrice of Christian Lacroix's Haute Couture. I asked her if it would be "possible" to have a blouse made to accompany the suit that was being fitted. Her response was, "My dear Tim, this is Haute Couture, everything is possible. If we don't have the colour of silk, we will dye the fabric to match."

For the lucky few who regularly participate in this world it is about building a collection much the same as one would acquire a collection of fine art.

This is where the old adage, "Two heads are better than one", comes into play. Working with a guide and/or objective eye is essential on the client's behalf has proven to be successful for our clientele.

You're renowned for your excellent eye for colour and detail. How did this come about?

A good eye is the product of an aesthetic education. I'm reminded of a quote from Syd Solomon. He was asked how to tell a good painting from a bad painting and, to paraphrase, he said, "It's simple. Look at a million paintings and then you can never be mistaken."

When reviewing a collection for a client, there are thousands of choices; only one is correct. For one to decide which is the "right" choice, one has to have looked at thousands of wrong choices first.

What is the benefit to knowing your clients' lifestyles, psychology and wardrobes inside-out?

There is no substitute for truly understanding a client's lifestyle. I cannot dress my clients for events and experiences that I haven't experienced myself.

What is the ultimate goal of working intimately with a client?

If we are successful, we create a wardrobe for our clients that they would create for themselves if they had our resources and time. It is our job to fully embrace and celebrate their personal style, while assisting them in reaching their goals.

Your knowledge of jewelry and gems is something of a trademark. Why is this so, and is it what women want?

A great jewelry collection is a useful jewelry collection. As I always say, just because one can afford a tiara, does not mean one should buy a tiara.

Jewelry is a marvelous luxury that can give a woman a great sense of beauty and power. In addition it can be, when chosen from an educated perspective, a marvelous asset which will increase in value over time.

A large part of your work is related to working with private clients. Why do you prefer working quietly in the background of private clients' lives than out in the public eye?

My clients are the ones in the public eye; this is about their personal style. This is not about me. Contrary to popular opinion I have always felt that "gratuitous exposure" would negatively affect my flexibility as well as the quality of my work.

Is your face more visible when you are out when dressed or when you are not dressed? When dressed? Why?

Elegance is not something that is worn; something only made of fabric. When one is truly elegant, the velvet hammer is not needed.

One of my clients, a woman who has been successful in the financial industry, refers to me as her "starch" because when she walks into a boardroom, she has my hand-bags with her. She has never designed what she is wearing. I don't know if she knows that the look of confidence.

Protecting confidence, particularly one's own skin, whether in a professional or social environment, is the most important quality. This allowed clients to move away from the superficial and into the more substantive.

Your connections run deep and far and wide. This means you know your clients well. How do you maintain your clients alongside the industry?

I am very fortunate to have long-term relationships with artists and designers in the Atlantic. Frequently I work with my partners to create a portfolio of jewelry, custom designed for my clients.

These designers have always been able to accommodate us, but because of our long-standing client relationships, we have learned that the designs we develop are marketable and will go on to become top sellers for future seasons.

If I asked you ten years ago what you were yourself now, would it be here?

While I feel incredibly fortunate for where I am today, I find it more difficult to ponder where I will be ten years from now.

Do you have any future expansion plans? TIP? What might they be?

I would like to see our brand become an international presence and to be enjoyed, consulting with top executives to assist them in creating products that are targeted at the luxury market.

"Luxury market" like "Hugoboss" is today two of the most important terms. I must keep in mind that success does not come widely available. It comes in desirability of the opportunity. I have brought that perspective to my consulting with, along with the ability to know how to sustain the relationship between signer and client.

You were once quoted as having said, "Price isn't the issue; service is". Care to elaborate?

A famous jeweller once said to his son when sent on a buying trip, "Don't bring home any bargains."

Our clients are not looking for a bargain. They are seeking value.

Having the ability to evaluate the cost of time is an important aspect of our success. Our clients are some of the most successful people in the business and philanthropic worlds. The one thing they cannot buy is more time. Hopefully, we afford them that.

I understand your services exceed those of simply acquiring pieces of couture for your personal clients to that of planning events and providing design and marketing direction for other clients' businesses. Tell me one of your most noteworthy successes in these areas.

I recently had a wonderful collaboration with a jewelry company focused on South Sea pearls. I designed and supervised the production of a twenty-piece collection, which was wildly successful.

In addition, I worked with them on all aspects of their presentation of the collection, which included a marketing programme as well as a renovation of their selling space.

Who are some designers and labels you collaborate with frequently? Why these in particular?

Over the years I've worked with so many talented people. Some relationships are formal and others are informal. James de Givenchy, the designer for Taffin, is a genius and we have had many successful collaborations. The jewellers Stephen Feuerman and Russell Zelenetz of Stephen Russell have an unfailing eye for the most exquisite museum quality estate jewels and we have worked together on building world-class collections for our clients.

Designer Michele Emanuele has a wonderfully fresh style and is my "secret weapon" when it comes to custom, enduring woman-swear. We have also had tremendous success with the young New York designer Chadwick Bell.

I am also extremely fortunate to say that I have long-standing relationships with many Parisian designers in both Pret-a-Porter and Haute Couture. Certainly, Christian Dior Haute Couture and Jean Paul Gaultier Haute Couture are at the very top of the list.

I have heard you are even known to re-design clients' wardrobes to better suit the outlay of their contents and newly acquired pieces. Is there anything Timothy Pope doesn't do?

Yes, just as one keeps a diary, clients' investments, collections and wardrobe for life require care. The key to maintaining these valuable investments is giving instructions for protection and care. A handmade lace blouse or a hand-bordered garment is best stored in a flat. Here are examples of the "extraordinary work" we provide in relation to clients' wardrobes.

You work with clients to add to their "ordinary" wardrobe collections. How do you infuse extraordinary?

A wardrobe is one that is filled with "extraordinary" lives. A wardrobe curated by TUP is by definition filled with accessories for whom time is the only way. In other words, what is the occasion? An invitation? The occasion? The question? "What am I going to wear?" or "What am I going to wear?"

Timelessness should be a focus of any wardrobe of couture. Why is that?

Allow me to answer your question for you: an example. One day I met a woman of enormous style and grace wearing Balenciaga and Chanel suits and dresses she purchased in the sixties and seventies. I have looked at her wardrobe a fresh perspective and I have thus, contemplating her wardrobe, asked her to continue to wear these clothes with great pleasure.

Tell me about your travels. Where does your work take you?

North, South, East, West, all over the world, South America, as well as Europe and Asia.

When the client calls, I travel where requested.

Please elaborate on either how you and your personal lives intersect and how you manage to keep them apart.

I don't keep them apart, I am grateful that many of my clients have become friends with me for over twenty years. It is that people who share a passion for life with a focus on quality have much in common and therefore, very special. I have over time become great friends.

I'm dating myself by saying that I have the privilege of now working with the children and grandchildren of many of my clients. These exceptional individuals have become much like family to me. I would say, "In all things, it is good to have a friend."

Interview by James Burkhon
Photography by Phillip Guitman