

IMAGINATION

Star of the East may shine here

By ANGELA BIANCHI
Special to the Sun

TOKYO — Hanae Mori, the star fashion designer of the East, has decided to set up shop in Canada sometime next year, in Toronto or Montreal.

"Mila Mulrony visited me here a while back and she invited me to come to Canada. I was hoping that I might have begun operations this year but things were put back," says the slender queen of Japanese fashion.

"I must say I was very impressed with the way she (Mulrony) dresses."

Mori already has fashion centres in New York, Tokyo and a haute couture house in Paris — a \$250 million a year fashion empire.

Mori's haute couture line was carried by Chez Catherine, Holt Renfrew and Creeds in Toronto but today it's at Estrid in Hazleton Lanes and Fetoun on Scolard.

Says Estrid Safadi, "Mori is very classic and there is definitely a market in Toronto for her clothes. I've already brought in some of the fall line and I think it will sell quite well."

Fetoun has already sold out of its Mori fall evening wear. Says store owner, Fetoun Yousif, "I had only ordered a few of her dresses to test reaction. I'm certainly ordering more."

Fetoun's silk Mori gowns range from \$1,800 to \$2,500.

Mori, whose fashion career began in 1951 as a costume designer for the Japanese movie industry, was the first Japanese designer to show in New York in 1965 to immediate success.

Nancy Reagan regularly wore Mori evening gowns before becoming U.S. First Lady. "Now she wears American designs because of her position," explains Mori.

Mori also is the only Asian designer to belong to France's Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Parisienne, an honor shared with only 22 other couture designers.

Although Mori prefers to create quality evening wear she has extended her field to include ready to wear, sportswear, scarves, hosiery, handbags, shoes, perfume, underwear and sunglasses.

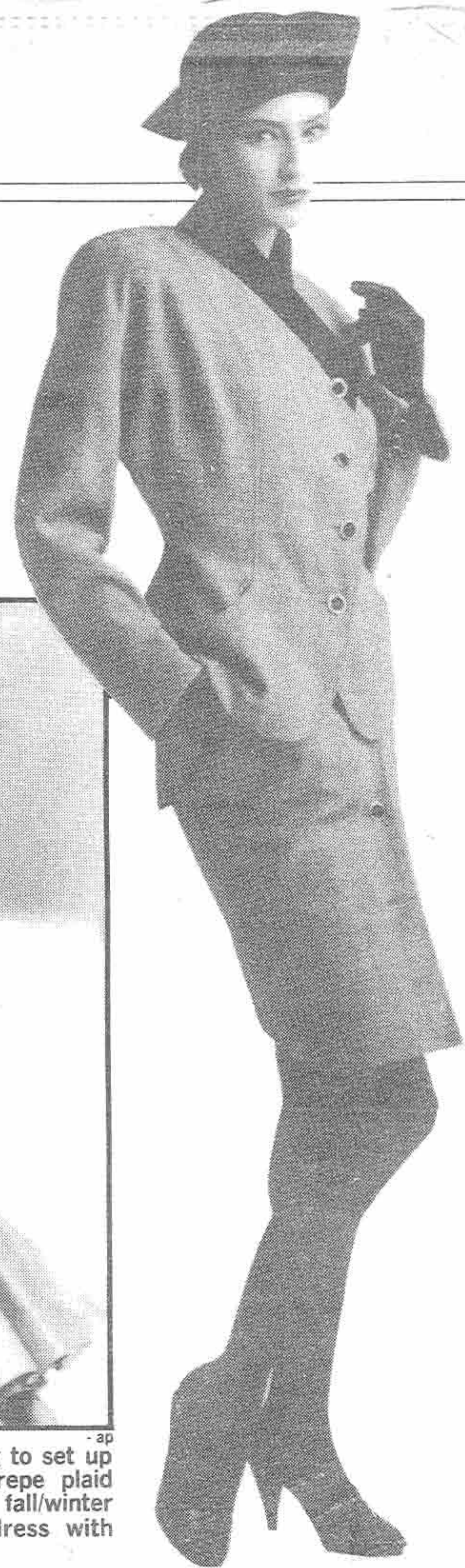
"Many years ago I even ventured into the hardware business," Mori laughs. "I designed a washing machine with my logo on it. Little red butterflies on white. It was quite popular."

Butterflies adorn many of Mori's fashions giving her the nickname, "Madame Butterfly."

Unlike other Japanese designers, Mori's designs are tailored more for the Western woman but with a touch of Japanese creativity.

But it's her evening wear that tells the story of her success. Exotic gowns wrought in silver with ancient landscapes. Signature embroideries of goldfish, dragons and pearls.

The difference between American and Japanese designers, says Mori, is that U.S. fashion is only a business. "They don't create if they can't sell."



□ HANAЕ MORI (top) of Tokyo, planning to set up in Toronto or Montreal, offers wool crepe plaid suit, accented with velvet (right) for fall/winter ready to wear and draped evening dress with tiered skirt from her haute couture line.