

Josy Mermet nods in approval at the way the tables are set, and at the tasteful Oriental decor of LiBai restaurant at Sheraton Towers. The private dining room where our light luncheon gathering is held, puts her at ease. Indeed, the ambience is quite becoming. Mermet seems totally sold on their ivory chopsticks, jade memorabilia

Turned Inside Out

Susanah Cheok comes face to face with Josy Mermet, who, during her short visit to our island, reads her like a book.

(she even asks where these can be purchased) and quiet, personalised service.

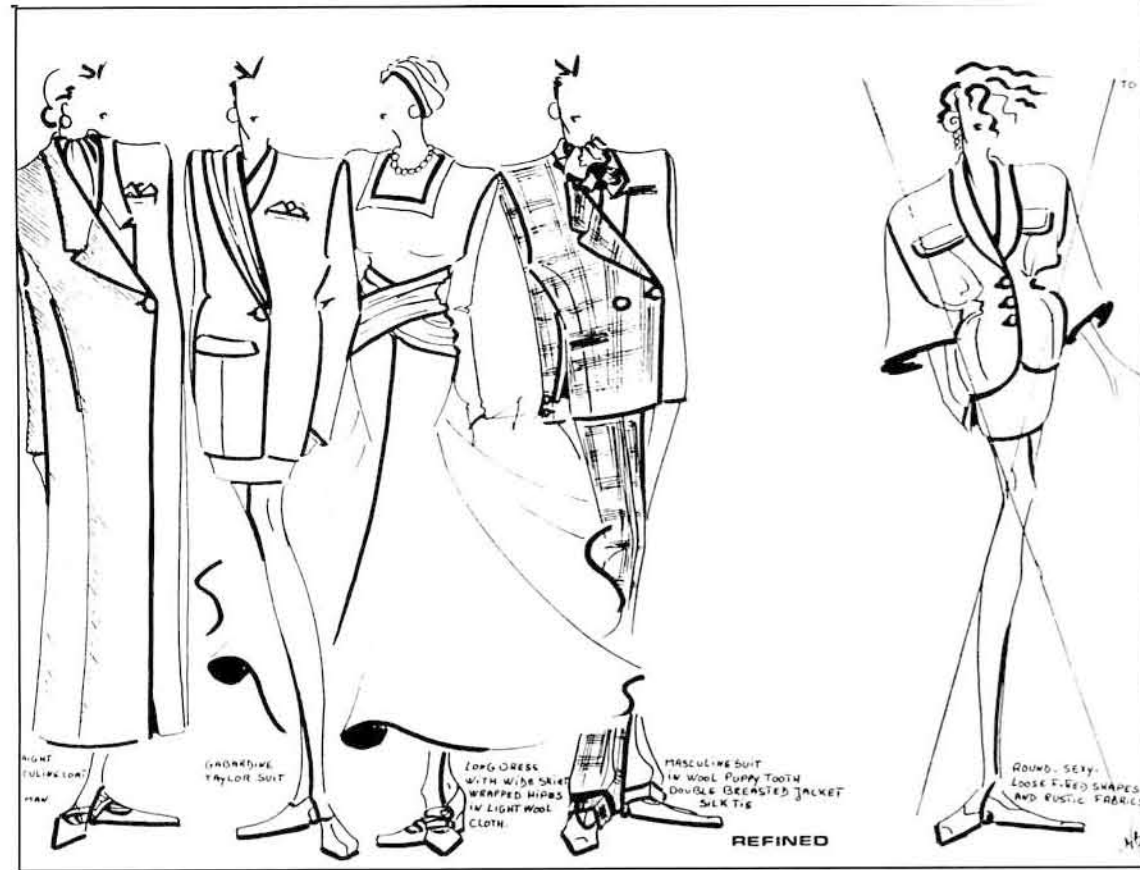
I was told Mermet's a dramatic, impassioned and sometimes extreme person. Today, her hair, very dark and cut page-boy style, is slicked back at the fringe and sides. She wears so much black eye-shadow, you hardly notice the khol and mascara she has on as well. Her lips are dressed in blood red and a deep plum blusher accentuates her already high cheekbones. Mermet is always only made up in Lancome, of course.

Her black wraparound dress is cut teasingly low at the front and tapers in at the bottom to resemble a ruched sarong skirt of sorts. This is teamed with opaque black tights and three-inch high heels. The outfit shows off her trim figure. I wonder how many more

women, at 46, with two children, are able to carry such a stunning number so well. Not many, I reckon.

Mermet is what you'd call a specialist in morpho-psychology. You've never heard of it? Well, till I met Mermet myself, neither had I. For the uninitiated, morpho-psychology is a science concerned with the relationship between a person's external physical make-up and his internal persona. Since the internal aspect is a person's other half, rightfully, it should be reflected on the outside as well. At least that's essentially what Mermet and her team believe. By reading your whole physical construction, and then recommending the application of various techniques, Josy Mermet attempts to bring out, and play up, your inner charm.

Practically everything Mermet knows of morpho-psychology has been learnt through experience. A keen sense



A contrasting mix of fluid dresses and structured suits are recommended for the refined individual.

of observation, the ability to memorise images at a glance and the gift of extremely powerful and reliable intuition, has since spurred Mermet on to realise a dream she'd been nursing for ten years. She now heads a four-year-old Paris-based image consultancy called Characteristic International Josy Mermet.

There was a time when morpho-psychology wasn't as widely-known, and accepted, as it is today, even in Mermet's country. The fact that the practice of morpho-psychology is very much more popular these days, also means that there's increased demand for Mermet's services and a long waiting list. Currently, Mermet works exclusively in conjunction with the cosmetic house of Lancome and the French department store, Le Printemps. At Le Printemps, Mermet provides services for 'very important' patrons and personnel.

What you really get when you make an appointment with Josy Mermet at the cost of about a hundred local dollars per session, is a lengthy, detailed, but startlingly interesting personality analysis to begin with. It gets particularly piquant when what she tells you about yourself corresponds with what you already believe, know or have heard said of yourself. On the other

hand, don't be surprised if she voices a couple of personality traits you never thought existed in your make-up, either. In such instances, you may knit your brows with scepticism and say 'oh no, that's not me at all', or you may stop to wonder if there is really such a quality waiting in the deeper recesses of your consciousness, one you've still to discover.

It doesn't take Mermet very long to describe what she feels is a cold, reserved and almost aloof exterior I possess. At first I think she makes me feel like a dead fish. That feeling, however, soon vanishes when Mermet adds that this reserve merely belies a fire-warm person burning inside. It is amazing that although I have not spent more than two hours with her, she notices the way I always hold my neck very upright. She remarks that this indicates a proudness and an unwillingness to change - all becoming characteristics of a rigid person.

I sigh inwardly, wondering to myself, half jokingly, just when the compliments would come. Except for a mention of my decisiveness and the penchant I have for exquisite, beautiful things, none whatsoever are showered. Meanwhile, Mermet strikes a familiar chord when she reads the collector in me - you should see the number of

useful, and not-so-useful 'nonsense', large and small, I have gathered through the years on my dresser and desk.

Mermet confides that the basis for her interest in morpho-psychology, lies in her desire to make people recognise themselves and each other as unique individuals, difficult as it must be in a world where statistics mean much, much more at times. As much as Mermet hates to categorise people, she slots me into a cold colour scheme group.

There is more fun to be had. Based on Mermet's analysis, fashion stylist, Natalie, the tallest and youngest in the team, deftly sketches a variety of apparel on large pieces of white paper propped up on a huge clip board. I like the suits and dresses which quickly appear on the paper. Wraparound tops and long flowy skirts materialise next to all manner of structured jackets plus masculine trouser suits and short tight skirts. For me, she advises fabrics ranging from the very gentlemanly - wool, gabardine and lots of checks - to the feminine - lace, chiffon, silk, crepe and satin. Details such as cuff links, scarves and bow ties can, and should, be added, she says. Accessories are a must, but only in cold colours. Best are plain