



Name in English: Vivienne Tam
Name in Chinese: 譚燕玉 [譚燕玉]
Name in Pinyin: Tán Yànyù
Gender: Female
Birth Year: 1957
Birth Place: Guangzhou, China
Current location: NYC
Philanthropy: Yes

Fashion Designer, Business Executive

Profession(s): Fashion Designer, Business Executive

Education: Higher Diploma in Design, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 1978

Awards: 2007, University Fellowship, Hong Kong Polytechnic University; 1997, Outstanding Alumni Award, Hong Kong Polytechnic University; 1995, 50 Most Beautiful People, *People Weekly*

Contributions: Vivienne Tam’s designs are known for combining Eastern and Western styles with traditional and modern fashion elements. Born in Guangzhou, Tam and her family fled the mainland after the 1949 Communist revolution, and moved to Hong Kong when she was 3-years-old. Growing up in the unique atmosphere of the then British colony of Hong Kong with its combination of Chinese and Western influences is said to have inspired Tam’s East-meets-West fashion sense. However, it was the more prosaic inspiration of watching her parents stitch and repair clothing as a child that first awakened her interest in fashion. After attending college to study fashion design in Hong Kong, Tam moved to New York. In 1983, Tam created her own company called East Wind Code Ltd to produce her designs.

Throughout the 1990s, Tam designed popular and provocative collections, often featuring religious symbols and Asian art. In 1995, Tam’s designs sparked controversy, with her “Mao” collection. The designs depicted the former Chinese Communist Party leader in unusual and humorous ways, such as with his hair in pigtails or with a bee on his nose. While alienating and offending her Chinese customers, Tam made waves in the US, as Americans lauded the provocative collection. In 1997, her “Buddha” collection excited similar interest and controversy. Such was the popularity and influence of her fashion designs though that several items from those collections are now featured in the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. In 1998, Tam designed a collection inspired by Chinese cosmology, “five elements of the universe.” Her 2001 collection, *Year of the Dragon*, featured images of dragons, in homage to her Asian heritage and inspirations.

In 2009, Tam introduced a new chic netbook she designed for the computer company, Hewlett Packard. The computer was featured as part of her Spring 2010 collection. The “digital clutch” is inspired by the traditional Chinese love story, “Butterfly Lovers.”

Vivienne Tam has made a special effort to press for the inclusion of Asians as runway models in displaying her collections; an important effort in an industry that is almost completely dominated by white models.

Tam's fans notably include such Hollywood celebrities such as Madonna, Julia Roberts, Goldie Hawn, and Britney Spears.

Philanthropy: Vivienne Tam has devoted her time and design talent to several charitable causes. In order to benefit the CFDA (Council for Fashion Designers of America) Foundation Initiative, Fashion Targets Breast Cancer, Tam designed a charm to be sold on the home shopping network, QVC. She also participated in a fundraiser called "Style and Sound" to benefit the same cause.

Tam has also demonstrated her commitment to social justice. In December 2009, one of her boutiques held an event where shoppers could purchase clothes with a portion of the proceeds benefiting Facing History for Ourselves. This organization's mission is to promote racial tolerance and to combat racism and prejudice. Tam also donated her designs for a fashion auction to benefit families affected by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Publications/Patents: 2000, *China Chic*, HarperCollins Publishers

External Links:

<http://www.infomat.com/whoswho/viennetam.html>

<http://www.answers.com/topic/vivienne-tam>

<http://www.fashionencyclopedia.com/Sp-To/Tam-Vivienne.html>

http://www.polyu.edu.hk/cpa/polyu/hotnews/details_e.php?news_id=1353