

KIMIKO



Photography CHAMIA

Taiwanese dance and fitness sensation KIMIKO imbues her abounding fans and followers with messages of body positivity and self-confidence.

*Interview by YUN CHIAN PENG
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Originating from Taiwan, KIMIKO, a choreography expert and active player in the entertainment industry, developed her KIMIKO body sculpting system to help women achieve their inner and outer confidence and beauty. She holds dance classes, collaborates with celebrities, has published three exercise and self-improvement books, and every year, she visits New York to further her training. To satisfy your curiosity, TWELV sat down with KIMIKO to discuss her inspirations, challenges, and passion for teaching.

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This Page: Jacket JUST CAVALLI, Top JILL STUART. Right Page: Coat JUST CAVALLI, Skirt SALLY LAPOINTE, Shirt JILL STUART, Shoes SAINT LAURENT from ALBRIGHT FASHION LIBRARY.



Jacket VICTORIA HAYES,
Top CHENG, Pants JOHNASTONE.



You visit New York City once a year— What makes it one of your favorite cities?

I like moving forward. The most exciting part of New York is that it always makes me keep doubting myself and makes me feel anxious. Even if I have a great job opportunity now, what's coming next could be jobs that I haven't tried before, or I could lose my job. It makes me feel that I'm not good enough, and it makes me want to be better and better. Like a blank sheet of paper, I am ready to start over at anytime. I always set goals for myself, but in New York, I keep forcing myself to do better than just "good." Most importantly, no matter how old I am, New York always gives me the courage to take a risk. New York is like a switch. Every time I enter the city, my breath, pace and thinking speeds up. Instead of someone pushing me, it's a motivation that makes me willing to do more, and at the same time keep moving forward.

KIMIKO

What's fashion to you, and what do you see as the relationship between fashion and dancing?

I have my own standard for fashion. Bold things aren't bad, but if it makes you feel reluctant, you may have to rethink it. My kind of fashion is trying to take a risk or trying something new, while still creating or designing in my comfort zone. Fashion is more than just outward appearance— it comes from your heart. People will never feel tired and reluctant if they are doing things they love.

All the major brands are telling people that your body and fashion is a combination. Of all sports, dancing uses the body the most, so I think dancing and fashion are inseparable. The influence that dancing and body gestures has on people will never disappear as long as fashion exists.

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You are always so energetic and in good health. Could you share your beauty secrets?

I drink a lot of water everyday. The only thing that I never touch is sweetened drinks. Otherwise, I won't limit myself. If a girl wants to be pretty, she must have a delighted and satisfied mood.

Do not stop traveling. Keep yourself in relationships, and don't force yourself to do things you don't like. For example, a lot of unexpected things will come to you, if you use your eyes and a smile to communicate with others, even if you aren't good at chatting. When you look at someone and smile, it brings luck to you. When you are facing anxiety, try to take a step back. It's not because you're scared. On the contrary, it is an effective and powerful way of dealing with upset feelings. This idea brings me a lot of good luck.

KIMIKO

What got you into dancing and teaching dance? What inspires you to teach?

New York was a turning point. When I came here after college, I just wanted to be a great dancer. But during that time, I found another side of myself—rather than being a great dancer— I wanted more for people to learn to dance and become more beautiful. That year I had a lot of desire. If I see someone who starts to love him or herself, both inside and out, I feel a great sense of accomplishment. And I never use the word “fix” in regard to my students. I think they just don't understand themselves that thoroughly. I listen to them first, let them talk about their disappointment about themselves, and then help them realize that they are pretty excellent. This is why I am here, to help them discover themselves.

Jacket VICTORIA HAYES,
Dress GEORGINE.





Top CHENG, *Pants*
JOHNSTONE.

me not to regret anything. And I'm lucky because as I work longer in my career, I have met many more professionals. Because of their preparation, I can turn my 150% of hard work into a 180% result. They are able to help me let go, be relaxed, and I am very thankful for their support.

KIMIKO

***I'D LIKE TO KNOW
WHAT KIND OF
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COLLABORATION
BETWEEN WESTERN
AND EASTERN
CULTURES.***

Is there anyone in particular you would like to collaborate with on a project?

I like working with anyone who has a creative mind, and I hope to have the opportunity to work with talent outside of Asia. In my opinion, everyone needs to find their own way of beauty. And I'd like to know what kind of chemistry can be created through collaboration between Western and Eastern cultures. My work has taken me many places— Paris, Japan, a round trip to Shanghai in one day and Beijing the next— and even just a phone call has taken me to places where I've never thought of going. I can fit into new places easily. Also, you can see a lot more culture and deeper experiences when you are on a business trip, rather than simply traveling. This is addicting to me!

How do you balance your work with other obligations in life?

I'm still trying to overcome this. Especially after becoming more well-known, there is basically no personal life, and this is a bigger challenge than my job. I used to think I had to do a very specific thing in order to for me to take a real "rest," but now I've learned to change the way I think. I won't set such a big goal for myself, because if you're working nonstop for three weeks, you won't be able to stand it, and you'll pity yourself.

If I know ahead of time that I don't have a day off, I'll take all my colleagues to a good restaurant to have anything we want, and make that our day off.

Knowing to change your mindset in every different moment and setting a small goal everyday to make yourself happy will help you become less emotional and less upset. Nobody is responsible for your negative emotions, so once you know how to please yourself, you can easily let go of a lot of things.

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NOBODY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR NEGATIVE EMOTIONS, SO ONCE YOU KNOW HOW TO PLEASE YOURSELF, YOU CAN EASILY LET GO OF A LOT OF THINGS.

What advice would you give to someone who was thinking of becoming a professional dancer?

I think that we should always be grateful. I know that professionals can easily consider themselves “geniuses,” and of course, if I did not have this idea, I don’t think I would have been able to face all the challenges that I do. But over the years, I am very grateful that so many people are still willing to help me even when I sometimes act arrogantly. At the same time, because I try to act grateful, there are still many people who are happy to help me whenever I am stuck. So, I think that you can believe yourself to be a genius, but always keep in mind that being a genius means you are helped by and protected by willing others. Even if you work hard, you still need to be grateful. You can’t take everything for granted.

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What are you focusing on now? What does the future hold?

Great question! I am currently preparing KIMIKO Studio, the Academy that I founded for international celebrity training. I hope that the KIMIKO workout system and KIMIKO dance can make a big difference for millions of Asian women, in terms of their bodies, minds, and appearances, and I hope they can be introduced to the rest of the world. These two systems of exercise can help you find your own unique beauty.

When I came to New York this time, I saw many American women with great bodies. But one thing that made me so happy was being asked by foreigners, “How can my body become like yours?” or “How can I have a smaller butt and beautiful legs?” And I realized that people in the Western world might not have the same conception of a perfect body as I had assumed—like big boobs and perky butts— and of course, some people may think







this way, and it's totally personal preference. This made me realize that my system might not only be suitable for Asian women, but for many body types.

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Jacket JUST CAVALLI. *Top* JILL STUART.
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