A Mask? Smmmokin!

By DAVID COLMAN

THE mysteries of love are so confusing that you can spend a lifetime unraveling them and still have a mess of string on your dying hands. Where does it come from? More important, where does it go? Is it any wonder that whole industries - psychotherapy, computer dating, opera - came along with the intent to parse (if only crudely) this most enthralling of subjects?

So who knows why, come wedding day, this man takes this woman while that man takes that man? The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing, said Pascal, and the heart has never been one to spill the beans.

Karen Park Goude, a Korean-American former fashion editor, he said, "I look at her face, and it fills me with pleasure."

And when asked to talk about one of his favorite objects, the first that came to mind was one of the inexpensive, machine-made, hand-painted masks he bought for the equivalent of a couple dollars in a gift shop on a visit to South Korea last year. "It's not as complicated as the Chinese masks, not as minimalist as the Japanese ones - it's Korean," he said, with characteristically sweeping generality. "It's about the features, which on these masks are as Korean as the African ones are African. It's a question of proportion."

Whether Koreans would agree is an open question. As for the mask, it can't hurt that it recalls Mr. Goude's heyday in the 1980's, when African and Asian influences ran riot through high fashion and art. And its cheery, slightly lunatic look recalls Mr. Goude's attitude that even the most serious things - like love, passion, art - can't be taken too seriously. They're far too important. 