

File This Under Creepy  
Tony Sarrecchia

You may not be paranoid if you think the mannequin in the store is watching you (unless, of course, you are wearing a tin-foil hat when you say it). A Japanese company has developed a mannequin that cannot only watch you, but also tell store's marketing department what it sees: Your sex, approximate age, and the brands of any bags that you are carrying. Additionally, this mannequin will strike a pose for the customer standing closest to it.

According to an article on tvnz.co.nz ("Robot Mannequins Strike a Pose," February 28, 2005, [http://tvnz.co.nz/view/news\\_technology\\_story\\_skin/476728%3Fformat=html](http://tvnz.co.nz/view/news_technology_story_skin/476728%3Fformat=html)), these robot mannequins use motion capture technology to mimic the poses of the worlds most beautiful women. The mannequin, a female code-named Palette, is faceless by design, but that doesn't stop her from observing her surroundings.

"Consumer attention would be diverted to the face if there were one," said Tatsuya Matsui, the designer. Palette's task, according to Matsui is to make "the product the mannequin wears look more attractive, increasing consumers' appetite to buy," and Matsui did not want a face to distract from Palette's job. Or perhaps, to hint that Palette really *is* watching you.

Two version of the mannequin are available; a whole body without legs or an upper torso for jewelry sales. Future designs plans include a Palette with legs and a child and male model.

While the cost of the mannequin has not been set, the company that manufactures Palette, Matsui's Flower Power and SGI Japan LTD., hope to price it as close as possible to regular, non-invasive mannequins.

Tin foil sold separately.

###

Originally published in the *After Dark Newsletter*, April 2005.