

DESIGNING YOUR DREAM GOWN

By Elsie van Zyl – LC Couture

Elsie van Zyl studied at Joline's Fashion Academy in 1986 and has been in the clothing industry for almost a decade. She believes that the wedding dress should be designed for the individual, be creative and most of all, it should be comfortable and fit perfectly.

Silk, tulle, satin and lace – mere yards of fabric to some, but to every bride these materials are at the heart of a romantic dream – her wedding dress. The enduring beauty of the wedding dress lies beyond its brilliance of design, sumptuous fabric or delicacy of construction; the wedding gown's magic rests in its distinction as a symbol of romance throughout the ages.

In the context of pure fashion, the wedding dress is a representation of the highest standards of the couturier; a hand-sewn, made to measure gown designed according to the classic principle that a dress should enhance the true beauty of the wearer's body. Wearing a made to measure wedding gown provides the bride with an opportunity that is rare in the modern world – indulging in a garment made according to strict standards of design and workmanship, and experiencing the service of the bygone era.

Choosing the right wedding gown is an intensely emotional, personal and sentimental transaction. The right gown is one with which the bride feels an emotional connection; it makes her look and feel beautiful, it sets her apart from all other brides, it incorporates all of her bridal fantasies and it satisfies a profound need to dress appropriately for an event of great personal significance. It seems almost impossible that several yards of satin, tulle and lace could fulfil such tremendous expectations!

For many brides, the most difficult part of selecting the right gown may be making a decision when so many choices abound – it may seem impossible to settle on just one gown. The diversity of choice should not be overwhelming; rather, it should be empowering. Given enough time and imagination, anything is possible. Remember that style need not be a function of finances; good taste is not dictated by money, but is a manifestation of smart choices.

The key to making the right choices is starting with the right focus. Fabric and silhouette are key elements; the cleverness of the cut and the drape ability of firmness of the fabric can either transform or conceal. The wedding dresses should flatter a bride's best features, emphasising a good figure or creating a better shape. The best gown flatters but never overpowers the bride; the gown should make the bride look beautiful without distracting from her radiance. The dress should become the woman ... not overcome her. The perfect dress enhances the bride's own beauty so that all attention is centred on her, and her dress is just part of her overall loveliness.

The right wedding gown should look absolutely fabulous, be well made and fit perfectly. It should feel entirely comfortable, reflect the bride's own style and meld smartly with the wedding festivities. The right choice is one that works for you and brings all the different elements of your wedding day together. The bride is the central figure on this day, everything around her is the frame that sets her off and enhances her. As the focal point in this picture, she must be at her loveliest.

And after months of strategic planning, the carefully orchestrated fittings, the drama only lasts a lifetime. Ultimately, each wedding dress takes its place in history as a testament to the enduring history of the human heart.