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Daily Archives: November 1, 2013

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Posted: Roxy

Categories: Haute Couture, Preferred Vendor of the Month

Preferred Vendor of the Month: Jeannie Galioto of Leo Duo



Have you ever dreamed of having a one of a kind wedding gown designed and hand crafted just for you? Our Preferred Vendor for the month of November is Jeannie Galioto. To be sure, a master craftsman in her field, Jeannie is a wonderfully talented couture designer and the person to turn your dream into a reality. Join us now as we learn more about Jeannie and how she creates one of a kind bridal couture.

With two decades of experience in costuming for theatre, film, and television under her belt, as well as a Master's degree in Costume Design from San Diego State, she has assisted award winning costume designers such as Paul Tazewell and Ruth Carter. Her teaching credits include SDSU, University of

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San Diego, University of California Irvine, and the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising. In addition to her designing prowess, Jeannie also has special training in the art of hat making known as **millinery**, and has created memorable headpieces for the Broadway stage as well as private clients. Currently, along with her long-time colleague and collaborator, Jennifer Brawn Gittings, she designs under the label Leo Duo.



To start, tell me a bit about yourself and your work. I understand you've been in costume design for twenty years and received your MFA in Costume Design to boot. What made you want to be in clothing design?

In kindergarten in Wisconsin, I told my mom that I wanted to be a designer in southern CA. For some reason, that was all I ever wanted to do. My Mom was very crafty and made her own clothing. I was especially interested in fine arts but figured that clothing design would be a way to be artistic and employable. My undergrad is in fashion design. I had to put on a senior show to graduate and my boss saw my show and suggested I move into theatrical design since my designs were pretty imaginative. I was designing the stripe patterns for polo shirts at the time and was, as you can imagine, not inspired by the job... I pulled out the yellow pages (yes, it was that long ago) and called every theater in Minneapolis where I was living and convinced some theaters to let me design some of their productions. I was hooked, each production I learn so much about the time period, place, the characters being portrayed, etc. Each look was unique.

Have you received any special awards for your work?

Yes! Several years ago I received the Patte award for Best Costume Design and In Minneapolis I was awarded Best Emerging Female Artist. I was also asked last year at this time to speak at the Costume Colloquium in Florence, Italy.

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You are obviously a very talented designer and artist. With your extensive expertise, what type of custom work could you potentially create for a bride looking for a custom piece for her special day?

I can create anything that a bride can dream up, recreating a look that may be reminiscent of a period wedding dress to something completely unique and fun.

Aside from the allure of a unique wedding piece, why else should a bride consider a custom couture creation?

When I work with clients, I get to know them, their taste, what they like and I also use my trained eye to design something that will flatter their figure whether they are a size 2 or a 22.

For our brides looking for a custom gown, would you be able to give us an idea of how that process might play out for the bride, and perhaps a range of how much such a service could cost?

The process is the bride should have some idea of styles that she is drawn to so that we have a starting point. Some of the basic decisions like sleeve length, dress length, etc. I have worked with people that didn't have any preconceived idea. It's helpful to look through photos together to choose elements to incorporate into the dress or even just a feel (i.e. sophisticated, fun, flirty, etc.) The range for a custom dress really varies.



Can you share a bit of what goes on behind the scenes to build a wedding dress? How many hours would you say a bridal gown might involve from sketch to final fittings?

There is an initial phone consultation where we talk about styles and then I assign the bride to find images of different dresses that she likes, the sleeve of one, the neckline of another and so forth. We meet and look through what she has found, I bring my sketchbook and pencil and I start sketching her dream dress. I take measurements and we talk about fabrics. What colors, what types, ([e.g.] satin, lace, etc.). I go home and do a final sketch and get some fabric swatches to show at our next



meeting. Once the design is approved by the bride, I buy the fabric and starting making the dress. There will be several fittings to be sure it fits perfect and to make sure that no changes are desired by the bride. Hard to pin down how many hours.... 4-5 hours sketching, 5 hours swatching fabrics, each fitting is an hour and building depends on elaborateness of the gown but a minimum is about 80 hours...

I understand you have special training in millinery. Might a custom couture bridal headpiece be a more economical option for the bride on a budget?

More economical [than] a dress, most definitely! If you cannot afford a custom gown, a headpiece is a great way to have something completely special and unique that was created just for you.



Would you mind sharing a bit of the process of how you make your headpieces?

When I am designing for a client, I always start out showing them photos and having them show me things they are drawn to so I can figure out what their aesthetic is. We look at fabric swatches and colors. I do several sketches and talk it through with the client. I then do a final sketch and start making the custom piece after the client approves the sketch. I have a fitting before the design is completed so that any changes are easier to facilitate.



Where do you get your inspiration for your designs?

Everywhere! I have tons of books, I subscribe to many magazines, I travel as much as I can, film, people watching, you name it...

What might set Leo Duo apart from other options brides might have for custom work?

We both have worked with all body types and age ranges and are extremely creative. We really get that it's the brides day and she has to look her best and this dress is a part of making that day the most special it can be! I am actually working right now on a wedding gown that is vintage and I am taking the entire dress apart and redoing it. The bride fell in love with the neckline and the fabric but it was too large and much too long. We can really be creative and think outside the box in order to accommodate anything a bride wants.

What is your favorite part of being a clothing designer?



Seeing people so happy and feeling wonderful wearing something I created for them!

Do you have any one favorite show you've costumed?

No, each thing I do is a fun and interesting project. That's why I love what I do, Never a dull moment and each day is so different from the last.

If you weren't a professional clothing designer, what would you be doing instead?

I always say my secondary career is a therapist because I learn so much about people as I am working with them. They tell me their problems and their body issues and I help to camouflage and make them feel great about themselves!

To indulge our romantic side and since we are writing for brides to be, could you share with us your favorite quote, poem, or song on the subject of love?

"Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead." - Oscar Wilde

Also, I simply must know... what did you make out of that beautiful lavender silk fabric you shared on your [Musings blog](#) on leoduo.com?

Ha! That is still top secret, it's for an elaborate costume for one of our private clients for 2014...



Jeannie can be reached at [LeoDuo.com](#) or [JeannieGalioto.com](#).

This is a guest post by freelance writer and blogger, [Katy Reiber](#). Katy studied English and Comparative Literature at California State University Fullerton and occasionally consults on social media for wedding vendors in the San Diego area. You can find more of Katy's work on the subject of food and frugality @ [ourcamcoveredlife.com](#)

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