

BRIDAL DESIGNER TO THE STARS

Monique Lhuillier
TALKS COUTURE

Words by Vanessa Pascale

These days, the name **Monique Lhuillier** has become synonymous with the bridal world and haute couture. But it wasn't too long ago that Monique was trying to make a name for herself. "I remember visiting stores when I started out. They would be

like, 'What's the name of your line?' I'd be like, 'Monique Lhuillier.' And they'd say, 'That Monique girl.' They could never say it. Three and half years later they're like, 'Do you carry Monique Lhuillier in the store?' When they started saying it right I was like, *we've come so far! Now they know how to say the name,*" Monique says elatedly.

Monique Lhuillier's story plays out very much like a fairy tale. The petite brunette was born in the Philippines, where she lived till she was 15-years-old. From there she went on to boarding school in Switzerland for two years, then to Los Angeles, where she studied at the **Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (FIDM)**. "I never left. I met my husband and got married right after college. This is home for me now. I've been here longer than I've ever lived anywhere," Monique says of Los Angeles. Monique's pursuit for the perfect wedding gown for herself was what sparked her affinity for the bridal industry. And in the fall of 1996, Monique started her first bridal collection.

Those from far and wide call upon Monique to create for them an elegant design that will awe onlookers —*especially* when it comes to their wedding. "It's so flattering when people come to me for one of their most important days of their life —that is the biggest compliment somebody can pay me. I keep telling my husband we're going to renew our vows after 15 years and I'm going to wear me. And he said, "No, how much is that going to cost!?" Monique says with a laugh. "It'll happen," Monique assures.

Her alluring collections have lured in many, many celebrities including this month's cover girl, **Alicia Silverstone**. "My sweet

friend, **Alex Keeling Thompson**, had looked around for me and thought I'd love Monique Lhuillier, which I did. Monique was so nice and so amazing. Her dresses were my favorite," recalls Alicia. "I tried on just 2 dresses and loved them both. The sash went so perfectly with the dress I chose. I love green. My wedding was very natural... and the sash just went along with that vibe." Monique fondly recounts the dress Alicia wore. "She kept it very simple and timeless. Her gown was a silk white strapless satin gown. I thought she looked beautiful —she was beaming and in love."

Designing for high-society and stars has become the norm for Monique, but she continues to experience *those* moments. "There are moments when I'm like, 'Wow, we've reached so many people.' Oh gosh, there are so many moments," Monique gushes. Her first ***I made it*** moment was "the same year I did four dresses for the **Emmys**, and a week later **Britney Spears** got married. I did her dress, and it was all over ***People*** magazine and all the magazines had it. My phones didn't stop ringing." Coming out with her own china line and opening a flagship store on **Melrose Place** were a couple more significant moments.

Creating such captivating pieces is a gift and like all true artists, her talent is inherent. "When you love what you do, it's woven into your life, you're constantly thinking of it," explains Monique. Inspiration for her next line or a new gown is found all around. "Every season I'm influenced by something different —a house, a great art piece, a painting, or old movie. They all inspire me. I'm so fortunate to be able to travel, so I'm exposed to a lot of different things that spark an idea..." Monique has been very successful in her line of work, and feels that this is due to "being a woman designing for a woman, and being young and feeling like I can relate to them. I know what they want to feel like that day. I really put myself in their shoes."

"PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO KNOW THAT I STILL DESIGN EVERY COLLECTION. PEOPLE ALWAYS THINK THAT WHEN YOU HAVE A COMPANY WITH THAT MANY PIECES IN THE COLLECTION THAT THERE ARE SO MANY ASSISTANTS DOING ALL THE WORK. BUT I'M STILL VERY INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS. IN ADDITION TO DOING THREE BRIDAL COLLECTIONS A YEAR, I DO FOUR READY-TO-WEAR COLLECTIONS, CHINA DESIGN, STATIONARY DESIGN, AND BRIDESMAID DESIGN."

With the **Golden Globes** approaching, I had to ask if she was designing for any of the attendees. "I can't talk about it, but yes, we've started that process already. Usually the magic happens the week before or even night before. No matter how much I prepare now, two days before things can change." Having designed for an astounding number of affluent clients, is there anyone that she'd like to design for that she hasn't yet? "I've been so fortunate to work with so many people that it doesn't come to mind so easily," she pauses. "You know who I haven't worked with? **Gwyneth Paltrow** I haven't had the honor of working with her yet." **ML**

DESIGNS FROM MONIQUE LHUILLIER
BRIDAL FALL 2010



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WHAT IS SIGNATURE
MONIQUE LHUILLIER?
"THE WAY I BUSTLE MY SKIRTS
AND GOWNS, THE
CONTRASTING WAISTBAND,
DIFFERENT SASHES, THE WAY I
FIT LACE CLOSE TO THE BODY,
THE LITTLE EMBROIDERY ON
MY CORSETS. I TRY TO PUSH
THE LIMIT A LITTLE BIT AND
BRING NEWNESS TO THE
BRIDAL INDUSTRY --THAT'S MY
CHALLENGE EVERY SEASON."

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BRIDAL FALL 2010



"IT'S ALL ABOUT FANCY AND OVER-THE-TOP SPECIAL. ALL THE PIECES IN THE COLLECTION WERE OVER THE TOP. EVERYTHING WAS REWORKED. IT WAS ABOUT THE DETAILS BEING REALLY INTERESTING. I DID ORGANZA FLOWERS OR FRAYED EDGES OR CLUSTERS OF BEADING. THIS IS THE TIME, THIS IS YOUR DAY, YOU'RE GOING TO PULL OUT ALL THE STOPS. I WAS VERY HAPPY WITH IT AND IT WAS VERY WELL RECEIVED." – MONIQUE LHUILLIER

DESIGNS FROM MONIQUE LHUILLIER
RTW SPRING 2010



HOW WOULD YOU
DESCRIBE YOUR
COLLECTIONS?
"ALWAYS ELEGANT,
FEMININE AND
MODERN WITH
A TWIST."
- MONIQUE LHUILLIER

DESIGNS FROM MONIQUE LHUILLIER
RTW SPRING 2010

