



FEATURE

Juliette Hogan Bridal

Juliette Hogan's new bridal showroom is heavenly. So says the designer herself, and her assessment couldn't be more accurate.

Imagined by Juliette, ticked off by her architect friend Nat Cheshire, and with a fit-out managed by interior designer Pip Maxwell, this is one divine oasis. A romantic dried installation by Muck Floral ushers you inside to where the light is otherworldly and real time slips away. Gauzy white curtains cascade from the ceiling; plush Armadillo & Co rugs warm the timber floorboards; fittings and furniture by Douglas & Bec, Simon James, Città, BoConcept and Mark Antonia form the loveliest bones; and photography by Olivia Kirkpatrick graces the wall. The icing on this celestial confection is Miann, a dessert restaurant on the floor below, the sweetest of spots for a post-consultation debrief and petit gateaux.

"I got to play dress-ups without having to worry about a toddler," says Juliette (mother to daughter Myra, with husband Dion Christie) of creating her wonder emporium in Morningside, Auckland, the latest step in a

bridal-design journey that began a few years ago. She'd been dabbling for a while, making wedding dresses for friends and bridesmaids, but pretty much kept it on the downlow until 2016, when she launched her first official collection. The workroom above her Ponsonby store became her bridal space, but when the store was relocated up the road in August, the team seized the opportunity to take things to the next level.

Of course, this sublime showroom is just one element of Juliette Hogan Bridal; the designer's creativity has been reignited. "With the main line, I have to be quite considered about end use and end cost – can you wear a bra with it, does it cover the arms, are you going to be able to wear it more than a couple of times? Whereas with bridal, there's so much more scope for design. It's been wonderful to be able to work on garments where you're creating something that generates such love."

Yes, love. It'd surely be impossible for brides-to-be not to fall hopelessly in love at first sight, so exquisite are the creations these racks are rocking. The latest range, which can

also be viewed online, includes popular pieces from previous releases (including bridesmaid dresses), plus 15 glorious new styles and five chic new separates. Fresh collections will be launched annually in April.

Available at high and low price points, the looks are entirely accessible, and can be customised as you wish, mixing and matching fabrications, bodices and skirts. For Juliette, it's all about authenticity. "There's no set formula," she says. "It's more, 'Let's see what you like and how we can make it work to ensure the dress is something that really resonates with you.'"

Juliette designs organically, with no set theme in mind. "I collect the fabrics, then let them dictate what they're going to be made into," she says. "We've been working with agents from Italy, India and Australia to bring in beautiful, beautiful fabrics, and had a silk created for us that has the most incredible drape to it."

"My design is very pared back and minimal," she continues. "I'm not about the bells and whistles – it's more about the fabric and





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silhouette and allowing people to explore their own personality. My absolute dream is that when women walk down aisles in my dresses, people will say, ‘That’s them to a T’. I don’t want any confusion – it’s about enhancing them and making them feel wonderful.”

Juliette intends to make herself available throughout 2019 to create four 100% bespoke gowns in consultation with four lucky ladies. But for now, if she tried to meet every bride, she wouldn’t get anything else done, so the consultation process is guided by her “phenomenal” specialist bridal consultant, Olivia Brown. Olivia manages all the appointments and the creation of every garment, including the cutting of the fabric in the workroom. Each piece is crafted locally and sewn by “amazing” machinist Lily Li, with as many fittings as is necessary to ensure a like-a-glove result.

“It’s a tailored experience here and very hands-on,” says Juliette. “It feels like a nurturing space – like you’re being taken care

of.” In fact, Olivia also spends a great deal of time advising brides on what accessories they should wear, flowers they should carry and much more besides. “She’s basically become a personal stylist because people have such a warm relationship with her,” says Juliette.

Speaking of accessories – in the showroom, jewellery by Meadowlark glints in a glass case, and a trio of new veils Juliette has dreamed up are a similarly enticing sight. “I just think they’re so cool,” she says. “Our dresses are classic and clean-lined and simple – and then you put on a veil, and suddenly you’re a bride.”

Brides’ mothers are in expert hands, too. “We have a library of beautiful fabrics we can roll out for special occasions,” says Juliette. “If there’s a style or shape you love from our retail stores, we’re happy to make you something in a slightly elevated fabrication. We had a mother of the bride recently who wore my wedding dress, but in black sequins.”

Juliette and Dion’s own celebration last year was typically true to her aesthetic. She

wore a long-sleeved sequinned shift. “There wasn’t anything groundbreaking about the silhouette, but it was the most amazing dress and totally ‘me,’” she says.

“I didn’t want to be restricted by what I was wearing or for anybody to think I wasn’t being myself, yet I also wanted it to stand out. I hope that’s how our designs translate for our customers as well, and they get to express who they are. I love dresses that people look themselves in – like they’re not trying too hard.”

Recalling a favourite quote by British designer Vivienne Westwood, Juliette says, “‘I’m not terribly interested in beauty. What touches me is someone who understands herself.’ That sums up what I love about our brides: they know what they’re after.”

When designing, I think about how cool the dress would look on somebody, how it would make them feel and how it would showcase them as a person. They should shine – that’s the most important thing.” juliettechogan.com



Photography—A mix by Guy Combes, Shadowlands and Karen Ishiguru

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