



Kerstin Kallin



the crown bride

Swedish artist Kerstin Kallin's custom bridal jewellery is crafted with skill and precision, embodying the vision of each bride-to-be. Lauren Nielsen explores the intricacies of this unique designer.

Swedish artist Kerstin Kallin specializes in custom bridal jewellery, working with each bride-to-be in order to make a piece that is perfect for her special day. Kerstin worked as a music and Swedish teacher for eleven years before branching out in August 2013 to devote her time to her jewellery making business, Kronbruden (The Crownbride). Her love of teaching remains, though, and her beading classes continue to be an important part of her life.

Growing up in a small village in the countryside of northern Sweden, Kerstin developed her sense of creativity through drawing and making all sorts of crafts. Now, Kerstin lives with her husband and two small children in Stockholm where she runs her business, teaches beading classes, attends workshops, and spends ample time with her family.

Working out of her home, Kerstin's art spreads all across her apartment.

"I solder and do metal clay in the kitchen, bead and do wirework on the living room sofa, photograph pieces in the living room, and edit and make tutorials in the small office," she tells us. "I'm simply a creative mess. Fortunately, I have a very understanding husband and my children are easily bribed with a bead or two!" she exclaims.

Crowns, tiaras, diadems and more

Creating bridal jewellery, Kerstin primarily uses wirework for her pieces, especially in her signature bridal crowns. When she first began making her crowns, Kerstin used metal wire to craft her pieces. Because of this, working with wire is where Kerstin feels most "at home" in her jewellery making. "I have two favourite materials: the soft aluminium wire is wonderful to shape into soft curves, and silver has such a pretty shine, is available in all kinds of shapes, and is able to be soldered," says Kerstin.

However, since first starting up, Kerstin has ventured into working with different materials and trying other techniques for her pieces. "I am more and more intrigued by bead embroidery, silver-smithing, and incorporating beading into my metalwork." She continues, "I love to

explore different techniques to help me realize the vision I had in mind for the particular piece in my head."

As most of her pieces are designed for brides, Kerstin constantly collaborates with brides-to-be to gain insight into what they envision for their special day. "It is challenging and so much fun to try to make the perfect piece of jewellery for a certain person," Kerstin adds.

Working with the brides-to-be on their pieces leads to Kerstin's favourite part of her job: "I am most proud when I have created a piece of jewellery for a particular person and the bride sends me a beautiful picture from the wedding day and a happy review."

All of Kerstin's jewellery are finished pieces. She often uses Swarovski beads, seed beads, and fresh water pearls in her work and for her non-bridal pieces she usually combines beads with sterling silver or gold and leather. Her pieces of hair jewellery are made with aluminium wire, artistic wire, copper, brass, bronze and sterling silver. When she is not creating jewellery, Kerstin also creates patterns for jewellery pieces.

Plethora of inspiration

As can be seen in nearly all of her pieces, nature is the top inspiration for Kerstin's jewellery. "My crowns, tiaras, and circlets are named after plants, and their shapes are often

continued over ►



"Eternell" was selected as a finalist in Fire Mountain Gems and Beads' 2013 Contest.

"Valborg" was made
to look like the fire on
Walspurgis night. It was
awarded first prize at
Facett STHLM 2012.





"North Star" is made with bead embroidery mounted on a metal base.

organic with soft curves," she explains. For example, the bridal crown Sälge means Willow, the crown named Dvärgbjörk means Dwarf Birch, and Skogslönn means Maple Wood.

Further inspirations include historic pictures of royalty and myths. These are particularly important for inspiration because the crowns and other hair pieces fit well with the medieval and renaissance times as well as in mythical and fantastical stories.

Contests with themes or limitations also allow for Kerstin to expand her ways of creative thinking in new and different ways. "I love the challenges at the big Swedish beading fairs!" she exclaims. "I sometimes participate in international beading contests as well, like Battle of the Beadsmith or Fire Mountain Gems contests. A deadline

"Kamelia" won the "Weddings we Remember" contest on PUSS 2013 in Stockholm.

can be good to get me going," she remarks.

Right now, Kerstin is excitedly working on her first piece designed for a man. She is creating a low and wide crown in brass with oak leaves for a man who works with medieval tournaments during the summertime.

Learning and teaching

While Kerstin is constantly creating new and unique pieces, she has never received formal training in wirework—it is all self-taught. She has learned a plethora of beading techniques from workshops at big bead gatherings in Sweden such as Facett STHLM, PUSS, Bead Lovers Meet, and Pärla GBG.

Furthermore, Kerstin has taken a few short classes in lamp work and silver clay, along with extensive classes on silver-smithing. "I love taking classes and I certainly hope to continue to learn more in the future," she adds. Some

techniques she hopes to learn in the future are enamelling and master silver-smithing.

The love she holds for learning accompanies Kerstin's love for teaching. Being a teacher for the past eleven years, it seems

natural that Kerstin would want to share her love of beading and jewellery with others. She does so through classes she organizes herself as well as some offered at Medborgarskolan, a school that offers classes in all sorts of crafts, music, and language.

"My classes so far are in different beading techniques and beaded designs. I haven't had many classes on how to make crowns and tiaras. Maybe I will rethink it in the future, but for now, the beading classes are enough," Kerstin shares.

Kerstin's biggest challenge was leaving the security of her full time teaching job and venturing out to run her business full-time. While she is still figuring out how to balance her roles as mother, artist, and businesswoman, Kerstin continues to focus on her beading work: "My main focus is to keep the joy of beading and designing. A happy heart and curiosity are my keys to being a successful artist."

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Visit Kerstin's website
www.thecrownbride.com

