

Luly Yang Design: Better than the Dream.

Judith van Praag

One late afternoon in October, rushing passed retail display windows on Seattle's downtown Fourth Avenue, something—a vision, or was it an apparition—made me stop and turn around to check. Did I really see a ballerina posing in tutu?

Suggestion is the power of the designer. Behind the windowpane—branded with Luly Yang's logo—stood an antique French chair, its muscular legs suggesting the ballerina's calves, the upholstered seat partially covered by a pile of tulle. That "ballerina" chaperoned by a mannequin—dressed to kill—in a sequined and beaded sheath, silently extended an invitation: "Come on inside, this is where you'll find your gown for the gala."

Windows flanking the door to Luly's Studio*Boutique showed delightful one of a kind evening purses, displayed on gorgeous "Out of Asia" fabrics. Definitely a place to return to on a less hectic day. And that I did.

Luly Yang's Studio*Boutique is a dream come true; for the betrothed the couturiere was four years ago, and for present and future brides to be.

Once you've entered the front door you feel enveloped by feminine elegance. You know it right away, you're in a lady's boudoir, the back room where wishes are whispered and fantasies come true.

Luly's signature is visible in everything, from the interior design of her new Studio*Boutique, to the custom made satin pumps matching a gown reminiscent of 1940s Hollywood luxury.

Yardage used for curtains which separate the boutique from the fitting room and designer's studio, are so pretty I could well imagine some smart client asking the designer to make her "a Scarlett O'Hara", using the boutique's drapes for a stunning outfit.

Luly Yang's family arrived in Seattle from Taiwan in 1978.

Back home her grandfather had been an innovating architect, combining Asian tradition with European style. Her mother is a print artist and an accomplished calligrapher.

From early on Luly was interested in fashion. When she opened her fashion studio four years ago, some clients said, "I remember you from when you were in fifth grade. You were that girl who was always drawing, already designing outfits!"

But there was no fashion department at the University of Washington and since Luly wanted to stay close to her family, her father, an engineer, pointed out that studying graphic design might satisfy her creative drive. And for a while it did, but she has come home to her old passion. Her medium of today is soft, as she went from two- to three-dimensional design.

Her experience as a corporate retail designer –"branding" or creating personality for clients– serves her well in her present business. For Luly Yang knows how to make her clients look good. The moment you enter her universe, she scans your person for strong points, for –sometimes hidden– beauty, which she knows to draw out, to emphasize. She respects her clients' thoughts and ideas, but likes to drape fabric, in order to show what would make them look especially beautiful. And who wouldn't like to be indulged that way?

"People in Seattle are all wrapped up, they could show more skin," Luly said, "But it's too cold," she added with slight disappointment in her voice.

When I suggested fur, she nodded "I've got fur." And yes she does, pink fur with perforated patterns that make it look like lace. Hardly warm enough, but if you like, she'll make you a wrap.

Luly's got it all, and if she doesn't have what you want at hand, I'm sure she'll create something on the spot, draping and molding gorgeous fabrics on your body; a perfectly shaped gown, just for you. Each piece with Luly's label is executed with the utmost care. Her team exists of the best, which is clear from the execution. You won't find sloppy seams or wayward hems on Luly's creations.

Just like her grandfather did in architecture, Luly combines influences of different cultures, delivering lovely surprises. You'll find floor length gowns, ensembles in any length and bustiers –reminiscent of period costume bodices– to combine with either skirts or chic lace trousers. She also commissions (and carries dresses by) other designers and breath taking custom jewelry.

Luly's Studio*Boutique opened on the 4th Avenue Street level of The Fairmont Olympic Hotel building this summer. Before, the designer says she felt she was an artist with a studio. Now she has a gallery, a visible outlet for her creations. And what good fortune not to have to drive out of town for this "outlet".

As a matter of fact, out-of-towners could stay at the wonderful hotel, wine and dine, enjoy a visit to the luxurious Jeremy Todd Wellness Spa & Salon, and have a consultation with Luly Yang, all within the same building or city block.

If my husband and I ever decide to renew our vows, I'll want Luly to design that skin baring number I could see in her eyes during the interview. And yes, I'll dream of the whole shebang: Haute Couture, Grand Hotel, Wellness Spa, Chocolati's bonbons on our pillows.

Voted Best Local Dress Designer by Seattle Bride Magazine,

Luly's motto, "Sometimes Life is Better than the Dream," should send all ladies over to her Studio*Boutique, 1218 Fourth Avenue, (206)623-8200.

If you are planning "your big event," make sure to mark your calendar for the Seattle Wedding Show at Washington State Convention Center, Saturday January 8 from 10:30 A.M.-5:30 P.M. and Sunday January 9 from 11:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M. For more information www.weddingshow.com and www.lulydesign.com.

Previously published on 12/1/2004 in the International Examiner.
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