



ELENI KYRIACOU: Northern Lights Siren

London based Cypriot designer will showcase her new Spring/Summer collection at Paris Fashion Week this autumn

Womenswear fashion and textiles designer Eleni Kyriacou caught the fashion industry's eye back in October 2011 with her headline-grabbing debut collection made from silk, metallic and foiled leather.



That was followed by an ethereal bridal collection in 2012 presented at Athens Xclusive Designers Week for Spring/Summer 2013. Two years down the line, and with internships at the late Alexander McQueen and Emilio de la Morena under her belt, she's created the first ever collection to be showcased at Paris Fashion Week, "The Northern Lights Siren" inspired by aurora borealis light imagery.

al stockists to see her work and Eleni is naturally "very excited" about finally presenting her work to a global fashion audience.

"This is the first time, I will also potentially gain even more press coverage and make new contacts. I'm sure I will gain a lot from the whole experience," said Eleni just before Fashion Week.

The idea behind her label has always been to explore exciting concepts and translate them into fashion.

"I want women to wear my line as they find it intelligently designed but also wearable and flattering too. There is an emphasis on conceptual design and innovative use of textiles and form."

Most of her clothes are inspired by nature and landscape formations, something which stems from the fact that she initially studied a BSc in Architecture at The Bartlett, UCL.

Then followed studies in Textile Design at Central Saint Martin's before she moved to Greece for three years to work for Anamorphosis architects and then as design director for an interior textile company.

However, it was not long before she would move back to London to pursue her career in fashion.

"I've been creative all my life. My design training was in architecture and this gave me the solid foundation I needed to pursue any design route. But my favoured medium has always been textiles."

Having worked in textiles and fashion for many years now, she says she still loves architecture and interior design and is influenced by them.

In fact, each season, she looks for inspiration mostly from interests outside of the fashion world, such as archaeology. "Other times it may come from reading, watching documentaries or listening to music, like listening to a song about the northern lights: which is the idea behind the new collection. I looked at videos and photog-



raphy of the light phenomenon and that is what inspired the collection."

Based in London, Eleni admits the city also influences her as a designer, as she is immersed in "an ethnically diverse and culturally rich city, with an endless source of places to explore and things to see and do".

"Having lived in London all my life, I have been exposed to great art and design, which I see not just in museums and galleries but in the city all around me."

Eleni currently has a studio in the UK and a showroom in Greece, where her sampling and production team is also located and admits she is "keen to acquire a stockist in Cyprus, although the retail sector is currently facing a challenging time, as in Greece too".

She defines the Eleni Kyriacou girl as someone who "likes something a little edgy, but still refined, wearable and flattering. She wants to stand out tastefully and strikingly yet modestly. She loves conceptual design and the fabrics and details have to be splendid."

In fact, the media have repeatedly used the word 'refined' when describing her work. Marie-Claire France recently described her work as "structured whilst maintaining fluidity".

Her most dominant influences from the fashion world include "Hussein Chalayan and Issey Miyake because I think they're geniuses. But I love the talent of many others like Jean-Paul Gaultier. I'm influenced by a lot of art and design from all periods."

But what has ultimately shaped the designer she has become are her apprenticeships at Alexander McQueen and at Emilio de la Morena which she termed as defining moments in her life.

"My experience at Emilio de la Morena was a turning point for me as it was the first time I ever worked in fashion and was immediately convinced that I would remain a fashion designer for the rest of my life."

"Working for the late Alexander McQueen has also greatly influenced me. I found the atelier a very positive and inspiring environment. It was very visually prolific and you felt immersed in the collections when you entered the studios. I have emulated that

in the way I work. My experience there also gave me the confidence to launch my own label."

And while she explains that it's impossible to choose her favourite piece designed to date, she confesses that from her new collection, she loves the dress used on the Paris Fashion Week invitation, a two-tone dark blue and neon yellow-green dress.

Apart from fashion week she revealed that she "may be collaborating with a filmmaker to design costumes".

As for the future, Eleni aims to stay in the fashion industry for many years to come. "I really just want to keep doing what I'm doing and more than anything else I want women to wear my clothes. I'm open to all opportunities as a designer and I'm ready to expand."

The collection will be presented at Zip Zone Paris fashion tradeshow during Paris Fashion Week at the Museum of Decorative Arts from September 27 to September 30. For more information about the designer visit www.elenikyriacou.com



Chapel walls backdrop

The photoshoot for the new Spring/Summer 2014 collection took place in Aegina, Greece, at the small chapel of Ayios Dimitrios.

"We used the white walls of the church as the backdrop to photograph the looks as well as the amazing view. I wanted a lot of clear sky and view to emulate the heavenly feeling of the northern lights in northern countries, where the dresses replace the northern lights against the view's backdrop," said the designer.

The new collection is inspired by the stunning phenomenon of the aurora borealis. The visual material used comprise of videos and photography of the natural light display. The collection seeks to emulate the sense of veiled, sinuous, drifting movement through the use of a dazzling colour palette directly inspired by aurora borealis imagery.

The light displays consist of misty blocks of light, swirls, rings, streaks, layered and juxtaposing areas of vary-

ing shape and coloured light, including lime and neon yellow-greens, magenta reds, pinks, deep blues, aqua blues and cream.

This is translated into light fabrics that amplify movement: opaque silk cotton satins, transparent chiffons and fluorescent georgette. The theme is echoed by collaging fabrics, and also layering them to create two-tone effects and fluorescent highlights as the neon yellow georgette is revealed as one colour flutters over the next in movement creating a sense of fluidity.

The silhouettes are loose fitted and layered to create movement with detailing to create the highlights and climaxes in colour and texture as is seen in the northern lights. Rubber trimmings have been used to create a textural contrast to the floating fabrics. The plastic's translucent quality creates a highlight against the skin or fabric as it is used over neckline, shoulderline and backline.