

SPECIAL EDITION APRIL 11, 2023

WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.

New York Luxury Bridal Fashion Week returns Tuesday with a full schedule of new collection runway shows, presentations and appointments through Thursday. Here, WWD kicks off the season with a preview of some of the most directional gowns of the week ahead, where volume and drama play a big role. *For more, see pages 22 to 31.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY RUO BING LI

Runway Bride





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A photograph of a stone wall and a glass door with a blue fabric in the foreground. The stone wall is made of large, light-colored rectangular blocks. To the right, there is a glass door with a semi-circular window above it. The door is white and has multiple panes. In the foreground, there is a blue fabric with a white floral pattern, draped over a wooden surface. The overall scene is bright and airy, suggesting a spring setting.

SAREH NOURI

NEW YORK

SPRING 2024 COLLECTION



WWD New York Luxury Bridal Preview

Bridal Industry Rolls With Consumers' Concerns and Fashion Trends

As the bridal industry weathers economic and geopolitical concerns, brides look for gowns with special touches and retailers say they're working to offer more last-minute options. BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

Bridal manufacturers are rolling with an evolving world, with overinformed and indecisive brides, shipping concerns, a tough geopolitical landscape, sustainability objectives and rising costs and inflation.

In a survey of 12,000 couples who plan to wed this year conducted by The Knot, 61 percent said the economy has already impacted their wedding planning and decision-making. And 49 percent pegged inflation and rising costs as another top concern.

Those in the bridal industry describe brides who are flush with information, and often looking for styles that fit their individual tastes, with special touches. Brides are still willing shell out for "the one," experts said, though the industry could do better providing options for people across the size and gender spectrum. With sourcing issues in the news, some brides are reconsidering where their gowns will be shipped from to avoid any delays.

For retailers, e-tailers, designers and brands, there are still many opportunities in the global bridalwear market. By 2026, bridalwear is expected to reach \$69.9 billion in volume, compared to \$55.5 billion in 2020, according to the Global Bridal Wear Industry Report. With nearly \$26 billion in 2021 sales, the U.S. continues to control the lion's share of the business with more than 44 percent of market control. In second place is China, which is forecasted to reach \$6.8 billion in sales in 2026, the report said.

Broadly, the bridal industry needs to work to cater to a wider and more diverse range of brides, according to The Knot Worldwide's Lauren Whalley, fashion editor, inclusivity and beauty. "There's still so much white space in wedding fashion, when it comes to inclusivity and diversity. While strides have been made over the past few years, we still have a long way to go. Everyone should feel seen and represented," she said. "My hope is that designers prioritize size inclusivity and that different shapes and sizes should be considered from the start of the design process, not as an afterthought."

For that, the industry would need to hire more models who are plus-size, petite, older and different genders for the runway and campaign imagery, Whalley said. There is also a need for a greater range of sample sizes and overall dress availability in stores, she added.

The quest for self-expression has boosted the continued interest in color and patterns, Whalley noted. In The Knot's 2022 Attire and Fashion Study, white dresses remained the preferred hue with 83 percent of respondents compared to 91 percent five years ago. Respondents indicated greater interest in floral details and appliqués. "That said, there is an opportunity for unique spins on wedding dresses, whether it's through the fabric, silhouette, hand-painted details, beadwork or appliqués. It's

Pnina Tornai for Kleinfeld Bridal is a key resource.



Anne Barge is seeing interest on ballgowns.

all about these little details on the garments that help differentiate one bride from the next and make them feel special as they celebrate their big day," Whalley said.

Bridesmaids, too, are not feeling the most financially confident. In a survey from David's Bridal, only 28 percent of bridesmaids said they felt financially confident. As a nod to the current financial uncertainty, the chain has rolled out bridesmaid dresses that retail from \$99 to \$130, meant to be affordable as bridal-party duty often includes additional expenses like bachelorette weekends, bridal shower gifts and hairstyling and makeup splurges.

After their appointments at David's Bridal, brides can take home three swatches to help with their color choices for bridesmaid dresses.

Despite the unsteady economy, some bridal manufacturers and retailers are seeing orders for high-end, pricier styles. That is happening despite some having to raise prices by 5 percent to 10 percent, due to cost hikes for raw materials, labor, rerouted production and shipping.

Open Market research indicates brides have been spending larger amounts on their wedding gowns than they have in the past. Additionally, brides also want to customize their gowns, and become a part of the design process. With an increase in spending and customizations, couture manufacturing has greatly benefited.

When it comes to dream dresses, shoppers are willing to invest in quality, said Pronovias' chief executive officer Amandine Ohayon. The retailer and online operation is seeing good sellouts for its high-end collections Privee and Atelier. Post-pandemic, guest lists are trending smaller than prior to the shutdown, Ohayon said.

In March, Pronovias debuted the "Essence of Love" capsule collection that was inspired by the latest VIP looks. Next up is the launch of the "Pronovias Preview Collection" in May.

Looking ahead, Ohayon said that to capture the increasing sector of Millennials the bridal industry "needs to innovate more than ever." With a greater variety of styles faster deliveries a must, companies that have the scale and agility to introduce "hot new designs, fast and frequently with shorter lead times" will be the winners, she said.

After several months of focusing on this tactic, Pronovias now has an offering of "fast-track dresses," which can be delivered in three weeks.

Ballgowns are consistently in demand at Anne Barge, which plans to produce its 2024 spring collection in a new Atlanta design studio. In the past few years, the company's prices have increased by 5 percent to 10 percent due to increases in fabrics, labor and shipping costs, but the

hope is that the new domestic factory will result in greater supply chain control and price stability, according to owner and creative director Shawne Jacobs.

Geopolitical tensions in the past few years "have led to increased awareness of where products are manufactured. Highly skilled talent in pattern making and sewing is not as readily available in the United States, as it is globally," she said, adding that the domestic location should help to alleviate consumers' apprehension about potential shipping delays.

Badgley Mischka has also shifted its production. Last year, the company moved its manufacturing from Taiwan and China to England and Europe to ensure there would be no interruptions, according to founders Mark Badgley and James Mischka. Badgley Mischka brides are favoring a clean aesthetic, with minimal beading but a sophisticated sense of style. For 2024, the designers said they are moving toward "a fuller, more modern gown with dramatic detail, like an oversize flower or voluminous bow." Brides-to-be are in search of original, elegant styles and "the more luxurious, the better," according to the design duo.

Kleinfeld shoppers are more inclined to spend more this year versus last, but many are purchasing wedding gowns with less notice than before – three to six months in advance, versus six months to a year, according to director of merchandising Dorothy Silver.

Pnina Tornai is the top seller at Kleinfeld, the Lebanese Italian designer Tony Ward, Martina Liana and Sarah Nori are a few other key lines. Soft A-line dresses and gowns with deep V-necklines are popular there.

The New York store is catering to brides with robust budgets by offering three types of VIP appointments including a top-tier \$750 "Diamond" experience. That top-shelf treatment allows a bride-to-be and her friends have the store all to themselves when it is normally closed on Mondays or ►

Sareh Nouri Puts a Modernist Twist on Classic Romance

The designer known for creating classic bridal and eveningwear with avant-garde details discusses her latest collection and an expanding design studio and flagship salon.

Established in 2011, the internationally loved fashion brand, named for its designer Sareh Nouri, is growing quickly. Sareh Nouri bridal and its recently launched eveningwear collections are now in over 60 stores worldwide, including Kleinfelds, Bergdorf Goodman and Neiman Marcus in the U.S. – effectively engaging an audience beyond bridal.

Female-founded and led, Sareh Nouri made its mark in the bridal industry offering classic brides a fashion-forward twist, all designed and produced fully in the U.S. Nouri has described her design aesthetic as reminiscent of the golden era of Hollywood, looking to fashion icons like Grace Kelly and Audrey Hepburn for inspiration.

“The gowns in all of my collections can transcend time and allow for brides to love

the gown the day they wear it and for many more years to come,” said Nouri. “My designs stand out because all of the gowns are truly unique and feature beautiful hand draping, architectural seam work and novelty unique fabrications. There are lots of trends in bridal that come and go each season, but one trend that never goes out is a timeless and classic style and that is always at the foundation of my designs.”

A notable detail across Sareh Nouri’s collections is an iconic bow detailing. The signature element is one that retailers noted that brides in the know have come to ask for specifically as it has remained a constant from season to season.

“The bows in our collection are highly sought after and many brides look to add our bows even on styles that are not shown with bows to make a memorable moment on their wedding day,” said Nouri. “We



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MANI ZARRIN

have also had brides that reuse their bows for their baby portraits laying their babies on the bows as a sentimental token to their wedding day.”

Stories of brides incorporating details of their Sareh Nouri gowns into their lives have grown especially on social media and have been a driver for the brand to see tremendous growth within the U.S. Brides reach out to the brand on social media and email to connect with the brand to order gowns directly and to share stories. Nouri said she is touched to see families where sets of sisters all wear Sareh Nouri bridal gowns, sharing that she has seen the same with cousins or best friends who all want to be Sareh Nouri brides.

As a result, several new cities, states and countries now offer Sareh Nouri collections.

Notably, over the last couple of years demand for Sareh Nouri’s statement-making gowns has grown internationally, an experience that Nouri told Fairchild Studios has been a rewarding one and impactful on the design process. In Japan, Sareh Nouri has partnered with luxury bridal and evening salons to create several custom gowns while many brides in countries that do not currently have a Sareh Nouri salon have connected with the brand directly. Each is an opportunity for the growth of the brand.

“There are so many different cultural and religious traditions around bridal gowns that we have really had the opportunity to create different modifications to our gowns from neckline changes to closing the backs, and adding long sleeves to the gowns,” said Nouri. “Normally when we create custom gowns for cultural or religious reasons we work with the stores and brides by offering to do a muslin prototype of the gown before completing the final gown. There is a lot of back and forth with our team and the salon team to make sure that we accomplish what the bride is asking for.”

Listening to her clientele has been key in growing the Sareh Nouri brand and what ultimately led to the launch of an eveningwear collection in 2021. With the evening collection, Nouri told Fairchild Studios, ongoing requests are coming from mothers of the bride asking for gowns. Originally exclusive to the Sareh Nouri flagship location, the evening collection is now offered in numerous stores nationally and internationally. By partnering with

several of the salons that were already carrying the bridal collections, the brand has been able to seamlessly offer gowns for an entirely new customer, where she is. And according to Nouri, getting into more stores is just the start, there is still an opportunity to expand the line and followers can expect even more growth.

To accommodate brand growth the company has expanded its design studio two times over the last two years and has hired more employees in production to meet all bridal and evening orders. The brand maintains the importance of focusing on customizations and being able to be produced in the U.S., Nouri says, this makes a huge difference. “We control our entire production process and can also deliver dresses that require fast rushes.”

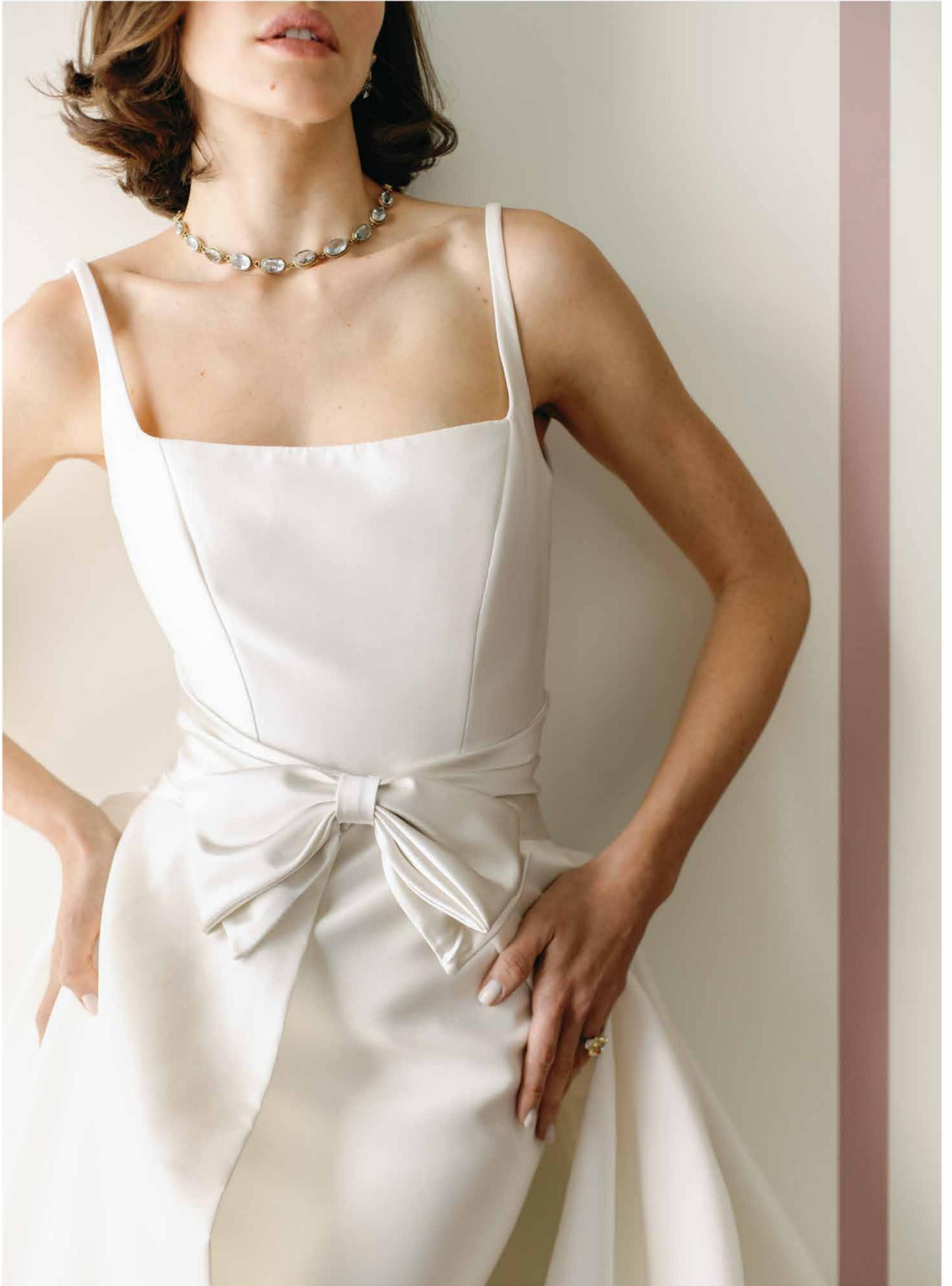
After just two years, the brand will move its flagship salon to a larger location this year.

“It is incredible how in such a short time my gowns have sold to so many brides and moms,” said Nouri. “With each bridal and evening collection, the flagship salon keeps getting smaller and that is why this year it is time to move to a new flagship location which is triple the size of the current salon. This growth has also been going on at my design studio as I have had to expand three times in the past two years to accommodate for the growth of my company.”

This season at New York Bridal Week, Sareh Nouri will present the Something Blue collection, which will share a new take on a favorite inspiration – touches of blue. “The idea of something blue for a wedding is truly a tradition that I find that ties in beautifully with my clean gowns,” said Nouri. “That is why you will see touches of blue throughout the accessories.”

A highlight of the collection this season is the Hydrangea gown, created with a printed duchess satin with a blue floral print. Nouri told Fairchild Studio it is “one of the most avant-garde dresses” she has ever designed.

As she gets ready to present her new collection, Nouri builds on her appreciation for all of the brides and all of the moms that have worn her gowns for some of the most memorable and special moments of their lives. “I am really thankful for the 10 years I have had in business, and I am looking forward to what the next decade will bring for me.”



MARK INGRAM

ATELIER



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Tuesdays, with appointments of varying length. There are 200 VIP appointments already booked from now through July.

The abundance of available information about all things bridal has them “looking and looking and looking” – postponing any commitments as long as possible, Silver said. Kleinfeld is keeping in-store samples at the ready, and vendors are accommodating by stocking up accordingly. Once they do decide, the average spend is between \$3,800 and \$4,500 for a dress.

Before market, Silver consults with the retailer’s vice president who specializes in risk and profits and gets a shopping list of what’s missing and what’s unnecessary based on price points, styles and body shapes. “That really helps because at some point or another, you look at your stock and think everything looks the same. You want to make sure that you don’t repeat that again and again in bridal market,” Silver said.

Now more than ever, brides are arriving to shop more informed than ever, according to Mark Ingram, who has a signature Midtown store. “And she wants to see quote-unquote everything, which is impossible. To know everything and see everything in bridal is impossible. It makes the decisions harder to make. It’s harder for them to commit to a dress. My philosophy is [to ask], ‘How did you commit to your fiancé? It’s the same thing. There really could be a greater guy out there.’ When you find someone or something you really love, you stick with it. But girls often come in and say, ‘This is the dress that I really love. This is the one.’ But then they continue to shop even after they buy a gown. We know that because they call with so many questions after they’ve made a purchase, asking about other styles.”

Needless to say that can be disconcerting until brides’ dresses are

shipped to the store and fittings are underway. However, even at that stage, brides are using comparing themselves to social media images of how they think they are supposed to look. “A certain self-confidence has been lost,” Ingram said.

To try to help them focus and build trust, Ingram has launched a newsletter to help brides learn about him, his store, designer profiles and the brands that are offered. During appointments, staff make 90 percent of the suggestions. “It’s never been a self-service operation and it will never be. You have to come in and trust the process and the talent that we have hired here. You need to come in knowing what you want. If not, we can help you but it will take longer. Use all this time that you are spending on social media to narrow down what you want to look for and how you want to feel on your wedding day.”

The retailer has introduced bridal looks from the Paris-based designer Dylan Parienty, who had trained under Giambattista Valli, and will have a trunk show at the Mark Ingram Atelier. With the absence of strong American bridal brands like Carolina Herrera and Angel Sanchez, “The talent seems to be coming from overseas now,” Ingram said.

Designer Michael Costello said his clients know just what they want and how much they want to spend. But to appeal to all different budgets, it offers a range of options. Although with inflation concerns, women are holding back a little on what they spend on a day-to-day basis, “they’ve never held back when it comes to bridal, especially with us,” he said. “It’s that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for them to create that magic they’ve always wanted for that one special day.”

Brides-to-be are increasingly more open to various silhouettes, and that something-for-everyone approach offers the greatest

opportunity for the bridal market, Costello said. “Before we were always looking for the traditional white dress or ballgown. Now there are so many different things and so many designers offering such beautiful pieces. Women are pushing themselves to explore new designs and opening their imagination to new possibilities and I think that’s one of the greatest opportunities that we have in the bridal market right now,” he said.

Enaura’s cofounders Sohil and Nayha Mistry said they have diversified raw material vendors to avoid sourcing issues but the collection’s artisanal hand beadwork can only be done in India, due to cultural aspects. Their shoppers are gravitating towards statement accessories, like gloves.

The bridal company has increased prices due to hikes in labor and logistics costs. Despite that and consumers’ inflation concerns, shoppers still prioritize style and quality for their wedding gowns, according to the Mistris. Brides are willing to spend a little more to achieve a certain look, they said.

Yellow by Sahar’s owner and creative director Sahar Fotouhi believes the bridal industry has focused on a single traditional image for too long and needs to better embrace individuality, which is where the most potential exists.

Its design process, fabric sourcing and manufacturing are housed in the U.S., France and Italy. Most of Yellow by Sahar’s lace is made on century-old machines in France. “All three are stable industries that have withstood the test of time, so I do not plan on changing production,” Fotouhi said.

The interest in vintage is also gaining ground with environmentally minded shoppers. That is welcome news to Amy Abrams, co-owner of The Manhattan

Yellow by Sahar uses resources in the U.S., France and Italy.



Vintage Show, who has seen this bridal trend evolve with the general interest in vintage and preloved fashion.

The newly launched platform Rowely is another secondhand resource for veils shoes, and other accessories, bridal outfits for bridal showers, engagement parties, rehearsal dinners and bachelorette parties. Rowely has offerings from brands like Zimmermann, Retrofete, Agua by Agua Bendita, LoveShackFancy, Berta, Cult Gaia, Sachin and Babi, Needle & Thread, Loeffler Randall, Bhldn, Alice + Olivia, Jason Wu and Shoshanna.

Aside from being a way to show off a bride’s personal style, “Wearing vintage or incorporating vintage “allows brides to tap into the notion of wearing ‘mom’s dress,’ to appreciate the design and craftsmanship of a past era and convey the message of sustainability that resonates with everyone,” Abrams said. ■



Kate Middleton in an Alexander McQueen wedding gown designed by Sarah Burton with sister Pippa Middleton in April 2011.

Princess Brides Still Reign, Despite Women’s Empowerment Gains

The fairy-tale wedding still has lasting appeal with many women.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

The princess ballgown wedding-dress fantasy is alive and well.

Princess-inspired wedding dresses have only gained interest since Kate Middleton wed Prince William in 2011 with 27.7 million viewers watching. And Meghan Markle’s and Prince Harry’s 2018 wedding only created further interest – as evidenced by the nearly 29.2 million

viewers of that union, noted Kleinfeld director of merchandising Dorothy Silver.

Those royal weddings has changed the whole industry from beaded, shiny styles to classic, timeless and elegant gowns, Silver said. “I always tell my brides, ‘You want to look back at your wedding pictures 20 years from now, and love the way you look.’ That classic timeless elegance is so

important. You don’t want to feel trendy.”

Princess weddings are also offered up by Disney – which animated the fairy-tale narratives many Millennials grew up on – which has an estimated 50 different venues for couples to get married. Approximately 1,500 couples tie the knot at the Disney World Resort each year. Aside from the travel and attire expenses, Disney World’s minimum wedding event fee starts at \$7,500 and reaches \$50,000, depending on the venue, day of the week and event time.

While some may question if princess fantasies align with women’s empowerment and equality initiatives, Silver said each bride reserves the right to dress as she pleases.

“It’s every woman’s own dream about how she wants to look and feel when she gets married. They have the right to feel that way,” Silver said. “There’s a pot for every cover. Everybody is different. We see so many different types of brides who comes from all over the world and all over the U.S. They all have their dream of how they want to look on their wedding day – whether that is like a Disney princess or Grace Kelly.”

Wearing a princess dress is also a break from the pandemic-induced ultracausal lifestyle, noted Christine Wettstein, cofounder and director of brand strategies at Coterie White and Melange de Blanc. “No matter what, it’s not every day that you can wear a ballgown. It’s more of a question of, ‘Why not do it if you can and you want to?’ Versus fitting into a mold of a princess bride,” she said.

Simultaneously, more-is-more trends, like pajamas with feathers and oversize sleeves, and other over-the-top looks can be found at any price point, she said. “Of course, that will translate to a bride’s wedding dress should it be desired,”

Wettstein said.

Justin Warshaw, CEO and creative director of Justin Alexander, said what to wear for a wedding day boils down to personal choice. “Whether it be a more feminine, princess-y style, or a more structured and modern silhouette, a wedding dress is a reflection of the individual. A bride should wear whatever she is most comfortable and feels best in on her wedding day.”

Rami Al Ali, who has a signature bridal collection, doesn’t see a conflict between women’s empowerment and being delicate and feminine. “Empowerment doesn’t just come from appearance. It’s also a lifestyle and behavior, regardless of their background women are still very interested in looking beautiful,” the designer said.

Enaura’s cofounders Sohil and Nayha Mistry said many Millennial brides grew up with princess stories that are often associated with royalty and glamour. “This can still be appealing regardless of women’s rights and empowerment as it represents a romantic ideal and a sense of fantasy,” they said.

Mark Badgley and James Mischka said the endurance of the princess bride style is all about the dream or magic of being a bride. “It’s about the wonder, the fascination and the enchantment of walking down the aisle in all the formality – and that is a very special kind of power.”

Yellow by Sahar’s owner and creative director Sahar Fotouhi described the princess bride as “the epitome of magic.”

And while a lot of women feel empowered embracing their femininity, Fotouhi said there are other ways to celebrate that don’t fit into the princess box. “Some brides may choose to express themselves in a stylish and bold way, and we honor that with our gorgeous wedding suits,” Fotouhi said.



ANNE BARGE

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All Buttoned Up: Why Brides and Their Mothers Are Turning to Tailoring

"There are a lot more people than you think who don't want to wear a fairy princess dress" on their wedding day, said Daisy Knatchbull, founder of women's tailor The Deck on Savile Row. BY SAMANTHA CONTI



A London bride wearing a tailored suit by The Deck on Savile Row.



A tailored look from Pronovias.



The Shiloh jumpsuit by Pronovias.



A bride and her mother in three-piece suits by The Deck on Savile Row.

LONDON – Alessandra Rinaudo, artistic director at Pronovias, will never forget the first time she dressed a bride in a trouser suit. Actually, it was two women getting married in Spain around 15 years ago, and both were wearing suits.

"One was red and the other was white," said Rinaudo. "The women looked amazing together. I'll never forget it."

Although Pronovias specializes in wedding dresses, Rinaudo always has options for brides who prefer to wear a suit, tailored separates or an all-in-one on the big day.

"Not all women are the same," and not everyone wants a dress, said Rinaudo, adding that over the past three years she's seen an increase in demand for tailoring. In response, she offers jumpsuits; tuxedo jackets worn over crepe T-shirts or crop tops, or suits with detachable chiffon overskirts.

She described the women who ask for tailoring as "super-confident, and chic," much like Bianca Jagger, whose ivory "Le Smoking" by Yves Saint Laurent set a new standard of nuptial cool.

Pronovias isn't alone. Daisy Knatchbull, founder of The Deck, the first women's tailor with a shopfront on Savile Row, said she's not only fielding requests from brides but from their mothers, daughters and girlfriends as well.

"There are a lot more people than you think who don't want to wear a fairy princess dress," said Knatchbull.

The tailoring trend was already gathering steam before lockdown, but Knatchbull believes the pandemic – and all of the canceled or postponed weddings – shifted a lot of people's perspectives, and priorities.

"Right now, we're seeing micro weddings. Having a small wedding makes that bride really think about what she wants to wear. Maybe it's a suit with a special embroidered message inside, or something blue or borrowed that we've stitched into the suit. It's that kind of woman who's come out of COVID[-19]."

and linings can be changed and updated. While a wedding dress can be transformed, sold or donated to charity, many end up hanging in the closet, yellowing with age.

Some brides aren't even bothering to buy their wedding clothes. They're renting them instead.

Two years ago, Britain's former first lady

Carrie Symonds married her beau Boris Johnson dressed in a flowing white gown by Greek designer Christos Costarellos which had been rented from the fashion platform My Wardrobe HQ.

At the time, the decision was considered unusual. Not any more.

Sacha Newall, founder and chief executive officer of My Wardrobe HQ, said that brides are now renting multiple outfits for their wedding day (or days). That includes tailoring, which Newall described as a fast-growing trend across the market generally.

She said that brides are often opting for a classic dress for the church and then changing into tailoring for the party afterward, or wearing

tailored clothing to the registry office ceremony, "and then changing into something short and sparkly or feathers" for the evening.

Full-price luxury retailers are also seeing some women opt for tailoring over traditional dresses.

Tiffany Hsu, vice president womenswear and kidswear fashion buying at Mytheresa, said the site has "always offered tailoring within our bridal category, and it is very popular with our customers. These pieces also work really well for other evening occasions."

Last year Bella Freud began offering sharp tailored clothing as bridalwear in response to her customers' requests. She sells it via her own site as well as on Matchesfashion.

"When people are getting married, they want to look like themselves still. Town hall weddings are becoming increasingly popular, and we see that people want to be glamorous without having to do this huge number," Freud told WWD last year.

She said there is so much indecision and confusion about wedding day dressing "because so many people find they are having to be someone else for the day. I don't want it to be confusing for them. It's an old tradition, but people are experimenting, and we've seen a huge interest in white and cream tailoring, in waistcoats and this kind of boy-girl love, which is very sexy and interesting."

Style is another big reason why some women prefer tailoring over traditional dress. Tailoring offers older brides, and the mother of the bride, a cool, sporty option.

"We get bridal parties [at the Savile Row store] and they're so much fun. Everyone is drinking Champagne, sitting around with their best friends, and crying when the mother sees the daughter, or the daughter sees the mother who's getting married again," said Knatchbull.

At The Deck, she said, three-piece suits with a wide leg are the most popular, with brides opting for cream, and mothers and friends favoring light blue, pale pink or yellow.

The Deck offers customization, with tailors able to sew a father's necktie into the back collar of a jacket; customize the back of a waistcoat with a special fabric; or add special stitching, or messages, inside, that are meant to last forever.



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Market Moments

A snapshot of the industry's latest launches, collaborations and up-and-coming designers.

Emerging Bridal Label Cinq to Debut at NYBFW

While studying fashion design at Massachusetts College of Art and Design in 2017, Macye Wysner went wedding dress shopping at Ceremony Boston with her future sister-in-law and ended up tailoring her schooling around bridal design from the experience.

"I walked in and thought, 'this is amazing.'" I worked at the store throughout my time in school – I was able to learn about styling while being on the floor and hearing what brides had to say. You can't put a price tag on that experience," Wysner told WWD. Fast forward to 2020, the designer was living and working in the Los Angeles fast-fashion industry, but missed the emotional connection she felt working with brides. So, she whipped up her debut bridal label, Cinq, which coincidentally launched when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"Luckily, I had a dear friend who's a bridal influencer that got her start on TikTok and told me to put the collection on there. I thought, 'I'm not going to do that, my bride isn't there and I don't want to dampen the brand,' but I did it and it blew up. It's hard your first few years putting yourself out there, so I feel very fortunate I was able to lock-in at that specific timing," Wysner

said, adding she believes the Cinq bride is someone who's seeking out alternative, artful designs that meld modernity with heirloom and historical influences.

"Each collection has five styles – it's not in our DNA to overdesign. We're keeping it intimate and purposeful. All the gowns are made in Los Angeles and a lot of our mills are in Italy. We use a lot of silk tulle – not necessarily as silk styles, but layered as 'ghostly' and 'liquid-y' intricate options. I always describe our brand as 'ghost brides' – having pieces that are more catered to theater and art, but modernized and wearable," Wysner said. "In reference to time periods, I've taken different aspects like the drop-waist or empire-waist and Rocco period influences and blended them together."

Since launching Cinq, Wysner has continued to grow her label organically with trunkshows and a select number of stockists while building out new styles and focusing on their internal structures and corsetry elevation. For instance, Cinq's new collection three-in-one duchess satin and silk tulle petticoat corset gown, which will debut as part of Collection 03 during the brand's New York Bridal Fashion Week debut on Thursday. – EMILY MERCER

A look from Cinq Collection 03.



A look from Cinq Collection 02.

Monique Lhuillier Teams With Paperless Post

This spring, luxury bridal and fashion designer Monique Lhuillier has teamed up with Paperless Post to offer a new collection of romantic digital wedding invitations and save the dates.

"This collection marries the unrivaled artistry and convenience expected by our customers. Whether you're wearing a Monique Lhuillier gown, or you aspire to infuse her elevated designs into your special day, these invitations will set the tone for an elegant event," Paperless Post chief executive officer James Hirschfeld told WWD.

The collection offers 13 styles with matching envelopes boasting signature Lhuillier details directly inspired by her gowns' botanical, floral, embroidered, lace

and beaded fabrications. For instance, the "Little Lillies" invitations, which feature a Lily of the Valley design; a pale pink "Sweet Blooms" floral design, and a colorful "Blue Butterflies" floral style. The collection starts at \$0.44 per invitation for 50 invitations; each design is offered with Paperless Post customization tools and is available to shop on Paperless Post's website.

"It is the artistry of the collection that perfectly reflects the delicate essence of my bridal gowns. Florals and my love of gardens is on full display in print, color and silhouette," Lhuillier told WWD of the collection. "For those who are looking for a memorable yet effortless way to approach wedding invitations, Paperless Post is the premier destination." – E.M

Designs from Monique Lhuillier's collection for Paperless Post.



A look from Galia Lahav Spring 2024.

Galia Lahav's New Bridal Look

In 2020, Israeli bridal label Galia Lahav designed a bespoke black wedding dress for Christine Quinn's opulent wedding. Since the former "Selling Sunset" star's dress debut, the brand has received an explosion of requests for custom bridal gowns in the dark hue.

For April's New York Bridal Fashion Week, the brand is delivering directly to these customers with the debut of its spring 2024 collection's singular black French lace, corset bodice, mermaid wedding gown.

While the brand had previously debuted a full collection of black wedding gowns nine years ago, "It's so me, so I couldn't help myself," designer Sharon Sever told WWD. The body-hugging black gown, styled with a matching white veil with black lace trim and long-sleeve black lace top, will retail for around

\$10,000, and sits within the brand's larger spring 2024 collection.

"The vibe [of the spring 2024 collection] is Spanish, as the collection is based on the opera, 'Carmen,' and was shot in Spain. I'm a very big opera enthusiast – it's one of my biggest inspirations – and I am part of the board here. As we are a company that's all about women[']s empowerment, sensuality and diversity, the story of this opera is of a very strong woman that unfortunately loses her life, but doesn't want to surrender to restrictions of any man. She's living her own life, doesn't want to listen to anyone, wants to be independent and is a free spirit," Sever said. "Women make their own choices. It's a matter of choice if you feel good in your own skin and want the world to see you as you are. If this is you, then you have to be you." – E.M

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WWD New York Luxury Bridal Preview



New styles from the Badgley Mischka Grown Brilliance collection.

The 20 New Lab-grown Diamond Rings From Badgley Mischka

Badgley Mischka and Grown Brilliance are adding more engagement ring styles in the fourth year of their collaboration. The styles include larger lab-grown stones.

"Stones that are not easily attainable in mined diamonds," explained Mark Badgley. "We are using trillions, trapezoids, half moons as well as shield cut for side accents."

The latest collection adds 20 new styles, making up 180 styles over all, offering something for everyone.

"Because we only use lab-grown diamonds in our designs, we are reaching a population that is concerned about the future of our planet. Lab-grown diamonds are conflict free, because they are man-made in a controlled laboratory setting. All this matters to our customers," said James Mischka, about the reach of the collection.

The legendary duo have dressed

countless brides and have their finger on the pulse of what a modern person wants for their big day – and that continues to evolve. "The designs are influenced by what stone shapes are trending. We just launched new earrings that complement our bestselling engagement rings, which are a great addition to bridal jewelry. We are also building our day into evening collection, such as large carat weight hoops," Mischka said.

According to the lab-grown diamond-maker, the collaboration is meant to marry science, style and luxury, embracing modern technology, featuring iconic design, and bringing customers timeless jewels.

The collection ranges from \$600 to \$36,500, selling at department stores, specialty stores and online. "There is something for every budget," Mischka said.

– THOMAS WALLER

Spotlight on Danielle Frankel Fall 2023

New York designer Danielle Hirsch launched has gained tremendous traction for her luxurious, fashionable alternative bridal designs since she launched her business in 2017. Business has doubled every year, and she's dressed brides including Zoë Kravitz, Alexandra Daddario, Julia Garner and more. Following Hirsch's meeting with WWD at her Midtown Atelier, she was also inducted to the CFDA as a new member.

To continue to provide the growing Danielle Frankel customer base her fantastical touch, Hirsch filled her latest fall collection with couture-like styles, as well as a new assortment of versatile garments, fueled by her bespoke wedding business. The collection was described as seasonless and earthy (a few looks were styled with custom life-like floral baubles designed by an artist in the Ukraine, and delicate micro-floral and raffia hats) but also touched on the ethereal, minimalist and glamorous.

"We end up doing a lot of custom work, so we wanted to provide garments that would allow us to walk the customer

through custom," Hirsch said of the lineup, adding looks at varying price-points that merchandise beautifully were of equal importance. For instance, '90s slipdresses broken up into spaghetti strap camisoles and skirts, as in a standout air organza shift mini with allover, hand-embroidered transparent sequins and genuine baroque pearls or a silk-wool number with hand-cut corded lace-trimmed neckline and hem.

The elegant looks were often layered with plush cashmere knits alongside a debut white tuxedo (said to be inspired by a bespoke men's tuxedo-meets-gown inquiry), a sculptural cropped jacket and plenty of special boned gowns ranging from the sculptural (a silk wool twill and linen organza tea-length Miller gown with structured boned bodice, high neck and pleated and draped skirt) to the more fluid (an off-the-shoulder pleated and hand-inked velvet Suki number).

With fall, Hirsch continued to deliver sartorial beauty for a wide variety of brides. – EMILY MERCER



Styles from the new Ancient Greek Sandals bridal range.

Ancient Greek Sandals Debuts Bridal Offering

Destination weddings have become increasingly popular in 2023, as COVID-19 restrictions continue to lift. As people lean into far-flung locations for their big days, modern nuptials can take place anywhere, from a sprawling park, sun-drenched beach, to an evening under the stars – and today's bride wants a modern take on a wedding shoe for those kinds of settings.

Enter Ancient Greek Sandals, the handmade footwear brand with a cult-like following that is making it official, debuting an assortment of bridal footwear suited for a destination wedding.

"Every summer I receive so many requests from brides-to-be for custom bridal sandals, so I knew the desire was there," explained Ancient Greek Sandal's cofounder Christina Martini. "Some wanted an existing style, others a classic AGS style with a slight twist, such as matching leather to their dress or adding silk ankle ties or jewel embellishments; others wanted more intricate and unique designs."

It was those requests that helped shape the range of styles. "Most of the styles are AGS 'much loved' styles dressed for a wedding," Martini said. For the collection, the colors and materials for the soles and insoles are different than what was used in the original styles.

The debut collection comprises 15 styles in a range of wedding-ready hues,

from pearly white to silver sparkles. All styles are available with a pale blue sole, "as a nod to the 'something blue' tradition" with a white silky pouch and personalized limited-edition blue box, both with silver detailing, Martini said. "It's always a huge compliment when a bride chooses to wear my designs on her big day, so this project was a very special one for me personally," she said.

Martini is closely following customer feedback from the debut, but sees it as a category she'd like to grow, aiming to add four to six new styles per season. While the groom is left out for now, the brand is growing its men's business, and Martini may include a few options for him down the line.

Eleven years in, the brand is scaling. "Last year, we introduced bags and homeware, we felt that we wanted to expand our DNA to other products which reflect the craftsmanship and our traditional techniques," she said, with the goal to open stores in various island locations globally.

"We call them bridal sandals but they aren't just for wedding ceremonies, the Ancient Greek Sandals Bridal Collection is perfect for bridesmaids, for changing into late-night dancing; and of course, honeymoon getaways," she quipped.

Priced from \$240 to \$440 the bridal collection is available exclusively at the brand's Athens location and AncientGreekSandals.com. – T.W.



Here and right: Danielle Frankel Bridal, fall 2023.



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WWD New York Luxury Bridal Preview



Dior's sunglasses with pearl details.

Jacque Aiche's opal teardrop-center freshwater pearl beaded necklace in 14-karat gold with pavé diamonds.

Grown Brilliance's cultured freshwater pearl drop earrings with lab-grown diamonds.

Garrard's Catherine 18-karat white gold, aquamarine and diamond tiara at Net-a-porter.

Hirota's Tahitian black pearl and Akoya pearl ear cuff.

Gianvito Rossi's platform mule pump.

Centerpiece

A once-in-a-lifetime event deserves unique and special accessories to match. Here, a curation of standouts to complete a wedding look for both a bride and her party guests.

BY THOMAS WALLER

Edie Parker's Slim Jean "Mrs." clutch.

De Beers's Adonis Rose drop earrings, 18-karat white gold and diamonds.

Sophie Bille Brahe's Jeanne simple necklace, 14-karat recycled yellow gold with freshwater pearls.

Manolo Blahnik's flat sandal with crystals.

Material Good's large multishape open-hoop white gold and diamond earrings.

Sydney Evan's bracelet in 14-karat gold with pavé diamonds.

Binata Millinery's netted-veil headband.

Amina Muaddi's mule pump.

Mark Cross's pouch bag.



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WWD New York Luxury Bridal Preview



Tiffany & Co.'s Soleste pear-shaped halo engagement ring with a diamond platinum band.

Fred Leighton's 18-karat yellow gold, silver-topped gold and 10.05-carat marquise diamond ring.



Milamore's 18-karat yellow gold ring with yellow diamond and white diamonds.

Sophie Bille Brahe's Floating Heart ring in 18-karat recycled yellow gold and diamonds.

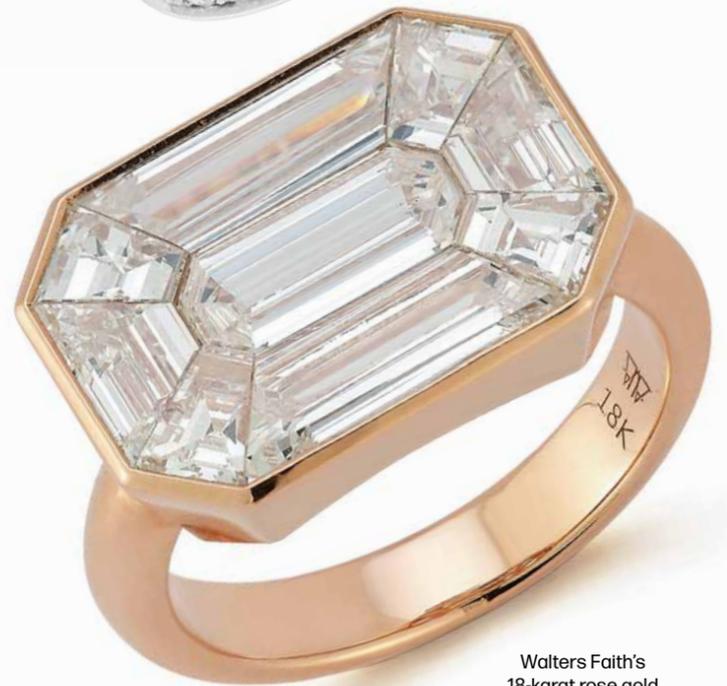


Van Cleef & Arpels' Enlacement wedding band featuring diamonds set in platinum.

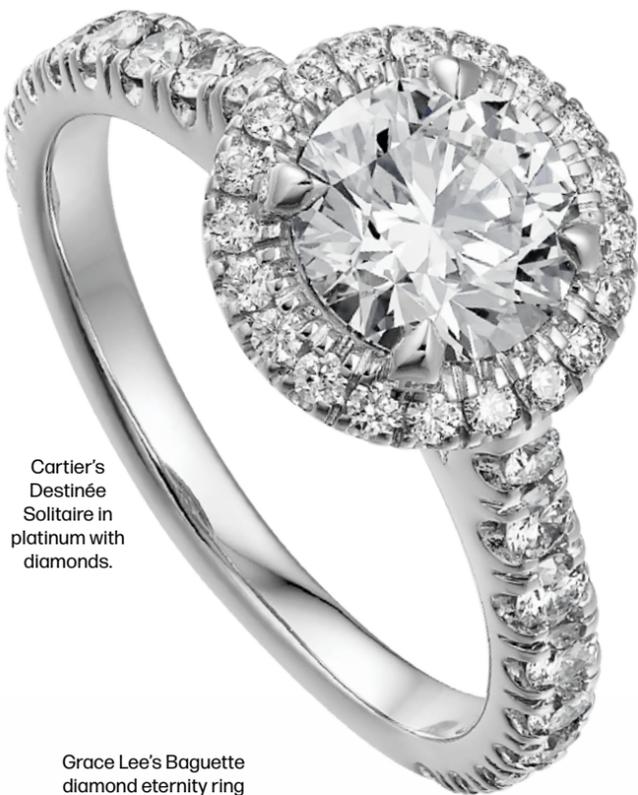
Special Setting

Be it classic – in white gold, platinum, yellow gold and diamonds – the singular most important piece for a bride-to-be is the ring. An instant heirloom, today's modern bride can choose trendy using a toi et moi two-stone ring, or go the traditional route. Here, the best of the best of the wedding ring category: engagement and wedding bands.

BY THOMAS WALLER



Walters Faith's 18-karat rose gold illusion set diamond East West emerald cut ring.



Cartier's Destinée Solitaire in platinum with diamonds.

Grace Lee's Baguette diamond eternity ring in 14-karat gold.



Marrow's fine white gold and diamond ring.

Verdin Bridal Couture is the Modern Bride's Dream Come True

After just two years, Gustavo Nunez discusses achieving the American dream through his huge success in expanding Verdin New York into bridal and the inspiration behind his new collections.

Born in Mexico and raised in the U.S., Gustavo Nunez, Mexican American designer and founder of Verdin New York, has been a student of the industry all his life.



Gustavo Nunez, Founder of Verdin New York

Now a member of the Bridal Council of America, Nunez's lifelong relationship with fashion began at a very young age, inspired while watching his mother design women's apparel in Guadalajara, Mexico. With goals to achieve the American Dream, Nunez moved to Los Angeles to get a degree in fashion design at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandizing (FIDM) before moving to New York to pursue his own career in fashion. As Nunez took on roles in leading couture houses, including Marchesa and Reem Acra among others, he became known for his craftsmanship, impeccable garment construction and timeless silhouettes.

When Verdin New York, named after Nunez's mother, Maria, launched it was a true appreciation for all of the experiences and inspiration that shaped Nunez. The designer's love of his Mexican culture combines with technical spirit in his designs that speak to the modern bride. His designs update the ideas of beauty and elegance and ensure that in the making of every gown the focus is on high quality materials, the cut, the best fit and refined finishes.

Here, Nunez speaks to Fairchild Studio about his 30 years of experience in the fashion industry, the evolution of Verdin New York and what's next for the brand.

FAIRCHILD STUDIO: Can you tell us about your start as a designer with over 30 years of experience in the fashion industry and what prompted you to start your own bridal brand?

GUSTAVO NUNEZ: When I first arrived in New York in 1995, I started as a pattern maker and designer's assistant in a private label company. After that, I became the atelier manager for Rebeca Taylor and was a production director for companies such as Marchesa and Reem Acra, among others.

During the pandemic I was inspired to change direction – I was at home for almost three months and I couldn't sit at home waiting for COVID to go away so I took the moment to design bridal.

Bridal design is something that I've wanted to do since designing my sister's and friend's wedding gowns. I loved the experience. I had also just gotten married the year before and had my own wedding experience to consider. While the world changed, I knew that brides were still going to get married. Weddings might be getting smaller or postponed but they need to be dressed for the most important day of their lives to walk down the aisle.

I decided to start by designing ten wedding gowns and show them to the salons I had always dreamed I could have designs in and see where it could lead me. Today, Verdin Bridal Couture Fashion House is based in New York Garment District.

FAIRCHILD STUDIO: Verdin Bridal New York is still just two years old, in that time how has the company evolved?

G.N.: The change has been in my designs. I started by bringing the world of sportswear to bridal and slowly has been evolving to what I really love.

FAIRCHILD STUDIO: How would you describe that design aesthetic that you've come to love?

GUSTAVO NUNEZ: With my bridal collection I'm starting to be known for



light, ethereal and romantic gowns. My designs are light and romantic with contemporary silhouettes with ethereal detailing, I use handmade embroideries, Italian laces, silk brocades and beautiful textures of textured fabrics. I oversee the entire process from the drape to the last bead or stitch.

FAIRCHILD STUDIO: What is the inspiration behind your new collection?

G.N.: This season's collection was inspired by my last trip to Italy – the beautiful architecture, fountains and gardens. I wanted to create a light and romantic collection, the gowns are named after Italian cities and towns.

One of my favorite designs from the collection is a gown made from beautiful Italian lace. It has a light build corset with 3D flowers that look like an Italian garden.

FAIRCHILD STUDIO: What's next for Verdin?

G.N.: This season we are launching the Verdin Blanche collection which offers bridal gowns at a lower price point.

As for the future, we're excited about more expansion! I showed my first collection at Fall of 2021 and my collection was picked up by Bergdorf Goodman in NY, Ultimate Bride in Chicago, among others. Since then, we have continued to open new salons every season and would like to continue doing so. We are now in the most exclusive salons in the United States, Japan, Korea and the Middle East. Next, we would love to be in Latin America, Europe and the rest of the world!

INTRODUCING THE VERDIN BLANCHE

This season, Verdin New York Bridal Couture will offer a new collection, the Verdin Blanche, with the goal of bringing the brand's clean, modern designs to new audiences and new markets.

The most notable difference between the Verdin Bridal Couture and the new Verdin Blanche collection is the price point, which expects a \$2,500 to \$4,000 price compared to the \$4,000 and up price range of Verdin Couture.

"Being in trunk shows all over the country last year, I noticed that the lower price point is very popular and I wanted to create some designs that can help us expand to other markets in the world such as Mexico and Latin America and Europe," said Nunez.

Moreover, Gustavo Nunez, designer and founder of Verdin New York, acknowledged that the collection was created to keep up with the changing trends and evolving needs of the market. "I wanted to keep evolving as a designer, so I needed to create a collection that understands the market," he said. "I feel that we need to keep evolving as the market also changes."

Importantly, Nunez stressed that the Verdin Blanche collection will be carrying on the romantic, couture aesthetic he has created with Verdin's main line, using light stretch crepes, satins, organza, laces and a little beading.

Verdin Bridal Couture is an American Company based and manufactured in New York City. The Verdin Blanche collection will be shown at bridal week in New York City.

WWD New York Luxury Bridal Preview

BIG *moments*

Exaggerated volumes and editorialized drama go hand in hand, turning the special wedding day into a head-turning fashion statement. Here, WWD previews some of the most directional gowns of New York Luxury Bridal Week.

Photographs by **Ruo Bing Li**
Styled by **Alex Badia**

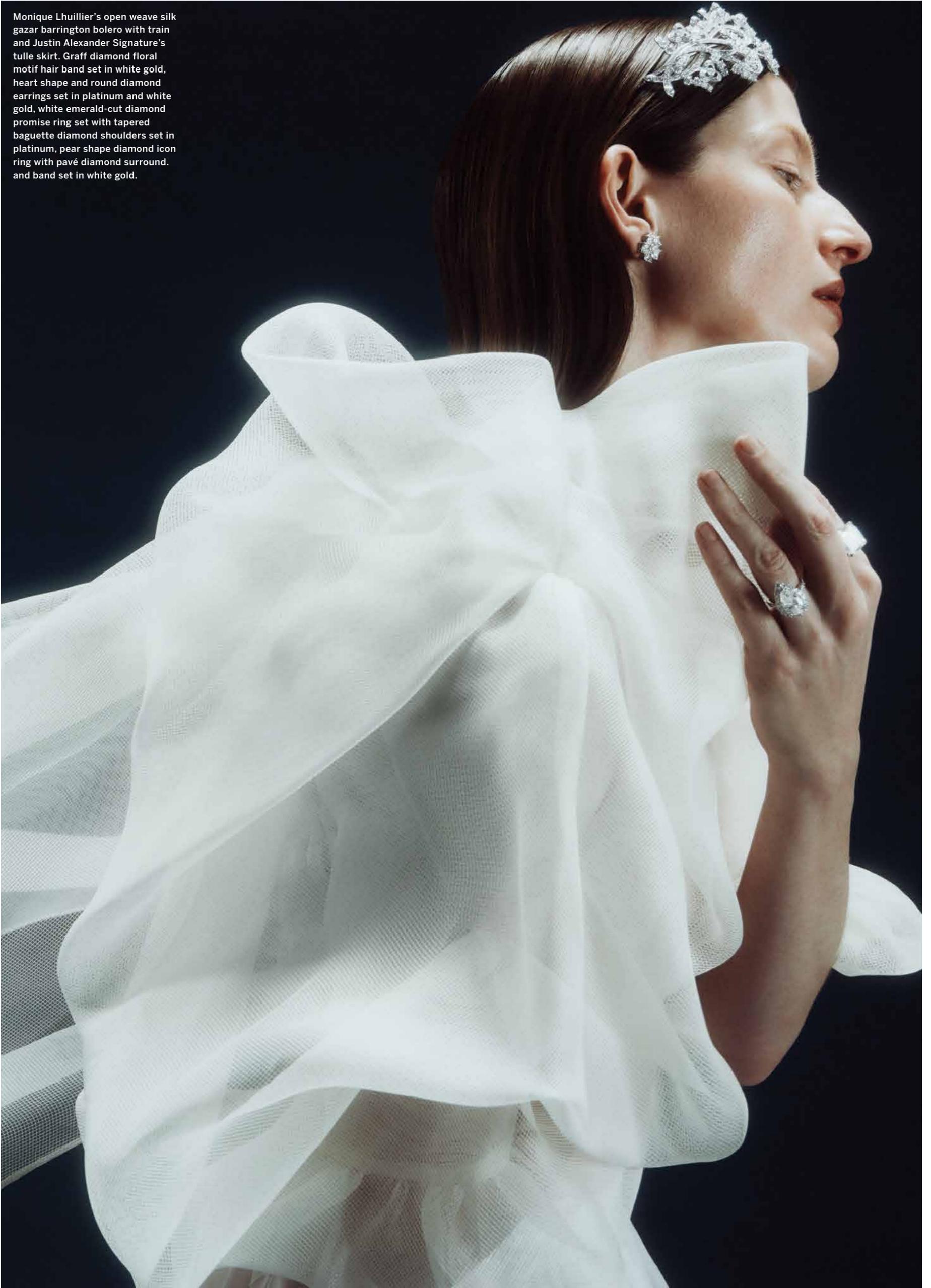
New York Luxury Bridal Preview **WWD**

ON THE COVER: Sareh Nouri's printed floral duchess satin off-the-shoulder gown with draped band with watteau petal in faille and oversize ballgown with layered detail. Reem Acra veil; Jennifer Behr tiara.

THIS PAGE: Ines Di Santo's off-the-shoulder corset bodice gown collaged with traditional corded lace and large lace ballgown skirt of traditional lace layered lilac tulle lining. Jennifer Behr veil headband; Nana Jacqueline Alana lace gloves; Ritique orchid fully encrusted earrings with south sea pearls; Graff white emerald-cut diamond bracelet, set in platinum.

WWD New York Luxury Bridal Preview

Monique Lhuillier's open weave silk gazar barrington bolero with train and Justin Alexander Signature's tulle skirt. Graff diamond floral motif hair band set in white gold, heart shape and round diamond earrings set in platinum and white gold, white emerald-cut diamond promise ring set with tapered baguette diamond shoulders set in platinum, pear shape diamond icon ring with pavé diamond surround, and band set in white gold.



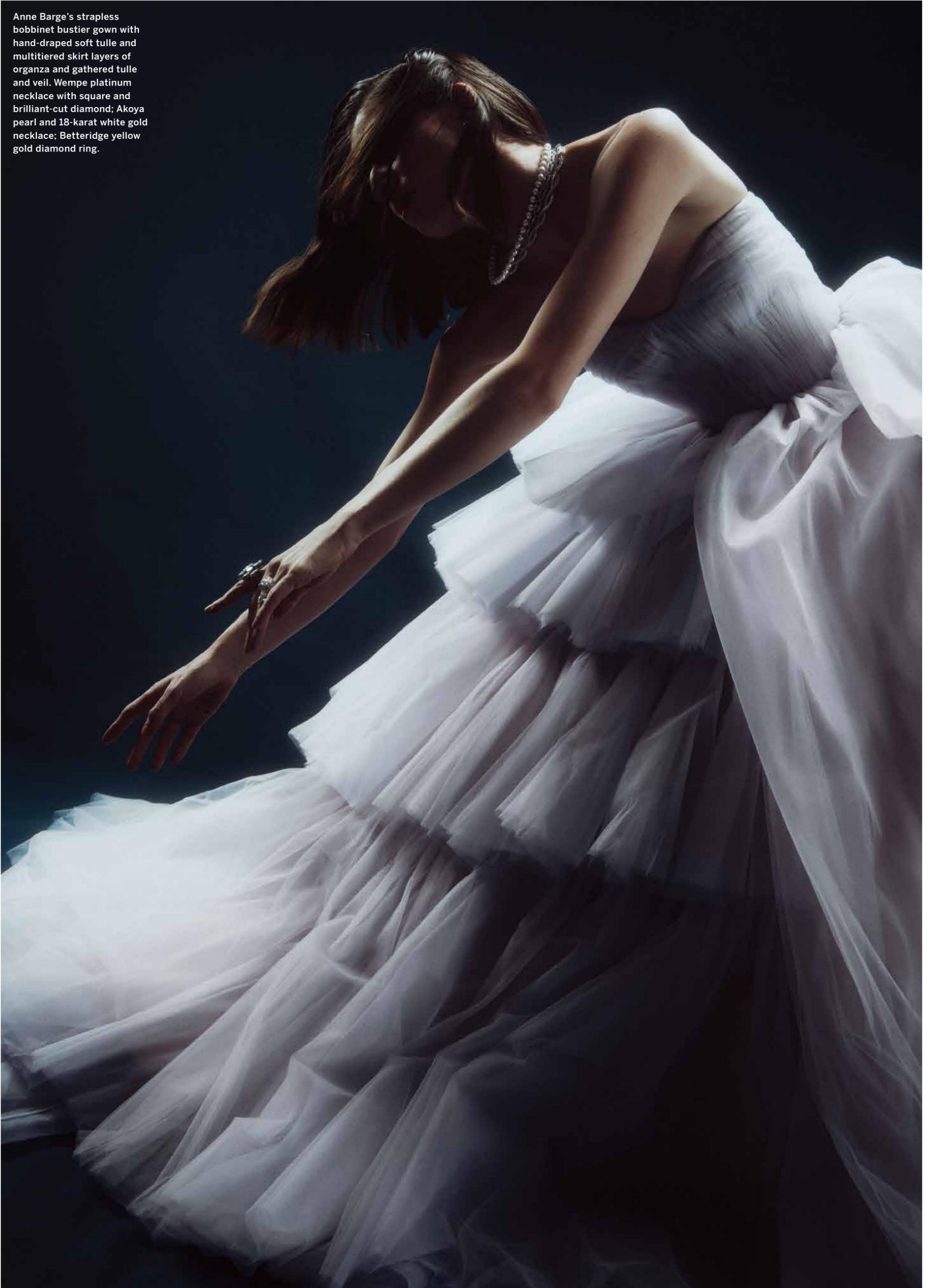
New York Luxury Bridal Preview **WWD**



Rami Ali Ali's guipure lace gown and veil. Bianta Millinery hat; Van Cleef & Arpels "À Cheval" earrings featuring diamonds set in 18-karat white gold and platinum.

WWD New York Luxury Bridal Preview

Anne Barge's strapless bobbinet bustier gown with hand-draped soft tulle and multitiered skirt layers of organza and gathered tulle and veil. Wempe platinum necklace with square and brilliant-cut diamond; Akoya pearl and 18-karat white gold necklace; Betteridge yellow gold diamond ring.



New York Luxury Bridal Preview **WWD**

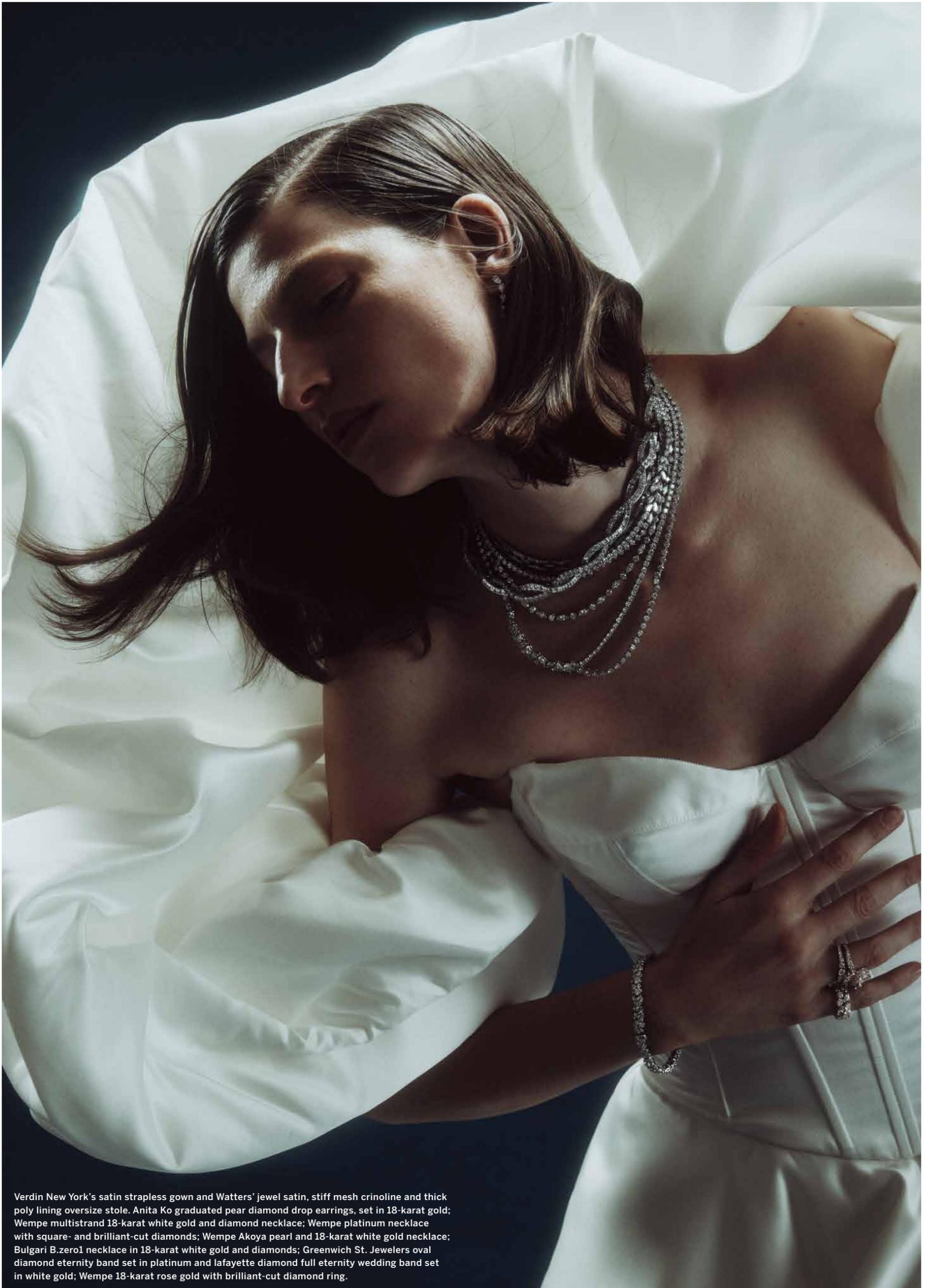
Justin Alexander Signature's Chantilly lace and beaded appliqué A-line gown. Viktor & Rolf Mariage veil; Genevieve Rose hat; Wempe's platinum necklace with square and brilliant-cut diamonds.



WWD New York Luxury Bridal Preview

Honor's layered flocked tulle gown with Chantilly lace and cellophane bows. Amsale veil; Eugenia Kim hat; Wempe 18-karat white gold earrings with pear-cut and brilliant-cut diamonds.



New York Luxury Bridal Preview **WWD**

Verdin New York's satin strapless gown and Watters' jewel satin, stiff mesh crinoline and thick poly lining oversize stole. Anita Ko graduated pear diamond drop earrings, set in 18-karat gold; Wempe multistrand 18-karat white gold and diamond necklace; Wempe platinum necklace with square- and brilliant-cut diamonds; Wempe Akoya pearl and 18-karat white gold necklace; Bulgari B.zero1 necklace in 18-karat white gold and diamonds; Greenwich St. Jewelers oval diamond eternity band set in platinum and lafayette diamond full eternity wedding band set in white gold; Wempe 18-karat rose gold with brilliant-cut diamond ring.

WWD New York Luxury Bridal Preview

Nardos' Italian lace gown with hand-embroidered satin faced organza bow and bridal buttons down the back. Jennifer Behr pearl veil headband; Van Cleef & Arpels "À Cheval" earrings featuring diamonds set in 18-karat white gold and platinum.



New York Luxury Bridal Preview **WWD**



Mark Ingram's re-embroidered Chantilly lace and mikado two-piece ensemble with lace Mandarin collar top with corset bone seaming beneath a Mikato ballskirt with "pick ups" and satin cummerbund belt. Dora Marra flower headpiece; Monvieve gloves; Wempe multistrand 18-karat white gold and diamond necklace; Wempe platinum necklace with square- and brilliant-cut diamonds; Wempe Akoya pearl and 18-karat white gold necklace; Bulgari B.zero1 necklace in 18-karat white gold and diamonds; Wempe 18-karat white gold and diamond ring, and 18-kara white gold and brilliant-cut diamond ring. Wempe 18-karat white gold and brilliant-cut diamond earrings.

Hair: **Taichi Saito** at Art Department

Makeup: **Roy Liu** at Saint Luke Artists

Model: **Jennae Quisenberry** at Wilhelmina

Casting: **Luis Campuzano**

Market editors: **Emily Mercer** and **Thomas Waller**

Fashion assistant: **Ari Stark**



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