



INTERVIEW: LUXURY HANDBAG DESIGNER MARCELA CALVET



Company/Designer Name: Marcela Calvet –

“Designer Label for Glamour” since 2008

Designer Background Summary: A legacy rooted in the Paris of the late '20s when the Maison Calvet acquired the renowned Haute Couture label Callot Soeurs. Based on this iconic history, Marcela Calvet set out to re-ignite the glamour and sophistication that was the trademark of the Callot Soeurs / Calvet brand and adapt it to the 21st century.

How did you get started?

I have always been surrounded by elegant, intelligent women whose style was impeccable. Both my grandmothers greatly influenced me. My mother's French chic of course, my older sisters' modern take on fashion, and my god-mother's, who was the first lady of Argentina, understated style. Our house was filled with photos of stylish women, in particular those that feature my Mum and god-mother with Jackie Kennedy, Queen Fabiola of Belgium, Empress Farah Diba, Princess Margaretha of Sweden. And those of my maternal grandmother with friends like Coco Chanel and Doris Duke. I would look at these photos examining every detail concerning their wardrobes. By the age of 9, I had already designed my first handbag.

What inspires your designs and what's new for 2011?

My designs are characterised by a fusion of classic lines and avant-garde sophistication. I describe it as the melding of Buenos Aires seduction with Parisian elegance. In terms of what inspires me I'd say it is beauty in all shapes and forms. My inspiration comes from persons, places, nature and works of art. I've just launched my latest handbag collection which I named 41 Avenue Montaigne, the last address of the beautiful boutique of the Callot label (Calvet), in Paris. The handbags that comprise this collection pay tribute to the world's first true fashion super-models. These women were not only glamorous but exuded a sense of self-assurance that the camera captured time and again.

How would you describe your design style, design signature and who is your targeted customer?

My design style is glamorous without being flashy. My philosophy: less is more. My signature is the marriage of seduction and sophistication. My customer is the woman who values her femininity and knows who she is. The woman who understands her own style.

What designers inspire you?

I continue to draw from the past because that is where fashion as we know it today, began. I greatly admire those who started it all: Callot Soeurs naturally, Madeleine Vionnet (who trained with Callot before launching her own label), Paul Poiret, Jaques Fath, Molyneaux, Lanvin, Cristobal Balenciaga, and of course Madame Chanel.

What obstacles did you have to overcome?

Acknowledging that they exist makes it easier to overcome them when they present themselves. Fashion is a very competitive business and you have to seize your moments by recognising an opportunity when it presents itself, no matter how small.

How did you overcome them?

You have to keep a positive attitude and believe in yourself. You must believe that what you are creating is unique, beautiful and of value to those for whom you are designing. This is not always easy to do but in my case I am often reminded by a very wise man: my husband Jonathan Richard.

What has been your greatest moment on your journey so far?

I am slowly but surely building the path that will lead me to my destination: to bring the Calvet legacy back to fashion's main stage. Right now my handbags are setting the tone and I plan to grow from there.

What has been the biggest change in your designs so far?

By incorporating lush leather handbags to my signature exotic skin collections, I am able to create designs that are relaxed, trendy and always stunning.

If money were no object what would you do right now?

I would continue to create but I would donate 100% of every cent I make while giving more of my personal time to charitable causes. I already do these things but I would like to do more.

What are the best and worst things about being a designer?

The best is that you are always creating. Dreaming new designs while finding inspiration even in what may appear to be the most insignificant thing. The worst things that can happen to a designer is to give up, to stop believing in yourself and the failure to turn your difficulties into opportunities.

Describe your typical day?

It depends on what part of the world I find myself. When I am in Newport (where I spend most of the year), I start my work day quite early; particularly now that we are in the process of opening our US Flagship boutique on famous Bellevue Avenue. But when I am in Buenos Aires or Paris I am able to mix business with pleasure and enjoy the company of family and friends. Things move at a different pace there.

What is your philosophy of life?

A great part of life consists in contemplating what we cannot cure and enjoying the simple moments. Keep a positive attitude even when you must face the greatest of adversity. There is a quote by Abert Camus which my father makes a point at reminding me from time to time: “You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life”.

If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?

I think there is a perfect time for everything. I do believe that things happen in the manner in which they are meant to happen and when they are supposed to happen. Learning is a process, achieving a goal is a journey but to me it is more fun to build the journey’s path than to actually achieve the goal. I would not do anything differently.

When will you know you have made it?

I do not think I will ever know because the roads that I continue to carve to reach my destination do not separate me from it; they are essentially a part of it.?

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