

CAROLINA HERRERA

“I love the idea of elegance and intricacy, but whether it is in a piece of clothing or a fragrance, the intricacy must appear as simplicity,” says Carolina Herrera, the 2004 CFDA “Womenswear Designer of the Year,” of the esthetic sense that has driven her during her for 25 years as a fashion designer. “I think that standard has served me well; women seem to love my clothes. I am extremely grateful for the success that they have given me.”

Spoken without a stitch of ego, the statement reveals a great deal about Carolina Herrera. Her entirely straightforward approach toward her business--which Herrera founded 25 years ago after being prompted by fashion legend Diana Vreeland and her great friend, the late Count Rudi Crespi--is perfectly balanced by her entirely impassioned feelings about her late parents; her husband Reinaldo Herrera; her four daughters, Mercedes, Ana Luisa, Carolina and Patricia; the family house in Venezuela, La Vega, built in 1590, and of course, her dogs, Gaston, and Gaspar.

Along with the newly launched *CH* fragrance, she oversees an international design firm that encompasses her signature fashion collection, a bridal collection, fragrances and accessories. Sales extend around the world (U.S., South America, Europe, the Middle East and the Far East). “I started doing this because I loved fashion,” she says. “But I had no idea what it would become. I can only say that I am very lucky my mother instilled such discipline and structure in my life!”

Herrera, born in Caracas, Venezuela, descends from a long line of Venezuelan landowners and statesman. The designer is animated in her affection for her parents, Guillermo and Maria Cristina Pacanins, admitting that she is “spoiled as far as men’s looks are concerned” because her father was so dashing. She refers with love to her mother’s “cultivated aura.” “She was very strict, but not in a loud way,” Herrera adds. “There was a time and place for everything. I have carried this idea with me all my life.”

That noble sensibility, combined with a slightly wicked charm, enabled Herrera to make the transition from her halcyon days as a chic and renowned beauty on the international scene--where she spent days with royals and nights with the Warhol crowd--to a designer with such talent and business acumen that she could not be ignored.

After receiving a positive reaction to a fashion collection she created in 1980 as “a test,” she moved with her family to New York from Caracas in 1981 and formed Carolina Herrera, Ltd. Her exquisitely detailed, expertly crafted creations were immediately in demand. Chic, sophisticated women all the world-over turned to Herrera’s label for the type of impeccable suits, dresses and gowns she instinctively knew how to design--the legacy of having grown up in a world where women wore only couture. Herrera herself had attended her first couture show, that of Cristobal Balenciaga, at the age of 13 with her grandmother.

In 1987 Herrera expanded her business with the launch of her first fragrance, *Carolina Herrera*, a heady and romantic blend of the tuberose and jasmine essences she had always worn. A men’s fragrance, *Carolina Herrera for Men*, bowed in 1991. In 1994, Herrera debuted her third scent--the floral *Floré*. Herrera credits her daughter Carolina as muse and collaborator in her fragrances, *212* and *212 MEN*, launched in 1997 and 1999. These fresh, sensual fragrances resonate a cosmopolitan fascinating reflection of the modern world. The next fragrance born from this collaboration is *CHIC*. In 2006, *212 Sexy* followed, a more delicate fragrance, using sweet and original notes. The newest fragrance *CH Carolina Herrera*, unveiled in the spring of 2009; recalls Herrera’s love of gardens transported to the heart of her daughter Carolina.

In a business climate that says “continue to do or die,” Herrera thrives. The first Carolina Herrera flagship store opened in the Fall of 2000 on Madison Avenue in a 4-story landmark building. In the spring of 2006 Carolina Herrera New York opened their second boutique in Los Angeles on Melrose Place. In April 2008 a third boutique was opened in Highland Park Village in Dallas, Texas; and in March of 2009 a fourth boutique was born in the Bal Harbour Shops in Bal Harbour, Florida. In December of 2009 our fifth flagship will open at Mandarin Oriental Las Vegas at CityCenter in Las Vegas, Nevada. The interiors of the New York, Los Angeles, Dallas, Bal Harbour and Las Vegas boutiques are designed to mirror Herrera’s sense of elegance, luxury and sophisticated modernity. In 2001, Carolina Herrera launched a lifestyle collection, *CH Carolina Herrera*, in Europe and in 2002 expanded it North America through a network of free-standing stores.

On June 2, 2008, the Council of Fashion Designers of America honored Herrera with the *Geoffrey Beene Lifetime Achievement Award*. This award was in recognition of 26 years of hard work, but by no means does this mean she is going to stop anytime soon. With countless

projects in her future including new fragrances, a breast cancer awareness campaign, and with her ongoing work as Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations, Carolina Herrera continues to bring her unique vision to the world.

“With my clothing and fragrances,” says Herrera, “I believe that it is best to be realistic, but to always mix a bit of fantasy with reality. It’s the same with life, really.”