



Designer Reem Khalil in her Laguna Beach studio.

Wedding Dress Redux

Laguna Beach designer Reem Khalil reworks already-worn wedding dresses, making them suitable for the aisle of everyday life.

By Rakhee Bhatt

Published on August 20, 2010

Dropping \$10,000 on one-time-use dress seems like a silly pursuit. Unless it's your wedding dress, of course. But few things are as heart wrenching as hanging a wedding gown in the back of the closet once the honeymoon ends. Which is why designer Reem Khalil is helping women get more milage out of their pricey wedding purchases by adding a customized, suitable-for-everyday stamp to gowns that have already gone down the aisle.

"I brought nostalgia from the big day with a modern look," Khalil, who is based in Laguna Beach, said from her booth at the town's annual Sawdust Festival, running through August 29th. Khalil, who learned to sew from her seamstress mother, cut her fashion teeth with a visual merchandising stint at Urban Outfitters before setting out on her own. Now clients bring their already-worn wares to the designer's Orange County studio where the garment is stretched to a canvas and painted by hand using all natural dyes. The dress then gets fired in a kiln to set the paint before going under Khalil's knife and becoming a more casual incarnation of its former self.



STREET READY: *A formerly white wedding dress after receiving Khalil's touch.*

"I like the romance of wedding dresses, as they're ethereal and flowing," said Khalil. But her business thrives because few women are going to wear their Cinderella-esque Vera Wang for a trip to the fro yo stand. "I can picture women wearing it on the beach or in a park," said the designer. "I designed it to be comfortable and sexy."

In addition to using natural dyes and eco-friendly fabrics including organic bamboo, cotton and silk, Khalil also adds one-of-a-kind accouterment such as antique Chinese coins for that "something old" feel. But she isn't a one-trick-pony. Khalil also creates a ready-to-wear line of dreamy, dip-dyed gear as well as a line of baby clothes.

"My travels have been an inspiration in incorporating traditional wares and textiles from other countries into my work," said Khalil, who counts her perfect Laguna Beach day as one where she can wake up and take a beachside stroll before hitting her studio. "Seeing what makes people shine is my heart's passion."

Khalil's designs are at the Laguna Beach Sawdust Art Festival through August 29th. 935 Laguna Canyon Rd., Laguna Beach. (949)494-3030. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. The designer can also be contacted directly.
http://www.lagunaartstudios.com/artistalpha/artists_k/khalil_reem/khalil.html

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