



A DESIGN PROVING GROUND

PAST WINNERS OF HARRIETT'S
PARK AVENUE FASHION WEEK
EMERGING DESIGNERS CONTEST
TALK ABOUT THEIR CAREERS 

From the Casablanca Collection by Diana Simaan Kessler



Diana Simaan Kessler

DIANA SIMAAN KESSLER

2009 HARRIETT'S PARK AVENUE FASHION WEEK EMERGING DESIGNER WINNER

Diana Simaan Kessler was born in London in 1977 and moved to Orlando 10 years later. Kessler's line, Diana Simaan Couture, focuses on couture day- and evening-wear and bridal. She is also a partner and shareholder at Baker Barrios Architects, where she became the company's youngest principal ever at

the age of 24. She has been with the company for more than 13 years.

Since winning Emerging Designer, Diana has been approached by media outlets and buyers who are eager to feature her talents. Clients come to Kessler for custom-designed dresses ranging from day-wear dresses to dresses worn on the most momentous occasions, including weddings and formal galas.

Who, or what inspired you to get into fashion?

My mother. She was involved in the fashion industry when I was a child and has always had a great sense of style. So I was lucky enough to be exposed to it at a very young age. My love for fashion probably became apparent at the age of 2 when I hopped up on the runway at a show during fashion week in London.

My love for creating made me want to become a fashion designer.

Who is your favorite designer?

There are many designers I admire. Currently, Ellie Saab and Zuhair Murad are the frontrunners.

How did winning the Emerging Designer Contest affect your design goals?

It exposed my designs to the community and helped turn my passion and hobby into a business – Diana Simaan Couture.

Tell us about your current collection, including its name.

My current collection is called "Casablanca." It's inspired by the beauty of Morocco. The dresses are colorful and romantic. Each dress has two different looks to it, making them stylish and practical.

My designs are made to make a woman feel beautiful, feminine and confident. My inspiration comes from several outlets: architecture,



Detail from the Casablanca Collection by Diana Simaan Kessler

fashion, love, my family, travel, art, the beauty of a woman and life! I always strive to make my creations classy, timeless and versatile.

What is next for you as a designer?

Being a partner and shareholder of one of the best architectural and design firms, I have always aimed for excellence. I would love to grow Diana Simaan Couture and continue to design and fabricate custom couture dresses that make a woman feel confident and beautiful. I am currently planning trunk shows around the country and, of course, Winter Park will be one of the cities on my tour.

SORAYA BERNARD

2008 HARRIETT'S PARK AVENUE FASHION WEEK EMERGING DESIGNER WINNER

Bernard studied fashion design at the Altos de Chavon School of Design in the Dominican Republic, which is affiliated with the Parsons New School of Design in New York. In 1995 she moved to Orlando to work for Walt Disney World and then for NBCUniversal.

Who, or what inspired you to get into fashion?

Fashion is in my blood and started with my mother. My brother and my nieces are also following this beautiful art.

Who are your favorite designers?

Oscar de la Renta and Valentino.

How did winning the Emerging Designer Contest affect your design goals?

My goals have always been to give the best of my designs to my clients. When I won the Winter Park Fashion Week in 2008, therefore, I knew that my designs had been recognized. That is a wonderful feeling. The Winter Park Fashion Week is a great event for any emerging designer who wants to participate and be part of the winning team.



Soraya Bernard

