

# Rena has big designs on the future

SHE made outfits for 85 weddings last year and her creations recently graced the pages of OK! magazine but it's not all about dressing the stars, local dress designer and maker Rena Zhang makes extraordinary dresses for ordinary people.

She aims to be a dress designer and maker with a difference and following her own wedding experience was inspired her to set up her business.

"When I was planning my wedding in 2005 I kept coming up against the same problems - lack of personal service, prices too high, long lead times and inflexibility. I just thought the whole thing was wrong. So setting up my own bridal dress business was the obvious thing to do."

Rena was born in China, her father was a popular local tailor and it was from him that she learned many of the basic skills. She had always wanted her own business and always had a love of fashion.

She opened her first shop in Fleet in 2005 but moved to Farnham last September and now runs her haute couture house in The Borough.

Once a year Rena brings out a new range of her unique designs to give brides-to-be some inspiration of what they might like

for their own dress and has just launched her new collection.

About 15 dresses make up the new collection and Rena explains it is often from trying on these dresses brides pick out elements they like, which are brought together to create their own bespoke design.

"It is such a personal thing and I become friends with so many brides," explained Rena, who says many of her best friends were past customers.

"We suit all budgets, we make dresses which are £800, £1,000, £1,200 and more but I would say the average is about £1,200-£1,300.

"In terms of what we do you can get similar services in London but you are talking an average price of £2,000-£3,000," Rena explained.

"The thing with weddings are there isn't a trend. Everyone is different. Brides are so individual- you can't generalise."

While bridal wear provides her greatest chunk of business Rena and her team also create outfits for the rest of the wedding party, including bridesmaid dresses, waistcoats and cravats for the men and outfits for the mothers of the bride and guests as well as evening dresses for special occasions.

Of the 85 weddings she

worked on last year, the biggest involved 12 bridesmaids and 12 ushers who were all dressed in her designs.

A mother of the bride two or three-piece outfit would cost around £350-£400 and occasion wear, for posh parties, balls or Royal Ascot for example, is priced at around £300.

"For occasion wear and evening wear classic is the best and most popular. Traditional shapes are always classier and better as you can get a lot more wear out of them.

"It is more special having something unique," explained Rena, who says she frequently sees people fiddling with ill-fitting shop-brought dress, "because it will actually fit."

Rena is now looking to expand and reach a much wider selection of clients with the aim to open two more shops, each about 20 miles in either direction of Farnham, later on in the year.

But she doesn't want to lose control by branching out too far and insists she aims to grow steadily. "The one thing I will not compromise on is our level of personal service and attention to detail."

Rena Zhang Couture-Bespoke Couture, 43A The Borough, Farnham 01252 728084 or 07791 667018 [www.renazhang.com](http://www.renazhang.com)



One of Rena Zhang's creations. (Picture by philipnashphotography)

alexandrapatrick

marketing services | strategy | copywriting

West View | Marsh Road | Ruckinge | Kent TN26 2PU

T: +44 (0) 1233 733864 E: maria.callow@alexandrapatrick.co.uk W: www.alexandrapatrick.co.uk