



Basia Zarzycka

Legendary London-based designer extraordinaire Basia Zarzycka is sweetly soft spoken, has an absolutely ethereal air about her, and creates magically delicious couture and whimsical accessories. One peek inside her shop window speaks for itself — you simply cannot pass it by without being lured, pulled, and seduced to enter. Once you have progressed beyond the threshold where an enchanted world lives, nay blooms before your very eyes! A festooned adorned kaleidoscope of color and texture bursts forth in every corner, nook, and cranny. Her fabled luxury shop at 52 Sloane Square is now a famous tourist attraction, Chelsea icon, as well as an actual art installation.

Outside, there is a changing display of handmade flowers: a halo around the window, and a permanent invitation to browsers. Inside, there is a sumptuous mix of brightly colored hats, waistcoats, shoes, and accessories, glittering with jewels, colored glass, precious stones, lace, gold, and silver. There are flowers everywhere. Look more closely and you will see a sacred opal ring, an enigmatic diamante eye patch, and a gorgeous, yet ambivalent tiara. Yes, this wondrous place is entirely and forever spellbinding!



Basia graduated from the University of London Goldsmiths College with a BA in embroidery and textiles, and then went on to gain her Masters of Arts (Fashion and constructed textiles) from Birmingham, her hometown. Her present shop opened in 1999 where she designs for clients ranging from Foreign Royalty to International Pop Stars and some of the biggest names in Hollywood.

Basia oversees all commissioned projects from conception through completion, maintaining the highest standard of workmanship. A sprite team of pattern cutters, seamstresses, embroiderers, and traditional artisans work to the exacting

criterion that, she believes, sets her work apart. Highly innovative, she successfully introduces the latest technology into design combined with the most beautiful materials, both antique and contemporary.

If you are ever so lucky to be invited to pop in for a cup of English brewed tea in Basia's home, her private realm, you will be gently greeted by the lady herself wearing a floor-length gown and matching coat with a wispy concoction of vivid pink feathers in her hair. You will then be guided up the white painted steps guarded by clipped bay trees and through the glossy black painted front door, leaving far behind hum drum regulated life.

The entire place feels as though it is from a time gone by, as if it were the draped dressing room of some theatrical, operatic diva. She leads you through the treasures of her four-story home in stately progression, before sweeping up an armful of tiny terrier dogs and returning to her nearby studio and back to work.

What drives this fascinating woman to create? What mesmerizes her? Sparks her imagination? Where do her ideas come from and just what inspires her? Let's ask the creative sorceress herself... listen as she sheds illumination upon us, here is what Basia has to say.

"I am in love with flowers and fauna, Polish Folklore, my collections of early 19th century, and beautiful Victorian hand-worked or embroidered antique costumes and textiles, nature, Wooden Architecture, and Marie Antoinette, all of which have a great influence in my work."



I surround myself with collections of eclectic unusual findings (things such as exquisite buttons, dressmaker's dummies, colorful Victorian silk ribbon embroidery, antique rosaries, and delicate vintage silk corsages) and display these treasures in a 3-D collage ... a kind of freestanding installation, on any surface I can find. I am most fortunate to own over 2,000 Victorian flower-making presses and cutters that include every flower and leaf one can imagine.

My installations are to be found everywhere I am ... in the kitchen, drawing room, bedroom, and hallways of my home and studios. I am constantly changing these displays whilst working on my projects. I do not produce seasonal collections twice a year ... as I am always creating and making and working either on bespoke orders or new creations for my shop. These special and very personal displays of 'object trouve,' which are ever-changing and evolving, inspire me to create and execute new color combinations and textures within my work, whether it be a pair of English Floral Garden Shoes or a diadem and jewelry for the film The Duchess. My ever-changing 3-D displays, if that's what you wish to call them, are my secret to coming up constantly with fresh new ideas.

In my shop I am able to share this way of working with everyone as there is a huge installation of jewelry, tiaras, hats, shoes, and feminine accessories that I have created and designed on the ground floor and the wedding and evening gowns on another floor. There are always heavenly scented Tuber Rose candles lit every day from morning till dusk, and beautiful ethereal music in the background with layers of birds singing."

So there you have it, Basia in the round, so to speak, where she lives in a world of pure fantasy, a magical mystery tour for sure, second to none, unplanned, spontaneous, and only a heart beat away!

Indulge your every fantasy and whim. Please feel free to visit her Web site at basia-zarzycka.com for a moment of extravagance; share with her and be inspired by her collection.

