

Tara LaTour breathed new life into bridal-wear with her thesis collection; Sherene Russell finds out what inspired her to create the perfect gown for every girl's fairytale wedding.

Minneapolis born Tara LaTour showed a desirably elegant collection that had the women in the audience excited with anticipation at Parsons The New School For Design. Designing bridal-wear has always been a passion for this creative insider and from a young age she would spend years perfecting the art of design; creating every girls dream of getting their hands on the perfect fairytale dress.

Of course, she never failed to impress the audience with her gowns, gracing the stage in whimsical fabrics in the sheerest chiffons and perfect shades. LaTour's thesis collection was inspired by a small island in the middle of Lake Waconia in Minnesota where her grandparents met and ironically, when the ballroom was rebuilt on the mainland, her parents met there to. Some may call it fate and some may call it a true fairytale love story. Not only was it her experience of love that inspired a collection full of enchantment and mystery, but it was the women in her family that motivated her to capture the power and elegance that sits behind the collection.

The first dress shown on the model encapsulated the grace and beauty of the perfect princess. Called the Angela, the base of this dress is made in raw silk and crinkled silk chiffon and hand dyed to perfection in midnight blue. The belt is made of twill, tulle, chiffon and braided silk; the perfect ensemble for a breathtakingly gorgeous bridal gown.

Her second dress, the Luella, had every girl in the audience gasping for breath. Made of silk jersey and metallic crinkled chiffon, the drapery on this gown had the audience starrng in amazement. The neckline, made of silk organza and pleated tulle, was not the only thing that made this dress effective, it was the smallest details like the hand braided straps and bleached peacock feathers that were graced eloquently over the models shoulder. And let's not forget the sweetest dress of all, the Amanda. Made in silk duchess satin with a silk taffeta and tulle treatment, this was the one dress that had every woman muttering, 'that's the one.'

When asked about her love for designing wedding dresses, LaTour admitted it was all down to her grandmother. 'I come from a very supportive and encouraging family and that continually inspires me to go forward. I first got interested in wedding gowns when I watched my grandmother sew my aunts wedding dress. I used to take the scraps and make smaller versions for dolls. She was an amazing woman to watch; she was a sewing bandit, a painter and a love of nature, and always encouraged using my creative brain. She defiantly passed that onto me. She was also the one who gave me my first sewing machine.'

Without a doubt, LaTour needs no introduction. Her collection has already been spotted by fashion insiders and by no means we're guaranteed to see her collection in the chicest wedding boutiques in New York very soon. Like LaTour says, the world is her Oyster. 'I am a true believer that when you do something, you do it right. And that is what I plan to do!'



Imagine Such Creativity



Thesis week at Parsons sees student upon student stand nervously in front of a panel of judges, presenting what can only be described as garments with the perfect 'hanger appeal'. That is not how Hazel Lubbock would describe the collection from graduate Gilda Su.

Su produced a collection brimming with such creativity and passion that it instantly stood out from the rails of monotonous clothing. Inspired by *The Magic Faraway Tree*, by Enid Blyton, it is no wonder that the garments have character.

'Imagine having an enchanted wood as an extension of your backyard,' says Su, 'with a magic tree in the middle of it, where fairy folk live and one gets to visit exciting lands at the top of the tree each week, have amazing adventures, eat pop biscuits and google buns, and slide down moonface's slippery slip'

You can tell that Su had fun making these clothes; she wanted to create clothing that might spark a memory of a child's innocence and love for adventure. Her clothes embody the emotions of growing up reading these books, and imagining a world of colour, fun, and make-believe.

This, and the theme of dependency and tension lead to her using various pattern and fabric manipulations, giving each item a unique silhouette. Pleats, multiple tucks, gathers and tiers are used to show how one thing cannot exist without the support of another. These innovative - yet wearable - garments are versatile in their own right, and pixie-ish hats inject a sense of mischief.

Su is particularly proud of the collection balloon print jersey romper. Having spent time carefully draping and cutting the pattern, the end result looked exactly how she'd imagined on paper. 'There are so many different ways to wear this piece to create different looks and silhouettes,' she says, 'it's the ultimate fun item to run around in and you can just be whoever you want to be in it.'

Obsessed about design, Su aspires to one-day work for Japanese greats such as Rei Kawakubo, Junya Watanabe and Jun Takahashi. It's easy to see how these designers have influenced her, 'I could die a happy person if I was buried in *Comme des Garçons*,' says Su.

Su has fantastic style, wearing cutting-edge clothes from the designers she idolises. 'I would have a closet full of couture, mix those pieces with something more *avant garde* and top it off with a Stephen Jones hat,' says Su, dreaming of her future, 'I'd try to become friends with Anna Piaggi so that I could ask her where she buys her canes from and then I'd fall sleep on a Christian Lacroix dress.'

The future remains uncertain, although expect to see Su setting up a store in her homeland Singapore or her love, Tokyo. In the mean time she'll be in New York re-making her entire collection in a more subdued colour-palette, and then taking both versions to stores to sell.