

## Elizabeth Emanuel Creates Couture Label

● The designer who created Princess Diana's wedding dress refers to her new couture line as "salvaged luxury."

BY FIONA MA

**LONDON** — What do Priyanka Chopra, Cher and Princess Diana have in common? They've all been dressed by Elizabeth Emanuel. While her name is most often mentioned in the same sentence as the late princess, there's a lot more to Emanuel than the famous, 25-foot-long wedding

gown she created with her then-husband David Emanuel.

In the years since that iconic wedding dress, Emanuel has kept rather quiet, working on a variety of retail projects, designing for the theater and building up a high-profile clientele for her one-off designs. Now she's launching a couture line named Elizabeth, Paris 1902.

"I think of it more as launching with a full collection, whereas before I'd do a capsule collection and a few outfits. This time, I've created pants, shirts, gowns etc.," she said, adding that she added the Paris 1902 for

aesthetic flourish. "I started doing calligraphy and I found something that said Paris 1902 and it just looked nice. It doesn't really mean anything."

Emanuel describes the collection as "discovering a future vintage outfit," and, to wit, her inspirations are mined from history, including Virginia Woolf's novel "Orlando," vintage Lanvin silhouettes and the film "Death in Venice."

During an interview at her basement studio in Maida Vale, she talked about her use of historical garment techniques such as cartridge pleating and of fabrics that aren't traditionally seen in couture.

"I like to call it 'salvaged luxury.' It's taking something like rough sacking material and combining it with beautiful embroidery, or using very fine muslins and cottons, which we use a lot of, and embellishing them with stamping and embroidery and draping them in different ways," she said.

She's also prioritized animal welfare and keeping her carbon footprint low, so fabrics are made from, among more traditional fibers, pineapple, hemp and nettles. She makes fabric dyes herself from avocado stone and a selection of 100 different kinds of teas.

There are cotton chemises, shirts stamped with the brand logo done in calligraphy or in a stylized stencil print, sculptural blazers with sparkling embellishments and a corset with pointed bra cups. She's made skirts in all shapes, some drape and skim the leg while others billow from the hips with intricate ruffles and pleated shapes.

The pieces are rich in detail and feature artfully unfinished hems with heavy draping channeling a distinct vintage aesthetic.

Emanuel has also designed a series of gowns such as a draped gold lamé bustier with a black asymmetric skirt that Chopra wore in the Jonas Brothers' comeback music video "Sucker."

Dressing celebrities is nothing new to her. Recently, Cher wore the label's Rock Star Jacket to the VH1 Trailblazer Honors. The designer said the jacket, which is short, with glittering embellishment, has been popular among musicians. Emanuel has also dressed the likes of Helena Bonham Carter, Joan Collins and Elizabeth Taylor and now she wants to create designs for one and all.

"These are beautiful clothes for anybody to put on and to use irrespective of age and gender. It sounds corny, but you are the star of your own movie of life so everything is about you. You should wear anything you want and not be afraid to try on different looks. We've got some very interesting pieces that you can put together in your own way so it makes an entirely new creation," she said.

Emanuel isn't worried about the difficult retail climate either. For the designer, couture is a covetable investment, just like art. Her most accessible pieces, she said, will be stamped silk scarves. Emanuel said she is still confirming price points of the collection.

Eventually, she wants to expand into ready-to-wear.

"There definitely is a place for that, much like Ralph & Russo. This is a starting point because this is where we can have the pure signature of the collection. With ready-to-wear, you have so many other things to consider such as the price point, but with this we can make anything we want, and then think of the prices later."

Elizabeth Emanuel

