

Under Cover

THE VIABILITY OF VEILS

Veils are not a cover up! Bridal veils do not hide, they enhance! Once a necessary symbol of purity and commitment, now a beautiful accessory that crowns the bride, veils maintain their majesty in the world of bridal. An interview with Cheryl King, the famous Veil Lady from North Carolina, helps us uncover the viability of veils.



What can your designs realistically provide for the bride?

My designs complete the vision of the "bride." Whether she chooses to go traditional or contemporary, most brides still want to look like a "bride." We offer the ability to take the wedding gown designer's view of a bride and transform the total image to fit the personality of the bride by adding uniqueness to an off the rack gown.

A bride may fall in love with the train on the gown, but how many wedding photos actually show the train, and how many show her face? Her face is in virtually all the photos, while the train is in but a few. The headpiece and veil are the ultimate accessory. In the movie "Steel Magnolias," Olympia Dukakis' character says something wonderful, something to the effect that "what separates us from animals is our ability to accessorize."

Have veils always accompanied wedding gowns?

The veil is one of the oldest wedding traditions. It represented youth and virginity. Early Christian brides wore either a blue veil to symbolize the Virgin Mary, or a white veil for purity. The early Greek and Romans chose red veils, symbolizing fire, to ward off evil spirits. Entire wedding parties would often wear veils to confuse evil spirits so that they would not know who the bride was and harm her. In 1799, Martha Washington's granddaughter, Nellie Custis, was seen through a lace curtain by her fiancé. He complimented her beautiful appearance, and she wore a white lace scarf in his honor at their wedding. Today the bride chooses her headpiece and veil to complete the essence of the bride.

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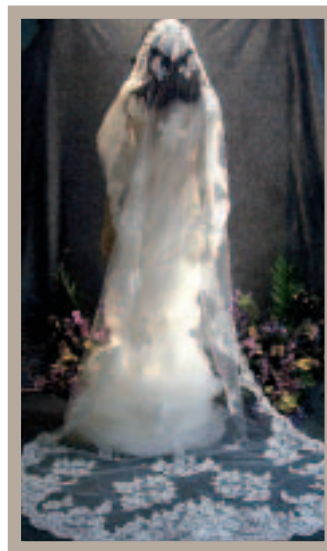


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How does a veil contribute to the reality of the bride's fantasy?

We deliver image creation and fulfillment for the bride. Many brides will experience very strong emotions when the perfect wedding gown is found, and often give in to tears. But when a veil is put on her head, her perception of her self image is altered. You see, when we think of someone, we picture their face. When a headpiece and/or veil is placed upon the head, it alters her look. Therefore, I would estimate that 90% of the brides I have worked with feel that this selection is much harder than the gown selection. I hear the same statement from my brides when they find the perfect veil, "NOW I feel like a bride." This does not happen in the gown alone.



Has the onset of Reality TV shows promoting marriage influenced brides?

Reality shows are only reality in that "real" people are the main characters, not actors. However, they may become a reality to today's bride because she typically has not done this before and has no prior experience to base her decisions on. In seeing all the grandeur on TV, I feel that it may alter what was originally

their dream wedding. It therefore becomes more of a production and a formality than an expression of love, and they often are not satisfied within their means. The difference between what the average bride sees and can afford to make her reality often creates either dissatisfaction, when she feels she has to settle for less, or financial debt when she chooses not to compromise.

What do you see in store for the future of the bridal industry?

The reality is that there will always be a market for bridal attire, but the midlevel seems to be disappearing. Most brides seem to either want couture or bargain. The advent of the big box chain and their billions of dollars spent on advertising, as well as the Internet, contributes to serious price shopping. The midlevel stores have a tough time competing. I see more designer knockoffs of lower quality and price on the forefront.

What three words would you use to describe your designs?

Well, I have to chuckle at this, because my mother and I have always jokingly referred to the business as "Veils R Us." However, I would have to say the following: elegant, handcrafted, art.

What would you most like to see change in the industry?

The lack of using headpieces and veils in the editorials has caused a major financial loss to every bridal salon I meet with. The brides use the magazines as a bible, if you will, and when they see no veils they want no veils. This has a financial loss of anywhere from \$150 to \$500 or more for each and every bridal gown sale. Retailers depend on the add-on sales, and this is the highest priced item in most cases. This adds up to many thousands of dollars per year in lost revenue. After all, when the bride looks at her wedding photos, the train is in very few shots but her face is in virtually all of them! 📷

Words from Cheryl King, a.k.a. The Veil Lady

Vocal About Veils

The bride is compelled to honor the marriage with her own sense of style in a way that reflects the gravity of her commitment. And yet the bride still wants to be viewed as a "bride" on her wedding day. Most view the wedding as the one and only time they will get to look like a "bride." Typically, in our culture, this remains a formal gown in a shade of white with a train and a veil. The differences through the generations are in the detailing: the sleeves, neckline, fabrics, silhouettes, embellishments. With the gown and veil being a shade of white, the eyes are drawn to the color contrast of the face. Our goal, when working one-on-one with our brides, is to have the guests say, "she is beautiful!", not "what a beautiful gown or veil."

We train through seminars on how to best flatter the bride's facial and body features, as well as the lines of the gown and the formality of the wedding and reception. The veil should end at a natural stopping point on the bride and the gown. This usually is either the waist, or better yet, slightly longer than the train. We encourage our retailers to measure the length of the veil from where the headpiece sits on the bride's head. It only takes a few moments, gives the perfect silhouette and pampers the bride.

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