

Fashion That Turns Heads

A look behind Maria Pinto's Spring 2009 collection

By Ashleigh Eisbrenner



Maria Pinto

Recognized for her sophisticated, timeless blend of form and function with styles that grace a woman's curves and move seductively with her body to flatter her figure, Chicago's finest, Maria Pinto continues to turn heads with her recent revealing of her spring 2009 collection—a mix of luxurious fabrics and seductive styles.

The collection is complete with ruffle and lace elegance; glamorous, cinch-waisted dresses; functional business attire; and luxurious dazzling evening wear. Colors range from pure white, to pastels, to exuberant brights, all the way to black. She proves that her style is not only fresh but effortlessly fashion forward.

Maria has dressed celebrities from Oprah Winfrey to actresses Sharon Stone and Andy McDowell, but she's most notable for recently designing beautiful, functional dresses for first lady Michelle Obama, such as the purple sheath she wore on the night of President Barack Obama's democratic primary victory speech. Maria's entrance-making garments are the result of her perfection in and sophisticated attention to detail, draping and structure.

It's understandable she's the recipient of many prestigious design awards, including the Gold Coast Fashion Award, which previously honored Donna Karan, Bill Blass and Anne Klein. The 2009 year holds another handful of award ceremonies honoring Maria and her countless accomplishments. She is a graduate of the School of the Art Institute in Chicago and has also studied at New York's Parson's School of Design and the Fashion Institute of Technology.

View her breathtaking designs at Saks Fifth Avenue, Barney's New York, Takashimaya and other fine boutiques as well as her personal boutique on Jefferson Street in Chicago. See firsthand how Maria marries luxurious European textiles with fabulous American design.

We at the Suburban Woman are flattered that Maria Pinto took some time out of her busy day to tell us about her just showcased spring collection and what it's like working with Michelle Obama.

About Your Collection

Suburban Woman: What was your inspiration for your latest collection?

Maria: My fall 2009 collection pays homage to the influence of the Rococo movement throughout history, as well as the continuous curve.

SW: Why did this inspire you and how did it play into the collection?

Maria: I was transfixed by the idea of making a continuous curve within the collection. I wanted a never ending line that forms and enhances collars, pleats and the draping on the back of a dress, coat or skirt.

These design components are best personified in the Petra dress and Prudence gown. In a juxtaposition of control and release, these pieces are cinched and fitted in the front and voluminous in the back.

SW: What is your favorite piece from the collection?

Maria: I love the Petra dress in indigo parkway wool.

SW: What has kept you committed to the Chicago market for all these years?

Maria: Not only is Chicago my home, but the city has given tremendous support, friendships and inspiration through the years.

SW: What important advice would you give to women about their wardrobe?

Maria: My biggest piece of advice for women is to start early and build a great wardrobe and save up for well-made and well-tailored dresses that best accentuate your body type. A solid wardrobe is an investment, and the pieces that I create have that quality and workmanship that is timeless.

About Your Clients

SW: What is your goal when a woman walks into your boutique?

Maria: My clients, whether highly visible or school teachers, are women with style and substance who want to look and feel good without devoting too much time and





energy to fashion. My goal is to empower them. I want them to feel invincible when they walk into a room.

SW: When did you first meet Michelle Obama?

Maria: Five years ago Michelle was introduced to me by a loyal client.

SW: What has it been like to work with her?

Maria: Working with her has been a true pleasure.

SW: Is there anything exciting we should know about you, coming up in the near future?

Maria: In addition to the debut of my new fall 2009 collection, I have some exciting events coming up in the Spring: On March 12, The Anti-Defamation League will be honoring me with a Woman of Achievement Award at their 16th Annual Women of Achievement Awards Dinner at the Fairmont Chicago; on April 23rd, School of the Art Institute's Department of Fashion Design will be presenting me with the Legend of Fashion Award at their event, The Walk; and I'm thrilled to be honored by the Women's Board of the American Cancer Society with the ACS Visionary Award, featuring a live runway show of my fall 2009 collection on May 6 in Chicago. I'm very grateful for the warm response that I've received.

