



# Let Envy

WOW THEM WITH YOUR CHAPEAU

BY CINDI R. MACIOLEK



Every bride is the center of attention on her wedding day. Yet, one of the many things running through her mind as she walks down the aisle is, will everyone think "Wow!" when they see me?

While each bride must find the exact outfit that fits her personality, her dreams and the venue, a number of brides have chosen to wear a work of art by custom milliner Sally Faith Steinmann that would make the shoes in Carrie Bradshaw's closet jealous.

For years, brides, mothers of the bride, mothers of the groom and wedding guests have turned to Steinmann to bring to life their visions of chapeau fantasy. Although hats are not an



everyday accessory in today's busy world, just the thought of seeing a woman in a hat conjures up the ideals of elegance, class, confidence and maybe just a little bit of fun.

"Wow!" is exactly what Jana von Bramer said when she first opened the box with her custom bridal hat from Maggie Mae Designs, Steinmann's design house named after her favorite cat. "The hat was THE hit of the wedding. My husband and I were planning to marry in England, so I wanted a proper English hat. My initial conversation with Sally clinched the deal for me. She really cares because she loves each and every one of her hats. She knows how special they make the client feel. Her enthusiasm and creativity set her miles apart from other hat establishments."

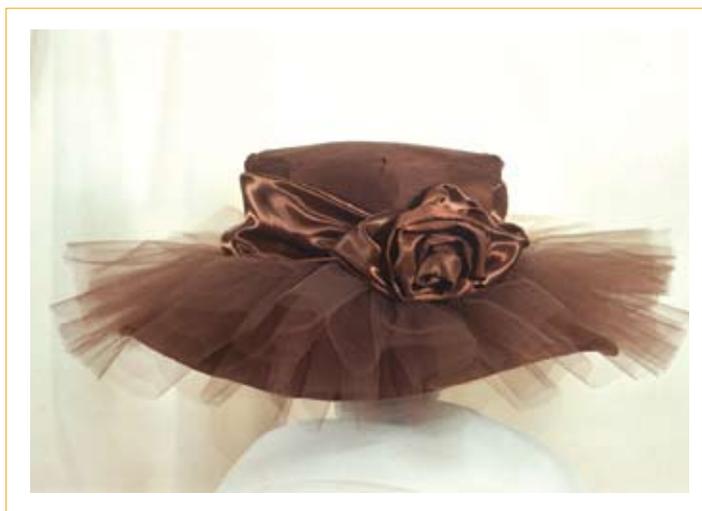
Sometimes, a magical hat like one from Steinmann, can make you say things you hadn't anticipated. "The hat made me feel so special," said von Bramer, "while exchanging vows, I mentioned ... 'but don't touch my hat.' That became the joke throughout the reception."

"Wow!" is what Steinmann thought the first time she started making hats. "My mom had given me a pattern for making a felted hat," said Steinmann. "It was enormous! The trick was to put it in the dryer on high heat. It shrunk down to a normal size. I'd never seen anything like it before. I was hooked! I felt it needed a little decoration, so I added my own personal twist to it. After a bit, I started to play with fabric and the rest, as they say, is history."

Custom millinery is definitely a dying breed in America,

but Steinmann's skill rivals that of any British or European source. A custom made hat is not simply an adornment, but something that touches the spirit of the wearer. "I was searching for a hat that would not only match my ivory wedding gown but be unique as well," said bride Angel Krasnegor. "I liked the idea of creating a hat from scratch that would make a wonderful keepsake from our special day."

Part of Krasnegor's motivation for wearing a hat on her wedding day was protecting her fair skin from the heat of the summer sun during her outdoor celebration. Her goal was to remain radiant and not wilt in the scorching temperatures, but to also alleviate the worry of what to do with her hair. "Dealing with Sally was one of the most enjoyable aspects of planning the wedding and I was proud to don her creation. She was pleasant, personable, and enthusias-



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tic. It was obvious that she cared very deeply about turning out a quality item."

Steinmann turns out her hats in the studio of the house where she was born and raised. Her Cape Cod, Massachusetts setting is inspiring and calming at the same time. A Wellesley grad, Steinmann thought she would find a career in film. However, once she caught the bug, thanks to her Mom, she felt as if she reconnected with activities she did as a child.

Initially, Steinmann sold her hats in stores and worked



through wholesale buyers, but “I wasn’t able to connect with the person who actually bought the hat,” Steinmann said. “I wanted to start working with women directly. I put up a website, and my customers found me. The connections that develop are astounding, moving and personal. I seem to attract women that understand that my hats are like sculptures and they love the personal attention that they get as we create something special for them.”

“Sally is an artist who can create anything you can dream. She made a very special day for me more than just special,” said Kathy Schmoltdt, a mother of the bride who had Steinmann design the chapeau for her daughter’s wedding day. “I had plans to wear a hat and had shopped for one but was unable to find one that complemented my dress. Once I found Sally on her website, I called her. Before we hung up, it seemed as though I had known Sally all my life and I knew she would design exactly what I envisioned. Sally’s hat was perfect!”

Louise Luke Rohde needed something to match the soft apricot dress she purchased for her son’s wedding in an elegant castle just outside Paris. “Sally was able to pick up a trace of the dress color and we found a large hat which was flattering,” said Rohde. “Sally spun her magic. I was thrilled with the hat. We grown-ups should play more and express ourselves more and that hat made me feel wonderful.” Attesting to the artistic nature of Steinmann’s hats, Rohde hangs it in her dining room as a reminder of that special day.

Lorraine McDade and her husband were planning a vow renewal ceremony, and for her, a hat was part of the picture. “I cried when I opened the box. It was the most magnificent hat I have ever seen,” said McDade. “I put it on and it was a magical experience. It transformed me. I felt regal and elegant. When my family and friends heard that I was wearing a hat, they truly thought I had lost my mind. Hats were not in style at all. Once they saw it, they completely understood why I wanted it. It stopped people in their tracks all evening. Strangers would tell me how spectacular I looked and asked me where I purchased it.



During our photo session on the winding staircase in the main lobby of the hotel, people were hanging over the railing just gushing over it. It was incredible.”

Of course, Steinmann’s magnificent hats are not just for the bridal party. Guests can get into the act, too. When Jennifer C. Berardi was looking for a hat for her girlfriend’s wedding, she turned to Steinmann to purchase her very first hat. “I just knew when I spoke with Sally that she was the right choice for me,” said Berardi. “I have worn the hat to several different occasions and it never fails, it is the talk of the party. People can’t stop commenting on it.”

The design process is extremely interactive, since Steinmann wants the client as involved in the design as she is. Therefore, it can take from several weeks to several months to get to the finished hat. Generally, the client finds the Maggie Mae Designs website, and communication begins via telephone or email. Photos and swatches will go back and forth as the discussions continue, until at last the vision comes to life.

“There’s no set way the process develops,” said Steinmann. “Each customer has her own thoughts and ideas. I try to match the fabric of the dress as closely as possible. I think of it like a palette of paints and a brush. That’s the fun and art of designing each hat. There’s lots of creativity for both of us. It’s like a treasure hunt to find just the right everything!”

The cost for all this personal attention is rather affordable, with most designs priced from several hundred dollars to just under \$1,000. The more elaborate the design, the higher the price. Although she displays numerous styles on her website, everything can be customized, from design to color to trim. To see her creations, visit [www.maggiemae.com](http://www.maggiemae.com).

In addition to wedding hats, Steinmann’s creations have seen the likes of the Kentucky Derby, the Breeder’s Cup, Royal Ascot, Red Hat Society and numerous other social festivities.

When it’s your turn to make an impact, wow them with your hat!