



Architect of Fashion

SUZY KOHOUT

Prague fashion designer Jiřinia Florianová entered the world of fashion along a route that led from the Prague castle to the cutting room. The connection is evident in her work.

Florianová's fashion line, Linie, concentrates on dresses for weddings and other formal occasions. She says, "I try to create simple, clean lines and uncomplicated patterns, suited for a classic look, a look that doesn't change too seasonally." It's a look that has won favor with a significant number of clients, ranging from one-timers who want to dress up for a unique occasion to singers and concert artists at the National Theater who require a continuing supply of formal wear.

Florianová has designed women's fashion for 17 years, but she started out in the world of design as an architect, a graduate of the architecture faculty of Prague's technical college. Her early employment was on various architecture projects for the state, most in Prague. Her work focused on renovations of the Prague Castle and the reconstruction and restoration of other historical monuments.

Pure pragmatism directed her attention to fashion design in the '70s. "During those days seamstresses practically didn't exist," Florianová recalls. "It seemed as though





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there was never anything stylish to wear and those who wanted well-designed clothes had to make the clothes themselves." Thus motivated, Florianová began sewing and knitting. Self taught she met other women of similar interests. In 1978, she and a group of acquaintances produced a winter fashion show in Prague at Bertramce.

What began as a hobby for the young Prague designer developed into her profession. In 1984 she enrolled in the Střední textilní škole v Brně (Center of Textile Studies in Brno) to broaden her technical knowledge. Among the difficulties she had to overcome in the 1980s, Florianová recalls, was the basic task of finding fabrics of sufficient quality to support her designs. Another was overcoming the conservatism of existing outlets unwilling to accept what were, at the time, her innovative ideas.

Florianová entered fashion shows and exhibitions. She won attention from women's and fashion magazines. Then, in 1989 the Velvet Revolution changed everything. The designer was then emboldened to open her own workshop and store, and the business took hold immediately.

At her current shop on Křemencová street, near Národní Třída, Florianová and her staff design and manufacture a variety of creations and offers chic accessories to accompany them.

Florianová's outlet features dresses from the rack, but the designer is glad to create something especially for the customer and her occasion. The workshop is an integral part of the store itself, an arrangement that encourages clients to participate in the dressmaking process from start to finish.

"I love it when I have new material in front of me and am anticipating what will be created from it," says Florianová. "I always keep my model in mind first and create something suitable for her tastes. Then I create using fine fabrics of different hues and shades to compliment the model. And in the end I might further ornament the dress with hand stitched embroidery, beads or imitation diamonds," she explains.