

DUO SPEAKS EXCLUSIVELY WITH

# Rachel Gilbert

Deluxe fabrics and embellished evening frocks are a signature of Rachel Gilbert's style. The Sydney designer, who once worked for American heiress Nicky Hilton, is making a name for herself among the style elite.

See for yourself why her designs are turning heads at [rachelgilbert.com](http://rachelgilbert.com).

INTERVIEW BY CARLA CARUSO



Imagine working for one of the Hilton girls. You know, the all-American, great-granddaughters of Hilton Hotels founder Conrad Hilton. Think parties, private jets and fabulous wardrobes.

Well, Sydney designer Rachel Gilbert can make that claim to fame. She was previously based in the Big Apple as a head designer for Nicky Hilton's (that of Paris's sister) fashion label. And, yes – it was every bit as glamorous as you could imagine. “Life in New York was fast and fabulous,” Gilbert recalls. “Although I worked long hours and hard, there were definitely great perks to my job. I travelled to places like Las Vegas frequently in private jets

Since returning to local shores, Gilbert hasn't looked back. She made a splash with her own label at Rosemount Australian Fashion Week three years ago, making her mark with luxury fabrics and hand-beaded evening frocks. (The designer could double for a catwalk model herself with her glossy, dark mane and leggy proportions.)

After signing with leading public relations agencies in Sydney and London, Gilbert was able to secure high-calibre editorial from the world's press (including rave reviews). Her threads have also since been worn by a who's who of stars – think homegrown songstress Delta Goodrem, US

Looking back, Gilbert says moving to New York and then starting her own label took guts, but the experiences have paid off handsomely. After all, she was taught to take risks. “The bigger the risk, the bigger the rewards. You may fail but you can always learn through your mistakes,” Gilbert says sagely.

And, if she could go back in time – to when she was a student at the Whitehouse Institute of Design – what would she tell herself? “Wow, everything!” Gilbert says, laughing. “I'd say: ‘Go for it. There are so many opportunities out there to do whatever you like. Have confidence and drive and you will amaze yourself!’”



*Life in New York was fast and fabulous. I travelled to places like Las Vegas frequently in private jets and attended all the exclusive parties!*

and attended the exclusive parties.” Not bad for a homegrown Aussie girl, brought up with sun, sand and surf, not bright lights and A-list celebrities.

Still, she took life in the city that never sleeps in her stylish stride. “New York is great because there is always a new place to go to for whatever mood you are in. I loved every minute of it!” Gilbert enthuses.

Working for Hilton also, surprisingly, was a breeze, according to the young Aussie designer. “Nicky is really down-to-earth. We really shared a similar design view, so it was very easy and fun working together.”

Of course, Gilbert was always destined to do great things. Before her Big Apple move, she kicked off her design education at Sydney's prestigious Whitehouse Institute of Design and later honed her craft with the best in the biz, working for designers Lisa Ho and Peter Morrissey.

country pop singer Taylor Swift and, of course, the Hilton sisters.

Labelled a Cleo Magazine ‘designer of the year’ only helped to propel Gilbert's career further forwards. Her wares are now stocked in more than 100 boutiques nationally, as well as in the US, Greece, Dubai, the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan. Phew! As well, her clothing can be found at the prestigious online boutique, [net-a-porter.com](http://net-a-porter.com).

Plus, she still gets to whisk around the world on occasion (though not on private jet this time around). “I travel a lot for work – China and India, for sourcing and production, and I also travel to the US and UK a lot for sales and business ventures,” Gilbert explains. “We are starting to work with department stores in Turkey and Dubai, which will most likely be my next trip. That's exciting!”

So, does she ever feel like pinching herself when she sees big-name celebs wearing her label? “Sure! There are many surreal moments I have had in my career and I am very grateful to have experienced so much.” Still, Gilbert adds: “I get just – or, more excited – seeing a stranger in my designs though.” Gilbert's list of favourite outfits that she feels most herself in comes as a bit of a surprise – “a dress and flats or jeans and a white T-shirt”. They're a far cry from her label's glamorous signature style – no pointy heels or sequins! – though we're sure whatever Gilbert wears, it'll be with a sense of style.

As for what you'll find her getting up to when she's not working? “Interior design, Pilates, reading, meditating, travelling and spending time with my family and friends,” she says, a smile playing at her lips. No doubt all of these passions – in some way – imprint themselves on her eye-catching designs.