

Gina Foster Millinery

Five minutes walk from the noise and bustle of High Street Kensington is the tranquil setting of Kensington Church Walk where, in May, Gina Foster opened her first millinery boutique. Here is Georgian London at its best, leafy, elegant, well spoken and rather wealthy. A perfect position for a classic millinery designer producing a modern yet feminine collection of hats with high quality customised service. The space is small but very light, with an interior that is stylish and yet oozes classic comfort.

In the seven years since gaining an HNC at Kensington and Chelsea College, under Kirsten Scott, Gina achieved a great deal. She was that one student who, after graduating in 2003, was offered a full time position with Stephen Jones, when she became the new head of *Miss Jones* and responsible for the delivery of the entire wholesale collection! A previous nine months of work experience with Jess Collett, combined with a formal management background, did help her through what was to be quite a 'challenging time'. But she adapted to the role very quickly and learnt masses and for three seasons worked on the collections. But her real ambition was to start her own label, which she had been developing, and so in 2007 the Gina Foster brand was launched from her home in London.

The shop was immaculate when I arrived, Royal Ascot had been very busy but now business was slowing down slightly and Gina was preparing a winter collection. I asked if clients in the shop required a different product? "Actually they do," she told me, "My previous clients arrived by appointment and most wanted designer or flamboyant headwear, in the shop many of my customers require more accessible styles, they want to 'buy a hat' ready made. But we like to supply custom-made and I think this will increase in the next year. Only yesterday I had a lady from Scotland wanting a hat for her daughters wedding in July 2011!"

The workroom at the rear was very compact, in fact quite small, but Gina did not seem to worry about this. "Most of our hats are small, the few blocks are kept in a cupboard and we keep the workroom very tidy. I don't retain too much stock and don't build up huge amount of bits and pieces." This was millinery heaven, as I had never seen it before!



Clockwise from top right: Small classic pieces are very much Gina's handwriting.

Gina's assistant, Melissa, in the small but very tidy workroom.

Exquisite, folded gros-grain headpiece.

Gina Foster Millinery boutique.

Gina Foster, ready to greet the press on the opening day.



Gina Foster Millinery

5 Kensington Church Walk
London
W8 4NB

Tel: 0207 737 7611

www.ginafoster.co.uk

Open: Mon to Fri 10 – 6, Thurs 10 – 7, Sat 10 – 4