

MY RESIDENCE:

Gina Foster *milliner*

Where do you live and why? Chelsea Embankment, I've lived in the Royal Borough all my life and love being close to the river.

Where or how would you spend a 'lost day' in your area?

I'd spend the whole day in the Chelsea Arts Club, it's a hidden gem. I'd be in the garden all day catching some rays then have a few drinks in the bar where there would be an exhibition on display before moving into the dining room for supper with friends amongst all of the wonderful characters that frequent the club.

Describe a typical Gina Foster customer?

There is no typical client. Overall they tend to be stylish ladies who have fun with fashion, and they come from all over the world.

Will you be very busy for Ascot this year?

Flat out! Though usually the rush doesn't start till about ten days before which is always a bit nerve-wrecking.

What was the first hat you ever made?

It was pretty bad! A black felt trilby with a black-and-white feather trim that I made on a short course at London College of Fashion. I did manage to drag it out for my cousin's wedding though so it can't have been that awful.

What makes a good milliner?

Patience. You can't rush a good hat.

What hat style is tipped to win this year?

I'm loving a coulis – a classic shape that's easy to wear; basically it's a broad-brim but without the squashed hair.

Is the fascinator really dead?

Definitely not! They have become a bit bigger and more stylish, so you can't get away with a few feathers anymore!

Who wears hats well?

Anyone who has a bit of attitude. It's all about confidence and how you carry yourself when you're wearing it.

Do you go to the races? If so, where will you go this year?

I always go to Ascot for a day for 'market research.' Last year I went to Sandown for Ladies Day where I was the official milliner. The year before I was the official milliner for the Epsom Derby and had to judge the best-dressed.

What's your motto for life?

Live for today, who knows what will happen tomorrow.

If you could change one thing about London, it would be?

Cheaper taxis!

Where do you go to escape from it all in your local area?

Chelsea Physic Gardens, it is the most tranquil garden with places for daydreaming and wonderful aromas. I keep meaning to go on their guided tours to find out about all of the medicinal qualities of the plants.

What makes you smile about where you live?

The Chelsea Pensioners in their red coats.

What three things would you rescue if your house was on fire?

My iPhone, I can't live without it. My picture of Chelsea Flower Mill and the river, painted by my father and a picture of my sister, brother and I all in the garden when we were younger, also painted by my father.

Where would you live if money were no object?

In a big house in Kensington with another in Meribell.

Gina Foster never leaves home without... A hat!

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GINA FOSTER

MILLINERY

Tell us about your new shop?

It's a tiny boutique on Kensington Church Walk, a wonderful street of specialist boutiques just off Kensington High Street. It's very fresh and bright with all sorts of hats for every occasion.

What's your most memorable local meal? It's a real treat to go out to lunch with my girlfriends and we love Bluebird for a long lazy lunch. The last time I went was in January so I'm due another outing!



Who

would you invite to your dream dinner party? It would have to be a Mad Hatter's Tea Party full of fashionistas I admire: Vivienne Westwood, John Galiano (pictured), Coco Chanel, Philip Lim and Erdem.



What's

your most expensive hat?

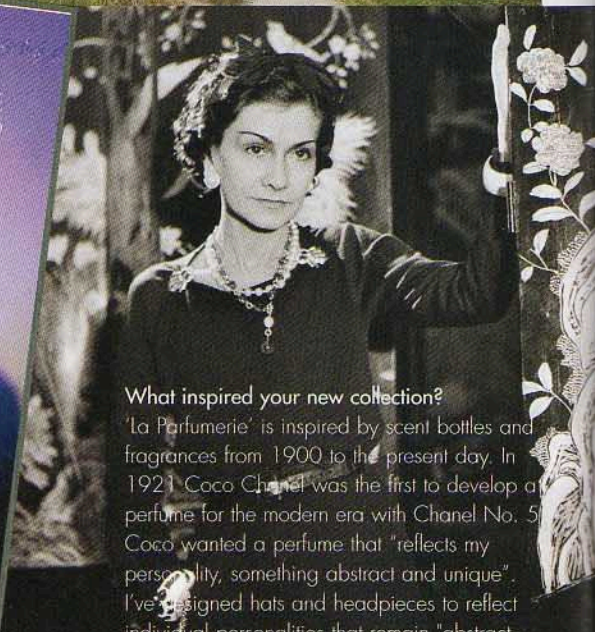
It was called Lilliana and was £944. It took days and days to make. Most of my hats are between £200 and £400, which for a hand-made hat, is pretty reasonable these days.



What famous hat wearer do you admire? Stephen Jones. Having worked with Stephen for three years I'm amazed that he can keep coming up with new designs, each different and reflecting the wearer's character rather than the designer's.



Where were the last three places you went on holiday? Norfolk for Easter (pictured), I love the sandy beaches and big skies. Meribel for a week in January; I lived there for four years so it feels like a second home. And Majorca with friends last summer.



What inspired your new collection?

'La Parfumerie' is inspired by scent bottles and fragrances from 1900 to the present day. In 1921 Coco Chanel was the first to develop a perfume for the modern era with Chanel No. 5. Coco wanted a perfume that "reflects my personality, something abstract and unique". I've designed hats and headpieces to reflect individual personalities that remain "abstract