

Party Girl

Bring it on, Bridezilla! This Cardiff native knows how to throw a fête

| By Dawn Triemstra | Photography by Chris Clinton |

At a recent six-figure high school graduation soirée at the London Hotel in West Hollywood, rapper Iyaz, whose song “Replay” can be heard at clubs from NYC to Atlanta, stunned guests with a surprise performance. Forget about DJs, Chinese lanterns and cupcakes. This fête featured mercury-dipped light bulbs, seating charts made from vintage neckties and not one but five commissioned desserts (argyle-printed frozen banana bites!). The visionary? San Diego’s in-demand event planner, Vanessa Van Wieren of Alchemy Fine Events & Invitations (alchemyfineevents.com).

The party-planning hierarchy has a new queen bee, who ditches organza napkins and calligraphy for etched-metal invitations and custom-stitched linens by the seamstress for fashionista favorite Rodarte. “In the design world, an inspiration is wonderful, but it’s of little value unless you have the ability to execute it,” says the OTIS fine arts grad, who spent a year and a half in Italy earning her master’s in graphic design. Van Wieren is executing events with unseen flair, creating everything from one-of-a-kind invitations with real wood details and hand-drawn comic strips, to royalty worthy weddings.

“I knew I didn’t want to be a starving artist,” says the petite Cardiff native, who’s rarely seen sporting heels shorter than three inches. Van Wieren put her

artistic energy to work as the creative director for Solana Beach-based Mistral, known for its intoxicating bath products and adorable packaging. She then joined with high school friends to create Lollipop Events & Design, which received nods from top bridal blogs with its kitschy, candy-colored, DIY. Now on her own with Alchemy, the mood is more luxurious and less crafty. A recent wedding invitation with hand-sewn pearls graced the pages of *Elle Italy* and Jose Villa, the god of wedding photography, is a fan.

Brides-to-be from St. Barts to New York have tapped Van Wieren to make their lavish dreams a reality. There was a Jackie O-inspired rooftop nuptials in the space Diane Von Furstenberg uses for her runways shows (the Empire State Building was the backdrop) and a multi-day destination wedding in Monaco. Think private yacht tours, the famed Monte Carlo casino and even lawn games. “I love keeping everything under my creative umbrella—then it won’t turn out piecemeal.”

And what would be a picture-perfect wedding for the single 31-year-old? “People always ask me that and honestly, I think I would elope.” But if she didn’t, just imagine a destination wedding on Capri with hand-knit Missoni table linens and a 10-course dinner prepared by Thomas Keller, natch. **R**



TABLE MATTERS Party planner Vanessa Van Wieren before an event.