

# Designing Woman

Just three years after her brand's inception, **Fotini Copeland's** ladylike designs are beloved by the fashion crowd, the downtown set and the ladies who lunch.

| By Ann Binlot |

It's not usual that a celebrity passes over Dior and Saint Laurent for a burgeoning label, but that's what Amy Poehler did when she selected an edgy Fotini laser-cut leather gown for the 2012 Met Ball. "I couldn't believe it," says Greek-born Canadian designer Fotini Copeland. "I was really excited."

The fashion elite have taken note of Fotini's ladylike designs as well. *Harper's Bazaar* included the label as part of the freshman class on its spring 2012 "Hot List," and *The International Business Times* touted the brand by noting, "Fotini did the impossible: designing clothing that is demure but also glamorous."

When Copeland wanted to pursue fashion early on, her father discouraged her, so she studied business at the University of Toronto, which led to a career in finance and then public relations. It wasn't until she was in her 40s and had raised two daughters that she decided to return to her dream.

Already armed with business acumen ("My business side of studies really helped me to enhance and understand what it is to start up a company"), Copeland traveled to and from Italy for three years to learn the craft of corsetry. "It's been something that I've loved from when I was a little girl looking at beautiful gowns in 18th-century books," she recalls.

Equipped with a keen eye and corsetry knowledge, she moved to New York in 2010 to launch Fotini—which means epiphany



in Greek. Now fully settled in the Big Apple with an apartment on the Upper West Side and an atelier in the Garment District, the fashion designer made her debut with a presentation at the Gramercy Park Hotel in September 2011. For her fall 2013 presentation during New York Fashion Week she chose an intimate setting at the Pierre Hotel. Her designs have ranged from dark and provocative to delicate and refined, but they all exude a sense of class equally suitable for a young financial analyst or a 60-something docent.

For her spring 2013 collection, Copeland drew upon her personal experiences, as she often does while designing, and found inspiration in a trip she took with her husband a few years ago to the French countryside, and the soft color palette of Impressionist paintings. "Every morning I would wake up, I would see wisteria," she recalls. The delicate flowers became the custom print in the ultrafeminine collection,

which is filled with fabrics like corded cotton, silk chiffon, silk organza, cotton jacquard, cady and Chantilly lace.

Who is the woman who wears Fotini? "She likes to be noticed, she's strong, she likes to feel comfortable and have the comfort of wearing a beautiful garment," says Copeland.

And how does her father feel about his daughter disobeying his wishes? "Now my father is my biggest fan," says Fotini. "As much as I was unhappy with the direction he made me go in, I think that's probably been one of the most beneficial moves." Available at Crescala Fashion Development, 13 W. 36th St., fifth floor, 646.912.9292, [fotini-nyc.com](http://fotini-nyc.com)

**SKETCH ARTIST**  
Clockwise from top left: Fotini in her Midtown West studio; a sketch of the Emmanuelle gown from her spring 2013 collection; the gown after production in a corseted silk chiffon wisteria print with grosgrain waist.

