



Two sketches from the Pamella Roland Fall 2011 line

Pamella DeVos: From Michigan to the **RED CARPET**

Diaphanous, sumptuous, elegant and classic are words that come to mind when describing Michigan-native Pamella DeVos' line of clothing for women, named Pamella Roland. She dresses A-list celebs such as Angelina Jolie, Hillary Swank and Halle Berry (and the list goes on and on). Pamella was kind enough to chat with me during her crazy Fashion Week schedule.

by Illysia Neumann-Loreck

YOU WERE VERY SUCCESSFUL IN BUSINESS, AND YOU DECIDED TO GO A DIFFERENT WAY BY STARTING PAMELLA ROLAND IN 2002. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO TAKE THE RISK?

First of all, I've loved fashion my whole life. I started working at a clothing store when I was 15, and it's just something I always wanted to do. My father said, "You are not going to get anywhere in fashion and art," so I got a business degree from Michigan State with a minor in art history. I knew fashion was something I always wanted to do, and I had a designer friend help me get it started, but I didn't take the plunge until I was 42. I have three kids and they had to come first.

A LOT OF YOUR INSPIRATION SEEMS TO COME FROM EUROPE AND FROM ART. HOW DO YOU GO FROM AN IDEA TO A COLLECTION? DO YOU START WITH FABRICS? COLORS? SILHOUETTES?

The two things I love are travel and art. I'm on the board of the Grand Rapids Art Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Because they're both things I love to do, they're an experience in my life. I'll be in Italy drawing on a napkin as I watch people. You can get ideas from just watching people. In places like Paris and places in Italy, people dress so well. I also get inspiration from colors, like Capri always has these beautiful flowers, and that's been an inspiration of mine. I always start with fabrics too as I'm thinking of these colors. We get the fabric quite early and then we say, "This would make a great coat" or "Wouldn't this be a beautiful gown?" For this collection, I have one fabric that's a gown and also a coat. You wouldn't think you'd use the same fabric for a gown and a coat, but it's a really beautiful fabric.

WHAT WAS YOUR INSPIRATION FOR THE FALL 2011 COLLECTION?

It's China. I lived in Asia, and I visited there often. One thing I really loved about it, and especially now that we're focusing on Shanghai, is that the old and the new side-by-side is really amazing – the traditional Chinese, but then you see these amazing buildings all over. A lot of people are intrigued by Shanghai, and China is really the place to be right now. It's really quite something. You have modern cityscapes with rural farmland. You have all the colors of a field harvest, and then you have a big urban skyline. So my collection has some traditional Chinese elements but then it's quite modern.

YOU ARE FROM THE GRAND RAPIDS AREA, AND YOU STILL HAVE HOMES IN MICHIGAN AND SPEND A LOT OF TIME THERE DESIGNING. HOW IS MICHIGAN AN INSPIRING LOCALE FOR YOU?

I love Michigan, and I'm such a Midwest person. I'm very proud of where I'm from. More than anything, the inspiration comes from the change of seasons. When I'm doing a fall collection, I can think of making a great coat. Growing up, we skied at Boyne Mountain and Nub's Nob. We have a home on Lake Michigan in the Harbor Springs area. The colors are just beautiful. It's my favorite place to be in the summer. I even have some New York friends who come to Michigan for their summer vacation now.

WHAT'S THE HARDEST THING ABOUT SHOWING A COLLECTION AT FASHION WEEK?

The hardest thing is that you're tired. It's a really crazy, busy time. I wear many hats as the owner and designer for the Pamela Roland line. I find that I'm doing 10 things at once. I'm doing the styling, the fitting, the music, everything is going on at the same time, and there are events at night. There are so many things that you can go to. I have friends who have shows, I'm now part of the CFDA (the Council of Fashion Designers in America), and they have events. There are all these different things you could be doing, but you've got to sleep sometime!

Also, people are excited about the show but more than anything, I'm thinking ahead. The minute the last model walks off that runway I'm thinking, "Oh gosh. I hope everyone liked it. I hoped the buyers like it because I hope this collection does well. In the very beginning, I just wanted to get through the show. Now I know how important the collection is for the buyers and the press to love, so your customers will buy it, and you will continue to be a success. I have a business brain, and I always remember that's what it's all about.

WHAT'S THE MOST FUN THING ABOUT FASHION WEEK?

There is an excitement in the air, and there's so much going on. I love the creativity part of it. I love styling and working with my music person. You're constantly changing things around. A dress might look great on paper, but you look at it when it's made and it doesn't look right, so you change this, this and this. I have a great group this year. Everyone works well together. People have told me that I have a very calm fashion house. I don't let people go off because one person can



Pamella DeVos with her three children

create so much chaos. People ask me how I stay so calm throughout all of this and I say "because I've raised teenage daughters!"

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF DRESSING A CELEBRITY FOR THE RED CARPET?

The number one challenge today is that it's so much more competitive than it used to be. There are so many designers popping up everywhere. Everybody wants to be a designer these days. When I watch some of the award shows, there are designers that I've never heard of. I do have great relationships with the stylists and some of the stars so that helps. Actresses often tell me my clothes are comfortable. The fabrics are beautiful, they feel good on you, and they make you feel good. They're not fussy. I have lot of loyal stylists and actresses who we've dressed over and over.

WHO HAVEN'T YOU DRESSED YET THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO?

I'd love to dress Kate Winslet. I love her. I think she's a classic beauty. And Jennifer Aniston. I think she's really adorable, and everyone loves her. She's quite funny and very beautiful. It seems like she could be a good "friend."

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR PAMELLA ROLAND IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

We have a lot of things we're working on right now - a lower end line and accessories and licensing. We have a lot of things in mind that we're right in the middle of right now, but we had to stop for a little thing called Fashion Week!



Brittany Snow



Vanessa Williams



Halle Berry

CELEBRITY STYLE FILE

Pamella Roland has a lot of devoted celebrities



Hilary Swank



Hayden Panettiere



Maria Menounos



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