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The price tags are platinum — from \$800 for a two-piece suit to \$1 800 for a four-piece outfit — and bring Nellis more than \$1 million in sales per year, ranking her as a major Canadian entrepreneur as well as a designer of international acclaim. Her name is at home among those of Giorgio Armani, Yves Saint-Laurent, Gianni Versace and Sonia Rykiel.

In spite of her success, Nellis remains humble, shrugging off her talent as being simply "instinctual." And she chooses not to live in New York or Los Angeles where she could do more business, but in Vancouver on Canada's west coast because she likes it there.

Zonda Nellis' designs are classic "good transition clothes" such as dresses, suits and wraps which can be donned as day-to-evening wear. The fabric is made from hand-dyed yarns combining linen, cotton, silk, rayon and metallic threads.

"I was in Egypt for about three months," she says. "I developed my fabric from one piece of material that I saw there. The Egyptian cloth wasn't anything like mine is, but the sense of the fabric was similar."

Nellis is quick to point out that she has made it on her own, without any financial assistance. She started small, selling her wares at craft fairs along the west coast and soon realized that her designs could sell anywhere. She was right. The combination of design and artistry has made the Zonda Nellis collection a unique statement in the competitive world of high fashion and surely a force to be reckoned with for years to come.

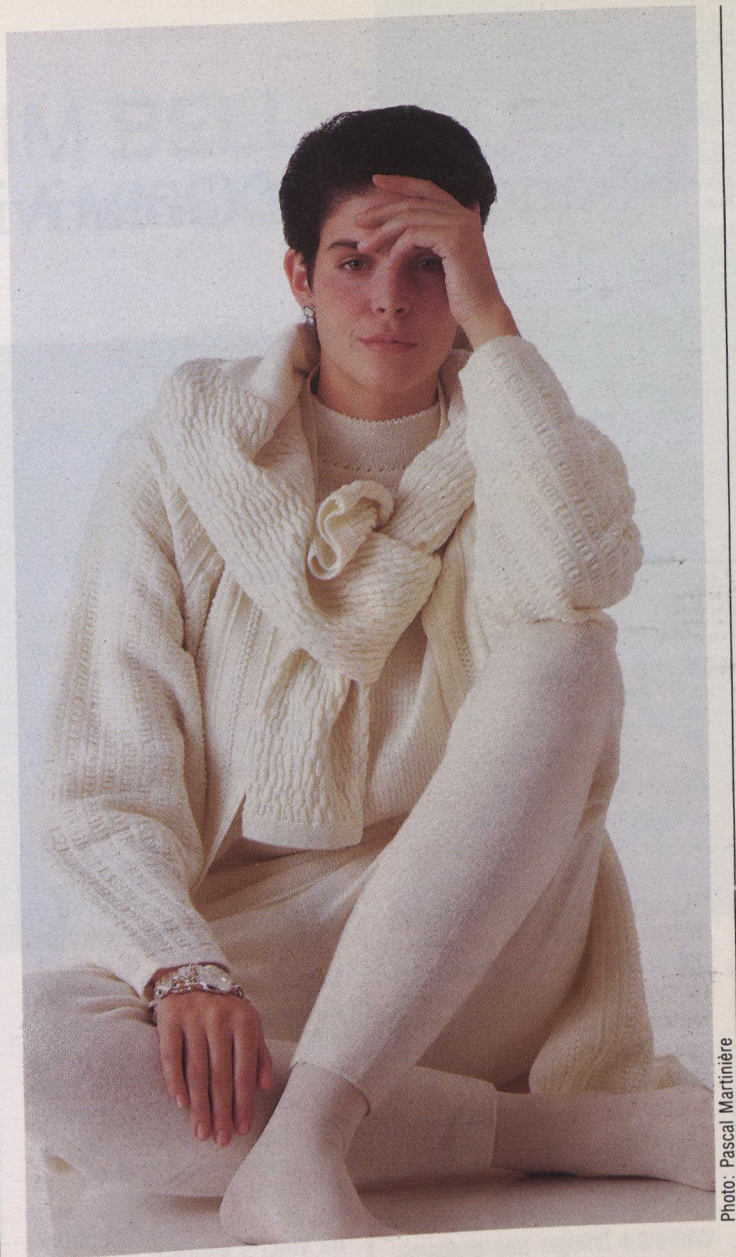


Photo: Pascal Martinière

Canada at Liberty

One of Europe's most prestigious retail stores, Liberty of Regent Street in London, will mount a major promotion of Canada focusing on Canadian fashion this fall.

The Canadian government took the initiative by inviting Liberty buyers to visit Canada last October. They were astounded at the quality of contemporary Canadian fashion design which not only meets international standards of creative excellence but has not, generally speaking, had much exposure in Europe.

The promotion will cover fashion design clothing and accessories as well as furniture, ceramics, glass, books, food, visual arts and sculpture and will begin with a major fashion show at Liberty's at the end of September. The entire promotion will last more than three weeks and will occupy 557 m² of Liberty's Regent Street store. Everything promoted will be for sale and it is anticipated that several of the 20 or so Canadian designers participating will be launching major international careers by virtue of this event.

Lyse Spénard

Fashions by French Canadian designer Lyse Spénard have been a resounding success since their introduction two years ago. Synonymous with the current interpretation of female elegance — comfortable chic — the Lyse Spénard collection has what it takes to please the contemporary woman.

"My customer is not a woman who spends a half-hour in front of the mirror every morning, and she's not likely to spend an entire paycheck on a sweater . . . fashion is just one element in her life." With this in mind, Spénard designs her collection using practical colours, simple lines and synthetic-blend fabrics which keep prices and dry cleaning costs to a minimum. But one shouldn't be fooled by the sensible aspect — these clothes are sophisticated, feminine and very stylish.

Spénard, a graduate from Le Collège Lasalle, a fashion merchandising school in Montreal, entered the professional world of fashion as a buyer for Holt Renfrew, a major Canadian retailer.

After that, she went to work for Stanlyse Inc. as a marketer, and later was asked to create her own line for the company. Spénard's experience in the business aspect of the industry combined with her flair for design has helped her create popular fashions with wholesale revenues in Canada exceeding \$9 million per year.

Beginning this spring, the Lyse Spénard collection is being sold in the United States. First-year sales are estimated at \$7 million. Spénard's designs will be available at such well-known stores as Bloomingdale's, Lord and Taylor, Bullock Wilshire, Burdines, Dillard's, as well as several prestigious specialty boutiques.