

Perchance to Dream

Diane von Furstenberg Makes it Happen

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photo by Marco Garcia



Opposite page: Diane von Furstenberg during her recent stay at Halekulani's Orchid Suite. **This page:** The DVF boutique shines with the designer's personal style.

CELEBRATED FASHION ROYALTY and top American designer Diane von Furstenberg has carved a spectacular career that spans more than 30 years. An international fashion and lifestyle brand phenomenon, it takes only a few moments in von Furstenberg's presence to observe that it takes what can best be described as a hands-on approach to her business—which has been rapidly growing and expanding to become one of the most successful fashion brands in the country. With boutiques all over the world, from Asia to Europe to Australia, Honolulu is the latest location for a brand-new DVF boutique, and von Furstenberg herself arrived in the Islands to celebrate the store's opening. We sat down with her at Halekulani's Orchid Suite to chat about her knack for empowering women.

For those wondering about the amount of personal commitment a successful businesswoman should have—especially when it comes to running a fashion empire that bears her name—their questions would be answered simply by observing von Furstenberg at her Honolulu boutique's grand opening party. She happily posed for countless pictures with guests, signed autographs and even gave fashion advice to those trying on dresses.

A recipient of the prestigious Council of Fashion Designers of America Lifetime Achievement Award, von Furstenberg has graced the cover of numerous magazines, including *Newsweek*, which described her as “the most marketable female in fashion since Coco Chanel.” She has gained iconic status not only for her

business acumen and aesthetic savoir faire, but—and probably most importantly—for her unusual connection to, and understanding of, the fashion and style sensibilities of women on both a sartorial and intuitive level.

Her brainchild, the wrap dress—a simple jersey dress she introduced in 1973—became one of the more prominent fashion symbols of the mid-'70s, when more than 5 million were sold (and continues to remain vibrantly pertinent). While patterns, colors and styles have evolved from season to season, the basic style and sentiment of the wrap dress (comfortable yet sexy, easy to wear and universally flattering) has captivated a whole new generation of women. von Furstenberg draws inspiration for the prints of her dresses both from the limitless palette found in nature—such as the motion of leaves and rippling of water—as well as from architectural designs and patterns incidental to everyday life. Asked if she might consider a print that evokes Hawai'i, she responded, “Absolutely. It is extraordinarily beautiful here, how could I not be inspired? I am really excited to have a shop here. Hawai'i is an important international place.”

The Honolulu DVF boutique features a sleek, gallery-like design, all the better to showcase the colorful pieces in her recent collection, along with accessories like shoes, handbags, sunglasses and more. A recent DVF addition is her new fragrance, called simply Diane, which features frangipani, known here in the Islands as plumeria.

When asked about her own beauty regimen and secret to staying vibrant, von Furstenberg's response is relaxed and warm, much like her demeanor. “My vitality?” she asked laughingly, “I think it's the love of life and curiosity. It gives me energy. I have so much to see, to do.”

While DVF has grown to become a global lifestyle brand that produces a broad range of trendy products including cosmetics, a home décor line and various accessories, von Furstenberg continues to connect to customers through her designs. Explaining the thought that goes into them, she points to the connection she feels with the women who wear them.

“When I was a young girl, I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew what I wanted to become. I became that woman through fashion, and by doing so, was helping women to feel that way too. So there was immediately this incredible dialogue. I think the most flattering thing you can wear is confidence. If you feel confident, you feel beautiful,” she says.

Always hands-on, von Furstenberg actively courts social media to further her dialogue with the new generation of DVF patrons. She uses Twitter to inspire and captivate (yes, she actually does this herself, signing off with a genuine “Love, Diane”). One recent tweet—Dream your future, make it happen. Love Diane—supports her confidence-themed dialogue with women, and those who patronize her products.

While in town, she attended a dinner party hosted by her

friend, Princess Djalta Alliata di Montereale. Princess Djalta met her husband, SRI Prince Vittorio, in Rome at the home of Prince Egon von Furstenberg (von Furstenberg's first husband); the two women later became good friends while living in Manhattan during what Princess Djalta fondly refers to as the “Studio 54 era.”

In addition to all that running the DVF conglomerate entails, von Furstenberg serves as president of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)—an organization that aims to raise the status of fashion as a branch of American art and culture. She explains its mission this way: “We are a family of designers, about 400, and we have people every stage of the way. We work with students, give scholarships—we work with young designers, giving them mentorship exposure.”

von Furstenberg embodies European elegance: Her eyes sparkle, her smile can aptly be described as languid, and her sculpted posture evidencing a sound yoga practice. Following her short stint in Honolulu, she was off to Kaua'i for a quick holiday with her husband, Barry Diller (himself a movie and media mogul and owner of one of the largest sailing yachts in the world), followed by China, where her book, *Diane: A Signature Life*, was recently translated into Mandarin (and where the DVF brand is extremely popular). Said von Furstenberg, “China is very interesting to me because it is so vibrant—it moves so fast and is exciting.” Smiling, she added, “and of course, now I am enamored with Hawai'i. I will be back.” ♦