

COLLETTE DINNIGAN

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A pioneering figure in Australian fashion, Collette Dinnigan was born in 1965 in South Africa and grew up in New Zealand. While studying fashion at Wellington Polytechnic she gained an appreciation for cutting, draping, and fine craftsmanship. Dinnigan worked within the costume department at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation before launching her eponymous label in 1990. Her debut lingerie collection consisted of sultry slip dresses, romantic camisoles, and silk pajamas with delicate details. These designs were well suited to the vogue for wearing underwear as outerwear in the 1990s, and Dinnigan would later expand her lingerie line to include women's apparel for day and evening.

The first Collette Dinnigan retail store opened in Sydney in 1991. This was followed by a Melbourne location in 1995 and a London, UK location in 2000. In the United States, the brand was carried by Henri Bendel, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Barneys New York. Dinnigan expanded her international reach by applying to present a ready-to-wear collection in Paris. She was the first Australian accepted to do so by the Chambre Syndicale du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode, and her 1995 ready-to-wear collection was well received. The following year, Dinnigan was added to the official Paris Fashion Week schedule by the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture, another landmark achievement. Dinnigan joined the organization's executive board in 2008 and ended her Paris Fashion Week tenure in 2013. The designer downsized her namesake brand's operations and refocused her attentions on its core clothing lines and special projects in Australia.

From bold black lace mesh to soft pastels and botanical patterns, Dinnigan's work is informed by her interest in vintage clothing. Spaghetti straps, sheer layers, antique lace trimmings, and supple silks were characteristic of her designs from the late 1990s and early 2000s. Dinnigan is known for channeling classic, sensual boudoir sensibilities in a way that appeals to the modern woman.

The Collette Dinnigan brand oversees multiple divisions, including Collette Dinnigan Enfant (which was created in 2004) and Collette by Collette Dinnigan, a diffusion line established in 2010 in celebration of twenty years in business. Collette Dinnigan Bridal was launched in 2007, and has created wedding gowns for Miranda Kerr, Toni Collette, and Sarah Murdoch. Dinnigan has dressed an elite clientele including the Duchess of Cambridge, Angelina Jolie, Nicole Kidman, and Beyoncé. In addition to designing high-end women's apparel, Dinnigan has successfully partnered with mass-market retailers. She collaborated with Marks and Spencer and Target on an affordable lingerie line called Wild Hearts, and with Aldi on Young Hearts, a 2015 line featuring clothing for girls. Young Hearts was expanded to include boys' apparel the following year. Dinnigan has also been involved in designing eyewear, home furnishings, wallpaper, and linens, often citing her love of travel as an inspiration for the patterns and textiles created for these projects.



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Collette Dinnigan, spring/summer 1999. Niall McInerney, Photographer © Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

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