

CHRISTINE



Through the Decades — Evolution of the brand

1970s

Christine established her brand in 1973, at a time when there were no suppliers in Vancouver and no fashion industry to speak of, which meant no support system. Christine was also branching out just after that 60s period when women had been burning their pointy bras as a sign of freedom. Lingerie was not a sought-after item, and there were not places where you could see beautiful undergarments. When she talked about teddies that were sensuous and beautiful, customers did not understand, so she had to both design and educate.

Christine went in search of everything. Silk, her primary fabric, was only available in Vancouver's Chinatown, where small 20-metre bolts were the norm. It was during a trip to San Francisco, exhibiting at the Renaissance Fair with fellow Canadian designer Zonda Nellis, that she found a silk supplier.



“There was no one doing exactly what I was doing, and I didn’t have brands to look to as mentors, so I had to create my own, designing within the sphere of my own influence.”

~ Christine Morton

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1980s



This was an exhilarating period professionally and personally. During Christine's first major sales trip to New York in the early 80s, she secured appointments with Bergdorf Goodman, Bloomingdales, Saks and Henri Bendel with several placing orders immediately. Christine's iconic Whimsical Wrap was put prominently on display in the windows of New York's finest department stores and the top stars of-the-day including Cher, Elizabeth Taylor, Linda Evans, Joan Collins, and Lauren Bacall began wearing the line. For Christine, it was the beginning of lingerie breaking out of function and into fashion – the consumer's love affair with lingerie began, echoing her own.

Her foray into bridalwear began with her own wedding in 1983 to David Farris when she designed her gown, along with Edwardian-inspired dresses for her three bridesmaids and a flower girl. A random call from a woman in Toronto offering a garage-full of lace and appliques from the 1920s and 30s, along with rolls of machine lace and pearl buttons ensured she had the material she needed to produce unique, one-of-a-kind gowns.

The bridal business was robust with custom-work locally and US distributors Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue carrying the collection. Christine, supported by her league of female sewers, continued to produce lingerie and stage trunk shows for clients like Henri Bendel, essentially running two distinct lines – bridal and lingerie. All while starting her family – her first child, Selena, was born in 1984 followed by Andrew in 1988 and Izzy in 1989.

Towards the end of the 80s, the antique lace that she collected was dwindling and becoming harder to find, and as the business scaled up, it was time to have lace produced for larger orders. Christine traveled to Europe to work with an embroidery company that had a library of lace archives dating back to the 1920s. She spent days pouring over catalogues and samples, many of which she had re-produced and began incorporating into her designs.



NOTE: Christine has gone back to the European company for her 50th anniversary collection, having them produce the intricate and detailed lace that she first fell in love with 50 years ago.

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1990s

In the early 90s, in the midst of business expansion and childrearing, the brand ran into challenges when a new bank manager called her line of credit. This was compounded by an abundance of inventory. In true Christine style, she took this as an opportunity to innovate. Loading up an old van and renting a store on Granville, Christine and David, created what today would be described as a 'pop up' and customers – loyal and new – were lined up down the street, soon putting the brand back on firm footing.



2000s

Christine remembers the early 2000s as one of business transition and upheaval as the lingerie business was getting competitive; she characterized it as a strange time but one that built character and fortitude. She also made the decision to step away from the wedding gown market. A foray into the international market with a retailer in Japan proved brief.

The business moved into the second floor of a glass building with skylights – a fitting tribute to her father – behind the former gas station at the corner of Marine Drive and Taylor Way in West Vancouver. She hired a group of young professionals who brought a fresh energy to the business and for the next 15 years the focus was on growing the brand and re-organizing the company.

2010s

In the early-2010s, Christine was beginning to scale down, moving into a smaller location on Powell Street, when Neiman Marcus called, establishing a replenishment program with five to six styles available on repeat.

Christine, now in her sixties – a time when many think about retirement – found herself once-again expanding, occupying the building next door, and bringing many of her sewers in-house to create a mini production-house and the original building became a showroom and sales gallery.

It was time to refresh her business acumen and Christine acquired a mentor who focused on the financials and assisted in the creation of an advisory board. In turn, the board worked to develop a plan for business sustainability including strategic support for Christine.



Enter Raymond Lee in 2014. A known name in the Canadian fashion scene, having graduated from Kwantlan Polytechnic University and Ryerson (now Toronto Metropolitan University), Raymond worked with a number of prominent brands, including Neto Leather, Koret, Jax, Margareta and Boys Co. before joining Christine as Director of Operations.

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2020s – 50 years

When 2020 began, Christine was grieving the loss of David. Then COVID, and Christine was again at the mercy of the marketplace with vendors cancelling both short and long-term orders. In March, she closed production and stayed home for three months. It became a time of reflection and healing. Christine embraced the solitude and allowed her creativity to become her primary focus. It began with a renovation to her home where she created an atelier in what was David's woodworking garage. This creativity flowed through to the business where she focused on design, giving herself permission to step back from the business and her hands-on roll, allowing Raymond to run the day-to-day operation.



With everyone at home, luxury loungewear had found a new popularity. Christine was a brand of choice and became its biggest promoter, focusing on its own online sales – a move which proved highly successful. Today, as Christine marks five decades, retailers are back placing orders and the brand can be found in more than 100 high-end boutiques and stores throughout Canada and the US.



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