

# La Princesse Claire

digne malgré la polémique!



“ Mon mari rate donc quelque chose! ”

CLAIRE À PROPOS DU PRINCE LAURENT

C'est la tête haute que la Princesse Claire est arrivée à la résidence de l'ambassadeur des Etats-Unis à Bruxelles afin d'assister à un défilé de mode. Quelques heures plus tôt, son époux, le Prince Laurent, avait été réprimandé par Yves Leterme, premier ministre du gouvernement en affaires courantes, à propos de son séjour au Congo et en Angola. Mais cette polémique n'a de toute évidence pas contrarié la princesse, laquelle a même lancé une boutade sur Laurent face à l'ambassadeur Howard Gutman et son épouse, le Dr Michelle Loewinger.

PAR HELENA TEN BROEGHE

Bienvenue dans ma maison, transformée en un palais de la mode rempli de magnifiques mannequins», a déclaré l'ambassadeur à son invité. Claire du regard immédiatement: «Mon mari rate donc quelque chose!». Claire a tout de suite été saluée par la très charmante Princesse Léa, l'épouse de feu le Prince Alexandre. L'organisateur de ce défilé de mode n'est autre que l'épouse de l'ambassadeur. Dr Michelle Loewinger, elle-même passionnée de mode. Tous les deux à trois mois, elle entend éditorialiser la résidence de l'ambassadeur en un véritable lieu de la mode africaine et belge, avec pour titre «Diplomacy through fashion».

Pour cette première édition, la créatrice américaine Michelle Smith, mieux connue sous le nom de Milly, et Anna Heylen, qui compte parmi les reines de la mode belge, ont été mises à l'honneur. Les réactions enthousiastes qui ont suivi l'événement n'ont pas manqué de ravir Michelle Loewinger: «Mon but est de faire connaître les créateurs belges et américains dans chacun de ces deux pays. J'aime le travail de Milly depuis de très longues années, elle est extrêmement populaire aux Etats-Unis. Ses créations se vendent également en Belgique, mais personne ne la connaît lorsque je parle d'elle. Tel est également le cas de la créatrice belge Anna Heylen. Elle est très adroite et fait partie des valeurs sèches de la mode depuis longtemps. Elle doit simplement se faire une place sur le marché américain. Les Américaines présentes ce soir-là ont en effet été subjuguées par les créations avant-gardées d'Anna Heylen, caractérisées par des lignes vaporeuses. Pour leur part, les Belges n'ont pas caché leur surprise face au style vestimentaire enjoué des années 70 imaginé par Milly. Reste à savoir maintenant si les dames de la jet-set bruxelloise sont disposées à troquer leur garde-robe belge contre une collection américaine.

UN PEU DE CHAMPVINSAMI! Quel qu'il en soit, la Princesse Léa n'est pas prête de faire ce choix. «J'adore la mode belge, nous devons tout de même faire preuve d'un peu de chauvinisme, non?», rétorque la très élégante princesse. Elle nous confie également qu'elle cite elle-même une partie de sa garde-robe. «Ce n'est pas toujours évident de trouver des tenues élégantes quand on a perdu son 36. De plus, je n'ai pas beaucoup le temps de faire du shopping. Je desiste donc souvent ce qui me vient à l'esprit et j'en confie la confection à ma couturière». La Princesse Léa coudie, elle aussi, parmi les adeptes de la mode vintage. Que choisiriez-vous dans la garde-robe de feu la Princesse Léa? «Une des princesses les plus élégantes de toute l'histoire? Je dirais une petite veste Dior que j'ai portée récemment. Elle est d'une qualité incroyable! Mais je dois généralement me contenter de capes et de châles car la princesse était beaucoup plus intime. Mais heureusement ma belle-mère et moi-même partageons la même opinion, du 36, à l'instar d'ailleurs de ma fille Laetitia. Elle regarde souvent les magnifiques palais de châteaux de la Princesse Léa. En effet, la classe reste intemporelle!»



La Princesse Claire en conversation avec l'ambassadeur Howard Gutman et son épouse, le Dr Michelle Loewinger, dans un salon transformé en un palais de la mode rempli de magnifiques mannequins, à l'occasion de l'ambassadeur.

## Princess Claire Dignified in Spite of the Polemic

Article in Belgian weekly *Royals*

*It is with her head held high that Princess Claire arrived at the U.S. Ambassador's residence to attend a fashion show. A few hours earlier, her husband, Prince Laurent, had been reprimanded by caretaker Prime Minister Yves Leterme about his trip to Angola and Congo. But this polemic visibly did not affect the Princess,, who even joked about Laurent with U.S. Ambassador Howard Gutman and his spouse Dr. Michelle Loewinger.*

‘Welcome in my house transformed in a fashion palace and full of beautiful models,’ the U.S. Ambassador told his prestigious guest. Claire immediately remarked: ‘my husband is missing something!’ Claire was met by the charming Princess Lea, widow of late Prince Alexander [who had arrived earlier.]. The organizer of this fashion show was the wife of the Ambassador, Dr. Michelle Loewinger, who is fond of fashion. Every two or three months, she intends to turn the Ambassador’s Residence into a meeting place for Belgian and American fashion in the framework of her program entitled ‘Diplomacy through fashion.’

At this first show, U.S. fashion designer Michelle Smith, better known under the name 'Milly,' and Anna Heylen, who is among the leaders in the Belgian fashion world, were the guest designers.

The enthusiastic reactions that followed the event made Michelle Loewinger very happy. 'By goal is to make Belgian and American designers known in both countries,' Dr. Loewinger said. 'I have liked Milly's creations for many years, she is extremely popular in the U.S. Her creations are also sold in Belgium but no one knows her when I mention her name. It is also the case of designer Anna Heylen. She is very talented and has been among the best designers for a long time, but she simply needs to become known on the U.S. market,' she added.

And indeed, Americans who were present at the show were fascinated by Anna Heylen's avant-garde creations, characterized by vaporous cloth. As for the Belgians, they did not conceal their surprise at the colorful style of the Seventies of Milly. It now remains to be seen whether ladies of the Brussels jet-set will exchange their Belgian clothes for American ones.

In any case, Princess Lea is not about to make that move. 'I love Belgian fashion. And we need to be somewhat chauvinistic, don't we?' Princess Lea noted. She also told us that she creates some of her clothes herself. 'It is not always easy to find elegant clothes when one no longer has a size 36,' she said. 'Besides, I do not have much time to do shopping, so I often design what comes to my mind and I let my couturier make it,' she added. Princess Lea is also among the fans of the vintage fashion. What would she pick in the wardrobe of late Princess Lilian, one of the most elegant Princesses ever? 'I would say a short Dior jacket which I very often wear. It is of an incredible quality. But I usually wear cloaks and shawls because Princess Lilian was much thinner. But fortunately my mother-in-law and myself have the same size for shoes, i.e. 39, just like my daughter Laetitia. She also often looks at Princess Lilian's wonderful shoes. Indeed, class remain timeless,' Princess Lea pointed out.

Princess Lea was forced to interrupt this conversation in order to bid farewell to Princess Claire, who was unable to stay longer at the reception organized after the fashion shows. The wife of Prince Laurent came by herself to the evening and returned in her Mercedes Vito van. Once at home, she had perhaps to discuss with her husband about his difficult day. But one thing is sure: Princess Claire fully supports her husband, and she has already proven so in the past. And it is not

Prince Laurent who will complain about the solace that his wife gives him in this difficult period.

***Caption under two photos:***

Princess Claire talking with Ambassador Howard Gutman and his spouse. ‘Welcome in my house turned into a fashion palace full of wonderful models,’ the Ambassador said.

**Anna Heylen’s Belgian know how**

Anna Heylen remains rather unknown of the general public but she has been considered one of the most talented Belgian designers for many years. Most of her creations are hand-made, which explains why not everybody can afford them. Each piece is created in a limited number. Ordering a special unique creation, like a wedding or evening dress, is possible.

Princess Mathilde has recently become a customer of Anna Heylen. The Princess and the designer met during a roundtable at the Fashion Museum. Anne Heylen does not really consider herself a Royalist but she will not forget this encounter and what followed. ‘Princess Mathilde is a smart lady who made the fashion world more dynamic. She certainly contributed to maintaining the Belgian know-how within our country and we must be grateful to her for that,’ Anna Heylen said.

In the past, Princess Claire also pledged to promote unknown Belgian designers. Each year at the Belgian Independence Day festivities, she wears a creation from a different Belgian designer. The objective is to one day organize an exhibit with all these creations. Will Claire this year wear an Anna Heylen creation? Anna Heylen does not know. ‘We have not been contacted yet but we would of course be honored,’ she said. But as a result of Prince Laurent’s controversial trip to Congo, against the recommendation of the Palace and of the Government, it is not sure that Laurent and his wife will still be invited to attend the Independence Day festivities.