

Victoria
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A London Cinderella Shop

No matter their fancy, whether a flower-strewn gown or a hat worthy of Ascot, customers who step through the door of Basia Zarzycka's lilliputian London shop know to expect enchantments within. Bursting with splendid one-of-a-kind accessories and wearable works of art, it pairs the owner's love of 18th-century opulence with her sure 20th-century touch.



First-time visitors never fail to be dazzled by Basia Zarzycka's unique array of treasures, things she has been collecting all her life—a fringed silk paisley parasol, perhaps, or a lace and mother-of-pearl folding fan that Marie Antoinette might have carried, or antique buttons, above.

As they wander about, browsers soon see the many costume-ball masks sprinkled around the store—some ornamented with mysterious lacy veils or peeking out from behind pillows, as above. When this costume and textile designer opened her store five years ago, the masks were among the first things she sold and are equally popular today.

"They're very baroque, very Venetian, like something from a Monteverdi opera," Basia says.

Brides just setting up house-keeping covet Basia's lavish "fruit" pillows, created with the help of her mother, Jadwiga—a native of Poland



who passed along her love of traditional embroidery and needle arts. Together, they craft the cushions in shimmering tones of ivory and gold lamé, adding little snippets of antique fabric. "We save every precious scrap we find," says Basia. "I'll turn a tiny piece into a grape, or it might show up stitched into a wedding gown."

At any one time, several such gowns might be unveiled in the shop, awaiting brides due for a fitting. On the silk gown, opposite, such rarities as hundred-year-old Vauxhall glass beads—"they shimmer like butterfly wings"—mingle with the fabric forget-me-not and wild-rose ribbon bouquet pinned to the skirt.

"We have a thousand different specialty tools just for making flowers," Basia notes. Blossoms of chiffon and handmade velvet ivy, for instance, adorn the long-trained Chantilly lace dress, left. "You'll often see ivy on my dresses; it's one of my favorite motifs."

ROMANTIC REMINISCENCE

