

Date of birth: 2 May 1969

Place of birth: Hollywood, California

Now lives: Paris (I've been here eight years)

Started out: Originally I was a partner in a industrial trade film production company in San Francisco – with the money I'd made I did a Master of Fine Arts degree in English, taught for a bit but hated it, and decided to go to Paris to find myself, where by chance I met luxury ready-to-wear designer Andrew Gn and became his muse.

Career highlights: Launching Gentry de Paris at Salon de la Lingerie in 2003, winning the Prix Séat at the Trophée d'Evian de Créateurs de Mode in June 2005, currently being nominated for Entrepreneur of the Year for the European Women of Achievement Awards, and seeing the corset and bustle I created for this year's Salon de la Lingerie Ultra Lingerie catwalk show make it to the semi finals.

Future plans: Opening Gentry de Paris "bedroom concept" boutiques in Paris and Monaco this autumn. Each store will have three bedrooms furnished with antiques, where customers will be able to buy everything from the sheets to the lingerie in the drawers to the chocolates on the pillows.



Gentry Lane

The designer of luxury lingerie and loungewear label Gentry de Paris talks about the similarities between her men and her coffee, her love of corsets, and her dislike of customs forms.



Silk satin step-in, one of the key vintage-inspired loungewear pieces in the new collection from Gentry de Paris.

French silk satin hipster knicker with rhinestone

WHAT'S YOUR TRADEMARK STYLE? Before every purchase, I ask myself one question: Does this look like something Audrey Hepburn would wear? If the answer is yes, then I buy it regardless of price. (Which is why they treat me like a rock star at Prada and Lanvin.)

FAVOURITE LINGERIE ITEM? I worked with a plastic surgeon to create our newest bra. It very lightly brings the breasts in but, instead of crushing them together, it holds them up and forward. Because it slims the silhouette, I swear it makes you look taller and thinner.

WHO DO YOU MOST ADMIRE IN THE INDUSTRY? The lace designers and textile manufacturers who have been in business for generations.

FAVOURITE LINGERIE SHOPPING HAUNTS? Liberty when the lingerie was still based next to the footwear department, as my two fetishes are lingerie and shoes; Daniella in Love on the Boissy d'Anglais, as it's the best boutique in Paris and the owner is nice and elegant and knows everyone; and Parisian lingerie specialist Cadolle.

WHAT FASHION ITEM FROM THE PAST WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPERIENCE A COMEBACK? Corsets and waist cinchers. I am crazy

about tiny, nipped waists. And yes, I know I am in the minority on this one...so don't worry. You won't see them in my collection. But you will find dozens in my closet.

BEST ADVICE EVER GIVEN? It takes money to make money.

BIGGEST RISK EVER TAKEN? Starting this company!

WHAT ACHIEVEMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF? I'm not proud; I'm actually astounded that I am finally equally comfortable speaking French or English.

BEST/WORST THING ABOUT WHAT YOU DO? The best is meeting the end consumer, which I do every season by visiting every stockist. I haaaaaaate filling out all the customs forms for distribution.

WHAT COULDN'T YOU LIVE WITHOUT? That's easy: French espresso. I always say that I like my coffee how I like my men: strong, bitter and French.

WHO/WHAT KEEPS YOU SANE? My pug, Napoléon. He's the cutest, best dog in the world.

BEST CHILDHOOD MEMORY? I grew up in Southern California, near Disneyland. I've been literally hundreds of times, and it really is the "Happiest Place on Earth". I'm certain that fairytale overexposure has had serious repercussions on many of my life choices.

WHAT MAKES YOU LAUGH? Hugh Laurie.

WHAT MAKES YOU CRY? Hugh Laurie's married.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO RELAX? I get massages at L'Appartement 217, rue Saint Honoré. I also have season tickets to the ballet. A complete classical dance fanatic, I haven't missed a performance in years. The costumes, the music, the poise and graceful gestic... it's like a visit to paradise.

WHO OR WHAT WOULD YOU PUT IN ROOM 101? Factories that deliver late. I'm super organised and have to create all these false deadlines. Surprisingly the factory with the most complicated task, always delivers on time.

WHO ARE YOUR THREE FANTASY DINNER GUESTS – ALIVE OR DEAD? Scott Fitzgerald (he's my ideal man), Napoléon (he's my other ideal man), and Cole Porter so someone can entertain us while we enjoy our after-dinner cognac.

WHO'S YOUR PIN-UP? Hollywood actress Mamie van Doren. She's still gorgeous and still posing. We named a babydoll nightie after her last season.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE DAY? I suppose I'd have to do something to quell the rioters, as I don't think the UK would take too kindly to an American-born/Parisian PM. But then I'd make luxury lingerie tax deductible. And have lunch with the Queen. Then try on all the gorgeous vintage clothes at the V&A. ■