

[LOOK WHO'S TALKING]

COMFORT ZONE

KIMBERLY MCKINLEY
RECREATES A SUMMER-TRAVEL
SAVIOR: THE CHIC SHIRTDRESS.

By Jennifer Barger
Photography by Greg Powers

Created by Dior in the 1940s, popularized by chic women in the Eisenhower era and co-opted by Diane von Furstenberg in the 1970s, the shirtdress exists somewhere at the intersection of wildly glamorous and extremely wearable. It's a combo that appeals to Georgetown frock star Kimberly McKinley, who launched her Kiki Lynn (kikilynn.com) line of shirtdresses (from \$295), caftans (from \$175) and knits (from \$70) from her light-dappled Wisconsin Avenue showroom. The brand's moniker riffs on the sleek blonde's childhood nickname.

"There weren't any brands that were [creating] made-in-the-U.S.A. dresses that fit well," says McKinley, who did 15 years in the New York fashion world at Louis Vuitton and Bloomingdale's. After working and reworking her trademark button-up, waist-tied shirtdress, she started selling black, gingham and striped numbers both by appointment via her Georgetown showroom and via local stores like Sherman Pickey. They're all sewn in Manhattan's storied Garment District and Brooklyn, where McKinley works with a freelance designer.

The key to the dresses' appeal? Luxe American-, Portuguese- and Italian-crafted fabrics, statement-making brass buttons and a flattering fit. "I wanted them to be reminiscent of the 1950s—full and feminine—but practical, with roll-up sleeves and a belted waist," says McKinley.

Clever touches—pockets in the skirt seams that don't bulge, a hemline that's shorter at the knees and longer at the sides—assure the garments look both ladylike and sexy. "The nice thing is, when you sit down, the hem stays near your knees, but you still have a nice drape," she says.

"They're great for weekends," McKinley says. "These are pieces that take [women] through their interesting days and nights."



MCKINLEY'S HOTS

Caftans, date nights in a cozy corner at Off the Record, a day at the beach sans cellphone, any meal at Martin's Tavern surrounded by family and friends, handwritten thank-you notes on personalized stationery

MCKINLEY'S NOTS

Being carelessly underdressed for nice occasions, waiting in line, arrogant customer service, flooding and closed lanes on Rock Creek Parkway, humidity

EASY BREEZY Former Louis Vuitton exec Kimberly McKinley recently launched her own DC-based line, Kiki Lynn, from her Georgetown showroom, where clients may browse the collection by appointment.