

Elisabeth Koch - BEIJING



In 2009, we told you that milliner Elisabeth Koch was 'one to watch' and we were right...

If you've read [Issue 34](#) you'll know that Elisabeth Koch is a creative hat lover with a multicultural background who took her passion for headwear to a whole new level by enrolling on a course at the former Wombourne School of Millinery in the UK. Since then, [Elisabeth Koch Millinery](#) has become one of the most fashionable hat labels in China and has received much international press attention. We recently caught up with Elisabeth to find out how she managed to achieve such amazing success in such a short amount of time.

Where are you based?

After finishing my hat course in Wombourne, I moved to Beijing and set up [Elisabeth Koch Millinery](#). I had no market research and had never been to China. My husband was sent here as a diplomat for the Dutch Foreign Service, though he has since resigned to follow his passion for resource efficient technology and has set up his own business in that sector. I quit my job at a bank in Brussels, went to Wombourne School of Millinery and then immediately to Beijing, where I hit the ground running. We have had two children in China and moved house three times within Beijing alone, due to our diplomatic-status-to-entrepreneur choice. The last six years in Beijing have been quite a roller coaster. I was recently interviewed (in English) by a Chinese TV channel and this gives a good insight into my life here and my hats ([click here to watch](#)). *Elisabeth is pictured here with a few of her hats (right).*



How did you launch your own millinery label?

I went to parties wearing my craziest hats and, before I knew it, I had press knocking on my door for hats for photo shoots. Within six months, I had a 12-page spread in *Harper's Bazaar*. Since then, the press is hard to keep track of and I have a huge press board on the wall in my studio. It's not just Chinese press. I've also had hats in *Vogue Italy*, *Numero Paris*, *Teen Vogue US*, *Supplementaire UK*, *L'Officiel Ukraine* and newspapers in the United States and Holland.

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Have you met many other Chinese milliners?

There are no other milliners on mainland China. There are factories and hat shops, but no one who properly makes hats the old fashioned way! This was confirmed to me when I was asked to give a lecture and demonstration at the Beijing Institute for Fashion Technology (BIFT), where I found out that they only made hats with patterns and sewing machines, not haute couture pieces.

What's your latest news?

Last year, I was approached by a large Chinese hat firm called **Hatters' Hub** and was asked to create a joint hat line that would be their high-end label - Elisabeth Koch Millinery by Hatters' Hub. We have had this collaboration for six months now and it is proving to be successful all round. Hatters' Hub design and create other labels but our joint label is 100% hand made in our studio in Beijing, where I spend every day. We make just one of each hat, so each creation is quite unique. At the same time, I continue my own label, Elisabeth Koch Millinery, which is for sale in Beijing, Shanghai and in Atlanta, Georgia in the USA. Also, I recently showed hats at the 21st China International Clothing & Accessories Fair (CHIC 2013) in Beijing and at the 2nd International Culture Design Industry Fair in Suzhou. My next show will be at the Park Hyatt in Beijing later this month.



Elisabeth Koch Millinery

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