

Celebrating Life Lolita Style

By Wanda Jankowski

Savannah-based artist and entrepreneur, Lolita, built a brand that has expanded from giftware into home textiles on the idea of commemorating life's special moments

Often the most successful products stem from ideas based on entrepreneurs' personal experiences. This was the case for Lolita, an artist and entrepreneur educated in fine arts with a professional background in marketing, advertising and apparel fashion.

While enjoying drinks with girlfriends one evening at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, she noticed that each of them ordered a martini that reflected her taste or personality. The thought occurred to Lolita, "Wouldn't it be great if the glasses had fun, individual designs that coordinated with the drinks to make the party even more special and festive?"

Lolita used her design and marketing skills to launch a martini glass collection hand-painted by artists who reproduce her original colorful designs. A drink recipe is painted on the bottom of each glass that reflects the personality or theme embodied in the design.



Lolita at work.

The design themes not only commemorate a range of special occasions, such as Birthday Girl, but turn ordinary moments into special "Lolita moments" with concepts based on personalities, such as the Shopaholic, the Social Butterfly and Five O'Clock Somewhere.

After expanding her line into varied types of drink-ware and other gift items, Lolita has taken the brand further by collaborating with Avanti Linens on an extensive line of home textiles and personal accessories that debuted during the Fall N.Y. Home Fashions Market.

What shaped your design vision?

"I'm passionate about art and life in general. My core belief is that art should be accessible to everyone. It has enriched my life (I've been an artist since I was a young girl) and I have always surrounded myself with lots of color and beauty and patterns galore.

"The Lolita style is based on connecting art and you. People in their very individual ways inspire me to create items that spark emotion and make them laugh. Humor over the human condition is injected into every one of my



designs. Designing also for people's special moments is a big consideration."

Shopaholic bedding ensemble by Avanti Linens for Lolita.

Who is the Lolita customer?

"The Lolita customer is passionate about life, enjoys fun, sophistication, humor and celebrating the ordinary as much as the extraordinary in life. She's a girl that loves sharing time with girlfriends; a guy that likes to laugh at himself; a mom with a 21-year-old who wants her son or daughter to celebrate the occasion with class; a woman that can celebrate moments, even sometimes unfortunate ones, like getting a divorce or being on a diet.



"There is a design for every personality, every sense of humor, every walk of life."

Beach towels from Lolita's Love My Home Collection by Avanti Linens.

What makes your designs distinctive?

"Each design is eye catching, energetic and detail driven. I wanted each design to exude confidence. Often a sense of humor or a sassy/sexy/bold side shows through, too.

"My creations have palettes that are infused with complementary colors and I use strong design elements in my layouts. Less realism, more fantasy, more whimsy with a little funk.

"Matching personalities was a key and unique difference in my design approach and in the products' appeal in the marketplace. The Lolita customer has a relationship to the product. It's a statement about the individual who purchases it."

Why are you choosing to work with

Avanti?

"Many factors go into the decision-making process when preparing to sign a license with a manufacturer. One of those factors for me is 'do they get it?' After my first meeting with the Avanti team it was clear that they 'get it'.

"I find the team at Avanti easy to work with and open to new ideas—both of which, I believe, are key ingredients to a successful relationship. Additionally, I try to contract with what we call the 'best of breed' in manufacturing, so for any new product category, the quality of product and personnel, drive, and financial stability are all key. Avanti fits that bill hands down."

Will you develop new designs with Avanti?

"Absolutely. They are launching the line in home textiles with hundreds of skus and we are already planning far into the future. I have found that Avanti, like myself, is willing to think outside of

Lolita's Fast-Track Timeline



2000: Love My Martini Collection was

the box or how I prefer to say it: ‘color outside of the lines and have fun doing it’. Avanti is a great team player in this approach.”

What is the ultimate goal for your line?

“My brand is about lifestyle and entertaining. Entertaining at home has increased in popularity and we all still want to surround ourselves with things that make us happy.

“The transition of my designs from my original glass drink-ware line into home textiles, fashion and personal accessories works well for my brand and my customers. I have heard for years from my fan base that they want more Lolita. My goal is to fill that desire.”

Resources

- Avanti Linens, 201-641-7766, avantilinen.com
- Designs By Lolita, 912-920-9887, designsbylolita.com

born with signature martini recipe on the bottom of each glass.

2004: Lolita signed licensing contract with Santa Barbara Designs. Eighteen additional designs were introduced, including the popular “Shopaholic” and “Flirtini.”

2006: Lolita introduced 121 new items and shipped a total of 687,000 pieces to more than 5,000 stores worldwide.

2007: Nearly two million Lolita products were sold. The expanded collection now includes martini, wine, margarita, mojito, champagne and pilsner glasses.

2008: Lolita on Entrepreneur’s 2008 Hot List. City-tini Collection, hot beverage mugs and shooters introduced. Glass sales surpass four million.

2009: Scented gel candles and Pink Ribbon glasses in the fight against breast cancer introduced. Licensing agreement is signed with Avanti Linens and a wide range of home textiles, from aprons and oven mitts to bedding and pillows are debuted at market.