

Q&A with Alexis Maybank & Alexandra Wilkis Wilson

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Kicking off their book tour at the W Hotel in Boston, Alexandra Wilkis Wilson and Alexis Maybank, have made their mark in the fashion industry. These hard-working and determined women are the epitome of style and panache.

The gorgeous duo co-founded [Gilt Groupe](#), an online shopping site that provides instant insider access to today's top designer labels, at up to 60% off retail prices. Now, the two are sharing their journey from Harvard undergraduate students to successful entrepreneurs in their new book titled, *By Invitation Only: How We Built Gilt and Changed the Way Millions Shop*.

During the event, Wilson and Maybank shared advice, stories of friendship & business, and answered questions over a wonderful brunch. The self proclaimed "A's," kindly took the time to answer a few questions about their ongoing expedition through the fashion industry.

Sebastien Laforest: What style advice do you have for today's woman?

Alexandra Wilkis Wilson: Every woman should have a fantastic and reliable pair of heels that she can wear from the start of the day to the end of day.

Alexis Maybank: For a woman, it's not necessarily to chase the trends, but figure out the silhouettes and the style that defines them [the woman].

SL: What are the basics that every man should have in his closet?

AWW: I think a man needs a great fitting suit.

AM: I think it's really important for men to have nice shoes, first and for most that's critical. And then, I think it's all about the details in men's dressing. It's the pocket square, it's the cuff links, it's the glasses, and the tie choices. So, it's more the details that added together, say a lot about your specific point on style. And it's what differentiates one man from another in the way he puts himself forward.

SL: What was the most fearful aspect of starting Gilt Groupe?

AM: It's actually the very start of our book... that first morning when we were having our first sale. So much is on the line, but there's always that deep fear that customers won't come, customers won't like it, you'll have to rethink your idea. And on the other side of it too, it can be really scary when you have convinced a group of people to leave their steady jobs to take that leap of faith to come work with you on your start up. So, it's intimidating and scary because you take that responsibility so seriously and carry it on your shoulders.

SL: What is your advice for someone trying to enter the fashion industry?

AWW: For the fashion industry, I think it's really important that you stay in touch with the news; a good place to start is reading Women's Wear Daily. But I think if you're considering a career in fashion, get some sort of experience maybe through an internship or an apprenticeship. It is an amazing industry and experience, but it's not for everyone. So, the best way to know if it's for you is to just get in there and do it.

SL: With all the places you've traveled, where is the one place in your opinion everyone must visit at some point in their lifetime?

AWW: The two of us have actually travelled a ton together. So, that is so hard to just pick one place. I guess I'll say New York City because that's where I'm from and that's where our business is based. New York City is just such an exciting place, and has become a great city for not only fashion and finance, but also entrepreneurship and a number of other industries.

SL: What is the funniest and/or craziest thing that has happened to you during the course of your career?

AM: The funniest and craziest was probably a year and a half in [after starting Gilt Groupe], when we hosted an event for Valentino and his documentary on his life, *The Last Emperor*. Right as we were all leaving the film, we were about to go sit at the table, it was a star studded crowd, and very exciting. In charges Madonna, into our party unannounced and without a seat. It was hilarious watching the people on our team who had put together the event start freaking out "Where are we going to find a chair for her? Where are we going to set her?" It was an exciting moment... I never thought that I would have a party that Madonna would crash.

SL: What is the most memorable moment of your career?

AM: The most meaningful, I say, is just starting a business with a friend, and being able to choose the group of people you work with. You spend more time at the end of the day with the people you work with than your family. And, if you can do it with a group you care about deeply and want to work with, it's that much more rewarding.

To learn more about the girls and where to purchase a copy of *By Invitation Only* book, visit their [website](#).

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