

Biographies of the great designers



Calvin Klein

- It's hard to imagine a young Francisco Costa growing up in the small Brazilian town where he was born (even to a family already rooted in fashion) and having even an inkling of the career he has now - a career which, in some ways, is only just starting. In the early '90s, the diminutive and cherubic immigrant arrived in New York as bright-eyed in the big city as any who had come before. He set about learning English and enrolled at the Fashion Institute of Technology, where he won the Idea Como/Young Designers of America award. After graduation, he was recruited to design dresses and knits for Bill Blass. But fate soon swept Costa towards his first big break when Oscar de la Renta asked him to oversee the signature and Pink Label collections of his own high-society house, plus Pierre Balmain haute couture and ready-to-wear. When **Calvin Klein** stepped down in 2003, Italo Zucchelli assumed the role of design director of the brand's menswear collections, following four seasons working directly with Klein. The simplicity and purity of the brand's design roots is a discipline in itself, one which Zucchelli deploys with a certain European panache, and inherent sense of sophisticated cool that has not only met with critical acclaim, but is an honest continuation of the Calvin Klein brand philosophy. Zucchelli lives and works in New York City.

Dolce & Gabbana

- **Dolce & Gabbana** are fashion's answer to Viagra: the full throbbing force of Italian style. The winning- combination of Dolce's tailoring perfectionism and Gabbana's stylistic theatrics has made the label a powerhouse in today's celebrity-obsessed age and just as influential as the ambassadors of sport, music and film that they dress. Established in 1985, the label continues to pay homage to such Italian film legends as Fellini, Visconti, Rossellini, Anna Magnani and Sophia Loren; in glossy art books, Dolce & Gabbana documents its own contribution to today's legends of film ('Hollywood'), music ('Music') and football ('Calcio'). With an empire that includes the younger **D&G** line, childrens-wear, swimwear, underwear, eyewear, fragrance (eight in total), watches, accessories and a global distribution through their own boutiques, Dolce & Gabbana are, quite simply, fashion's Italian stallions.

Giorgio Armani

- Now in his fifth decade working in fashion, **Giorgio Armani** is more than just a designer - he's an institution, an icon and a multinational, billion-dollar brand.

Armani the man was born in 1934 in Piacenza, northern Italy. He spent his formative years not in fashion but studying medicine at university and completing his national service. After working as a buyer for Milanese department store La Rinascente, he scored his first break in 1964, when he was hired by Nino Cerruti to design a menswear line, Hitman. Several years as a successful freelance designer followed, but it was in 1975 that the Giorgio Armani label was set up, with the help of his then business partner Sergio Galeotti. The brand now encompasses six major fashion lines and has diversified into bedlinen, chocolates and even hotels. Armani has won countless awards, including an Honorary Doctorate from the RCA in 1991; from 2000 his designs have been exhibited in a major retrospective show that has travelled worldwide. Armani has also picked up a dedicated Hollywood following, and January 2005 saw the launch in Paris of 'Giorgio Armani Prive', an haute couture-like collection.

Frida Giannini

- In March 2005 **Frida Giannini** was charged with pushing **Gucci**, one of the most recognisable status labels of the late 20th century, into a new era. She is responsible for its high-profile accessories and womenswear collections, which has become synonymous with figure-hugging pencil skirts, glamorous sportswear and vixen-ish eveningwear, a look established by Gucci's former designer, Tom Ford, during the '90s. Established in 1931 by Guccio Gucci as a saddlery shop in Florence, the company had been a traditional family-run Italian business until Guccio's grandson Maurizio sold his final share of the brand in 1993. It was Guccio who first intertwined his initials to create the iconic logo. Yet until Tom Ford came along in the mid-'90s, the brand's image was lacklustre; from autumn/winter 1995. In March 2005 Facchinetti also departed Gucci, and Giannini, who lives in a 15th century apartment in Florence and owns 7000 vinyl records, is now also responsible for women's clothing collections. Born in Rome in 1972, Giannini studied at the city's Fashion Academy; in 1997 she landed a job as ready-to-wear designer at Fendi, before first joining Gucci in 2002. Her 'Flora' collection of flowery-printed accessories was the commercial hit of 2004, and, at the time of writing, her first ready-to-wear collection was scheduled for autumn/winter 2005.

Mary Quant

- **Mary Quant** (born February 11, 1934) is an English fashion designer one of the many designers who took credit for inventing the miniskirt and hot pants.

The miniskirt was developed separately by Andre Courreges, and there is disagreement as to who came up with the idea first.

In addition to the miniskirt, Quant is often credited with inventing the coloured and patterned tights that tended to accompany the garment, although these are also attributed to Cristobal Balenciaga. In 1966 Quant was appointed an OBE for services to the fashion industry. In 2000, she resigned as director of Mary Quant Ltd., her cosmetics company, after a Japanese buy-out. There are over 200 Mary Quant Colour shops in Japan, where Quant fashions continue to enjoy some popularity.

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