

CONTEMPORARY
FASHION



SECOND EDITION

C O N T E M P O R A R Y

FASHION

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C O N T E M P O R A R Y
FASHION

SECOND EDITION

Editor:
Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

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EDITOR'S NOTE FROM THE FIRST EDITION

This volume is dedicated to Colin Naylor (1944–92), who initiated its publication and was editor until his early death. Colin's distinguished contributions to the arts—as editor of *Art & Artists* and as editor of indispensable reference volumes published by St. James Press and the Gale Group—resonate with his lively sense of the role of contemporary arts. I had the privilege of writing for him at *Art & Artists* decades ago and began on this volume in order to be involved again with an old friend and an inspiring editor. While he is not present for its outcome, *Contemporary Fashion* will always bear Colin's sense of adventure, scope of interest, and unceasing imagination. *Contemporary Fashion* is, I hope, no less Colin's book and dream for his absence upon its fulfillment.

Contemporary Fashion seeks to provide information on and assessment of fashion designers active during the period from 1945 to the present. International in scope in accordance with fashion's wide resourcing and dissemination, this volume attempts to provide dependable information and substantive critical appraisal in a field often prone to excessive praise and hyperbolic language. Each entry consists of a personal and professional biography; bibliographic citations by and about the designer; when possible, a statement by the designer on his or her work and/or design philosophy; and a concise, informative essay. The book's emphasis is on design creativity and distinction; in instances of a corporation, family business, design house, or other collective enterprise, we have attempted to hone in on the distinguishing attributes of the design tradition. Much literature from specialized periodicals is assimilated in the critical essays and listed in the bibliographies, offering the reader access to a wide variety and deep concentration of specialized literature.

Special appreciation is owed to the designers and design houses who generously supplied statements, information, and visual documentation. Virtually everyone in the civilized world talks about fashion. It is an area in which most of us consider ourselves knowledgeable, if only as a function of making our own clothing decisions on a daily basis. *Contemporary Fashion* gives value to the data and ideas of fashion discussion; it is intended to aid the discourse about apparel and edify the lively fashion conversation. *Contemporary Fashion* is to stand as a solid reference where no other comparable volumes exist and to make a contribution to fashion study and its allied expressions.

—Richard Martin (1947–99)

EDITOR'S NOTE FROM THE CURRENT EDITION

I have been happy to perpetuate a project beloved by both Colin Naylor (1944–92) and Richard Martin (1947–99), and believe each would be pleased with *Contemporary Fashion, 2nd Edition*. Unique to the second volume is an advisory board of industry professionals, who helped select the new designers and companies added to the previous edition's international mix. Additionally, the number of photographs is more than double the original, so readers and researchers may experience both a written and visual record of this evolving field.

Contemporary Fashion, 2nd Edition, like its predecessor, is filled with informative essays mirroring the many facets of the fashion world, including extended biographical headers with website addresses whenever available, and extensive bibliographic listings. Those involved with this book have striven to be as current as possible, and developments were added up to the moment the book went into publication.

This edition would not have been possible without Kristin Hart, who offered advice and unflinching support; Barbara Coster, who tackles whatever is thrown her way; Karen Raugust, who always comes through, with good results; Jocelyn Prucha, for diving repeatedly into murky waters for up-to-the-second information; Peter Gareffa, for offering me another opportunity; and to the beloveds, who made working this hard worthwhile: John, Jordyn, Wylie, Foley, and Hadley.

Lastly, a technical note: to save space and the mindless repetition of periodicals used throughout the publications sections, abbreviations were used for the *Daily News Record* (as *DNR*) and *Women's Wear Daily* (*WWD*). Discerning readers may also note in most cases when *Vogue* is listed, it is accompanied by the city of its publication (Paris, Milan, etc.), except when issued from New York.

—Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf

INTRODUCTION

Fashion is often perceived as frivolous, irrational, and dictatorial. Changes in fashion strike many people as mysterious, arbitrary, and senseless—except as part of a conspiracy to trick “fashion victims” into buying unnecessary new clothes. In 19th-century America, dress reformers argued that contemporary fashion was created by a cabal of male couturiers and Parisian courtesans, who sought to become rich by promoting immoral styles. Although courtesans are no longer significant trendsetters, designers are still widely regarded as dictators devoted to the planned obsolescence of successive absurd and expensive clothing styles. Conversely, the fashion press tends to characterize favored designers as “geniuses” whose creations arise independently of socioeconomic forces or cultural trends. Although more flattering, this latter view of the design process is no more accurate than the antifashion critique.

Years ago, when Richard Martin edited the first edition of *Contemporary Fashion*, he was one of a very few scholars who took fashion seriously. Throughout his career as an author and curator, Richard argued that fashion should be acknowledged as one of the visual arts. He was well aware that fashion’s association with the female body and with the ephemeral, as well as its reputation as a commercial enterprise, had contributed to its lesser reputation in comparison with the arts identified with men. But he insisted that, on the contrary, fashion played a singularly important role in modern culture. With the publication of *Contemporary Fashion*, he sought to provide substantial documentation on the work of a wide range of fashion designers, believing this would empower readers to recognize how fashion provides insight into issues such as self-expression, body image, gender, sexuality, class, and the manifold relationships between high art and popular culture.

Richard was a friend and mentor, and I am honored to provide an introduction to this latest edition of *Contemporary Fashion*, which includes a number of new and revised essays. Like the first edition, it seeks to provide reliable information on the most important fashion designers active from 1945 to the present. Since contemporary fashion is very much a global phenomenon, the book is international in scope. Organized alphabetically, it consists of essays on individual designers (from Armani, Balenciaga, and Chanel through Westwood, Yamamoto, and Zoran) written by scholars or critics in the field of fashion history. Each entry includes biographical information, as well as a critical assessment of the designer’s contributions to fashion, and a bibliography to facilitate further research. Thanks in part to Richard’s work, fashion is now increasingly regarded as a legitimate area of research, and fashion designers receive greater recognition as creative individuals working within a complex and valuable tradition.

—Dr. Valerie Steele, Chief Curator and Acting Director,
The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology

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C O N T E M P O R A R Y

FASHION

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Adele Simpson	Trussardi, SpA	
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A

ABBOUD, Joseph

American designer

Born: Boston, Massachusetts, 5 May 1950. **Education:** Studied comparative literature, University of Massachusetts, Boston, 1968–72; also studied at the Sorbonne. **Family:** Married Lynn Weinstein, 6 June 1976; children: Lila, Ari. **Career:** Buyer, then director of merchandise, Louis of Boston, 1968–80; designer, Southwick, 1980; associate director of menswear design, Polo/Ralph Lauren, New York, 1980–84; launched signature menswear collection, 1986; designer, Barry Bricken, New York, 1987–88. J.A. (Joseph Abboud) Apparel Corporation, a joint venture with GFT USA, formed, 1988; Joseph Abboud Womenswear and menswear collection of tailored clothing and furnishings introduced, 1990; opened first retail store, Boston, 1990; collections first shown in Europe, 1990; JA II line introduced, 1991; fragrance line introduced in Japan, 1992, in America, 1993; introduced J.O.E. (Just One Earth) sportswear line, 1992; designed wardrobes for male television announcers for 1992 Winter Olympics, Albertville, France, 1992; Joseph Abboud Environments bed and bath collection launched, 1993; Joseph Abboud fragrance launched, 1994; formed Joseph Abboud Worldwide to oversee labels and licensing, 1996; forged strategic partnership with GFT, 1997; introduced black label line for men, 1999; company acquired by GFT for \$65 million, 2000. **Awards:** Cutty Sark award, 1988; Woolmark award, 1988; Menswear Designer of the Year award from Council of Fashion Designers of America Award, 1989, 1990; honored by Japanese Government in conjunction with the Association of Total Fashion in Osaka, 1993; Special Achievement award from Neckwear Association of America Inc., 1994. **Address:** 650 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019, USA.

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Articles

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* * *

Joseph Abboud has said that his clothing is as much about lifestyle as design. Since 1986, after breaking away from Ralph Lauren, he has filled a niche in the fashion world with his creations for men and, more recently, for women as well. For the contemporary individual seeking a façade that is as casual, elegant, and as international as the accompanying life, the Abboud wardrobe offers comfort, beauty, and a modernity that is equally suitable in New York, Milan, or Australia. Abboud was the first menswear designer in the United States to revolutionize the concept of American style.

Born in Boston, Abboud is hardly provincial. Something of an outsider, he did not come to fashion through the usual design school training and had no pre-established world in which to fit. Instead he



Joseph Abboud adjusting an item from his spring 2001 collection. © AP/Wide World Photos.

made his own. His approach to fashion was via studies in comparative literature, followed by study at the Sorbonne in Paris. His fall 1990 menswear collection Grand Tour pays homage to that experience with its romantic 1930s and 1940s designs, reminiscent of Hemingway, while his own rich ethnic background provided the depth of appreciation for global culture inherent in his work. Coming of age in the 1960s, Abboud began collecting early Turkish *kilims* (flat woven rugs) with their salient handcrafted quality and stylized geometric patterns. These motifs form a recurring theme in his work, from the handknit sweaters to the machine-knit shirts. The rugs themselves, in muted earthtones, complement the calm, natural environment of the Abboud stores. For Abboud, the presentation of the clothing mimics the aesthetics of the garments: soft, casual, and elegant in its simplicity.

Color, texture, and the cut of Abboud fashions express a style that lies between, and sometimes overlaps, that of Ralph Lauren and Giorgio Armani. The palette of the Joseph Abboud and the 1992 J.O.E. (Just One Earth) lines for both sexes is more subtle than the traditional Anglo-American colors of the preppie or Sloane Ranger genre, yet more varied in tone and hue than the sublimely unstated Armani colors. Neutrals from burnt sienna to cream, stucco, straw, and the colors of winter birch, together with naturals such as indigo and faded burgundy, are examples of some of the most alluring of Abboud dyestuffs.

The Pacific Northwest Collection, fall 1987, manifested rich hues, from black to maroon, but even these were harmonious, never ostentatious. The black of his leather jackets, fall 1992, appears like soft patches of the night sky due to the suppleness and unique surface treatment of the skins. The fabrics for Abboud designs represent the artist's diligent search for the world's finest materials and craftsmanship. His respect for textile traditions does not mean that his work is retrospective but that his inventiveness is grounded in the integrity of the classics. His interpretation of tweed, for example, although based on fine Scottish wool weavings, which he compares to the most beautiful artistic landscapes, differs from the conventional Harris-type tweed. Silk, alpaca, or llama are occasionally combined with the traditional wool to yield a lighter fabric.

Unique and demanding in his working methods, Abboud is at the forefront of contemporary fashion-fabric design. His fabrics drape with a grace and elegance that is enhanced by the oversize cut and fluid lines of his suits. His characteristically full, double-pleated trousers, for example, are luxurious. The romantic malt mohair gossamer-like fabrics for women in the fall 1993 collection are cut simply with no extraneous details. Even the intricate embroideries that ornament the surfaces of many of his most memorable designs, from North African suede vests with a Kashmiri *boteh* design to the jewel-like beadwork for evening, have a wearability uncommon in the contemporary artistic fashion.

Nature is Abboud's muse. Beyond the obvious J.O.E. line appellation, the theme of the bucolic environment provides inspiration for the garments. Country stone walls, pebbles on a beach, the light and earthtones of the Southwest are interpreted in exquisitely cut fabrics that embrace the body with a style that becomes an individual's second skin.

Abboud's easy, elegant style had translated into a \$100 million business by 1997, with overseas sales accounting for about 35 percent of turnover. It was considered a healthy operation, but did not reach the heights of some of his better-known peers. In 1998 Abboud sought to boost his profile by entering into a strategic alliance with his 10-year licensee GFT USA, a subsidiary of the Italian company Holding de Partecipazioni Industriali (HdP). With the move, he hoped to increase synergies between Joseph Abboud Worldwide and GFT's J.A. Apparel subsidiary, both formed in 1996. The two businesses developed an integrated management structure and increased coordination among licensees.

Abboud launched an upscale black label line for men over 35 in 1999, intending to supplement his existing upper-moderate tailored clothing business. The products are sold in the designer's own shops and about 40 select doors at 10 leading retailers. They are manufactured in the U.S. using European fabrics.

In 2000 Abboud further cemented his relationship with GFT when the latter purchased Abboud's label and licensing rights for \$65 million. Abboud plans to continue as creative director and chairman emeritus for at least five years. The Abboud labels generated an estimated \$250 million in sales in 2000, with about 80 percent of that business from GFT, which produces and distributes Abboud's black and diamond label tailored clothing, sportswear and golfwear. The remaining sales come from 27 other licensees; Abboud's licensed lines include fragrances, furs, coats, lounge- and sleepwear, swimwear, timepieces, and home furnishings.

The GFT acquisition will enable expansion in key areas such as international distribution, golf, and women's wear, as well as boosting the company's retailing operation and enhancing the Joseph Abboud Environments bed and bath collection. GFT and Abboud are also considering the introduction of new collections, such as one geared toward younger men.

Abboud's business, at times, has been overshadowed by trendier labels such as Tommy Hilfiger, as well as by Italian designers who appeal to the same clientele. But his customer base—which includes several high-profile sports anchors and news anchor Bryant Gumbel—has long been loyal his earthy colors, use of texture, and his ability to combine the classic with the modern.

—Marianne T. Carlano; updated by Karen Raugust

ABERCROMBIE & FITCH COMPANY

American sportswear and outerwear retailer

Founded: in 1892 by David Abercrombie to sell camping supplies; joined by Ezra Fitch to become Abercrombie & Fitch, providing exclusive outdoor needs, including clothing and equipment. **Company History:** Moved to new Madison Avenue digs, 1917; filed for bankruptcy, 1977; bought by Oshman's Sporting Goods, 1978; bought by The Limited, 1988; Michael Jeffries became CEO, 1992;

back in black ink, 1995; went public, 1996; spun off by Limited, 1998; introduced children's stores, 1998; launched Hollister stores, for younger teens, 2000; also publishes *A&F Quarterly* catalogue/magazine. **Company Address:** 6301 Fitch Path, New Albany, OH 43054 USA. **Company Website:** www.abercrombie.com.

PUBLICATIONS

On ABERCROMBIE & FITCH:

Articles

- Paris, Ellen, "Endangered Species? Abercrombie & Fitch," in *Forbes*, 9 March 1987.
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Abercrombie & Fitch has come back from the brink of extinction several times since its founding in 1892 by David Abercrombie. Originally created to sell camping gear, Abercrombie met up with lawyer Ezra Fitch and expanded the business to include a myriad of products for the rugged outdoorsmen of the time. Yet A&F didn't cater to just anyone with a yen for adventure, but only to those who could afford to pay premium prices for high-quality goods. Among the firm's early adventurers were Rough Rider Teddy Roosevelt, Byrd, Charles "Lucky" Lindbergh, and Amelia Earhart; the next generation included Winston Guest and macho sportsman and writer Ernest Hemingway.

The company did a bumper business until the 1960s, when flower power and environmental awareness began to seep into the American consciousness. Abercrombie & Fitch's atmospheric stores, with mounted animal heads and stuffed dead animals, were soon out of sync with a country awash in change and protest. The majority of A&F merchandise catered to hunting and fishing enthusiasts, and blood sports lost their popularity as the decade ended and the 1970s began. Although the firm valiantly tried to expand its wares to appeal to more customers, A&F filed for Chapter 11 in 1977.

Nature is Abboud's muse. Beyond the obvious J.O.E. line appellation, the theme of the bucolic environment provides inspiration for the garments. Country stone walls, pebbles on a beach, the light and earthtones of the Southwest are interpreted in exquisitely cut fabrics that embrace the body with a style that becomes an individual's second skin.

Abboud's easy, elegant style had translated into a \$100 million business by 1997, with overseas sales accounting for about 35 percent of turnover. It was considered a healthy operation, but did not reach the heights of some of his better-known peers. In 1998 Abboud sought to boost his profile by entering into a strategic alliance with his 10-year licensee GFT USA, a subsidiary of the Italian company Holding de Partecipazioni Industriali (HdP). With the move, he hoped to increase synergies between Joseph Abboud Worldwide and GFT's J.A. Apparel subsidiary, both formed in 1996. The two businesses developed an integrated management structure and increased coordination among licensees.

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Oshman's Sporting Goods bought A&F in 1978 and hoped to parlay its fame into a broad mix of sporting goods and apparel, as well as a wide range of other products. The rescue failed, despite repeated attempts to revive the Abercrombie cachet. In 1988, clothier The Limited Inc. acquired the struggling A&F for \$47 million, along with its 27 stores. The Limited, however, was an evolving retailer itself, having bought Victoria's Secret, Penhaligon's, Henri Bendel, and others in quick succession. The future of A&F, however, came in the form of Michael Jeffries, who took the reins as chief executive in 1992, when there were 35 rather unimpressive A&F stores dotting the nation. Jeffries had an unusual way of conducting business, from his 29-page employee manual to his maniacal detailing of each and every store.

Jeffries' know-how and marketing savvy were put to the test. He drastically overhauled Abercrombie's image to appeal to a younger, hipper crowd, doing away with anything but apparel and accessories. Jeffries wanted to entice the collegiate crowd into A&F and did so with creative advertising and making each A&F store a cool place to visit and spend money, with blaring popular music and a sales staff with attitude. By 1995 the retailer was not only in the black but a true cultural phenomenon. Abercrombie's logoed t-shirts and cargo pants became the must-have apparel for teenagers on up, which happened to be the fastest growing segment in retail.

To keep the momentum going, Jeffries initiated the *A&F Quarterly* (a slick magazine-like catalogue they call the "magalogue") and aggressive advertising. Both measures received much attention but brought the ire of parents, advocacy groups, and politicians when some of the material offered drinking tips and some content was deemed pornographic. Like Calvin Klein before him, Jeffries had pushed the envelope too far but had no remorse or plans to change his ways. In 1999 the company ran its first television ads, and the company hit a staggering milestone—breaking the \$1-billion sales threshold.

By the end of the 20th century, the A&F magalogue was marketed only to more mature kids (18 and older with an ID to prove it) because of its emphasis on sex and "college-age" pursuits like partying. The younger crowd, of course, and virtually anyone buying Abercrombie had already bought the image along with the jeans, baggy pants, cargo shorts, and t-shirts. Though sales remained relatively solid, A&F had its share of troubles in the new millennium. Stock prices tumbled, its television ads didn't quite hit the mark, and as always, the firm continued to receive criticism for its *A&F Quarterly*. Oddly, in an instance when Jeffries could have reached millions of television viewers with his products, he refused to allow A&F clothing to appear in Showtime's *Queer As Folk* series—featuring young, hip, sexually active teens and adults doing all the things A&F showcased in its magalogue, with the exception that these pretty boys and girls were gay.

By 2001 Abercrombie had attempted to delineate its customers into three categories: for the younger or preteen crowd, it had launched Abercrombie stores in 1998; for teens and high schoolers, there was the newly introduced Hollister Co. in 2000; and older, college-aged buyers remained prime targets of traditional A&F stores. The latter group was also those to whom *A&F Quarterly* was addressed, but Jeffries seemed to have gone too far with the 2001 issue featuring the usual bevy of naked males and females. Bowing to pressure Jeffries pulled the issue, titled XXX, despite pleas that the magalogue was wrapped in plastic (like *Playboy*) and sold only to those with proof of their age.

Abercrombie & Fitch has proven itself a purveyor of more than just style, but of fashion advocating a particular lifestyle. Some quarrel with the firm's message and methods, but millions continue to pay premium prices for the simple apparel emblazoned with its name.

—Nelly Rhodes

ADOLFO

American designer

Born: Adolfo F. Sardiña in Cardenas, Cuba, 15 February 1933; immigrated to New York, 1948, naturalized, 1958. **Education:** B.A., St. Ignacius de Loyola Jesuit School, Havana, 1950. **Military Service:** Served in the U.S. Navy. **Career:** Apprentice millinery designer, Bergdorf Goodman, 1948–51; apprentice milliner at Cristobal Balenciaga Salon, Paris, 1950–52, and at Bergdorf Goodman, New York; designed millinery as Adolfo of Emmé, 1951–58; also worked as unpaid apprentice for Chanel fashion house, Paris, 1956–57; apprenticed in Paris with Balenciaga; established own millinery salon in New York, 1962, later expanded into women's custom clothing; designer, Adolfo Menswear and Adolfo Scarves, from 1978; perfume *Adolfo* launched, 1978; closed custom workroom to concentrate on his Adolfo Enterprises licensing business, 1993; debuted limited collection through Castleberry, 1995. **Exhibitions:** *Fashion: An Anthology*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 1971. **Collections:** Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; Los Angeles County Museum of Art. **Awards:** Coty Fashion award, New York, 1955, 1969; Neiman Marcus award, 1956. **Member:** Council of Fashion Designers of America.

PUBLICATIONS

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To make clothes that are long-lasting and with subtle changes from season to season—this is my philosophy.

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In April of 1993, Adolfo closed his salon on New York's East 57th Street, after more than 25 years producing his classically elegant knit suits, dresses, and eveningwear. The outcry from his clientèle was emotional and indicative of the devotion his clothes inspired in his "ladies," including C.Z. Guest ("It's just a tragedy for me. He has such great taste, style, and manners...I've been wearing his clothes for years; they suit my lifestyle. He designs for a certain way of life that all these new designers don't seem to comprehend."); Jean Tailer ("I'm devastated.... He's the sweetest, most talented man. With Adolfo, you always have the right thing to wear."), and scores of others, such as Nancy Reagan, the Duchess of Windsor, Noreen Drexel, and Pat Mosbacher.

These loyal clients were among the many who returned to Adolfo season after season for clothes they could wear year after year, clothes that looked stylish and felt comfortable, style and comfort being the essence of his customers' elegant and effortless lifestyle.

Adolfo began his career as a milliner in the early 1950s, a time when hat designers were accorded as much respect and attention as dress designers. By 1955 he had received the Coty Fashion award for his innovative, often dramatic hat designs for Emmé Millinery. In 1962 Adolfo opened his own salon and began to design clothes to show with his hat collection. During this period, as women gradually began to wear hats less often, Adolfo's hat designs became progressively bolder. His design point of view held that hats should be worn as an accessory rather than a necessity, and this attitude was carried over into his clothing designs as well.

Adolfo's clothes of the late 1960s had the idiosyncratic quality characteristic of the period and, more importantly, each piece stood out on its own as a special item. This concept of design was incongruous with the American sportswear idea of coordinated separates but was consistent with the sensibility of his wealthy customers who regarded clothes, like precious jewelry, as adornments and indicators of their social status. Among the garments that captured the attention of clients and press during this period were felt capes, red, yellow, or purple velvet bolero jackets embroidered with jet beads and black braid, studded lace-up peasant vests, low-cut floral overalls worn over organdy blouses, and extravagant patchwork evening looks.

Adolfo remarked, in 1968, "Today, one has to dress in bits and pieces—the more the merrier." By 1969 he described his clothes as being "for a woman's fun and fantasy moods—I don't think the

classic is appealing to people any more." Just one year later, however, he changed his point of view and at the same time increased the focus of his knits, which had been introduced in 1969. In a review of Adolfo's fall 1970 collection, Eugenia Sheppard, writing in the *New York Post*, declared "he has completely abandoned the costume look of previous years." Adolfo was always responsive to his customers' needs and this sudden change of direction probably reflected their reaction to the social upheavals and excesses of the last years of the 1960s.

By the early 1970s the 1930s look, inspired by films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Damned*, swept over fashion, drowning out the kooky individualism of seasons past. His explorations of this look led Adolfo, in 1973, to hit on what would become his signature item. Taking his cue from Coco Chanel's cardigan style suits of the 1930s, Adolfo translated the textured tweed into a pebbly knit, added a matching silk blouse, and came up with a formula his clients returned to over and over again until his retirement. These revivals of a classic became classics in their own right and the look became associated in America with Adolfo as much as with Chanel. Adolfo's collections were not limited to suits. When other American designers abandoned dresses for day in favor of sportswear separates, Adolfo continued to provide his customers with printed silk dresses appropriate for luncheons and other dressy daytime occasions. Adolfo's clients also relied on him for splendid eveningwear combining luxury with practicality. Typical evening looks included sweater knit tops with full satin or taffeta skirts, fur trimmed knit cardigans, silk pyjamas, and angora caftans.

After closing his salon to concentrate on marketing his licensed products, including perfumes, menswear, furs, handbags, sportswear, and hats, Adolfo made numerous appearances at department stores and on QVC to promote his name and products in the early and mid-1990s, which were valued at some \$5-million annually. In late 1995, he returned to designing, with a limited collection sponsored by Castleberry.

The designer himself once remarked that "an Adolfo lady should look simple, classic, and comfortable." He brought modest and characteristically American design ideals to a higher level of luxury and charm, combining quality and style with comfort and ease. While in some fashion circles, seeing women similarly dressed was a serious fashion *faux pas*, with Adolfo designs, women were thrilled to see their high-brow selections reflected in social scene mirrors. According to the *Chicago Tribune* in 1986, "Adolfo Ladies revel in duplication, triplication, quadruplication and more—much, much more." All because, as Jean Tailer told the *Tribune*, "we all feel a security blanket in getting the best of the collection." Adolfo provided, as the *Tribune* aptly called it, a "social security," to his ladies and they gave him loyalty, devotion, and upwards of \$2500 per suit.

—Alan E. Rosenberg; updated by Nelly Rhodes

ADRI

American designer

Born: Mary Adrienne Steckling in St. Joseph, Missouri, 7 November 1934. **Education:** Attended St. Joseph Junior College, 1953; studied retailing and design, Washington University (School of Fine Arts), St.

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Adolfo remarked, in 1968, "Today, one has to dress in bits and pieces—the more the merrier." By 1969 he described his clothes as being "for a woman's fun and fantasy moods—I don't think the

classic is appealing to people any more." Just one year later, however, he changed his point of view and at the same time increased the focus of his knits, which had been introduced in 1969. In a review of Adolfo's fall 1970 collection, Eugenia Sheppard, writing in the *New York Post*, declared "he has completely abandoned the costume look of previous years." Adolfo was always responsive to his customers' needs and this sudden change of direction probably reflected their reaction to the social upheavals and excesses of the last years of the 1960s.

By the early 1970s the 1930s look, inspired by films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Damned*, swept over fashion, drowning out the kooky individualism of seasons past. His explorations of this look led Adolfo, in 1973, to hit on what would become his signature item. Taking his cue from Coco Chanel's cardigan style suits of the 1930s, Adolfo translated the textured tweed into a pebbly knit, added a matching silk blouse, and came up with a formula his clients returned to over and over again until his retirement. These revivals of a classic became classics in their own right and the look became associated in America with Adolfo as much as with Chanel. Adolfo's collections were not limited to suits. When other American designers abandoned dresses for day in favor of sportswear separates, Adolfo continued to provide his customers with printed silk dresses appropriate for luncheons and other dressy daytime occasions. Adolfo's clients also relied on him for splendid eveningwear combining luxury with practicality. Typical evening looks included sweater knit tops with full satin or taffeta skirts, fur trimmed knit cardigans, silk pyjamas, and angora caftans.

After closing his salon to concentrate on marketing his licensed products, including perfumes, menswear, furs, handbags, sportswear, and hats, Adolfo made numerous appearances at department stores and on QVC to promote his name and products in the early and mid-1990s, which were valued at some \$5-million annually. In late 1995, he returned to designing, with a limited collection sponsored by Castleberry.

The designer himself once remarked that "an Adolfo lady should look simple, classic, and comfortable." He brought modest and characteristically American design ideals to a higher level of luxury and charm, combining quality and style with comfort and ease. While in some fashion circles, seeing women similarly dressed was a serious fashion *faux pas*, with Adolfo designs, women were thrilled to see their high-brow selections reflected in social scene mirrors. According to the *Chicago Tribune* in 1986, "Adolfo Ladies revel in duplication, triplication, quadruplication and more—much, much more." All because, as Jean Tailer told the *Tribune*, "we all feel a security blanket in getting the best of the collection." Adolfo provided, as the *Tribune* aptly called it, a "social security," to his ladies and they gave him loyalty, devotion, and upwards of \$2500 per suit.

—Alan E. Rosenberg; updated by Nelly Rhodes

ADRI

American designer

Born: Mary Adrienne Steckling in St. Joseph, Missouri, 7 November 1934. **Education:** Attended St. Joseph Junior College, 1953; studied retailing and design, Washington University (School of Fine Arts), St.



Adri, 1967: jersey minipants suit and shoes decorated with nail heads. © AP/Wide World Photos.

Louis, 1954–55, and fashion design at Parsons School of Design, New York, 1955–56; studied at the New School for Social Research, New York, 1956–57. **Family:** Married Fabio Coen, 1982. **Career:** Guest editor, *Mademoiselle*, college issue, 1955; design assistant for Oleg Cassini, Inc., New York, 1957–58; design assistant, later designer, B.H. Wragge, New York, 1960–67; opened Adri Designs Inc., 1966–67; formed Design Establishment, Inc. with Leonard Sunshine and the Anne Fogarty Co., New York, for the Clothes Circuit by Adri and Collector's Items by Adri division of Anne Fogarty, 1968–72; partner with William Parnes in Adri label for Paul Parnes's Adri Sporthoughts Ltd., 1972–74; designed for Ben Shaw company, 1975–76; Adri for Royal Robes, leisurewear, under license, 1976–77; Jerry Silverman Sport by Adri label, 1977–78; ADRI label collection for Jones New York, 1978–79; ADRI collection marketed by Habitat Industries, 1980–83; began as critic, Parsons School of Design, 1982; Japanese licensee N. Nomura & Co. Ltd., 1982–87; ADRI Collection marketed by Adri Clotheslab, 1983–87. Created Adri designer patterns for *Vogue*, 1982; designed several sportswear collections a year, selling to smaller specialty stores and private customers; joined Parsons School of Design faculty, 1991; corporate name changed to Adri Studio Ltd., 1994. **Exhibitions:** *Innovative Contemporary Fashion: Adri and McCardell*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1971; various shows, Fashion Institute of Technology, New York City. **Awards:** Coty American Fashion Critics "Winnie" award, 1982; "International Best Five," *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo, 1986. **Member:** Council of Fashion Designers of America. **Address:** 143 West 20th Street, New York, NY, 10011, USA.

PUBLICATIONS

On ADRI:

Books

- Lambert, Eleanor, *World of Fashion: People, Places, Resources*, New York, 1976.
 Morris, Bernadine, and Barbara Walz, *The Fashion Makers*, New York, 1978.
 Stegemeyer, Anne, *Who's Who in Fashion, Third Edition*, New York, 1996.

Articles

- "The Find: Adri," in *Women's Wear Daily* (New York), 7 November 1966.
 "Adri Opens the Door," in *Women's Wear Daily* (New York), 30 October 1968.
 Banik, Sheila, "The Adventures of Adri: A Designer Goes From Wragge to Riches," in *Savvy* (New York), October 1980.
 Burggraf, Helen, "Adri: Soft and Easy Designs for the Fast-Paced 1980s," in *New York Apparel News*, Spring 1982.
 Morris, Bernadine, "Banks and Adri Win Coty Awards and Cheers," in the *New York Times*, 25 September 1982.
 ———, "From Ellis, a Casual Whimsicality," in the *New York Times*, 27 October 1982.
 ———, "A Sportswear Preview: Fall on Seventh Avenue," in the *New York Times*, 5 April 1983.

*

I believe in a "design continuum" of clothing that is essentially modern, that reflects the changing patterns of living, evolving gradually but continually.

Good design can be directional *and* timeless, functional and innovative in the tradition of American sportswear, and responsive to the needs of a woman equally committed to professional responsibilities and an enduring personal style.

—Adri

* * *

From the moment she fell in love with her first Claire McCardell dress while still a teenager—a dress she copied for herself many times because it fit her so well—Adri (Adrienne Steckling-Coen) idolized McCardell who, coincidentally, was one of her lecturers at the Parsons School of Design in New York. Adri's early years with B.H. Wragge taught her the principles of tailoring and mix-and-match separates, long a staple of American sportswear. Designing for Anne Fogarty reinforced the feminine focus of Adri's design philosophy. Always, she returned to McCardell's tenet of form following function. Shapes were simple, skimming the body without extraneous detail or fussiness, often based on the practicality of athletic wear. While McCardell favored dresses, Adri emphasized trousers, later designing skirt-length trousers, or culottes, for variety.

From the beginning Adri utilized soft, pliable fabrics such as knits, jerseys, crêpe de Chine, challis, and leather. Her clothes were identified by their floaty qualities and she maintained that this softness made them easy to wear and provided relief from the frequent harshness of modern life. They were also ideal for tall, long-limbed,

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