

The Trailblazing Black Designers Who Shaped American Fashion



Black Designers in American Fashion by Elizabeth Way

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Black designers have made significant contributions to American fashion, from the early days of the industry to the present day. Here are some of their stories.

Ann Lowe

Ann Lowe was born in Alabama in 1898. She began sewing at a young age, and by the time she was 16, she was running her own business. In 1928, she moved to New York City and opened a shop on Seventh Avenue. Lowe quickly became known for her exquisite gowns, which were often worn by society women and celebrities.

Lowe's most famous creation was the wedding dress worn by Jacqueline Kennedy in 1953. The dress was made of ivory silk taffeta and featured a fitted bodice, a full skirt, and a long train. It took Lowe and her team six weeks to complete the dress, and it was widely praised for its beauty and elegance.

Lowe's career was cut short by a stroke in 1960. She died in 1981, but her legacy continues to inspire fashion designers today.

Patrick Kelly

Patrick Kelly was born in Mississippi in 1954. He moved to New York City in 1974 to study fashion design at Parsons School of Design. After graduating, Kelly worked as a freelance designer for several years before launching his own label in 1984.

Kelly's designs were known for their bright colors, bold prints, and playful use of embellishments. He often drew inspiration from his African heritage, and his clothes were frequently worn by celebrities such as Grace Jones and Madonna.

Kelly died of AIDS in 1990 at the age of 35. He was posthumously awarded the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993.

Willi Smith

Willi Smith was born in Philadelphia in 1948. He moved to New York City in 1969 to study fashion design at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). After graduating, Smith worked as a freelance designer for several years before launching his own label in 1976.

Smith's designs were known for their clean lines, simple silhouettes, and use of natural fabrics. He often drew inspiration from his African-American heritage, and his clothes were frequently worn by celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Bill Cosby.

Smith died of AIDS in 1987 at the age of 39. He was posthumously awarded the CFDA Lifetime Achievement Award in 1995.

Stephen Burrows

Stephen Burrows was born in New Jersey in 1943. He moved to New York City in 1966 to study fashion design at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). After graduating, Burrows worked as a freelance designer for several years before launching his own label in 1973.

Burrows' designs were known for their vibrant colors, bold prints, and use of jersey fabric. He often drew inspiration from his Caribbean heritage, and his clothes were frequently worn by celebrities such as Diana Ross and Cher.

Burrows is still active in the fashion industry today. He continues to design clothes and accessories, and he is also a professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Tracy Reese

Tracy Reese was born in Detroit in 1964. She moved to New York City in 1986 to study fashion design at the Parsons School of Design. After graduating, Reese worked as a freelance designer for several years before launching her own label in 1998.

Reese's designs are known for their feminine silhouettes, vibrant colors, and use of prints. She often draws inspiration from her African-American heritage, and her clothes are frequently worn by celebrities such as Michelle Obama and Kerry Washington.

Reese is still active in the fashion industry today. She continues to design clothes and accessories, and she is also a vocal advocate for diversity and inclusion in the fashion industry.

Virgil Abloh

Virgil Abloh was born in Illinois in 1980. He moved to Chicago in 2002 to study architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology. After graduating, Abloh worked as an architect for several years before launching his own fashion label, Off-White, in 2013.

Abloh's designs were known for their streetwear aesthetic, bold graphics, and use of irony. He often drew inspiration from his African-American heritage, and his clothes were frequently worn by celebrities such as Kanye West and Rihanna.

Abloh died of cancer in 2021 at the age of 41. He was posthumously awarded the CFDA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2022.

These are just a few of the many black designers who have made significant contributions to American fashion. Their work has helped to shape the way we dress today, and their legacy continues to inspire designers and consumers alike.



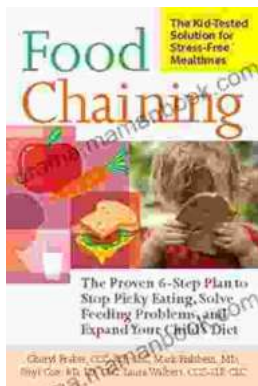
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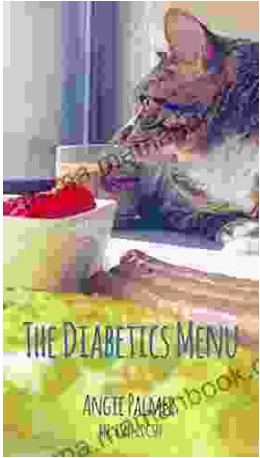
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