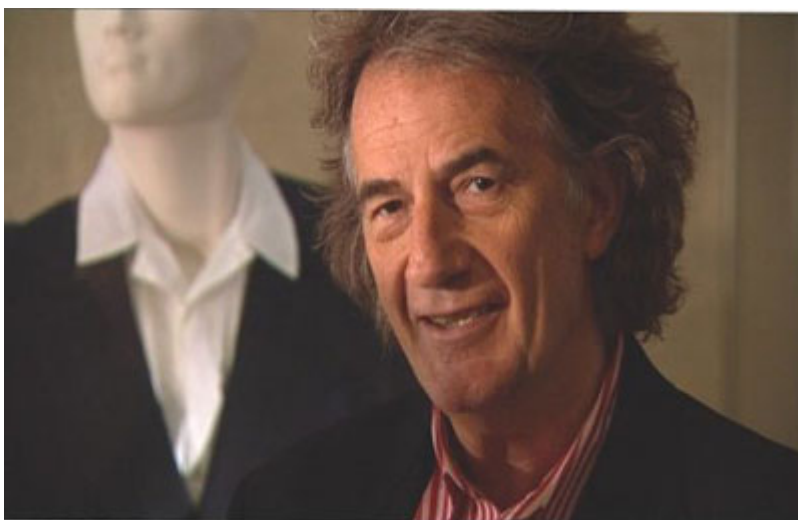

Classic with a Twist

Description

The classic straight suit with a floral print lining, the multi-coloured stripe on a men's sock, the 'well-made, good quality, interesting fabric, easy to wear. No bullshit clothing.'" This is the style of Paul Smith.

Paul Smith has become known for taking traditional British tailoring to the younger slicker crowds by incorporating classic design with a quirky underlining. He takes the traditional and mixes it with the modern to create a look that is forever fresh and sought after. "It is as though he possesses some inner equivalent of the Houndsditch Clothes Exchange – not a museum, but a vast, endlessly recombinant jumble sale in which all the artefacts of his nation and culture constantly engage in a mutual exchange of code," writes the US novelist William Gibson of the Paul Smith style.

It all started in the 1960s. As a young lad, fresh out of school, Paul Smith was summoned by his late father Harold Smith to work as an errand boy in a local Nottingham clothing warehouse. Smith had little interest in fashion at that point, following one star as his rising dream to become a racing cyclist. Little did he know he was to become the single most consistently successful British designer with an estimated £300 million company revenue as of 2006, selling products in over 200 shops worldwide.



In his late teens, an accident left Smith unfit for the cycling career, which in turn allowed his life to take another turn. He began to mix with the art college

students “and became interested in things like art and fashion.” What seems incredible is that some 6- 7 years later by the tender age of 24, encouraged by his then girlfriend, (now wife) Pauline Denyer, Smith took the risk and put down his hard-earned £600 savings to open his first shop.

Paul Smith Vêtement Pour Homme opened its doors in 1970 onto the back alleys of Nottingham. It was the only shop to sell Kenzo and Katherine Hamnett outside of London at the time. Paul Smith Vêtement also began to sell Paul Smith’s own simple designs, which he manufactured locally. From there on it was an escalating spiral of hard work and great achievement.

His first shop in Covent Garden opened in 1979. It took Smith three years to gather the money to renovate the shop from its original bakery premises. Once finished, it was a work of art, selling Smith wear, designer furniture and quirky gadgets that Smith would find on his travels. One of his most successful finds was the Filofax- a leather bound organizer, which he found tucked away in the East End of London. It is now known and sold worldwide.

Today Paul Smith has 12 different collections from Men’s Wear to Fragrance, Watches to Paul Smith Furniture and “things’. His products are sold in 35 countries with 500 wholesale customers in Japan alone. What seems to be recurring in his career is very much the hands- on, pro- active moving forward. Another, is a clear thinking ahead and an open mind to predict the next best thing to buy. Whether a Japanese magazine, or a cool swiss knife, Paul Smith wasn’t just selling clothes, at different decades his customers were to engage within the ever-relevant Paul Smith life style. "

The reason I’ve been successful is because I’ve just got on and packed boxes and I know that VAT means Value Added Tax not vodka and tonic," Paul Smith writes in his 2001 first released book ‘You can find inspiration in everything’. "I’ve sold on the shop floor, I’ve typed invoices. At some point I’ve done everything, and I’ve always kept my head above water financially. Nevertheless I’m extremely nervous about becoming a businessman and not a designer."

CATEGORY

1. TEXTILES

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