

# Pierre cardin: a fashion legend essay

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



## **Introduction**

The 20th Century witnessed a revolution of fashion and in fact, fashion design became a full-fledged profession during this period. The period saw the emergence of skilled designers whose works became popular across the globe. Currently, fashion design is a multibillion dollar industry with many designers from different parts of the world coming up with unique cloth designs. Fashion shows exhibiting the works of these designers are held on a monthly and annual basis in big cities such as Paris, Milan, Rome, New York, Hong Kong, Berlin, and London and so on. One of the most famous designers of the 20th Century whose works are still popular today is Pierre Cardin. Cardin is an Italian-born French fashion designer who carved his mark on the fashion industry with his distinctive works. Cardin pretty much came out of full obscurity to become a globally renowned fashion designer. He was particularly very popular from the 1950's all the way to the 1970's and is known for his expansion of the fashion industry via his unique creations.

(Cardin in 2014)

Cardin was born in 1922 in San Andrea da Barbara a small town near Venice in Italy to French parents who had immigrated to Italy some years back (Morais & Cardin, 1991). Cardin's father was a winemaker and he in fact, hoped that his son would take over the business once he was of the right age. Cardin however had dreams of becoming a dancer and an actor. The Second World War ended his dream, however, but at the same time brought him another opportunity to join the global charity organization, the Red Cross. While in the Red Cross, Cardin took accounting lessons, an experience that sharpened and brightened his business skills. This would later on prove

to be very useful in his career as a fashion designer (Okonkwo, 2007).

Cardin's interest in fashion and arts saw him become an apprentice tailor in Saint Etienne and Vichy, which were two growing French towns. His years as an apprentice heightened his fashion taste and creative sensitivity, and it was at this juncture that he decided to embark on a full-time career in fashion. In the year 1945, Cardin moved to the French capital of Paris and joined the Jeanne Paquin fashion house. He also worked for another fashion designer for Elsa Schiaparelli. His career however officially took off after he was employed by Christian Dior as a master tailor. He gained prominence for being the producer of the famous Christina Dior's New Look Collection in 1947 (Milbank, 1985). Cardin left Christian Dior later to set up his own fashion label, when he was just 28 years old. His label immediately kicked off and in 1953, he exhibited his first "haute-couture" collection followed by the 1959 "pret-a-porter" collection (Okonkwo, 2007). He had a wide clientele that included famous persons like the American actress Rita Hayworth and Eva Peron, the Argentinian first lady. Some of his other famous clients included the Beatles (Okonkwo, 2007).

Cardin fashion creations drew influence from a variety of things. At the top of these influences was the sexual and social revolution of the 20th Century that was fueled by industrial advancement and growth. During the 1960's, a period when he was at the peak of his career, his creations also drew a lot of influence from a future outlook (Milbank, 1985). This was seen in some of the materials that he utilized in his creations including jersey, diamonds, vinyl, hammered metal rings, and Perspex; as well as the various styles that he adopted (Okonkwo, 2007). These styles included geometrical and graphic

shape and also sharp line cuts. In fact, during this period, Cardin was considered as a fashion 'futurist' and his styles were credited with stimulation a fashion revival during the 1960's, a revolution whose effects and influence still reverberate today (Längle, 2005).

One of the most famous creation of Cardin was the "bubble dress", a creation that garnered him worldwide recognition and revolutionized the fashion industry (Milbank, 1985). The design of this dress is still popular even today. It basically comprises of a loose fitting dress with tightening on the waistline, where it then starts broadening before being brought back in at the body's hem therefore producing the "bubble effect" (Okonkwo, 2007). Cardin also came up with the collarless buttoned jacket, a creation that particularly impressed the Beatles, who contracted Cardin to design their clothes (Längle, 2005).

As mentioned earlier, Cardin was a futuristic designer, and his designs were considered to be ahead of his time. When it came to his designs, he preferred geometric motifs and shapes and often ignored the female forms (Okonkwo, 2007). He later moved to unisex fashions, and was known for his willingness to experiment. Most of his early designs included coats and suits with raglan sleeves as well as dresses with front defined waistlines (Pierre Cardin - Fashion Designer, 2014). Some of his dresses and suits had boxy waists and tulip shaped skirts and were accompanied by collars with scarf ties and brushing jackets (Pierre Cardin - Fashion Designer, 2014). Another famous design of his was coats having draped hemlines and unstructured chemises (Pierre Cardin - Fashion Designer, 2014). Some of his designs also had the trappings of space travel amongst other elements of science fiction.

Other styles that were synonymous to his fashion collections included tight leather trousers, knitted cat suits, batwing jumpsuits, close fitting helmets and tight-leather trousers (Pierre Cardin - Fashion Designer, 2014). Some of his designs are shown below.

Leather cosmos suit and wool jersey (1967) Wool Plastic coat (1970)

Wool metal dress (1968) Pictures courtesy of courtesy of

Pierre Cardin's influence on the fashion world cannot be underestimated. For example, he was the first fashion designer to launch a collection comprising of ready-to-wear merchandise. Before then, high fashion was actually a reserve of the wealthy and Cardin's efforts to take high fashion to the public was something that was unheard of (Längle, 2005). Currently, various luxury brands have adopted high fashion for the public or the masses via diffusion lines. High fashion for the mass has also been adopted by premium fashion brands such as Top Shop and Zara (Okonkwo, 2007).

Cardin is also the first designer to license his products using his name. This was not only in fashion merchandise but also in other products including furniture and food.

Cardin is also the first luxury fashion designer to take his empire global. He embarked on a global expansion initiative where he opened various fashion stores across the globe in countries like Russia, China and Japan (Okonkwo, 2007).

Cardin also paved the way for fashion designers to start using unique and rare material in manufacturing fashion products. For instance, he is the first designer to utilize crocodile skin in place of leather during the creation of his fashion accessories. Currently, it is common, for high fashion and luxury

brands to use unique materials such as crocodile and snake skins in creating their products.

In conclusion, Pierre Cardin is undeniably one of the greats in the fashion world. Currently, his luxury fashion empire is valued at a whopping US\$500 million. His creations especially from the 1950's to the 1960's continue to influence the current fashion industry hugely.

## References

Milbank, C. R. (1985). *Couture: The great designers*. Stewart, Tabori & Chang.

Morais, R., & Cardin, P. (1991). *The Man Who Became a Label*.

Längle, E. (2005). *Pierre Cardin: fifty years of fashion and design*. Vendome Press.

Okonkwo, U. (2007). *Luxury fashion branding: trends, tactics, techniques*. Palgrave Macmillan.

" Pierre Cardin (1922- ) French. " Pierre Cardin – Geometric Guru | Coletterie. N. p., n. d. Web. 19 Oct. 2014. .

" Pierre Cardin - Fashion Designer | Designers | The FMD." The FMD. N. p., n. d. Web. 19 Oct. 2014. .