



Jean Paul Gaultier

Jean Paul Gaultier was born in France in 1952. He started to sketch ideas for collections at the age of fourteen, and started to distribute them to several major designers, before being invited by Pierre Cardin to join his company for one year.

He started his own company in 1977 after working for Jean Patou and then Cardin again for some time. He has been one of the most influential French designers since then. He is an aesthetic provocateur, his designs and fashion shows are still directional and sometimes controversial. His clothes are humorous, showy and extremely clever, a mix of old and new in fabrics and cuts. He has produced sweatshirts trimmed with lace and satin, upside-down Eiffel Towers as heels for shoes, bracelets resembling tin cans. He is famous for his gender-bending styles, such as women wearing pinstriped suits and men wearing skirts. He subverts the clichés of masculinity and femininity: some of his menswear collections focused on typical female garments and details, such as décolletage, dresses and skirts, while exploring at times the theme of androgyny. He has also emphasised sexuality by suggesting garments like corsets, or by juxtaposing different elements like bustiers and tuxedos. Men and women have worn his impeccably tailored suits and jackets, underwear as outerwear, and a multicultural mix of ethnic-inspired garments.

One of the most significant contributions to fashion is the focus he placed on the bustline in the 1980s: corsets were revived and turned into outerwear. He has always emphasised

femininity and sexual fetishism, which is a recurrent theme in his work, so he started to design many corset-inspired clothes for both sexes, one of the most famous being the corset that he designed for Madonna's Blonde Ambition Tour and all the items worn by the singer on her world tours in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

His strong interest in corsets as expression of the mystery of femininity is also witnessed by his perfume, which is packaged in a corset-shaped bottle.

He had some strong seasons and looks whose origins can be found in the London street styles of the 1970s, in punk style and flea market dressing. Heavily influenced by them, Gaultier often uses bad taste in an effort to break taboos. He also shocked buyers and people on two particular occasions: in 1993 his collection called *Hasidic* irreverently played with some religious clothes, whereas one of his runway shows featured heavily tattooed and pierced models as a homage to body art in his collection combining the punk aesthetic with the new subcultural movements towards neo-primitivism. He has a different idea of beauty and ugliness. He has sometimes used real people for his catwalk shows, such as elderly people, fat women or theatrical performances like vampires coming out of coffins. He has designed clothes for actors, singers, and films: his James Bond collection received much attention in 1979, whereas in 1989 he produced the costumes for the film *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* and for *The Fifth Element* in 1996.

ACTIVITIES

1 Correct the mistakes in the following sentences

- 1 He worked for Pierre Balmain at the beginning of his career.
- 2 He has been one of the most influential British designers so far.
- 3 He has produced traditional clothes and accessories.
- 4 He has designed bracelets with the shape of the Eiffel Tower.
- 5 He is famous for his definite styles.
- 6 He has never used corsets and bustiers.
- 7 He has been inspired by famous stars such as Madonna, for whom he designed a wedding dress.
- 8 His collections have never shocked people.

9 He does not want his models to wear tattoos and piercings.

10 He has never made clothes for films.

2 The following definitions have been jumbled. find the correct sentences.

- 1 Gender-bending is a man's dress jacket, usually black with satin or grosgrain lapels, worn for formal events.
- 2 Décolletage is dressing or behaving like a member of the opposite sex.
- 3 Tuxedo is a French word meaning cutting or wearing a low neckline.