



Dirk Bikkembergs

Dirk Bikkembergs is a German designer who spent several years as a freelance working for European fashion houses, before specialising in menswear and forming his own company in 1985. He designed separates in dark, muted tones and heavily ribbed sweaters paired with matching leggings. His footwear includes variations on infantryman, football, and biker boots. He presented his first womenswear collection in Paris in 1993, with street-chic, futuristic designs for women including floor-length flared trousers, sheer halter tops, and leather trousers.

This is what he said about his job.

"I started designing fashion 15 years ago and I have always wanted my clothes to look strong. Wearers must have the feeling that they will never fall apart, so I finish them with big double stitching. This is part of my signature, and both men and women need to be always at ease when wearing my clothes."

"When I began working in this field, I loved the casual style of a white T-shirt, a pair of Converse AllStars, and jeans. But I decided that I would try my hand at denim only when I could do something which was as perfect as my favourite Levi's 501. Some years ago, the fashion world was all in black, but I looked at 16-year-olds for inspiration as they were not



wearing that. Young people had trainers and tracksuits and liked to look healthy, so I imagined I could try to make fabrics remember the shape of the body with the help of technology. My jeans trousers started that way: I took a footballer to my pattern cutter and made haute couture second-skin trousers with double stitching on his body shape. But my work is not sportswear, it is intense, sporty, modern, and healthy."

"My designs always express my feelings and thoughts. I am inspired by everything, by real, common things. And when I design I don't have a special, famous person in mind, such as an actor or a star. It's all about common people, just reality."

"My own experiences have always affected my work. I don't know if people really understood it, but for some time, every year, every season I made a new film that I put for twenty minutes on the catwalk. I got really sad because I realised that trying to give too many different ideas every season meant that people did





not make any sense of the whole thing. So I made things easier, and what I want to show now is my double-stitching, healthy trousers." "And my work has changed a lot. In the first ten years I designed fashion in general, but the experience of the football player helped me to have a more natural view: he was genuine, and didn't think in terms of label. When

he had the trousers on he liked the feeling they gave to him, it was as if he was wearing his tracksuit but he wasn't. And he never wore any other jeans afterwards. The real secret about this job is that you always need to be faithful to yourself and should never try to impress other people."

ACTIVITIES

1 Choose the best answer.

- 1 Bikkembergs's footwear includes:
 - A a variation of ski boots.
 - B adaptations of walking running shoes.
 - C variations of military, football and biker boots.
- 2 He has been designing items for:
 - A fifty years.
 - B fifteen years.
 - C thirteen years.
- 3 The most important thing for him is that:
 - A his clothes look and feel comfortable and strong.
 - B his clothes look chic and elegant.
 - C his clothes look strange.
- 4 He took his direction in fashion design because:
 - A he loved the casual style of youngsters.
 - B he loved black.
 - C he decided to produce his own Levi's 501.
- 5 He does not define his garments as sportswear because:
 - A they are not designed for sport but as healthy everyday clothes.
 - B they are worn by footballers only.
 - C they are not available in sports shops.
- 6 He used a football player:
 - A for his advertisements.
 - B to create his second-skin trousers.
 - C to make him famous.
- 7 When designing clothes he thinks about:
 - A very famous people.
 - B common people.
 - C sports people.
- 8 The experience of the football player helped him:
 - A to understand the importance of labels.
 - B to find other customers among footballers.
 - C to understand the importance of comfortable, healthy garments.

2 Think about Bikkembergs's logo and typical products. What can you say about his style? What does the word 'healthy' mean? The designer uses this word to refer to his trousers. Try to explain the real meaning you can guess from the text.

3 Use a word from column A and one from column B to form noun phrases from the text. Then use these new words to make sentences.

A	B	
Heavily ribbed	Leggings	
Matching	Trousers	
Floor-length	Sweaters	
Flared	Halter tops	
Sheer	Designs	
Leather		
Second-skin		
Street-chic		