



Paco Rabanne

Francisco de Rabanne da Cuervo, called Paco for short, was born in San Sebastian, Spain in 1934. His mother was Chief Seamstress at the Spanish salon of Balenciaga. Rabanne studied architecture at the École des Beaux Arts, Paris where his family had moved because of the Spanish Civil war. His earliest contribution to fashion were his bold plastic jewellery and buttons which he sold to Balenciaga, Dior and Givenchy.

In 1965 he started his career as a designer by presenting a collection of 12 contemporary dresses which he called "the Unwearables". These included his first plastic dress. Paco had had his first supernatural experience when he was only 7 years old and this influenced him for the rest of his life. In his personal life, he has been interested in mysticism, astrology, and other such subjects. He has given various magazine interviews talking about vibrations and out-of-body experiences. He wrote a book called *Journey* which is a personal account of his search for spiritual understanding and tells how he has applied the results of his search to his creative fashion work.

In 1966 Paco Rabanne opened his own outlet at the age of 32, where he became internationally famous for his metal-linked plastic-disc dresses, sun goggles and jewellery made of plastic in primary colours. Paco Rabanne's dresses made of small plastic tiles linked together by chains, stole the show in Paris. In the seventies, Paco Rabanne was the first to use black girls as models, which was thought to be quite outrageous then. In 1970 Rabanne pioneered fake suede dresses, knit and fur coats, dresses with ribbons and feathers or tassels linked to provide suppleness. By 1975 he was still bending hard-edged materials into dresses, but very few people wore them. Women had discovered the appeal of softer, ethnic looks. In 1989 Paco Rabanne was awarded the Golden Thimble at the 1st International Festival of Fashion.

Collections during the 1980s were constructed out of crinkled paper, strips of aluminium, rough cotton towelling, Perspex, maze-like configurations of patchwork leather, ostrich feathers and upholstery tassels. In 1990 Rabanne inaugurated his new boutique in Paris.

During the 1990s Paco Rabanne diversified away from metallic and plastic materials only, and started to present collections in softer man-made fabrics like sofina and amaretta.

In 1999 Paco Rabanne presented his final collection and retired.



ACTIVITIES

1 Read the text again and decide if the following sentences are true or false. Correct the false ones.

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|---|---------|
| 1 Paco Rabanne was born in France. | (T) (F) |
| 2 His mother worked in the clothing business. | (T) (F) |
| 3 "The Unwearables" is a collection of 14 clothes. | (T) (F) |
| 4 His supernatural experiences had an impact on his collections. | (T) (F) |
| 5 He opened his outlet at the age of 34. | (T) (F) |
| 6 He was the first one to use black models. | (T) (F) |
| 7 He has never received any prizes. | (T) (F) |
| 8 He used very strange materials in his collections in the 1980s. | (T) (F) |
| 9 He turned to softer materials in 1985. | (T) (F) |
| 10 He retired in 1999 after his last fashion show. | (T) (F) |

2 Look for the meaning of these words.

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|---------------|-------|
| 1 Seamstress | |
| 2 Outlet | |
| 3 Goggles | |
| 4 Tiles | |
| 5 Outrageous | |
| 6 Tassels | |
| 7 Suppleness | |
| 8 Crinkled | |
| 9 Maze | |
| 10 Upholstery | |

3 Write a short text describing Rabanne's experimentation with materials and design.

4 Rabanne wrote a book focusing on his supernatural experiences and the relationship between them and his designs. Discuss this topic in your group