

RALPH RUCCI

Ralph Rucci draws his inspiration from a private aesthetic universe – Far Eastern asceticism, modern art and ethnic-folklore.

Rucci's trademarks are scintillating paintings made into prints, meandering Frankenstein and "worm" stitches, suspension techniques, the vibration technique, the thread of life technique, and many more with an unerring eye for volume and structure. But, above all, he has an almost obsessive interest in the materials such as stiff horsehair, paper taffeta, silk faille, silk moire, double-faced wools and cashmeres, chiffon, georgette, bonded leathers and latex.

Ralph Rucci was born in Philadelphia in 1957. An artistic child, he later studied Philosophy and Literature at Temple University. Later, in New York, he attended The Fashion Institute of Technology.

After graduating, Rucci apprenticed with Halston before going off on his own in 1981. That September, he showed his first made-to-order collection, laboring alone for months in his studio apartment, draping and cutting all of the first toiles and the samples. He showed at the former Westbury Hotel, wheeling the racks to the hotel himself, assisted by several sample-makers.

A select clientele slowly developed, for whom Rucci worked tirelessly thereafter. In 1987, he had built the business to some significance only to succumb to the worst crash in American economic markets since the Depression of 1929. He barely remained afloat, and in 1994 he renamed the company Chado Ralph Rucci, an allusion to the Japanese tea ceremony and its values — elements he's always strived for in his work.

His international breakthrough finally came in 2002 when The Federation de la Haute Couture e de la Mode (formerly known as the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture Francaise) invited him, as the only American in history, to show a Couture collection in Paris as part of the official calendar.

Rucci showed Haute Couture in Paris for five seasons, returning in 2007 to show a Ready-to-Wear collection for the international market.

He returned to Paris in July 2019 to show a couture collection as part of the official Federation calendar and is very proud to return once again in July 2021.

RECOGNITION

Rucci has been the subject of many retrospectives, notably The Costume Institute of the Kent State University Museum (2005-2006), The Museum at FIT (2007), The Costume Institute of the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2007), and The Phoenix Art Museum (2008); and, his work has been part of fashion exhibitions in museums around the world.

Prestigious awards have included The Star Award from the Fashion Group International of New York (2005), The Cooper Hewitt National Design Award (2008), The Couture Council of the Museum at FIT (2006), The Pratt Institute Icon Award (2009), The Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts Visionary Award for Fashion (2011), The SCAD Andre' Leon Talley Lifetime Achievement Award (2012), and an Honorary Doctoral Degree from The Drexel University College of Art and Design (2015).

Rucci's clothes are in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Victoria and Albert Museum in London, The DeYoung Museum in San Francisco, The Phoenix Art Museum, The Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, The Texas Fashion Collection in Denton, Texas, among others.

Films have included David Boatman's, '**Ralph Rucci: A Designer and His House**' (2008), narrated by Martha Stewart and produced by the Sundance Channel and Christian Leigh's '**Ralph Rucci**' (2010).

Books published on Rucci include **The Art of Weightlessness** by Valerie Steele, Patricia Mears and Clare Sauro (2007), and **Ralph Rucci: Autobiography of a Fashion Designer** (2011) by Bauer and Dean Publishers with photographs by Baldomero Fernandez.

In 2011, Rucci received the great honor of being inducted into the Fashion Group International Walk of Fame. His plaque sits on the southeast corner of 39th and Seventh Avenue, set within the sidewalk for all time.