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Abraham Pelham: The Hottest Red Carpet Fashion Designer Today



Abraham Pelham

By Adrienne Papp

"I don't believe there are obstacles in life, just difficulties that have to be gone around or overcome." Abraham Pelham

The world of fashion design, with its dizzying array of haut couture, splashy photo magazines, red carpet and runway extravaganzas, is without a question the most exciting, inviting and glamorous one in the world! Everyone dreams about it, everyone wants to be part of it, but at least watch the breathtaking creations of fashion designers as the stars walk the red carpet and we enter the dream world with them: their butterfly moves as they showcase the rich couture, which never ends, yet we always crave for more. That is on the outside.

On the inside, the world of fashion can be one of the most fickle and competitive businesses on the planet, in which to sustain a long-term career is sometimes almost impossible with the exception of its mega talents longevity. In fashion reputations can be made or ruined overnight, the pressure of production, and new, fresh ideas more than difficult, and anyone sustaining a career is a God given raw talent who was born to make us glamorous and happy. What would make a man and a woman happier than pure beauty, which a designer can

bring out of us with his unparalleled talent that has a soul all by itself. As at its core, fashion design is always about the quest for beauty, the ultimate expression of elegance, the emphasis of the very beautiful female form along with the human

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spirit. "Let me see what you wear and I will tell you who you are," is what I say even to my friends.

The world of fashion is what attracted Abraham Pelham at an early age, who came to the upper echelons of it on a path that took him from his native country of Liberia to New York City and now finally to Paris, where he has made a name for himself as one the most unique and creative talents to come along in years.

"Growing up in West Africa presents a lot of challenges, and when I had polio at the age of two there were only a couple of choices for a kid like that, either stay at home or be out on the street," Pelham says. "But I decided at an early age that I was going to make a life for myself and be the best at whatever I would do."

Luckily, Pelham had a mother that was a major source of inspiration for him. "I learned a lot of things artistically from my Mother," he says. "She was my inspiration, and as she and other women in the area were able to travel and bring back western clothing to Liberia, I learned how to make handmade clothes in western styles. There was just something very exciting about taking the fabric and transforming it into something stylish and pretty and I knew at an early age that this was something that I was going to do."



Despite his being confined to a wheelchair, Pelham began some exploratory travelling through connections with Liberia's diplomatic corps. "I don't believe there are obstacles in life," he says. "I think there are just difficulties that have to be gone around or overcome." This statement that I love so much is indeed very interesting and unique to hear expressed so clearly from an artist as talented as Pelham. Right in this belief lies his enormous success with the determination that is an element in all megastars' life. We sometimes make the mistake of looking in from the outside and imagine a life of glamour, happiness, ease and champagne with strawberries every day for those rich and famous. Yet, the most horrendous difficulties are overcome by those who triumph over all "obstacles," because as Abraham says these are only challenges and once viewed as such your entire thinking has changed right there. And that thinking is all you need to succeed!

His travels finally brought him to New York and Pelham submitted some of his design sketches to the Fashion Institute of Technology, which recognized his talent and accepted him as a student.

"I got a lot of exposure in New York and was able to work with a lot of talented people," Abraham recalls. "I was also able to develop a clientele there, through the international community at the

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UN. A lot of the wives of the diplomats became clients.”

Not a surprise! Pelham’s style and elegance combined with a modern twist, yet a classy touch is unparalleled.

Other major fashion industry players were beginning to take notice too, and Pelham was offered a showcase at Henri Bendel, placing some of his designs in their display windows. “What excited me about that was the fact that I was creating something for someone I didn’t know, and they were very happy with it and came back to me. That was a true validation, like a light going off. I knew then that I might really have something to offer the world.” And, of course he did and has been ever since!

Suddenly, within the circles of the fashion world, and its consumers, fashionistas, such as myself a lot of word of mouth was being circulated about Abraham Pelham, and his name was creating a buzz throughout town even in the media.

“My name was becoming known, and I was able to do a collection for Bonwit Teller and they got excited about it,” he says. “I had designed a collection of suits and blouses, and the head buyer fell in love with them.” Other fashion moguls, including Nordstrom, Bergdorf Goodman and Saks Fifth Avenue, also began to take an interest.

As his reputation continued to grow, Pelham was contracted to create a line of custom, made-to-order dresses for special occasions, and word got around quickly among New York’s insular social elite. As he expanded his influence to the retail fashion industry, creating uniquely interesting designs for a growing client base, Pelham’s work also got noticed in the press, with a feature write-up in the New York Times announcing his arrival as a major player in the design world.



But as his reputation and success continued to grow, Abraham found himself becoming more and more frustrated. “It was nice to be successful consulting with a variety of clients, but I wasn’t getting any credit,” he says. “They loved the work, but my name wasn’t associated with any of it.” And that, as one artist would say to another, is ripping the soul off the very essence of its creations: self-realization!

With his growing frustration, Abraham Pelham began sizing up his options, and in 1997, after doing a charity show for an Ethiopian foundation at the Louvre to rave reviews and a mention on CNN, he decided to move to Paris. “I was thrilled to see that what I was doing was noticed by the press,” he says. The I

nternational Herald Tribune used a large portion of its front page to say “Abraham Pelham is fulfilling a lifetime dream by staging a Paris show using elongated African motifs on chiffon capes and subtle tribal markings at skirt hems...he gave an ethnic touch to the currently fashionable abstract decoration and brought two continents together”

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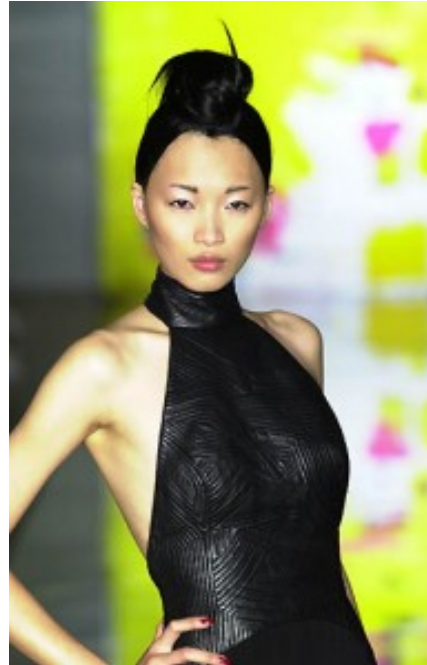
fashionable abstract decoration and brought two continents together.

That show turned out to be a courageous and significant career move, and in 1999 he did his first show in the City of Light. Despite some difficulties with France's old guard Syndicate de la Haut Couture, the event turned out to be a big success, with 600 people showing up and Pelham's name mentioned alongside other major designers like Givenchy in the local press, including this quote from Audrey magazine: "Abraham Pelham's most important quality is his pragmatism. Pelham goes straight to the point with an exercise in style on a white blouse that brings to mind Givenchy's 1950's 'Bettina Blouse' and which he uses to bring a fresh and proud approach."

"It was a show called 'Josephine Baker,' reflecting the excitement and style of that era," Pelham says. "I just happened to be doing the right thing in the right place at the right time, and it really started the ball rolling in Paris."

Inspired by his initial success, Pelham worked tirelessly on new designs and began to develop a lot of support from within the industry. He was now officially on the map. "People now had their eye on me to see if I was in this for the long run," he says. Pelham was also noticed, despite being limited by his wheelchair, for his energetic involvement every part of the creative process. During a show he could be seen wheeling himself around backstage, adjusting details, adding last minute touches, making sure every detail was just right.

Pelham held his second show six months later, called "The American Girl in Paris." "I was from America, now in Paris," Pelham says. That show created an enormous buzz in Parisian design circles, earning him a major upgrade from the three pages in a design magazine he received for his first show to full 10-page feature spreads in industry publications and even The New York Times, which said "Abraham Pelham is unusual. He moved from New York to Paris 18 months ago and showed his second collection of elegant slit skirts and sexy organza blouses during couture week in the Place Vendôme." Collezioni magazine chimed in saying "Shirts enjoy the limelight: close fitting, with long sleeves or with American style shoulder, tucked into long slender skirts. The designer is a perfectionist of real elegance." Abraham Pelham had now clearly arrived and was someone to be reckoned with.



A Previous Show

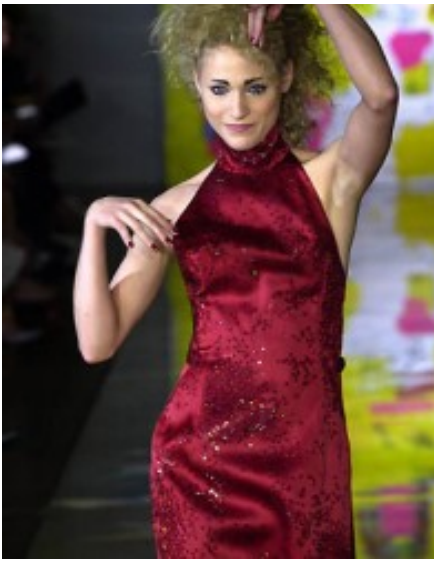
"What distinguished me is a very definite style," Pelham says. "My look is very feminine, very sexy and close to the body, using very sensual fabrics, the very best available from Italy. I was reinterpreting classic beauty in a very contemporary way,

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enhancing the elegance of the human form with a body forming mixture of fabric and a lot of transparency.” That style was described in this quote from Image magazine: “Abraham Pelham will breathe fresh oxygen into a craft which for years has existed under the threat of gasping its last. The American couture designs for women who love to wear clothes revealing a lithe silhouette, who adore the sensuality that oozes out from purity.”

With each show now an opportunity to set a new benchmark, Pelham produced new collections with wildly creative themes every six months, with a list of themes that speak to his ongoing quest for originality: “Urban Safari,” “Basquiat” and “The New Eve.” The French magazine L’Officiel referred to the way Pelham uniquely combines fabrics to enhance sensuality in his designs for Urban Safari by saying “Abraham Pelham combines styles. In the trend of the times in a very Couture spirit he signs a collection that is freely inspired by the safari style. Organza, lace silk chiffon, raffia and sophisticated fabrics underline the pure lines of the shapes.”

Fashion magazine Collezioni was also caught up in the excitement Pelham was creating, saying of “The New Eve” show that “Eve, the first woman ever to be created, is the muse that inspires young designer Abraham Pelham. His dresses are somewhat of a temptation. Simply cut and essential, but also filled with charm. He favours light, almost ethereal fabrics.” “I have to stay creative,” Pelham says, “and these shows are how I find ways to outdo myself. I have to come up with something that no one else is offering, that is uniquely expressive. That’s what editors and clients are looking for.” As a result of his vision, Pelham now has developed a select group of fans and clients in countries all over the world, including celebrities and even royalty who follow his every move.

With a well-established design house in Paris, Pelham’s next move may include a line of niche fashion and accessories designed specifically for sophisticated corporate and professional women. “These will be for women who don’t have time to consult with a lot of fashion sources, but who want the very best and want it to fit perfectly,” he says. It’s the kind of line that might serve as the foundation of the next phase of Pelham’s long-term plan. Another aspect to the plan is red carpet ready evening gowns that in my opinion will turn heads, shake up “old” Hollywood glamour, and most definitely initiate change with a royal and befitting elegance while presenting a rich and ever feminine flow to his never seen before creations of the ultimate red carpet design! Regal and classy, yet sexy and memorable seem to have been missing from the red carpet lately with a very few exceptions of course. Looking at the sketches that Abraham presented to me I can be the forerunner to say, “watch out Hollywood, a brand new style and a remarkable talent is going to sweep you off our feet!” Abraham Pelham reminds me of a modern Coco Chanel. Coming from



very humble beginnings and becoming the single most influential fashion icon in the World even to this day! That is where I see Pelham headed. That is the influence he has had so far and the best is yet to come!



“My business is currently in transition,” he says. “I am continuing to develop collections for my clients and high end retailers, but I am also looking at a five-year plan that includes a series of retail outlets under my name featuring unique custom designs and one of a kind haut couture. I see these going into major fashion centers like New York, London, Paris and Los Angeles. These will be places I can showcase my quest for elegance through original designs, the finest fabrics and impeccable cuts. That is what people are looking for. When it comes to the future I see so much more to come. I’m always dreaming, and looking for something that’s not already there, something new and exciting, something visionary. That is what continues to inspire me.”

And, that is what inspires the rest of us to look for the breathtaking work of this fashion genius that just by his words inspires women to want to look their best and wear the best!

About the Author of This Article:

[Lady Adrienne Papp](#) is a recognized journalist who has written for many

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Robert Taylor

May 2, 2011, 8:14

?..aah..Adrienne..No words are needed..Your work speaks volumes.

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