

# Oscar De La Renta (1932-2014)

The Doyen of American Fashion

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*“Fashion is a trend. Style lives within a person”*



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## Introduction

Oscar Aristides de la Renta Fiallo was his birth name but the world still knows him just as Oscar de la Renta. Name that the designer shortened himself and adopted for his persona alongside his fashion brand, gave him recognition. He became one of the biggest designers of all time because of his unique and exuberant clothing colors and textures. He was admired for his distinctly somewhat modern feminine women wear many times mainly inspired by his home country's culture. Something that many people did not know about the designer was his Hispanic background. By hearing Oscar speaking in many interviews' viewers might have at least noticed his heavy Hispanic accent. This was since De la Renta was a native Dominican born in the capital of Santo Domingo on July 22, 1932, and sadly died from cancer on October 20, 2014, at the age of 82. According to the website Biography.com Oscar was “raised alongside six sisters in a middle-class household” in his home country. This background of the famous designer makes us think about his humble beginnings. Even though being from a middle-class household he kept himself very humble and always recognized where he came from. Oscar was married twice throughout his lifetime. The first time was in 1983 with magazine editor Françoise de Langlade who died from “bone cancer in 1983” according to the website revoly.com. After this happened, he decided to adopt a son in the Dominican Republic and later got married again to the socialite and philanthropist Annette Engelhard Reed in 1990. She was an editor-in-chief of French Vogue. From a Puerto Rican father and a Dominican mother, de la Renta resided in the Dominican Republic until the age of eighteen. Even though Oscar’s father did not approve his first dream of becoming a painter, that did not keep him away from developing his dream of becoming a Fashion designer.



Oscar adopted his only son Moises de la Renta “from an orphanage from the Dominican Republic” according to an article in the Telegraph.com. Oscar did not leave that much of his fortune to his only adopted son after passing away. He left almost all his properties to his second wife Annette de la Renta and her three sons.



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Oscar with his first wife Françoise de Langlade who died of bone cancer. She was a contributing editor of the French Vogue for around eleven years. According to a New York Times article her biggest job was to be “a wife to [her] husband...” alongside leaving clear that marriage was something very “important” for her.



Oscar and his second wife Annette de la Renta arrived for the state dinner in honor of French president Jacques-Chirac in the White House on February 1 of 1995.

## **Education and Experience**

At the age of eighteen, he left his home country to study painting abroad in Spain, Madrid at the Academy of San Fernando. This academy is one of the most prestigious and oldest fine arts academies in Spain. Motivated by Fashion, Oscar later focused himself only on the fashion world and his unique talent led him to one of Spain’s most recognized courtiers Cristobal Balenciaga.

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De la Renta viewed him as a mentor who taught him the essentials of the Fashion world and opened him the door to become a big one just like him. In 1961, while on a vacation in Paris he got his first real fashion Job as an assistant to leading designer Antonio del Castillo (Lanvin-Castillo). After two years, he moved to New York to work “in couture and ready-to-wear” with Elizabeth Arden according to the website notablebiographies.com. He was part of the “Battle of Versailles” in 1993.



The San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid. In this prestigious academy, de la Renta “began to work as an illustrator for fashion houses” as described by britannica.com. The famous work of the doyen of fashion started in one of the oldest and recognized Spanish Fine Arts academy.

## Market Segment

The market segment that Oscar’s Fashion brand targets is all Female and Male from 20 and up along with children. However, his focus is mainly on women. He once said in an interview for the Hispanic magazine in 2002 that his “... underlying goal was to make a woman feel good and look her best”. He also added that “this new century is really the century of the

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women, up to now it has been a man's world". Overall, these are individuals who possess a high income since his fashion brand does couture, everything is expensive. Most of the clients and/or consumers are for the most part celebrities, models and recognized female politicians. In other words, people who are economically sustainable. The middle class and the higher class might the one benefited because they have the money to purchase the five to twenty thousand dollars attire. The cultural background of the market segment in my opinion is an acceptable mix of high-income Hispanics and/or Latinos, white Americans, African Americans among others. Especially many recognized celebrities.

### **Famous Looks:**

Celebrities such as Amy Adams, Sarah Jessica Parker, Penélope Cruz and Oprah have worn de la Renta's romantic feminine gowns. Alongside female politicians such as, former first ladies Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Nancy Reagan, Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama also donned



one of his gowns. Here's two of his famous looks:

**Moment to shine: Miss Adams, who was nominated for an award for her role in *The Master*, debuted her princess-like Oscar de la Renta dress on the red carpet.**



**Not only did Oprah wear a custom creation by de la Renta she also attended the 2010 Met Gala arm and arm with her close friend.**

### **Conclusion**

In my opinion, Oscar de la Renta made an immense contribution to the fashion industry and left a mark that will never be erased in Fashion. The passion from which he designed female gowns was somewhat inspirational. Oscar being from my home country makes me feel proud of him, even though I never personally knew him. Now I can say we have somebody that represents our Caribbean island. He represented my culture and the whole island itself. It is a privilege for me to say that there is a Dominican fashion designer that gained that kind of power and recognition in the fashion world. The world will always remember him as “The Doyen of Fashion” but, I will always remember him as the only “Dominican fashion Designer” that amazingly influenced the fashion industry .

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