

TOM FORD

Biography

Ford was born in Austin, Texas in 1961. In 1979 he moved to New York to pursue a history of art degree at NYU. Upon arriving in the city, Ford was introduced to what the fashion industry had to offer. "This nice guy from my art history class came in and asked if I wanted to go to a party. Andy Warhol was [there], and he took us to Studio 54 - wow. Even today, I still start shaking when I hear Donna Summer because it's the music of my coming-of-age," he told *Vogue*. A year later, the designer dropped out of his degree in favour of an acting stint in California.

Having saved money working through his time as an actor, he enrolled at Parson's school of design to study architecture but quickly switched to fashion. Upon graduation, Ford was employed by Cathy Hardwick as a design assistant. It was during his time at the company that the designer met his husband, the then-editor of *Women's Wear Daily*, Richard Buckley, whom he married in 2014 following a 27-year relationship.

In 1988, Ford was offered a job as design director at Remy Ellis, helmed at the time by Marc Jacobs. Following this, the designer's career with Gucci began, moving to Italy after Dawn Mello, then-creative director of the company in 1990. Ford took over from Mello as creative director in 1994. By 1999, the designer had made Gucci worth \$4.3 billion (£2.2), making it one of the largest and most profitable luxury brands in the world. After the Gucci Group bought Yves Saint Laurent under Ford's instruction, the designer went on to act as creative and communications director of the brand alongside his position at Gucci.

During his tenure at the luxury group, Ford also added Sergio Rossi, Bottega Veneta and Balenciaga to the Gucci group's roster. When holding company Pinault-Printemps-Redoute expressed interest in buying a controlling stake of the Gucci group in 2003, the designer announced that if it were to happen he would be forced to leave over conflict surrounding creative control. PPR's bid was inevitable, securing 68 percent by the end of the year. Ford confirmed his departure, leaving at the end of his contract the following year.

Ford took a break from fashion and shifted his attention to his directorial career, signing with CAA talent agent Byron Lourd. After founding his own film company, FADE TO BLACK, in 2005, he released the well-received film *A Single Man*, in 2009, based on the novel of the same name by Christopher Isherwood. Premiering first at the Venice Film Festival and later in the US, the film starred Colin Firth, who was nominated for an Academy Award, Golden Globe, Independent Spirit Award and a Screen Actors Guild Award for his role in the film. He went on to win the BAFTA Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role.

The conception of the Tom Ford brand began in 2004, the year after he departed from the Gucci group, starting with the launch of a cosmetics and fragrance line in partnership with Estee Lauder and former Gucci CEO Domenico de Sole. An optical and sunglasses range with the Marcolin group ensued but it wasn't until a year later that Ford marked his first foray into design under his own name.

In collaboration with Ermenegildo Zegna, the fashion designer launched a range of luxury menswear, including suits, accessories and shoes in 2006. As a result of its success, he opened his two-storey flagship store a year later, modelled after his London townhouse in New York's Madison Avenue. Partnerships with luxury department stores Daslu and Villa Moda kick-started the 2007 announcement that the Tom Ford brand would see an international expansion - with flagships in London, Milan, LA and Hawaii over the succeeding three years.

In 2010 Ford marked his return to womenswear design with an intimate presentation at his Madison Avenue flagship store with a coterie of attendees such as Beyoncé Knowles, Daphne Guinness and Lauren Hutton. The public and the rest of the fashion industry were kept on tenterhooks for two months to see the collection in an exclusive feature in American *Vogue*. The following collection was moved to London Fashion Week, but shown privately in a showroom. In 2013 Ford opened his collections to a wider selection of press, bloggers and photographers, joining the London Fashion Week official schedule and showing his menswear for the first time at London Collections: Men.

The same year, the designer was also featured in Jay-Z's song *Tom Ford* from the *Magna Carta Holy Grail* album and collaborated with Justin Timberlake on his cover art and music video for song *Suit & Tie*, affirming his position as an affluent mega brand.

Ford took an interest in photography from the very beginning of his career with his sensuous Gucci adverts produced with Carine Roitfeld and the 2000 adverts for YSL Opium perfume, shot by Stephen Meisel and banned from publication in the UK. Recently, he has shot the cover of *Numero* Russia's March 2014 edition and an editorial for CR Fashion Book's summer 2014 edition alongside his Tom Ford beauty and mainline campaign for spring 2014.

Ford has gathered recognition throughout his career spanning 28 years, collecting accolades such as the CDFA International award, Board of Directors Special Tribute and 2008 Designer of the year, named in the 2011 Timetop 100 list of influential people, four VH-1 /VogueFashion Awards, two ACE awards from the US Accessory Council, GQman of the year award in 2000, the Andre Leon Talley Lifetime Achievement Award from the Savannah College of Art and Design and was nominated for a BFA Designer Brand award in 2012.

The designer currently resides in his Los Angeles, London and Santa Fe with his husband Richard Buckley and their son Alexander John Buckley Ford.