

# Prince of Pleats Issey Miyake dies

Japan's *Kyodo News* outlet announced that fashion designer, Issey Miyake, passed on 5 August in a hospital in Tokyo. The designer was best known for pioneering delicate pleats as well as dressing many celebrities, such as Steve Jobs, with his iconic black turtlenecks.



Source: © Page Six [Page Six](#) Kim Kardashian wore Myake in 2020

Though his dozens of endeavours within fashion were distinct in their aesthetics, their attitude was by and large the same: intelligence, humanism, and a fascination with technology.

"I gravitated toward the field of clothing design, partly because it is a creative format that is modern and optimistic," he wrote in the *New York Times* in 2008. "I prefer to think of things that can be created, not destroyed, and that bring beauty and joy."

It was a design ethos embodied as much in black turtleneck jumpers – which served as Steve Jobs' uniform – as it was in his flying saucer dresses and minimalist, cloud-like columns of the '90s and '00s.

## Worn by many celebrities

[Page Six Style](#) lists a number of celebrities that wore his clothes. Beyoncé wore the designer's veil in her video for *Mine*.

Solange's mom recreated a 1999 Miyake design while Mary-Kate Olsen wore Miyake to the 2013 CFDA Fashion Awards. Robin Williams wore a Miyake bomber jacket to the *Flubber* premiere.

Model Grace Jones was one of the designer's biggest fans and friends, having modelled in his shows multiple times as well as worn his clothes out and about frequently in the 1980s and beyond.

More recently, Kim Kardashian wore Miyake in 2020, proving that Miyake's recent designs are just as beautiful as those from the beginning of his career, Kardashian wore a matching silver turtleneck and skirt from his collection in 2020.

## **Simple, yet complicated**

Miyake's design philosophy was simple yet complicated, often taking one piece of cloth and folding it into origami-like pleats to create lovely organic shapes since the 1970s.

Dazed describes Miyake as "practical and poetic in equal measure".

"His work became a cornerstone of contemporary dress, shaking the foundations of Paris' salons in the 1980s with daring proportions and experimental textiles while enriching everyday wardrobes with artful staples and signature pleats," says *Dazed*.

In 1997 he formally retired from fashion. However, he continued to oversee the creative direction of all the lines created by his company, such as Issey Miyake, Issey Miyake Fête, Pleats Please, and his accessories offshoot Bao Bao.

## **Flexible movement**

According to *Dazed* he was born in Hiroshima on April 22 1938, first imagined himself as an athlete or a dancer, "which perhaps explains the premium he placed on flexible movement".

It was his sister's fashion magazines, however, that inspired him to change tack and study graphic design at the Tama Art University in Tokyo.

He then entered his designs into a fashion competition at the Bunka Fashion College but failed to win on account of his pattern-making and sewing skills.

"Shortly after, he attended the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture in Paris and was an apprentice to Guy Laroche and Hubert de Givenchy, drawing 50 to 100 sketches daily. Following a short stint in New York, where he became

acquainted with artists like Christo and Robert Rauschenberg, he returned to Tokyo in 1970 to establish the Miyake Design Studio," says *Dazed*.

## Protagonist of Japanese design

Alongside the likes of Rei Kawakubo and Kansai Yamamoto, Miyake was a protagonist of Japanese design, jostling to get a footing on the world's stage throughout the 1980s.

And it was during this time that Miyake began to experiment with the Fortuny pleat, which would offer his wearers the freedom to move while signalling all the cachet of high-end design. The fabric's ability to hold its pleats made it perfect for dancers, and Miyake sent 300 pieces to the Ballett Frankfurt, which led to the development of his Pleats Please range in 1999.

It would be 10 years until Miyake launched his menswear equivalent, Homme Plissé, which united performers, gallerists, musicians, and fashion-heads in elasticated waists, comfort, and craft. The process to make these seihin pleats can now be witnessed first-hand at the Homme Plissé flagship in Minami-Aoyama in Japan, which opened in July 2019.

In 2016, Miyake told *The Guardian* that "we call the people who make clothing couturiers – they develop new clothing items – but actually the work of designing is to make something that works in real life."

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