



BETSEY JOHNSON

Website: www.betseyjohnson.com

Betsey Johnson was born in Hartford, Connecticut, USA in 1942. Johnson spent a year at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, before graduating from Syracuse University in 1964.

During 1964, she was guest editor on the summer college issue of Mademoiselle and was hired by the magazine for one year after graduation. During that period she made and sold clothing designs in her spare time and later became a freelance designer, retailing through a New York boutique called Paraphernalia.

In the 60's, Johnson gained a reputation as a radical young designer, producing chalk-striped 'gangster' trouser suits, a clear vinyl dress sold with paste-your-own star motifs, a 'noise' dress made of jersey with loose grommets attached to the hem, silvery motorcycle suits, clinging T-shirt dresses and a wrapped cowhide mini dress which was worn with thigh high leather boots.



In 1969, she opened a New York boutique called "Betsey, Bunkey and Nini". In the 70's, Johnson turned to Disco wear and showed extravagant body-conscious clothes, many made up of stretch jersey. In 1978, she opened her own sportswear business.

In 1999 the Council of Fashion Designers of America, presented Betsey with their Timeless Talent Award, as a recognition of her ability to change with the times and her continued success in the fashion world for over 3 decades.

A dress with a 10-inch extended collar, worn by Julie Christie, the film star, made her name when it sold in the thousands. Betsey says : "fashion is all about having fun and mine are clothes to have fun in". Going into the 21st century, she is still making fun clothes.

For her Spring 2001 collection, Betsey recruited 29 Playboy bunnies to model her line of bikinis and bustiers. It was a real smash.

Irrepressable Betsey

Betsey has been married three times and has a daughter Lulu. She gives no attention to age and says she feels as if she is 22. On her 60th birthday in 2002, she did a back-flip at the party by her pool.

In the year 2000/2002, the city of New York decided to honour American fashion designers by placing bronze plaques along the pavement of 7th Avenue, the great street

of fashion in New York. This has been called the "FASHION WALK OF FAME." Betsey Johnson was one of those honoured with a plaque this year.



Spring/Summer 2003

Betsey showed the Spring/Summer 2003 collection at the New York Fashion Week in September 2002, which was greeted with acclaim. This dress is from that collection.

Autumn/Winter 2003 Ready-to-Wear New York - February 2003

The outfit on the right is one from the Autumn/Winter collection.

Betsey's dresses always bring out a smile. She showed full satin gypsy skirts in emerald green and electric blue, embroidered lingerie dresses with boldly coloured tights and giant sneakers. Mini jumper dresses were in swirls of orange and plum. Betsey as always, had the audience rocking and rolling in the aisles.



Spring/Summer 2004

Betsey Johnson's Spring collection was shown during New York Fashion Week in September 2003. A dress from the show is shown here on the left.

While Betsey gets older, her clothes get younger. She was inspired this season by cheeky French maids wearing skirts that brushed their bottoms like feather dusters. She included a sweater embroidered with S M, romper shorts and the rap singer Wyclef Jean taking his bow at the end. Her collections have a Peter Pan quality to them.

Fall/Winter 2004

The Fall collection was shown during New York Fashion Week in February 2004. Betsey paid homage to rockers from the past such as Mick Jagger and Tina Turner. Her models wore red Indian hairdresses, and Surrealist eyeglasses. She used her usual eye-popping prints, this one is a Pirate skull and crossbones motif.



Spring/Summer 2005

During New York Fashion Week in September 2004, Betsey Johnson presented her Spring collection. Two outfits from the show are



pictured on the left.

Betsey showed her clothes with the usual colour, verve and vivacity, with lots of frothy petticoats and ruffles. The designer herself defied her 62 years by cartwheeling down the catwalk. Betsey is Queen of the proms.

Fall/Winter 2005

The Fall/Winter collection was shown during New York Fashion Week in February 2005. Betsey used a London pub called "The Bull and Betsey" as her theme for Fall serving up a wardrobe of green tartans, florals and polka dot prints. Cute cardigans were worn with cotton shirts and tiered chiffon skirts. Corsets accentuated the upper body and some dresses were strategically cut. Lace ruffles mixed with butterfly sleeves, and the bridal gown was embroidered baby flannel.



Heart Truth - The Red Dress Collection

Betsey joined with many other designers in presenting a red dress for the Heart Truth Charity Show which opened the New York Fashion Week. Her red dress was worn by alex, the daughter of Rolling Stones musician Keith Richards. She is shown here on the left.

Ready-to-Wear

Spring/Summer 2006 New York

Betsey Johnson presented her Spring/Summer 2006 collection during New York Fashion Week in September 2005. An outfit from the collection is shown on the right, one of her short printed dresses.

This season Betsey has been inspired by Brigitte Bardot in 1960's France, pretty dresses with full skirts and embroidery. Her models looked like young girls strolling around the cafes of Paris in the summer.



An Award for Betsey

In November 2005 in New York, The Annual Accessories Council Excellence awards were given, Betsey, shown at the party here on the left, received the Lifetime Achievement Award

PERFUMES

2006

New York designer **Betsey Johnson** has built her long-standing career in fashion by following her own set of rules. Known for her celebration of the exuberant, the embellished, and the over the top, Betsey has been rocking the fashion industry with her unique and original designs since the 1960's. Her commitment to remain true to her one-of-a-kind vision has afforded Betsey continued success in an industry known for its fickleness. Her ability to change with the times while keeping her designs pure has not gone unnoticed. At the **1999 CFDA Awards**, Betsey was presented The **Timeless Talent Award** created especially for her, which recognized her influence on fashion throughout her career.

Betsey was born in Connecticut and spent her childhood in dance classes. Her aspirations to be a dancer and her love for costumes laid the foundation for Betsey's creativity and inspiration, which is still evident in her designs today. In 1964, Betsey officially entered the New York fashion scene by winning **Mademoiselle magazine's "Guest Editor Contest."** One year later, she landed the top designer position for **Paraphernalia**, a clothing boutique that at the time housed the hottest young London designers, including Mary Quant and Paco Rabanne, among others. What would soon become known as Betsey's trademark look began its formulations here: sexy silhouettes, hippie inspired flowing fabrics, whimsical detailing and, most importantly, a fabulous fit.

Now firmly part of what was considered the "Youth Quake," Betsey soon found herself in the unforgettable 1960's Warhol scene. **Edie Sedgwick** was her house model, while the **Velvet Underground's** John Cale took to wearing her designs both on-stage and off. In 1969, Betsey began her foray into retail by opening a new boutique called **Betsey Bunki Nini**. Directly following the opening store Betsey was offered a job from Alvin Duskin in San Francisco and thus began living a bi-coastal life for the remaining years of the 60's.

Along with the new decade came new career opportunities for Betsey and in the early 1970's, she came into creative control of the label **Alley Cat**, a label which set the trends for the 70's rock n' roll clothing, with bohemian and ethnic styles. In 1972, along with Halston, Betsey won the coveted **Coty Award** becoming the youngest designer to ever receive the honor.

After a decade of designing for other labels, Betsey decided to make a dramatic change in her life and in 1978, she formed a partnership with Chantal Bacon and started the **Betsey Johnson label**, as it is known today. Designing for herself allowed Betsey the creative freedom to execute her vision to it's fullest potential. The same year Betsey and Chantal launched their first retail store in the heart of Soho. In the early 80's, they were one of the first to open a store on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles, helping the street to gain its worldwide recognition as one of the best shopping areas of the 1980's. Today there are over fifty Betsey Johnson stores worldwide. International expansion came in 1998 with the opening of the wildly popular **London** store. In 1999 the **Vancouver** store opened its doors and **Toronto** opened in early September 2003. In September 2006, the first Betsey Johnson store opened in **Japan**. Betsey Johnson clothing is also available in better department stores as well as in specialty stores throughout the country, and in Europe and Asia.

The year 2003 marked some exciting licensing endeavors for the company, taking Betsey's signature prints and whimsy to new audiences with categories including shoes and lingerie. She continued this trend and has since added handbags, belts, cold weather accessories, eyewear, watches, jewelry, swimwear, legwear and a fragrance thus effectively emerging as not only a clothing designer but a top American Lifestyle brand.

In late 2002, Betsey was honored with an induction into the **Fashion Walk of Fame**, honoring her contribution to American fashion. A bronze and granite plaque containing an original sketch, signature and biography was embedded into Seventh Avenue sidewalk in early 2003. In March 2005, the **Signature Awards and NAWBO-NYC** committee honored Betsey with the **2005 Lifetime Achievement Award**. And following that, Betsey received the **Lifetime Achievement Award** from the **Accessories Council** in November 2005. Betsey Johnson was recently honored with the **Designer of the Year Award** at the annual **Fashion Accessories Benefit Ball (FABB)** in May 2007.

In 2003, while on vacation in Mexico, Betsey bought a magical little hotel, which she named "**Betseyville**" and proceeded to turn it into a dream vacation home, where she regularly visits to work and get inspired. She fell so in love with the culture

and surroundings that in 2004, Betsey purchased a second house in Mexico, this one dubbed "**Villa Betsey.**" Always loving a home project Betsey decided to turn Betseyville into an estate for rent to the public and chose Villa Betsey to become her main home in Mexico. Both homes abound with Betsey's signature touches can be seen when "**Betseyville**" was exclusively featured in **In Style Homes** in April 2005 and on www.betseyville.com.

A survivor of breast cancer, Betsey continues to be a strong advocate in the fight against the disease, making public appearances, participating in numerous fund raising events and creating one-of-a-kind items that have been auctioned off to raise funds for various charities. In 2003, the CFDA asked her to be an Honorary Chairperson for the **Fashion Targets Breast Cancer** initiative, which she graciously accepted. In April of 2004, she was awarded another honor by the **National Breast Cancer Coalition** (NBCC) for her continuous fight against Breast Cancer at a prestigious ceremony hosted by Ron Perlman. In Spring of 04, she teamed up with Geralyn Lucas, the author of the book "Why I Wore Lipstick...to my Mastectomy," designing an accompanying t-shirt which was launched in Betsey Johnson stores nationwide in October 2004 at a series of events called "**Courage Nights.**" Courage Night continued for its second year in October 2005 where CFDA Fashion Targets Breast Cancer and SELF Magazine joined the cause.

Betsey Johnson, both the woman and the label, is constantly moving forward and continues to keep a strong foothold in the fashion industry with no signs of letting up anytime soon. Her love of detail and design is evident in everything she does in life and in business. Her enthusiasm, creativity and boundless talent that have kept her at the forefront of fashion for the past 40 years will keep Betsey going for years to come.

"Making clothes involves what I like...color, pattern, shape and movement...I like the everyday process...the people, the pressure, the surprise of seeing the work come alive walking and dancing around on strangers. Like red lipstick on the mouth, my products wake up and brighten and bring the wearer to life...drawing attention to her beauty and specialness...her moods and movements...her dreams and fantasies." – **Betsey Johnson**

As one journalist recently quoted, "If Betsey Johnson didn't exist, we would have to invent her, simply to remind ourselves that fashion can be fun. She's the original wild child and set to paint the town pink!"

#