

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

African adventures are longtime inspiration for Emilio Pucci

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Travel and nature were among Emilio Pucci's main inspirations. Image credit: Emilio Pucci

By SARAH RAMIREZ

CAPE TOWN, South Africa – Although luxury fashion house Emilio Pucci has its roots in Florence, African cultures and diversity have long been celebrated by the brand.

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In a presentation during Condé Nast International's Luxury Conference on April 10, the image director of Emilio Pucci shared how different cultures have played a role in the evolution of the Italian fashion label. During Mr. Pucci's career, his visits to Africa played a prominent role in his inspirations.

"This is the way we've always worked in Pucci," said Laudomia Pucci, deputy chairman and image director at **Emilio Pucci**, and daughter of the brand's late founder and designer. "We've worked with different cultures, different girls, different inspirations."

Pucci the traveler

Born into an aristocratic Italian family, Mr. Pucci was educated in Milan and the United States. He returned to Italy and was part of the country's air force during World War II, even spending time in Japan.

Once Mr. Pucci began his fashion career, he turned to the natural environment in Capri for inspiration. It was not until his marriage that he began traveling internationally.

As Ms. Pucci described, her father was always traveling with a camera and a sketchbook.

Among the places the Pucci family visited were India, South America and Africa. Mr. Pucci also had a habit of speaking to other travelers, even stopping people in airports to chat.

"Of course he fell in love with Africa," Ms. Pucci said. "What was very interesting though was across his career he wasn't passive at all about the way he found his inspiration.

"By the '60s or '70s, many designers were referring to books or films, etc.," she said. "My father was actually taking the time to travel, interact with nature and speak to the people."

Mr. Pucci's travels in Africa inspired a variety of designs and prints, as well as influenced his personal values.

For instance, Ms. Pucci said her father was inspired by sarongs in Mali to design colorful, wide-legged palazzo pants.

Later in his career, Mr. Pucci supported racial integration in the U.S. during the Civil Rights Movement. As a result, his work appeared on several covers of *Ebony*, and he also dressed Aretha Franklin.

“If he believed in something, he went with it all the way,” Ms. Pucci said.

Pucci today

Although Mr. Pucci passed away almost three decades ago, his influence on the fashion house remains apparent.

His famous prints are one way the brand retains a sense of continuity as trends shift in and out of favor.

The label recently partnered with Neiman Marcus to remake some of its heritage prints for the contemporary customer.

A capsule collection of swimwear and ready-to-wear pieces was constructed using archival patterns exclusively for the department store brand. Pucci’s collaboration with Neiman Marcus focused on a trio of prints that originated between 1966 and 1971 ([see story](#)).

The designer’s love of traveling has also inspired other marketing efforts.

To promote its fall/winter 2017 women’s wear collection, Pucci filmed its idea of the flaneur, a French term meaning one who strolls or wanders.

In a short film, a model is first seen pushing a luggage cart. She also poses and interacts with a wall-size map ([see story](#)).

“It was the elegance of these women that fascinated my father,” Ms. Pucci said.

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