

A Study on the Fashion Design of Emilio Pucci – Focusing on the 1960s –

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to broaden the realm of the fashion design using print hereafter and to urge designers to the better quality design by presenting successful case. As a method of the study, the literature and visual data in this study were reviewed focusing on the 1960's, which was Pucci's golden age. For the historical background, textual and visual data related to sixties fashion and Italian fashion were referred. Foreign literature was investigated to study life of Pucci and his design tendency in fashion because domestic papers and research data were rare. Out of this, characteristics of fashion design of Pucci and conclusion were extracted.

Emilio Pucci was born to an illustrious Florentine aristocratic family in 1914. He was a designer, businessman and politician. Pucci's design has following characteristics. Firstly, gorgeous geometric prints with brilliant colors were key factor in Pucci's fashion design. Secondly, Pucci's design in fashion was a luxury sporty casual style symbolizing wearer's status and position in society. Thirdly, Pucci liberated the wearer's body using light and stretch material matching comfortable and active style. Lastly, Pucci developed total fashion dealing with various items widely including clothes and non-clothing products.

Key Words : sixties, luxury, stretch, print, total fashion

I . Introduction

Print design is widely used as a decoration technique for the fashion design because it can easily make various images and it costs relatively low comparing with other decoration techniques. Though the print design itself is important, the harmony with its fashion style and material is essential for the successful fashion design. Emilio Pucci is a designer whose print

design is in harmony with the fashion style and the material. He succeeded in fashion design because he designed unique, gorgeous and luxury prints and matched these with the material and style. His successful case could be a good model for designers especially focusing on print design. But it is hard to find the study on his fashion design yet. Therefore the purpose of this study is to broaden the realm of the fashion design using print hereafter and to urge

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designers to the better quality design by presenting successful case.

As a method of the study, the literature and visual data in this study were reviewed focusing on the 1960's, which was Pucci's golden age, though he worked from the end of the 1940's to the 1980's. For the historical background, textual and visual data related to sixties fashion and Italian fashion were referred. Foreign literatures were investigated to study life of Pucci and his design tendency in fashion because domestic papers and research data were rare. Especially, 'Pucci-A Renaissance in Fashion', 'Emilio Pucci-Looking at Fashion', and 'Emilio Pucci' where a full account of Pucci including photos had been given, were mainly studied. Out of this, characteristics of fashion design of Pucci and conclusion were extracted.

As a contents of the study, historical background was divided into general background and background by history of costume. Then, after being investigated life of Pucci and his tendency in fashion design, characteristics of fashion design of Pucci and conclusion were extracted as a result of this.

II. Historical Background

1. General Background

It was during the sixties, years full of vitality and optimism and marked by an active confidence in progress, that Emilio Pucci's designs established their reputation and met with unconditional approval, becoming, as never before, a fashion phenomenon, the symbol of an era of good taste¹⁾. The sixties were defined by unrivalled mass-media legends such as the music of the Beatles, the sexual revolution, Mary Quant, the death of Marilyn Monroe, Andy

Warhol's Factory, Swinging London, etc and Pucci enjoyed his period of greatest creativity, evidently inspired by the exciting and important interaction between fashion, design, music and science²⁾. Among many events happened during the sixties, what primarily related with Pucci's fashion are as follows.

Firstly, owing to the growth of science and technology, a variety of new material was produced, better living circumstances such as using convenient electric home appliances or making a jet trip at a low cost were made up, and the space age opened. These development of electronics and appearance of new material relaxed restrictions for style, function, and way of design. As a result of this, the ideal shape, tried by growing science and technology at the beginning of 20th century, could be materialized by rapid technological innovation in the sixties³⁾. High tech - from plastic and stretch fabric to industrial zippers - was associated with progress and a happy future⁴⁾.

Secondly, after the Second World War baby boom generation built up young power and they constituted a consuming society culture. The dominant characteristic of the sixties fashion revolution may be summed up with Vogue's catchword of the day, "Youthquake"⁵⁾. Social and economic developments had given young people around the world, the postwar baby boom generation, a self-conscious awareness of themselves as a distinct and unified group that they were able to respond to political events, in the process creating their own culture⁶⁾.

Thirdly, with the great development of mass media like TV, movie, and magazine, popular culture such as pop music or Pop Art made remarkable progress. Especially, pop music meant beyond simply playing music to young people at that time and had an great effect on

them and street fashion⁷⁾. People went crazy about Beatles and Rolling Stones and their fashion influenced their followers. The Beatles' arrival in the United States marked the start of the so-called 'British invasion' of popular music and fashion style⁸⁾.

2. Background by History of Costume

In terms of history of costume, there were a lot of events in the sixties. Among them, following three events are the most important and closely related with Pucci.

Firstly, mini skirt appeared and spread far and wide all over the world. As preference for the lightest, thinnest, shortest, and smallest thing in all fields of design came to be prevailing, product design became minimized. This trend affected fashion and made mini skirt appear and come to be widespread all around the world. Mary Quant, a mother of the miniskirt⁹⁾, was a designer who wanted to make people look like the young and retain their precious freedom. So she created clothes that allowed people to run, to jump, to leap, to retain their freedom¹⁰⁾.

Secondly, experimental and avant-garde design including space look came into fashion and a variety of new material was used for this as synthetic textiles were invented and treatment and finishing method were developed. Many designers created the new clothes using paper, plastic, metal, vinyl, glass, and etc. Cardin, Courreges, Emanuel Ungaro and Paco Rabanne experimented with futuristic 'space age' looks in the mid-1960s that featured new shapes and used new technologies¹¹⁾.

Thirdly, Pop Art or Op Art influenced textile design or color and led to abstract and geometric pattern or strong color arrangement¹²⁾. While the collaborations of the '20s and '30s were rarely repeated, the new art of the '60s

nonetheless supplied a fertile lode of invention for the decade's fashion designers¹³⁾.

III. Life of Emilio Pucci and His Tendency in Fashion Design

1. Life of Pucci

Emilio Pucci was born to an illustrious Florentine aristocratic family in 1914¹⁴⁾. He was a designer and businessman and played an active part in politics as a member of the Italian Parliament from 1963 to 1972 and of the Florentine City Council from 1965 to 1990.

He was excellent in sports such as swimming, tennis, fencing, and skiing from boyhood and chosen in 1934 to compete as a member of the Italian Olympic ski team. His mastery and love of sports have been a major part of his life and have influenced many of his designs¹⁵⁾.

Pucci who were raised by severe parents spent his childhood slow, calm, leisurely, and unglamorous. He graduated from the Ginnasio Liceo Galileo in Florence in 1933. At eighteen he entered the University of Milan to study agriculture. Though his strict parents gave him only a small allowance, he felt a new existence and a fantastic change outside of insular Florence¹⁶⁾. He got a taste of the wider field traveling around the world.

At that time, America was the dream of many European young people, and Emilio was no exception. Therefore he chose to complete his studies in the United States. He attended the University of Georgia from September 1935 to July of the next year. In July of 1936, he won a skiing scholarship to Reed College in Portland, Oregon and completed a Master's degree in social sciences. He felt that the American

experience changed him a lot in many ways. He enjoyed the debates, the long political discussions, social activities and even doing himself on trifles. After graduating from Reed College, Pucci returned to Italy and got a doctorate degree in political science at the University of Florence in 1941.

Pucci carried out his military service as a pilot. He enlisted in the Italian Air Force in 1938 and in 1940, in the middle of World War II, flew torpedo bombers on dangerous missions in a lot of areas of the Mediterranean Sea, from the islands of Rhodes, Sicily, and Sardinia. He obtained many images from the war, citing one particularly as a major influence on his work. The torpedo bomber pilots flew at very low altitudes to avoid the enemy's radar scan, skimming over the sea for thousands of miles. What impressed him was the constant movement and the kaleidoscope of colors that spread out before him on these long missions and this vision had influenced all his designs after that time.

His career as a fashion designer started when Pucci wearing his ski wear, his own design, appeared in Harper's Bazaar in 1948<Fig. 1>¹⁷⁾. Thereafter, He introduced stylish colors and style

onto the ski slopes<Fig. 2>¹⁸⁾. Then, as Capri look which was designed in 1949 became popular, he opened a number of Emilio boutiques on Capri, in Rome, on the Isle of Elba, and at the spa of Montecatini. He also began to export his summer wear to America and became the symbol of a new, comfortable style with the image of luxury resort<Fig. 3>. In the sixties, he came to take a golden age as designer symbolizing style and status. As doing good business, he extended his design line into all sorts of merchandise such as lingerie, perfume, accessory, and home furnishing. In the seventies, in connection with economically and socially depressed atmosphere, his business declined but after the eighties, his style came to get popular again. He died in 1992 in Florence.

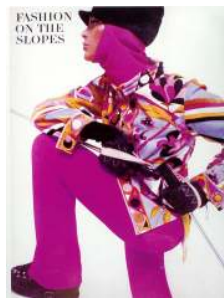
Emilio Pucci had an determined philosophy of life as follows and worked hard doing his best as a fashion designer and politician through his whole life. "The best thing you do in life is to serve people at the best of your ability."

2. Design Tendency of Pucci in Fashion

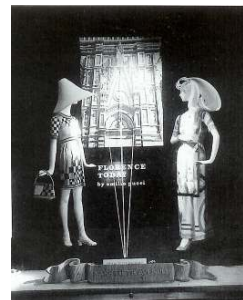
Pucci was fond of observing how, every now and then, local newspapers reported that visitors



<Fig. 1> Harper's Bazaar photo featuring Pucci's ski clothes, 1948 - Emilio Pucci - Looking at Fashion, p.24



<Fig. 2> Fashion for the truly chic ski slopes, 1965 - Pucci - A Renaissance in Fashion, p.59



<Fig. 3> Pucci new fashion in Saks Fifth Avenue window, 1965 - Emilio Pucci - Looking at Fashion, p.42

had been taken to the hospital, suffering from the "Stendhal Syndrome". He described the syndrome as a manifestation of a mysterious and timeless feeling of beauty, creativity, and harmony traceable in Florence back to some three thousand years ago¹⁹⁾. He was interested in getting the inspiration from the Florentine historic object of art and expressing it. He thought that fashion design had the responsibility of leading people through images of dignity and that was what he had to serve and a woman's greatest qualities were her femininity, grace, and mystery.

He also thought that clothes had to liberate the body by moving comfortably with the wearer. He preferred the practical design of very packable, easy-to-wear, morning-to-night because he enjoyed the trip himself and created casual and chic, natural and graceful sports casual look. At that time civilian air travel was becoming popular and Pucci's design which was light, cool, comfortable, and don't have to iron was very attractive for trip, casual party, and resort life<Fig. 4>²⁰⁾.

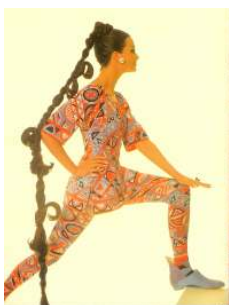
Pucci used silk jersey which was light and comfortable and "Emilioform," an elastic silk shantung

made by Trabaldo for slacks, bodysuits, and evening wear in 1960. He designed a variety of exotic prints with brilliant colors getting inspiration from the trip around the world. Trip had been a major inspiration for most of the famous Pucci prints. At a glance, they appeared to be abstract or merely stylized, but on closer examination, people could find patterns inspired by architecture, nature, or the activities of various places. Also, architecture or fine arts of the Renaissance period and the beautiful scenery and characteristic scenes of everyday life of Italy were expressed in prints<Fig. 5>²¹⁾<Fig. 6>.

IV. Characteristics in Fashion Design of Emilio Pucci

Pucci has following characteristics in his fashion design.

First of all, brightly colored and gorgeous geometric patterns were the most important key factor in Pucci's fashion design. His creative and quality printed patterns led Pucci style into a great success. During the 1960s, Op Art was



<Fig. 4> Blue, orange, and mauve printed lycra leggings, 1965
- *Emilio Pucci*, p.32



<Fig. 5> Printed silk blouse with fall tone design of Italian piazza, 1955
- *Fashion, Italian Style*, p.24

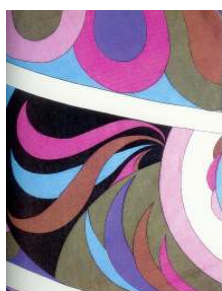


<Fig. 6> On the roof of Pucci's palazzo, 1964
- *Emilio Pucci*, p.33

popular and it described art that explored human perceptual processes through optical effects²². The works of Op Art's practitioners were perceptually ambiguous and often suggested dizzying movement, either through subtle shifts in color or black-and-white patterns and lines²³. Op Art also described a unique three dimensional effect by optical illusion shown by transforming some patterns geometrically and repeating them²⁴. Because these optical illusions were graphically simple, fashion makers adapted Op Art to textile and fashion design and this became the great heat for fashion-loving young people. Pucci's geometric patterns were basically influenced by Op Art. But compared with Op Art whose color was mainly based on black-and-white and motives were simply lines or figures, Pucci's were much more colorful and based on various and realistic motives<Fig. 7-8>. In his patterns, everything from the sunshine of Italy, the columnar architecture of Greece, the flowers of Provence, to the domed churches of Russia appeared²⁵<Fig. 9-12>. He made it a motif the scene of Italian daily life or relics of the past like Renaissance and designed

printed patterns with getting the inspiration from ethnic and folk elements of the local places traveling around the world<Fig.13-14>. For example, his visit to Bali in 1960 inspired him for many years. He called Balinese people "romantically intellectual," and the flowers, native batik work, decorative borders, and traditional dress built up the foundation for some of his most memorable designs of the decade²⁶<Fig. 15-16>.

His print was composed of a variety of color. Color played a significant role in Pucci's fashion design. It expressed psychedelic image like the depths of the sea, kaleidoscopic movement, and the infinite tonalities of shadow<Fig. 17-18>. His pure, primary and natural colors, his taste for abstraction, his frequent choice of non-figurative forms, his modular organization of the chromatic range, and his orchestration of straight lines or curves seemed to be inspired by the backgrounds of Renaissance paintings, or by the taste for symbolic representation and decoration found in Oriental and African cultures²⁷.



<Fig. 7> Colorful geometric print design which suggests movement 1953~75
- Pucci - *A Renaissance in Fashion*, p.115



<Fig. 8> A brilliant diamond tailored shirt and dots, stripes, and free-form shapes in a tapered silk shirt, 1960s
-Pucci-*A Renaissance in Fashion*, p.94



<Fig. 9> Gorgeous pattern appeared in the cover of Harper's Bazaar USA, 1963
-Emilio Pucci-*Looking at Fashion*, p.26



<Fig. 10> Stylized floral pattern, 1953~75
-Pucci-*A Renaissance in Fashion*, p.115



<Fig. 11> Graphic patterns inspired by traditional Florentine game, late fifties
 - *Emilio Pucci* - *Looking at Fashion*, p.65



<Fig. 12> Fishes design inspired by Mediterranean culture, 1969
 - *Emilio Pucci*, p.51



<Fig. 13> djellabas inspired by hippie fashion and Arab-influenced pyjama trousers, 1968
 -*Emilio Pucci*, p.49



<Fig. 14> Indian-influenced hot colored geometric pattern in silk chiffon, 1967
 - *Pucci* - *A Renaissance in Fashion*, p.100



<Fig. 15> Shirt with decorated hem-lines and a silk sarong, Bali collection,1962 ~1963
 - *Emilio Pucci* - *Looking at Fashion*, p.80



<Fig. 16> Balinese-influenced print and silhouette in silk jersey, 1962 - *Pucci*
 - *A Renaissance in Fashion*, p.102



<Fig.17> Pucci's representative print design from Vivara collection 1966
 -*Emilio Pucci*-*Looking at Fashion*, p.180



<Fig.18> Vivara hooded burnous and harem style jumpsuit,1966
 -*Emilio Pucci*-*Looking at Fashion*, p.48

Secondly, Pucci's design in fashion was a luxury sporty casual style symbolizing wearer's status and position in society. In the fifties when Pucci started to design, the entertainment such as sports, travel, recreation at resort was rampant among people of the upper classes to show off their social success. Pucci could understand the lifestyle of the upper classes very

well and design the clothes satisfying their needs because he was Italian aristocrat who was a professional skier and enjoying the travel. His designs such as the ski wear design, easy-casual wear which high society people could wear comfortably at airplane when traveling, resort look for a luxury resort area, and a suitable style for a casual party were

luxury sporty casual style and elevated to the level of a status symbol for an entire society in a certain period<Fig. 19>.

Thirdly, Pucci liberated the wearer's body using light and stretch material matching comfortable and active style. In 1960 Pucci began to experiment with the newest chemical finds – manmade fibers. With Tralbaldo mills, he developed a silk shantung, a blend of elastic fibers. He designed tight fitting cat-suits which he called capsular using this new stretch material and in order to accentuate the effect of a second skin on a slender and liberate female body, he added little booties, in a Renaissance style, and in a coordinated fabric²⁸⁾<Fig. 20>. His revolutionary new capsular was well ahead of their times and modern, international, dynamic, and chic. Also he designed comfortable and stylish pants. For his famous "cigarette pants," Pucci used a stretch shantung material in solid color<Fig. 21>. In 1960 he introduced a fabric called "Emilioform," an elasticized silk shantung made by Tralbaldo and used for slacks, bodysuits, and even evening wear²⁹⁾

<Fig. 22>. Emilioform composed of 45% shantung silk and 55% nylon was used for new skiing outfits – Capsular – that hugged the body like a second skin and this 'Capsular' symbolized a modern, international and elegant style³⁰⁾.

He inspired textile companies to produce the functional material such as the lightest silk jersey, the finest cotton batiste, the stretchiest nylon, and the softest cashmere<Fig. 23>. The pressure of the body was minimized by using the light material like feather and reducing the weight of clothes. His revealing silk jersey dresses made women feel and look wild, sexy, elegant and he felt that his clothes helped women liberate their bodies. Although he pursued relaxed free style, his design always did not miss elegance and femininity by prints such as floral patterns or softness of color and tone<Fig. 24>.

Lastly, Pucci developed total fashion dealing with various items widely including clothes and non-clothing products. For the first ready-to-wear fashion show, held in April 1967, Emilio



<Fig.19> Mini dress printed and decorated with beading, 1966 – Emilio Pucci–*Looking at Fashion*, p.86



<Fig.20> "Capsular" bodysuits made of "Emilioform" fabric, 1959 – Pucci – *A Renaissance in Fashion*, p.47



<Fig.21> Pucci's tailored silk shirt and tapered red pants, 1953 – Pucci–*A Renaissance in Fashion*, p.76



<Fig.22> 'Emilioform' clothing for resort look, 1960 – Emilio Pucci, p.27



<Fig.23> A bright colors on a silk crepe de chine, 1968/pure psych edelia in lightwe ight wool jersey, 1967 – Pucci– A Renaissance in Fashion, p.92



<Fig.24> Pucci relaxed and yet elegant style, 1965 – Emilio Pucci –Looking at Fashion, p.43



<Fig.25> Drawing of a bathroom with towels designed by Pucci for Spring Mills, 1967 –Emilio Pucci, p.58



<Fig.26> Walking artwork in boldly colored and patterned tights, 1969 – Pucci – A Renaissance in Fashion, p.139



<Fig.27> A selection of Pucci silk, cotton, and velvet handbags designed and made in Italy from the mid 1950s to mid 1970s – Pucci–A Renaissance in Fashion, p.149



<Fig.28> A solid and print wardrobe for Braniff hostesses, 1965 – Emilio Pucci – Looking at Fashion, p.179



<Fig.29> Pucci and his models for the launch of the perfume 'Vivara', 1966 –Emilio Pucci, p.52

Pucci launched a series of printed beachwear and towels, that were to be marketed by Spring Mills³¹⁾. Bathroom towels composed of a variety of colors and patterns appeared in the catwalk<Fig. 25>. Also, to help women wearing mini skirt look elegant, he developed a line of printed tights and multicolored diamond prints decorated the opaque pantyhose or tights³²⁾<Fig. 26>. And besides, he designed a variety of items

from scarf, bag, underwear, and shoes to perfume, home furnishing, porcelains, pen, and automobile<Fig. 27>. His kaleidoscopic textile designs were made up into these items³³⁾. He designed uniform, too. Before he designed it, airline hostess wore conservative jackets and skirts of muted blues, grays, and greens. For Braniff International Airlines in 1965, Pucci outfitted hostesses in layers of color–Pucci pink,

bold blue, a medium blue, absinthe green, apricot, and melon and Pucci's unusual uniform designs led increased passengers loads³⁴⁾<Fig. 28>. Since the beginning of his fashion design career in 1947, a myriad of Pucci-designed fashion accessories and non-clothing products have issued from his Florence atelier including playing cards encased in elegant boxes to signed lithographs that illustrate parts of his favorite patterns and elegant ceramic vases, plates, cups, and saucers uniquely patterned for prestigious Rosenthal China of Germany from 1961 to 1977, from zany headgear to tassel earrings to winged sandals, from patterned sheets to life-style perfumes to distinctive uniforms to collectible lithographs to his design for the Apollo 15 space mission in 1971, there are few high-style products Pucci has not put his crest on³⁵⁾<Fig. 29>. Pucci carried designer diversification into areas where many others had feared to tread³⁶⁾.

V. Conclusion

Emilio Pucci is a successful designer because of his unique, gorgeous and luxury print designs and well matched material and style with these prints. His successful case could be a good model for designers especially focusing on print design. This study aims at broadening the realm of the fashion design using print hereafter and urging designers to the better quality design by presenting successful case.

During the sixties Emilio Pucci's designs established their reputation and met with unconditional approval becoming a fashion phenomenon, the symbol of an era of good taste. As a primary event during the sixties, firstly, owing to the growth of science and

technology, a variety of new material was produced, better living circumstances were made up, and the space age opened, secondly, after the Second World War baby boom generation built up young power and they constituted a consuming society culture, thirdly, with the great development of mass media, popular culture such as pop music or Pop Art made remarkable progress.

In terms of history of costume, firstly, mini skirt appeared and spread far and wide all over the world as prevailing preference for the lightest, thinnest, shortest, and smallest thing in all fields of design. Secondly, experimental and avant-garde design including space look came into fashion and a variety of new material was used for this as synthetic textiles were invented and treatment and finishing method were developed. Thirdly, Pop Art or Op Art influenced textile design or color and led to abstract and geometric pattern or strong color arrangement.

Emilio Pucci was born to an illustrious Florentine aristocratic family in 1914. He was a designer, businessman and politician. He thought that clothes had to liberate the body by moving comfortably with the wearer. So he designed light, cool, comfortable clothes. He also preferred the practical design of very packable, easy-to-wear, morning-to-night because he enjoyed the trip himself and created casual and chic, natural and graceful sports casual look. Especially successful key element of his design was a variety of exotic prints with brilliant colors getting inspiration from the trip around the world.

Pucci's design has following characteristics.

Firstly, gorgeous geometric patterns with brilliant colors were key factor in Pucci's fashion design. Secondly, Pucci's design in fashion has been a luxury sporty casual style symbolizing

wearer's status and position in society. Thirdly, Pucci liberated the wearer's body using light and stretch material matching comfortable and active style. Lastly, Pucci developed total fashion dealing with various items widely including clothes and non-clothing products.

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