

# GIANNI VERSACE

b. December 2, 1946

d. July 15, 1997

**One of the first prominent Italians to come out, Gianni Versace was the designer for Princess Diana and Madonna. He fused fashion and pop culture into a billion dollar empire.**

*“In the past, people were born royal. Nowadays, royalty comes from what you do.”*

With his larger-than-life designs and savvy business sense, Gianni Versace fused fashion and celebrity pop culture in unprecedented ways.

Versace's career began as an apprentice in his mother's tailor shop in Reggio Calabria, Italy. It was there that Versace learned about making clothes, transforming his mother's lessons into his future fashion empire.

At the age of 25, Versace moved to Milan, Italy, where he designed collections for leading fashion houses. After six years, he launched his own label.

Versace oversaw the conceptualization of his label's provocative campaigns and runway shows. He collaborated with American photographer Richard Avedon on Versace advertisements. He became the lead designer for Madonna, Jon Bon Jovi and Princess Diana, among others. Versace used his celebrity clients in print ads and on the runway, connecting haute couture to music, movies and media.

In 1988, Versace was named “the most innovative and creative designer in the world” by the jury of the Cutty Sark Award. In 1993, the Council of Fashion Designers of America honored him with the American Fashion Oscar.

Versace unabashedly embraced his sexuality, becoming one of Italy's first public figures to come out. He worked closely with the Elton John AIDS Foundation and used his celebrity status to raise awareness.

On July 15, 1997, at the peak of his career, Versace was murdered outside his Miami home. His body was found by his partner of 15 years, Antonio D'Amico.

At Gianni's death, the House of Versace's estimated worth was \$1 billion.

