

YVES ST. LAURENT

b. August 1, 1936

d. June 1, 2008

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“Dressing is a way of life.”

One of the most noteworthy fashion designers of the 20th century, Yves St. Laurent is renowned for creating innovative trends that continue to influence style.

Born in Oran, Algeria, St. Laurent first discovered fashion through the theater section of Vogue magazine, taking special interest in costume descriptions.

St. Laurent was a target of bullying at school. He privately countered the taunts by saying to himself, “One day I’ll be famous,” and persisted in his exploration of the world of design.

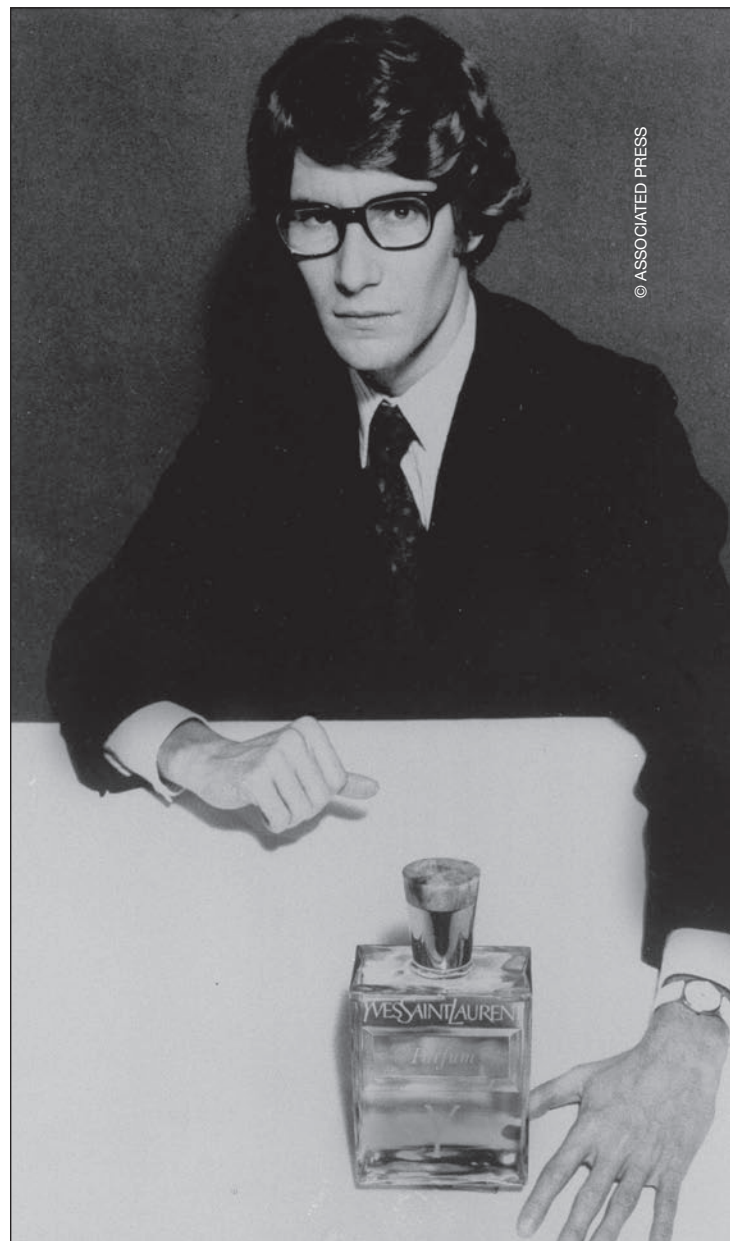
In 1950, his first great opportunity arrived at age 21 when Christian Dior hired him after viewing his design sketches. St. Laurent spent the first year performing administrative tasks for Dior. His talent allowed him to quickly rise through the ranks, and he became the head designer of the company following Dior’s death in 1957.

In 1958, St. Laurent garnered international attention with his first collection, which introduced the legendary trapeze dress. He achieved popularity experimenting with design motifs such as beatnik wear and ethnic patterns, becoming the first designer to introduce elements of pop culture into haute couture.

In 1960, St. Laurent split with Dior to establish his own fashion house with lover and business partner Pierre Bergé. Under his own label, he set new standards for the fashion industry. He was the first high fashion designer to release a ready-to-wear line, and was among the first designers to hire black and Pacific Islander models.

One of St. Laurent’s trademarks was to create feminized versions of menswear, such as tuxedos, safari jackets and trousers, blurring traditional gender roles. His work is widely credited with encouraging unique ways of self-expression.

In 1991, St. Laurent came out to the French magazine Le Figaro. In 2008, he exchanged vows with Bergé in a civil union. St. Laurent died a few days later of brain cancer. A number of women attending his funeral wore trouser suits as a tribute to the designer’s legacy.



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