

JASON WU

b. September 27, 1982

DESIGNER

Wu's inaugural ball gowns for Mrs. Obama are on display at the Smithsonian Institution.

“Being able to make history is something I would have never thought I would do.”

Jason Wu is a fashion designer who became an overnight sensation when the first lady, Michelle Obama, wore one of his gowns to the inaugural ball in 2009. Mrs. Obama chose a Wu design again for the inaugural ball in 2013.

Wu was born in Taipei, Taiwan. His parents, who own an import-export business, recognized his creative talent at age 5. His mother would drive him to bridal stores so he could sketch the dresses. Wu learned to sew by producing doll clothes.

When Wu was 9, the family moved to Vancouver, British Columbia. He attended Loomis Chaffee, a prestigious Connecticut prep school. At 16, he was designing doll clothes for Integrity Toys. A year later, Wu was named the company's creative director. Wu attended the Parsons School of Design in New York. In 2004, he dropped out six months before graduation to intern for designer Narciso Rodriguez.

In 2006, at age 24, Wu launched his own label and presented his first ready-to-wear collection. His clients include Ivana Trump, actresses January Jones and Kerry Washington, and RuPaul, for whom he designed six RuPaul dolls. In 2008, Wu was recognized with the Fashion Group's International Rising Star Award.

Ikram Goldman, of the Chicago boutique Ikram, introduced Wu's designs to Michelle Obama. Wu created a sparkling white chiffon inaugural gown for her and submitted it to Ikram. Wu didn't know until he saw the first lady on television

that she had chosen his design. Wu, who was 26, became the youngest designer to outfit a first lady for the inauguration. “I was over the moon,” he said. “I didn't think it was my turn yet.”

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Jason Wu lives in New York City with his business partner and boyfriend, Gustavo Rangel. Wu has grown his label into an internationally acclaimed fashion brand.

