

I ♥ D K

*Explorer talks to one of the most iconic fashion designers of all time, the one, the only **Donna Karan**...*

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THE SHAPE OF 2010
A turtle-neck dress from the Modern Icons collection released for Fall 2010 as part of Donna Karan's couture collection



Fashion can be a fickle thing, but New York-born Donna Karan has been wowing the industry for over 25 years now. She learned her craft working with Anne Klein before striking out on her own with Collection in 1985, based on her iconic Seven Easy Pieces system of dressing. From just a handful of clothes would come a diverse wardrobe to suit all occasions. Other famous pieces included the Bodysuit - or Body - and the multi-look Infinity Dress. Later, inspired by the city she loves, came Donna's massively popular DKNY brand which gave us the Cozy - a cross between a sweater and a scarf that can be worn in any number of ways - and a range of complementary accessories and fragrances. More recently, Donna set up her Urban Zen philanthropic initiative, more of which later...

How much did coming from a family involved in fashion influence you?

My father was a custom tailor and my mother a showroom model so fashion was really in my blood. Even my stepfather was in the business. In high school I designed a collection and put on a fashion show as a school project.

If you hadn't become a fashion designer, what other career path might you have taken?

I would have loved to sing like Barbra Streisand and dance like Martha Graham.

What was the response like to your first Donna Karan Collection back in 1985?

The response to our first show was incredible. It was a small, intimate show with relatively few looks, but it said something new. I wanted to create clothes for myself and for women like

me. Women were going back to the work force and I wanted to give her something that would make her life easier in a sophisticated way.

What made you move on from the haute couture Collection to create the more ‘high street’ DKNY brand five years later?

I wanted to create clothes for a woman’s other side, not just make a less expensive version of Collection. I needed clothes I could wear on the weekend, and I couldn’t find jeans that fit. I also wanted to dress my (then) teenaged daughter Gabby. Eventually it became the entire family, my husband, my grandkids, my friend’s babies. DKNY became about life, growing and evolving to include everyone one and all of their moods and expressions.



FALL FORWARD
Donna Karan and her DKNY Fall 2010 RTW collection including a Cozy dress with sequins (above)



And the Bodysuit - what inspired you to immortalise the design?

I live in a bodysuit; I always have. I studied dance when I was younger and wore a bodysuit as my foundation. I also practice yoga every day, so my bodysuit is still the first thing I put on in the morning; it’s the base of my own personal system of dressing.

And the Cozy?

I love when pieces can do more than just one thing. Clothes you can play with and change personalities. The Cozy was only one piece and could be worn in any number of ways.

‘We celebrated women. We took her day into evening with comfort and ease’

What influence do you think you’ve had on the fashion and beauty world?

It’s really for others to say, but I hope my Seven Easy Pieces system of dressing helped women realize you don’t need more clothes, just the right pieces that do more.

Who has been the greatest influence in your professional life?

So many people. Yet I would start with Anne Klein, Liz Claiborne and Claire McCardell – all

of whom understood the needs of women and the modernity of sportswear.

What single piece of work are you most proud of?

It’s not one particular piece. It’s more the alignment of Donna Karan and New York. That we celebrated women. That we took her day into evening with comfort and ease.

What do you love most about New York?

I love New York’s energy, its pulse, its ever-changing nature... I couldn’t live without Central Park. Visually, I love the skyline, the architecture, the bridges. Even after all these years, it still takes my breath away.

You come across as a deeply spiritual person. How, why and when did that start?

I’ve been on a spiritual path my whole life. Spirituality and fashion are not contradictory. They are both a part of me, just like I’m a mother and a businesswoman. Life is all about balance. I couldn’t do what I do if I didn’t find the calm in the chaos.

What was your motivation in setting up Urban Zen?

My late husband Stephan Weiss was sick with lung cancer. Living through that experience made it very obvious what was missing in healthcare – the need to care for the patient and not just the disease. That was my call to action. Urban Zen’s other two initiatives – preserving culture and empowering children – completed the circle of what I care most about. The three are inter-related – past (culture), present (well being) and future (education.)

What’s the best bit of advice ever given to you?

Anne Klein told me “God gave you two eyes. Use them.” 

The looks you can create from DKNY are limited only by your own imagination. To kick start your collection, why not purchase DKNY Fresh Delicious Duo (Be Delicious & Fresh Blossom) fragrance or the DKNY D Link Ladies Watch, available on this flight. For more DKNY, visit www.dkny.com. For the Donna Karan Collection, visit www.donnakaran.com.



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