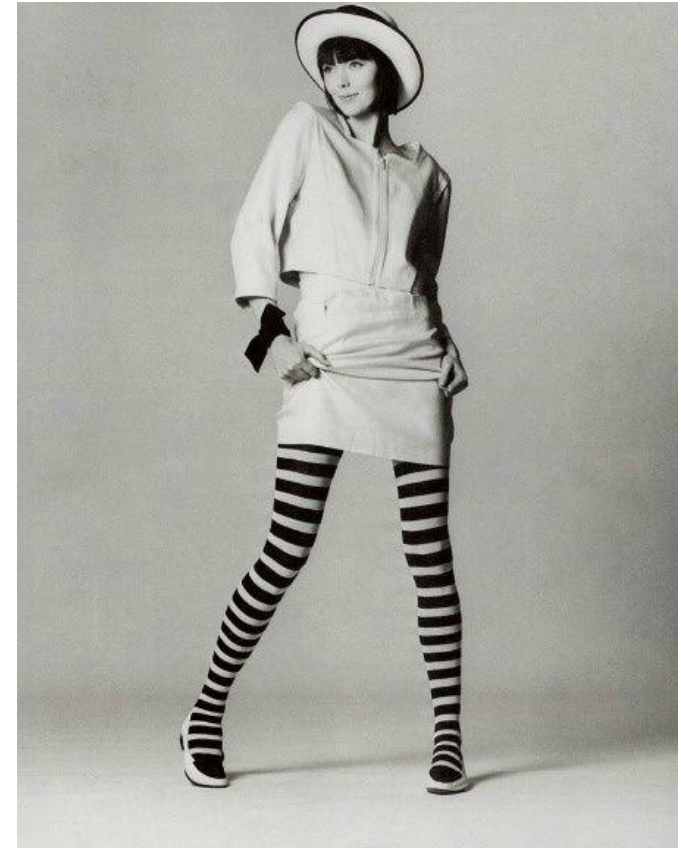




Dame Barbara Mary Quant

February 1930 – April 2023

Mary Quant was a British fashion designer and fashion icon. She became an instrumental figure in the 1960s London-based Mod and youth fashion movements and played a prominent role in London's Swinging Sixties culture. She was one of the designers who took credit for the miniskirt and hotpants. Ernestine Carter, an influential fashion writer, wrote: 'It is given to a fortunate few to be born at the right time, in the right place, with the right talents. In recent fashion there are three: Chanel, Dior, and **Mary Quant**.'



Quant was born on 11 February 1930 in Woolwich, London, the daughter of Jack Quant and Mildred Jones. Her parents, who both came from Welsh mining families, had been awarded first-class degrees at Cardiff University before moving to London to work as schoolteachers. She had a younger brother, John Antony Quant.

Quant attended Blackheath High School. For college, her desire had been to study fashion; however, her parents dissuaded her from that course of study, and she instead studied illustration and art education at Goldsmiths College for which she received a degree in 1953. In pursuit of her love for fashion, after finishing her degree, she was apprenticed to Erik Braagaard, a high-class Mayfair milliner on Brook Street next door to Claridge's hotel.

Quant initially sold clothing sourced from wholesalers in her new boutique in the Kings Road named Bazaar. The bolder pieces in her collection started garnering more attention from media like Harper's Bazaar, and an American manufacturer purchased some of her dress designs. Because of this attention and her personal love for these bolder styles, she decided to take designs into her own hands. Initially working solo, she was soon employing a handful of machinists; by 1966 she was working with a total of 18 manufacturers. A self-taught designer, her designs were riskier than standard styles of the time.





Quant's designs revolutionised fashion from the utilitarian wartime standard of the late 1940s to the energy of the 1950s and 60s' cultural shifts. She stocked her own original items of colours and patterns, such as colourful tights.



Quant's impact did not just come from her unique designs; in her boutique she created a special environment, including music, drinks, and long hours that appealed to young adults. This environment was unique for the industry, as it differentiated from the stale department stores and inaccessible high-class designer store environments that had a hold of the fashion market. Her window displays with models in quirky poses brought a lot of attention to her boutique, where people would often stop to stare at the eccentric displays.

For a while in the late 1950s and early 1960s, **Quant** was one of only two London-based high-class designers consistently offering youthful clothes for young people. The other was Kiki Byrne, who opened her boutique on the King's Road in direct competition with her.

In 1966, **Quant** was named one of the ‘fashion revolutionaries’ in New York by Women's Wear Daily, alongside Edie Sedgwick, Pierre Cardin, Paco Rabanne, Yves Saint Laurent, and Baby Jane Holzer.

The miniskirt, described as one of the defining fashions of the 1960s, is one of the garments most widely associated with **Quant**. While she is often cited as the inventor of the style, this claim has been challenged by others. However, skirts had been getting shorter since the 1950s, and had reached the knee by the early sixties, but **Quant** wanted them higher so they would be less restricting—they allowed women to run for a bus and feel more attractive to men. **Quant** later said: ‘It was the girls on the King's Road who invented the miniskirt. I was making easy, youthful, simple clothes, in which you could move, in which you could run and jump, and we would make them the length the customer wanted’. She said of the wearers, ‘They are curiously feminine, but their femininity lies in their attitude rather than in their appearance ... She enjoys being noticed, but wittily. She is lively—positive—opinionated.’





In addition to the miniskirt, **Quant** is often credited with inventing the coloured and patterned tights that tended to accompany the garment, although their creation is also attributed to the Spanish couturier Cristóbal Balenciaga, who offered harlequin-patterned tights in 1962.

In the late 1960s, **Quant** offered short shorts that were the forerunner of hotpants and became a British fashion icon. In 1967 she designed berets in twelve colours for British headwear company Kangol. Quant's berets, featuring her daisy logo, are in her collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Through the 1970s and 1980s she concentrated on household goods and make-up rather than just her clothing lines.

In 1988, Quant designed the interior of the Mini. Two thousand were released in the UK on 15 June 1988, and a number were also released on to foreign markets. In 2000, she resigned as director of Mary Quant Ltd, her cosmetics company, after a Japanese buy-out. There are more than 200 Mary Quant Colour shops in Japan.

