



PHILIP TREACY
LONDON

PHILIP TREACY BIOGRAPHY

1966: Born in Ahascragh, a tiny village in County Galway in the West of Ireland. Philip lived with his parents, seven brothers and a sister across the road from the village church.

“ As a small child, I loved to watch the weddings there. They were the equivalent of fashion shows to me. The dresses that people wore, I couldn’t believe them, they were incredible. It seemed so glamorous to see these creatures appear in these extraordinary clothes, as we didn’t have much glamour where I come from.”

1972: “ I started sewing when I was about five. I remember being with the teacher in school. The boys did woodwork or something, the girls were sewing and I thought: ‘Why can’t I do that?’ I asked the teacher and she said: ‘Okay.’ She was incredibly strict and, looking back, she could have just whacked me around the head. I started making dresses and hats for my sister’s dolls. My mother had chickens, geese, pheasants and ducks, so all the ingredients of the hat were in my house. My mother had a sewing machine. I was never allowed to use it, but I was so fascinated by this little needle going up and down joining fabric together that I’d use it when my mother went out to feed the chickens. There was like five minutes to get it out. If my mother found me I would be in a lot of trouble. I used to make clothes for my sister’s dolls. I couldn’t care less for the dolls but I could make the clothes really easily. I was making bust points before I knew what bust points were. I remember being in a neighbour’s house and he said to my father: ‘Don’t you think its weird that this boy is making dresses for dolls?’ And my father said: ‘Whatever makes him happy.’ You have got to see where I come from to understand how profound that was.”

1985: Moved to Dublin to study fashion at the National College of Art & Design, where he made hats “as a hobby” to go with outfits he designed on the course. “Nobody really had much time for the hat because it was a fashion school, but there did come a point when I was more interested in making the hats than the outfits.” When the students had to arrange work experience, Philip chose to spend six weeks with Stephen Jones, the London hat designer.

1988: Won a place on the MA fashion design course at the Royal College of Art in London. “When I was interviewed I didn’t know whether to play down the hats or play up the hats, but they were thinking of setting up a hat course so I became their guinea pig. After one day there I said to my tutor Sheilagh Brown: “What should I do? Should I make hats or clothes?’ She said: ‘ make hats.’ It was very practical, not a great revelation.”

1989: Philip took one of his hats to Michael Roberts, fashion director of *Tatler* magazine, and his style editor, Isabella Blow.

“Our conversation that day was like twenty seconds and I thought nothing of it. A few weeks afterwards, the secretary at the college said: ‘Some Lady has been phoning up. She wants to know what your schedule’s like for the next six months.’ I didn’t know what she was talking about, but it turned out to be Issie. Issie was getting married and had decided I was going to make a hat for her.” Having chosen a medieval theme for her wedding dress, Issie asked Philip to make an appropriate head dress. “I wanted to base the hat on a 1930’s play called *The Miracle* which Lady Diana Cooper was in. I suggested to Issy that maybe this would be good for the wedding. I couldn’t believe that I’d hit upon a person who didn’t expect tulle and veiling and pearls for her wedding hat.”

1990: Graduated from the Royal College with first class honours and set up a workshop in the basement of Issy and Detmar Blow’s house on Elizabeth Street Belgravia.

“ Issy was living upstairs with her resident hat maker in the basement working away all night long coming up with goodies. Suddenly all these wild people pitched up at all hours of the night trying on hats. Issy and I were like Harold and Maude trekking around London in a car. We’d go to an exhibition, or go to visit someone. We’d go and get books. We’d go and have a drink. And all our talk was of hats.”

1991: Summoned to Paris to meet Karl Lagerfeld, chief designer at Chanel. “I was 23 and I’d just left school, I didn’t know whether to call him Mr Lagerfeld or whatever. I was totally intimidated but Issie was exactly herself. She just walked into the house of Chanel and said: We’d like some tea please.” Philip went on to design hats for Lagerfeld at Chanel for ten years. The first hat he designed was the twisted birdcage, photographed by Patrick Demarchelier and worn on the cover of *British Vogue* by Linda Evangelista. Philip won his first British Fashion Council award as British Accessory Designer of the year.

1992: Won his second British Designer of the year award (Philip was to win three more) and started designing hats for the High Street.

“Hats are for everyone. We all have a head so we have the possibility to wear a hat. You feel better for wearing them. I was happy to be able to make hats that anyone could afford.” That November, a friend gave Philip the gift of a puppy. “The pup I was supposed to have was this pretty Jack Russell cross called Linda. Trailing behind her was her brother. A beautiful thing. Tiny. The size of two mugs. Pale pink with a black spot. I couldn’t resist him, so I said, ‘I’d really like that one. When I took him out people would ask what he was, and I’d say he was a piglet because he was so pink and sleek, so I called him Mr.Pig.”

1993: Staged his first fashion show- all black hats- in the Harvey Nichols department store during London Fashion Week. The supermodels of the era- Naomi Campbell, Yasmin Le Bon, Kate Moss, Stella Tennant and Christy Turlington- all modelled for him.

“I phoned up Christy Turlington to say that I was having a show and would she do it for me? She agreed and the rest followed on. Naomi Campbell’s agent called the next day. Kate Moss complained that I hadn’t asked her. London was in a lull then. The media went crazy when all those girls did my show and it completely changed perceptions of the hat.”

Began working with Gianni Versace and Valentino.

1994: Opened his own shop at 69 Elizabeth Street.

“It’s a little gold box with our window to the world. Our customers are everyone from a young girl who’s saved up for a £150 rainwear trilby to this very distinguished gentleman of about 70. He comes in every summer to order 20 Couture hats to entertain the ladies who will be staying on his yacht. It doesn’t matter how much people pay for them: everyone wants to look a million dollars in a hat.”

1996: Exhibited in the Florence Biennale, *fashion meets art*. Philip collaborated with furniture designer Tom Dixon.

“It was interesting but it took me a while to get over my embarrassment because I thought of art as a sacred cow. I make hats, not art. But Franca Sozzani (editor of Italian *Vogue*) asked me to do it and Franca is like Issie and Sheila Brown- one of those people you never say ‘no’ to.”

1997: Staged his first show in New York.

Launched an accessory collection of stingray bags and gloves, geometric and laser cut leather. Work included in the *cutting edge* Exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. The accessories sell all over the world.

1998: Exhibited in *addressing the century* at the Hayward Gallery and *satellites of fashion* at the Crafts Council, both in London.

1999: Designed hats for Alexander McQueen’s white Haute Couture collection at Givenchy in Paris, which included the gilded ram’s horns from Issie’s Soay sheep (of Spanish blood to make their horns more curly) and also designed for Karl Lagerfeld at Chanel. “Having studied fashion design it helped me greatly when I started working with designers because I understood how the clothes draped or moved and the proportions. What I didn’t understand as a student was that fashion isn’t clothes, fashion is much more interesting than that, it’s a feeling and a mood not dress-making.”

Staged his second show in New York.

2000: At the invitation of the chamber syndicale de la Haute Couture, staged the orchid collection, the first ever Haute Couture show in Paris devoted to hats.

September: Hat Block exhibition *Unlikely Sculpture*, London.

2001: Collaborated with the artist Vanessa Beecroft on an installation at the Venice Biennale.

“Another Franca Sozzani gig. She phoned up and said would I make so many masks for this artist, Vanessa Beecroft, by such a date. By chance, I was flying to New York the next day, so I met Vanessa while I was there. She was planning an installation of naked girls wearing Black leather masks. It sounded rather S&M, which isn’t really me, so I said: ‘Why not make the masks translucent to enhance the femininity of the wearers?’

April: Irish Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Unlikely sculpture*, Dublin.

October: Fondazione Nicola Trussardi *Unlikely Sculpture*, Milan.

2002: Won the Moët & Chandon award for luxury and exhibited the hats credited for Isabella Blow in *When Philip met Isabella* at the Design Museum in London with the launch of the first Philip Treacy book published by Assouline to catalogue the exhibition.

2003: January: Paid homage to Andy Warhol with his third Haute Couture Show in Paris.
February: Launch of the *Limited Edition* Andy Warhol waterproof accessory range available worldwide.
April: *When Philip met Isabella* exhibition began its world tour opening at the Melbourne Fashion Festival and then to the Power House museum in Sydney.
October: Presented with The Dream Weaver award by the Fashion Group International along side Jean Paul Gaultier, Dolce Gabbana and Donna Karen in New York.

2004: Philip is now taking his aesthetic into other disciplines, using his sculptural forms as a medium for other objects, such as glass wear and furniture.
September: Launch of the Portrait Chair, part of Habitat's 40th Anniversary project.
November: Presented with International Designer of the Year at the China Fashion Awards in Shanghai. This was followed by a twenty-look couture show with top Chinese super models and Alek Wek.
"I was honoured to be recognised by a culture rich in hats and headdress'. Glamour is a world wide currency."

2005: Philip was appointed design director for the interiors of Monogram Hotel's flagship property, The G. Working alongside Douglas Wallace Architects and Designers this hotel opened in July.
"I am a perfectionist and like to create pieces that people love to wear. With The G, we will apply the same principles and create a place where people will love to be."
April: Philip created the hats for the wedding of HRH The Prince of Wales and Camilla Parker Bowles.

2006: Philip Treacy for Umbro launches at London Fashion Week. The collection is a fusion of the two brands and delivers a complete package of men's clothing that is a synthesis of both brands' strengths and demonstrates: glamour, colour, shape, quality, movement and performance.
The collection combines all these elements, and the design, attention to detail, fabrication and cut, make it the ultimate expression of luxury fashion and performance wear.
"I felt sportswear lacked in style, I wanted to design a collection that is both functional and stylish. Sports wear is a language in fashion today."
April: Philip is given an Honorary Doctorate, *honoris causa*, by The National University of Ireland.
"I make hats because I love hats. It's an enigmatic object that serves the human purpose only of beautification and embellishment and making one feel good whether you're the observer of the spectacle or the wearer.
A hat is a positive symbol. A good hat is the ultimate glamour accessory. It thrills observers and makes the wearer feel a million dollars. This creates a high status of desirability and although the images received can seem out of this world the conspicuous consumer relates strongly to it. The message is simple and absolute, a great hat exists outside it's own time.
I believe in beauty and elegance and communicating thoughts and dreams in a visual way. I started designing hats 15 years ago while a student at the Royal College of Art. It was at a time when hats were perceived publicly as something worn by ladies of a certain age, and something from a bygone era. I thought this was totally ridiculous and simply believed "we all have a head, so everybody has the possibility to wear a hat." I love to work with my hands making something from nothing – turning 2 dimensional material into a 3 dimensional object is the penultimate moment of creativity of my craft. I have had the greatest pleasure of having the opportunity to challenge people's perception of what a hat should look like in the 21st century."

May: Philip contributed his Haute Couture Orchids to the *anglmania* exhibition at The Metropolitan in New York. Over the past 30 years, British fashion has been defined by a knowing and self-conscious historicism. In their search for novelty, designers have looked to past styles with an appetite that is as audacious as it is rapacious. Focusing on their historicizing tendencies, *AngloMania* presented a series of *tableaux* based on Britain's literary and artistic traditions.

2007: Isabella Blow sadly died on 7 May 2007. The legend that enthralled fashionistas with her uncanny ability to spot trend, discover models, and unearth new designers is mourned by an industry that has inexplicably lost a muse with whom there was never a dull moment. Her taste was unorthodox and her style was uncompromising. The Stylist, muse and taste maker Isabella Blow was a true original.

"Isabella was the first extraordinary interesting person I met in this country when I moved here from Ireland. In 20 years I have met all my heroes and nobody in my honest true estimation surpassed her. She was incredible. I thought there must be others like her, but there wasn't. Everyone was boring in comparison to her. I will miss her laugh, her passion and her humanity. I went to my studio today and Isabella is everywhere. In every hat I made, every corner I turn – she is there. I will always miss her."

June: For the first time Philip Treacy presented a fashion show within the Bessborough Restaurant during Royal Ascot. The exhibition *When Philip Met Isabella* travelled to The Marble Palace in St Petersburg. It was opened with a dramatic 50 look show in the Astoria Hotel.

September: Philip collaborated with Ralph Lauren, Donna Karen, McQueen and Rifat Ozbek for their spring summer 2008 shows.

November: Philip's first ever solo show in Ireland at The G hotel in his home county of Galway. Philip is appointed as an honorary Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) awarded by HRH Prince Charles and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall in Clarence House surrounded by his family. The honour was conferred on Philip by Her Majesty The Queen in recognition of his services to the British Fashion industry.

2008: Designed and photographed the Royal Ascot advertising resulting in a sell out week. As well as presenting his Couture designs again in the Bessborough Restaurant.

Commissioned by Italian Vogue Gioello to photograph specially designed hats and jewellery on Daphne Guinness.

Designed and art directed Grace Jones' first concert in 20 years at The Royal Festival Hall for the Massive Attack Meltdown Festival.

2009: Designed and art directed the first leg of Grace Jones' Hurricane tour beginning in Australia and finishing in the UK.