

# Fashion Outlook

New 'classic' designer

## Tommy Hilfiger gives prep polish

By Joan Lebow

Almost two years ago, an audacious ad introduced Tommy Hilfiger, announcing that he would be "the next great American designer." The ad dropped the names of America's most talented fashion designers and proclaimed upstart Hilfiger to be in their league.

Although that cheeky campaign did not instantly propel Hilfiger to the ranks of Bill Blass, Calvin Klein or Ralph Lauren, the young designer has nonetheless succeeded in coming a long way fast.

The clever publicity campaign got his name known and his designs into many stores. Those who initially wondered aloud, "Tommy who?" now can find Hilfiger's sportswear for both men and women in more than 200 stores around the country. He also has his name on six boutiques in the United States. This fall, two stores in Japan and one in London are slated to open, and soon there will be stores in Greece. Retail sales are nearing \$70 million.

What Hilfiger sells is the quintessential American look, spiffed up for the fashion conscious. It's true, we al-

ready have Ralph Lauren for that. But Hilfiger's designs — while not cheap — are far less expensive than Lauren's to-the-manor-born apparel.

"My taste level is American fashion with a European twist," says 36-year-old Hilfiger. He describes his oversized cotton Oxford cloth shirts, replete with a Tommy Hilfiger signature crest, as "true Euro-prep."

The blond and implish-looking Hilfiger, who lives with his wife and son in Greenwich, Conn., seems well-suited to wear the clothes that bear his crest.

He makes the most of clothes that are almost basics — and the emphasis is on the "almost." Designers and fashion editors with more dramatic preferences have scoffed at Hilfiger's seeming lack of originality.



THE MELTON stadium coat (\$198) tops a "Springsteen" denim jacket (\$78) and striped sweater (\$88).



A NYLON trench coat (\$130) goes over a plaid jacket with suede collar and elbow patches (\$120).

sweaters and believes total sweater dressing will continue to be popular. Noting that his "clothes are to be worn in the city or the country," he says the season's theme will be "Town & Country Classics." In other words, Hilfiger is moving out of only making casual fashions. He's also going after career-women and their sizable clothing budgets.

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## Photo Tips

by Peter Moss

For those of you more into the 'history' side of Photography there is an abundance of first class books available to you both in the library and at your bookstore.

If pure history is your preference you might want to check out material on William Henry Fox Talbot, or Daguerrre, both inventor-photographers are considered to be the "Fathers" of what today we know as: photography! (Both men developed very similar ideas, in different countries, at the same time.) If merely viewing old and great photographs is your desire you might enjoy a look through the works of Matthew Harrison Brady; America's great Civil War Photographer. You will find it interesting indeed to note that the first "Modern War" was covered in great depth by one of the times most modern inventions. Amittedly viewing shots of war is not what most of us prefer to do, however a lot can be learned upon viewing his works, both for historical purposes and for technical reasons. (Yes, they really did turn out first class photographs in the 1860's).

Old processes fascinate you? Well there are many volumes out there on: tintypes, collodion plates, dauguerrotypes, bromoil prints, platinum prints and a variety of other long unused processes. Some of these 'old processes' have recently undergone a resurgence of new interest by younger photographers and there are now available at some of the bigger galleries, bromoil and platinum print portfolios and new literature dealing with modern methods of working these old chemical marvels.

Older bromoil photographs have a marvellous 'brush' like texture that somewhat appears like an oil painting in black and white. William Mortensen from the U.S. turned out some fabulous bromoil prints in the 1930's and 40's and I believe there is a recent biography on him.

The F.S.A. (the Farm Security Administration) in the U.S. documented the Great Depression in that nation and the photos produced by that team are truly first class. Photography in the 1930's had advanced to the level of not merely an art but a tool to help educate future generations to the social plight of times past and present. Most notable from this project is the work of Dorethea Lange.

Biographies and autobiographies also provide delightful reading material plus and abundance of great photographs. Not only will you be able to increase your knowledge of photography but you will learn a great deal of the men and women who helped pave the way for us, today. Here is a small list of names you might want to check out material on: Ansel Adams, Diane Arbus, Margaret Bourke-White, Matthew Harrison Brady, Brassai, Robert Gapa, Daguerrre, Alfred Eisenstadt, Walker Evans, William Henry Fox-Talbot, Lewis Hine, Dorethea Lange, Mary Ellen Mark, William Mortensen, May Ray, W. Eugene Smith, Edward Steichen, Alfred Steiglitz, Minor White, Edward Weston.

The above 20 names only really scratch at the surface of the body or work available to you however they will stimulate, educate and probably thrill you! Enjoy. Until next Week.

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## FASHION



Joan Lebow

But with 18 years in the fashion industry behind him, and a strong business sense, Hilfiger knows well the value of commercialism. More consumers spend money on good-looking basics than many innovative but struggling fashion designers care to admit.

Hilfiger is best known for men's sportswear, a collection introduced nearly two years ago. The basics are clean-cut pleated pants, blue jeans and cotton T-shirts and sweaters in bright colors. For spring and summer, Hilfiger created what he calls "Newport style" with lots of primary colored stripes and comfortable knits.

His new line for women was well received, and a number of stores stocked with Hilfiger's men's clothes are likely to carry a broader selection of women's fashions soon. For fall, he expects women to favor hand-knit

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