

OBITUARY

Anne Tyrrell MBE

The passing of Anne Tyrrell after a long illness robs the UK fashion industry of one of its most charismatic and influential figures.

In a career spanning more than fifty years Anne's influence as both a designer and as an educator cannot be underestimated and her achievements in these fields were celebrated with the conferring upon her of numerous honours. These included an MA from the University of Creative Arts, Rochester (2008); a doctorate from the Norwich University of Arts (2013) a Lifetime Achievement Award from Graduate Fashion Week (2014); and an MBE awarded in 2008 by HM Queen Elizabeth II for her contribution to the British fashion industry.

Many industry figures have paid tribute to Anne's remarkable energy but one in particular – Simon Ward (COO of the British Fashion Council) – eloquently summed up the general feeling:

“Anne Tyrrell was a unique advocate for British fashion education, tirelessly developing closer links between our world-class colleges and industry. A champion for the emerging talent and the future of fashion, her generosity and warmth will be deeply missed”

Her mother Peggy, described by Anne's brother Peter as “a talented artist... and an exceptional needlewoman”, was perhaps the inspiration for her daughter's calling in life as Anne's career began with a diploma in Art & Design at the Norwich Art School. From 1957 to 1960 she studied fashion at the Royal College of Art and began work as a pattern cutter at the beginning of the ‘Swinging Sixties’. She rapidly climbed the business ladder to become Director of Design at clothing supplier John Marks where she worked between 1963 and 1984 and where she first developed a collection under her own name.

Such was her talent and enthusiasm for the business it was no surprise that teaching was immensely important to her and her role as a senior tutor at the Royal College of Art from 1974 to 1995 was a hugely significant part of her life. Upon relinquishing this role she accepted the position of ‘Visiting Professor’ at the RCA and continued to share her insight and expertise with students. Recognising the need to give a voice to the role of ongoing fashion education in 1992 Anne instigated the BFC Colleges Council which she was to chair for eight years before accepting the Vice Chairmanship of the BFC - a position she held from 2000 until 2007 until being asked to chair the Colleges Council for a second time. Once again she set about the task with her trademark vigour and arranged many successful university competitions, open days and seminars covering areas as diverse as sample making, pattern cutting and other business skills all with a view to making students as innovative and marketable as they could possibly be.

Aside from a busy schedule of extramural activity Anne's own fashion and interior design consultancy continued to flourish. Spanning accessories and brand development as well as fashion, ‘Anne Tyrrell Design’ undertook domestic and commercial redevelopments and Anne's long-term interest in property refurbishment and the world of antiques made many of these projects as much personal passions as commercial undertakings. They included a redesign of St. Mary's Rectory in Chelsea (2008-2009); a refurbishment of the living quarters of the Apostolic Nunciature in

Wimbledon (2010) and, perhaps most famously, a complete redesign of the London Underground uniform in 2000.

It was typical of Anne that even outside the business world her social life was enormously active and enjoyed to the full. Alongside her long-term companion Paul Mason - himself a successful businessman specialising in marine, sporting paintings and prints - Anne became an accomplished sailor at the Norfolk Broads Yacht Club and was a regular attendee at the Cowes Regatta on the Isle of Wight. Polo was another of her passions and the occasion of many happy visits to Windsor Great Park.

Whether in an informal or professional setting Anne's personality radiated glamour. Always immaculately dressed and often with a glass of champagne in hand, her witty and informed conversation made her presence at every occasion a social asset and her *joie de vivre* was shared by her family and a wide circle of friends.

A funeral attended by Anne's family and close associates was held on 12th February at St. Mary's Chelsea, Cadogan Street, SW3 2QR to be followed by a memorial service at St Mary's on Wednesday 3rd June at 2.00pm.