



COCO CHANEL

French fashion designer.

designer.



Coco Chanel (Gabrielle Bonheur) was a prominent French designer of clothes. She was born on August the 19th, 1883 in Saumur. Her mother died when she was hardly twelve. Her father didn't want to take responsibility for five children and they were sent to the shelter for the poor. When Gabrielle was 18, she got a job of a shop-assistant at one clothing store. She spent her free time singing in cabarets. The song she often sang was called "Qui qu'a vu Coco", which is why people started calling her Coco. Although she didn't become a successful singer, she was noticed by one of the wealthy retired officers - Etienne Balsan.



HE WAS FASCINATED BY HER PERFORMANCES AND INVITED HER TO LIVE IN HIS PARISIAN HOUSE. AT FIRST, SHE LIKED LIVING IN A NEW, RICHLY DECORATED HOUSE. HOWEVER, IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR HER TO GET USED TO THE STATUS OF A MISTRESS. SHE SPENT YEARS TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE ACTUALLY WANTED IN LIFE. SOON, SHE TOLD BALSAN THAT SHE WANTED TO BECOME A MILLINER, BUT HE ONLY LAUGHED AT HER IDEA. HE SAID THAT THERE WERE SO MANY MILLINERS IN PARIS AND COCO DIDN'T EVEN HAVE EXPERIENCE. LATER, ANOTHER MAN APPEARED IN HER LIFE. IT WAS BALSAN'S ENGLISH FRIEND - ARTHUR CAPEL, ALSO KNOWN AS "BOY". SINCE THEN, HER LIFE HAD RADICALLY CHANGED. ARTHUR WAS A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN WITH EXCELLENT ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS. HE ENCOURAGED COCO TO DEVELOP HER IDEA AND HELPED HER TO OPEN HER FIRST STORE OF LADIES' HATS IN PARIS IN 1910.



Three years later she opened a boutique in Deauville. From now on, she was a real businesswoman. Nothing could stop her neither the lack of experience, nor the First World War. She was an entrepreneur and a designer at the same time, creating her own elegant style. She became quickly recognizable among the famous ladies of Paris. Chanel became the first tailor who was the part of high society. She completely changed public opinion on designer's labor. After the announcement of the Second World War, she closed all her showrooms as she understood that it was the wrong time for fashion. In 1944, she was arrested for a while because of the rumors about her affair with a German officer. After that she moved to Switzerland where she spent the next ten years.



Chanel's glory was gradually disappearing, as the post-war fashion was mainly in the hands of Balenciaga and Dior houses. However, in 1953 she re-opened her salon in Paris and a year later she established her own fashion house. There was lots of criticizing in local newspapers, but she ignored them. All she needed was three years to restore her fame. Thus, a 70-year-old woman again changed the whole idea of fashion, making her style dominant. The great milliner died in 1971 at the Ritz Hotel in Paris. Her style is still considered to be the most elegant in the history of fashion.



CHANEL