

MILESTONES

#MYCHOICE

We asked nine influential names in the fashion fraternity to share one career-defining choice they made and the impact it had. The rest, as they say, is fashion history.

By MALIKA DALAMAL

HER CHOICE: TO PURSUE A DESIGN DEGREE IN LONDON



RUCHIKA SACHDEVA
CREATIVE DIRECTOR, BODICE
“The most significant, career-defining choice I made was when I chose to travel abroad for the first time to pursue a BA in womenswear design at London College of Fashion. That experience as a 19-year-old, keen to discover a world beyond the one I had known all my life, really shaped my focus and sense of possibilities as a young design student. My college experience not only opened my eyes to design as an art form, it also gave me excellent grounding in the processes of cutting and making a garment.”

ANITA DONGRE
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER AT HOUSE OF ANITA DONGRE
“Every decision I’ve made has impacted my career, good or bad. But perhaps the biggest milestone choice was starting my couture line. That decision not only added a business dimension, it also gave me a fresh canvas to translate my creativity—to use indigenous textiles and engage with various artisans and their crafts. It gave me a channel to help revive these crafts and showcase them to a global audience.”



HER CHOICE: TO
CREATE COUTURE

ARIELLE CHARNAS
INFLUENCER AND FOUNDER OF
FASHION BRAND AND CONTENT
PLATFORM
SOMETHING NAVY

"Right out of college I worked at Theory as a sales associate and I almost immediately realised my passion was in showcasing my outfits and engaging with my followers, which I did via an online fashion community—these were the days before Instagram existed. This led to the transition into blogging full-time, which ultimately paved the way for the Something Navy womenswear line in partnership with Nordstrom."

**HER CHOICE: TO
TAKE HER DAILY
WARDROBE ONLINE**



**HER CHOICE:
TO HARNESS
THE POWER
OF POP-UPS**

SALONI LODHA
DESIGNER

"I had a love affair with textiles from a young age (although I originally wanted to be a potter living by the seaside in Puducherry). I cherish the memories of long afternoons spent unfolding and folding my grandmother's extensive sari collection and, if I think about it, these saris were the real inspirations behind my initial interest in textiles. When I moved to Hong Kong in 2001, which then was dominated exclusively by luxury brands, I saw a gap in the market for something more personal. I decided to set up pop-up boutiques and sell one-off designs made in collaboration with artisans back home. This provided the foundation for my own brand, which I started some years later when I moved to London." >



HER CHOICE: TO FOCUS ON ACCESSORIES

KARLA OTTO
FOUNDER OF PR AND COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY
KARLA OTTO

"When I was living in Japan studying the language, I was approached to model. I thought I would give it a go and it ended up being my first job and the start of my career in fashion. While I was model I found myself in Milan, where I met Elio Fiorucci in a restaurant. We got talking and he invited me to do the communications for Fiorucci then and there. I thought I would also give that a go—and have never stopped!"

GETTY IMAGES



HER CHOICE: TO EMBRACE THE UNKNOWN

ANYA HINDMARCH
DESIGNER

"It was really the moment that my mother gave me a Gucci handbag when I was 16—I still remember the feeling it gave me. It was my lightbulb moment when I understood the power of a great handbag and how it can be totally mood-altering. They say that an actor doesn't really get into the part until they wear the right shoes—a bag has the same effect on women, I think, giving them confidence for the role they need to play. That gift coupled with a careers talk at my school by the Emmanuels, who designed Princess Diana's wedding dress, gave me a clear vision of what I wanted to do—I literally drew a shop with a window full of bags and my name above the door!"

LAUREN SANTO DOMINGO
CO-FOUNDER, MODA OPERANDI

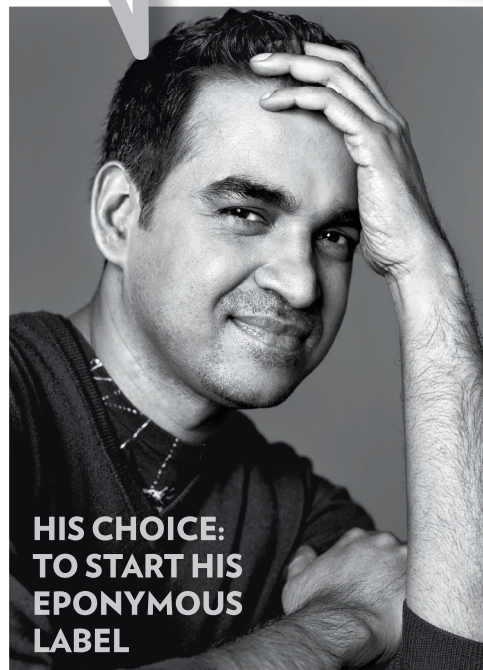
"Launching Moda Operandi is the biggest milestone decision I have made in my career till date. Having realised that there was a very real appetite out there for other women to have the same level of unedited access to designers that I had while I was a fashion editor at US Vogue, I set about creating a business that did just that. Women would ask me where they could buy the dress I was wearing, and the truth was nowhere, because they were often runway items that never made it to the shop floor. At Moda Operandi we give customers the opportunity to pre-order full collections from the world's best designers right off the runway."



**HER CHOICE:
TO LAUNCH A
CURATED FASHION
PLATFORM**

BIBHU MOHAPATRA
DESIGNER

"Taking the leap, with a lot of support and encouragement from my loved ones, I decided to resign from my design director position at J. Mendel to start my namesake label."



**HIS CHOICE:
TO START HIS
EPONYMOUS
LABEL**

**HIS CHOICE:
TO APPLY FOR
A COVETED
APPRENTICESHIP**



NIMISH SHAH
DESIGNER, SHIFT

"I remember sending a beautifully designed physical letter when applying for an apprenticeship at Chloé in Paris that turned out to be an important turning point for my career. It was a crazy insight in the deep end of fashion. I spent a year there and it helped me define my aesthetic." ■