



Philadelphia Fashion Designer LeGrand Leseur

By Jessica O'Hehir





LeGrand Leseur, winner of 2014's "Best Men's Clothing" and "Best Tuxedo" in "PHL 17's Hot List", is Luxe Beat Magazine's latest up and coming fashion designer! Born and raised in Philadelphia, LeGrand attended Anna Maria College in Massachusetts, where he majored in music, and proceeded to launch his first brand, Elephant Squad, a street-wear clothing line. After realizing his taste in clothing was no longer reflected in his designs, LeGrand Leseur sketched his visions and distributed them to factories around the world. His new and innovative clothing pushes the men's fashion world forward into relevance, as will his future women's line.

Soirées Sombres is your premier collection, tell us about it.

My first and newest collection is called Soirées Sombres, which is a French translation for dark evenings. I wanted this collection to be presented in a very dark way, evil almost. I think men are too worried today with being the "pretty boy", and I feel as though that's all fine and dandy, but that isn't the only way to present yourself. The runway show was dark, with "Dark Techno" playing, and an evil, horror type of make up presented on male and female models. It was really dark, but the looks themselves have a decent amount of color, which I

believe was a nice contrast.

What is fashion?

Fashion is simply expression. It's how you present yourself to the world, which in turn makes a statement. The fashion world reflects the need for culture in all societies. Fashion is culture. Fashion is life.

How would you define your personal style?

Evil villain meets Gatsby. I love colors, especially in my designs, but I enjoy having the ability to have a presence when I walk into the room. I have tattoos and body mods, and I believe that that community in the fashion world is lacking. I am known for my swirly face beard (that I shape myself), stretched ears, and septum piercing. I get some of the strangest compliments from "That works on you, but wouldn't on anyone else." to "That's f***ing sick!" I stopped worrying about people's opinions a while ago, but it's always good to get a few compliments.

You're from Philadelphia; what is the fashion scene like in the "City of Brotherly Love"?

Philadelphia. Well, it's Philadelphia. It is one of the greatest cities on earth, if not the greatest, but we are not known for our fashion; we are known for cheesesteaks. GQ named Philadelphia the #6 worst dressed city in America. I don't know



if we should go by their rankings, but they weren't the only ones. In Philadelphia you would usually fall into two categories: extremely urban (pants around the knees with a long tank top) or super super conservative (blue off-the-rack pinstripe suits). Anything in between is the scary grey area. I like to think I am staying in the city to help move out the cities fashion forward, at least for men.

When did you realize you wanted to become a fashion designer?

College. I started a t-shirt company, and then switched over to high-end fashion, so, around 2012. There was little point in owning a brand when I didn't really use my own product, although there are several professions out there that do just that. I just couldn't promote my product the way I wanted, to be honest.

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What was the first article of clothing you ever designed?

T-shirts I believe. I did have that line first, so it had to be the original design for my first order ever made. It was an elephant in the center. I worked on the concept with my graphic artist at the time.

Tell us about your design process.

It depends on the piece. It can take any where from three to six weeks, depending on what I'm doing. I was using a tablet for a while, but I found that it wasn't as precise as pencil and paper, so I stopped using it. It's been dead for months actually. My electronic drawings sucked anyway. The smell of pencils and the crispness of paper is a dream for the senses. It helps me focus on work, instead of a Facebook pop-up coming on the tablet every 20 seconds. It gets way too distracting. I can thin and thicken lines a lot easier than with a tablet and a stylus; thus, my drawings look a lot more crisp and "professional". The only thing I miss about the tablet is

the ability to zoom in and get even more details. With paper and pencil, what you get is what you have.

What are some of your accomplishments as a designer?

Winning Philadelphia's "Best Men's Clothing", and "Best Tuxedo", from PHL 17 with over 60% of the vote. If that isn't an accomplishment for a brand, I certainly don't know what is.

Is there a designer who you favor?

Karl Lagerfeld. He is a genius. His working is so prestige. Some people just don't get it. I also like him because he speaks his mind, while most other brands or designers hold their tongue.

Where do you purchase your fabrics?

I am working with a few mills around the world, which provide me with the fabrics I want and need. I also have been visiting Fabric Row in Philadelphia. There are a bunch of shops you can go to in order to find new and exclusive stuff.

What do you believe makes a quality article of clothing?

Uniqueness and durability. If it looks like what everyone else has, then it probably is, and that's lame as f***. You know who has a black suit? Every man ever. Change up. If it doesn't last, I find it pointless, so it has to be durable as well.

How do you prepare for a fashion show?

To be honest, I don't know. My last show was my first show, and I actually almost cried backstage. I was so f***ing nervous. I never had a fashion mentor or anything, so for me to successfully launch, I had to make sure everything was on point. After I did everything I could, I had to leave it up to my make-up artist, models, and photographer. I was backstage just trying to remain calm. After it was over and I walked on stage, I could breathe again. People were cheering and clapping, some people were whistling. That's when I knew that from now on it would be less of a headache.

How do you select your models?

I like beautiful women. I like to put beautiful women next to my suits. Their height, weight, hair color, etc., doesn't matter. My perspective of beauty has such a big range that anyone can do it – as long as the photos come out properly. I got tired of going to suit stores and seeing all male mannequins and male salespeople, so I told myself that

when it was my turn, it would all be female. Beautiful clothing, and beautiful people. Confidence is key, however. If you don't have that it won't work.

What advice do you have for aspiring fashion designers?

Be yourself. Try new things out and don't be afraid to fail. Just be yourself and fear not. The worst is that your ideas can be rejected; but I've been told that once the idea of the airplane was rejected, and the same with the earth rotating around the sun.

What are some of your goals as a designer?

Paris and Milan. I have to get to both ASAP. I obviously want to conquer NYFW (New York Fashion Week) too, but Paris is where I'm headed.

What is most important to you as a fashion designer?

Creativity, and I truly appreciate that. There are places in the world where you can't wear what you want to.

Do you consider yourself an artist?

Fashion is an art, so my designs do become a form of art. I am an artist by association. Expression is everything, so I will keep that going as long as I breathe I'm an artist today, and an icon soon.

To learn more about LeGrand Leseur, go to legrandleseur.com