Ellis, Perry (1940-1986) Encyclopedia Article

Ellis, Perry (1940-1986)

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Virginia-born Ellis took his talents from fashion merchandising to fashion design in 1975. In 1978, he founded Perry Ellis Sportswear, a name that immediately recognized his fashion niche. Strong color, luxury fabrics, and a rich-suburban nonchalance were chief characteristics: women prized his cashmere and silk hand-knitted sweaters and throws. He offered a young outlook on old-money styles. He also designed menswear and home fashions. A ruggedly handsome man and a famously affable figure in American fashion, he fell gravely ill in the mid-1980s, but denied that the cause was AIDS, then a scourge of New York design talent. Ironically, despite his denials, Ellis's struggle with disease and his early death was a point-of-conscience and conversion for the fashion industry which began aggressively to raise funds for AIDS research. Since his death, Perry Ellis continues as a popular licensing name.

Further Reading:

Moor, Jonathan. *Perry Ellis.* New York, St. Martin's Press, 1988.