



Hans Schneider at work, c1960

1949

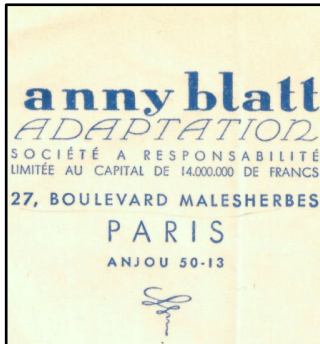
Hans Schneider joined M&S to upgrade merchandise following wartime restrictions. Under his direction our Design Department expanded rapidly – from just eight people in 1949, to over 70 by 1967.



Elisabeth Tomalin at her desk, 1954

Late 1940s

Elisabeth Tomalin was appointed Head of the Print Design Department. She regularly travelled to European couture shows for inspiration.



Anny Blatt Letterhead, 1953

1950s

Parisian knitwear designer Anny Blatt was hired as a consultant during the 1950s to advise on knitwear and jerseywear.



Hans Schneider and Serena Sinclair of the Telegraph, 1967

1958

Hans Schneider was appointed Chairman of the Examining Board at London College of Fashion. He believed that new designers would have a more rewarding experience working at M&S, than in haute couture.



Hans Schneider and Michael Donnellan, 1967

1962

Designer Michael Donnellan was hired as a consultant. Known as Michael, he had headed the house of Lachasse in the 1940s, before running his own couture house in the 50s and 60s.



The Design Department, SMN
Autumn 1967

1967

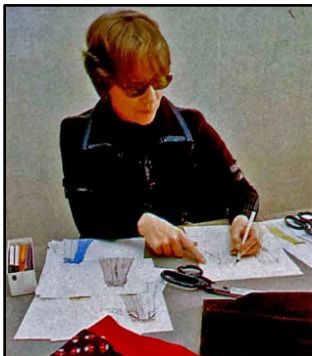
By 1967 each of our designers was also a technician and a fully qualified cutter. As well as our own design team, dress designs were also submitted by manufacturers.



Models pose in the M&S Design
Dept, 1970

1970

One of our main suppliers, Corah, opened a Design and Development Centre, with 50 garment and fabric designers. By 1973 we encouraged all suppliers to set up their own design departments and laboratories.



M&S Designer, 1974

1974

In a staff magazine article we said 'No matter how much he may feel like it, the M&S designer can never follow a whim and create something outrageous. He (and she) is part of a team, comprising selectors, fashion consultants and cloth technologists.'



Nightdresses possibly adapted from Emanuel's designs, 1979



Student design, SMN August 1983



Bruce Oldfield, SMN Jan 1988

1977

Whilst studying at the Royal College of Art (RCA), David Emanuel took part in an M&S competition designing lingerie, and was awarded top prize. His designs including split-sided nightdresses were later adapted for sale in store.

1983

Through supplier Peter Blond, students from RCA designed a range of clothing for M&S. The collaboration continued into 1984.

1988

We employed Bruce Oldfield in 1988 as a ladieswear consultant. Oldfield was known for his work with Joanna Lumley, Joan Collins and Diana, Princess of Wales.

1990-1991

The newly established international office for Clothing and Homeware helped our design team to forecast fashion trends, using the knowledge of its internationally experienced designers. The team also established a network of design consultants including Paul Smith and Betty Jackson.



Design Department, 1992



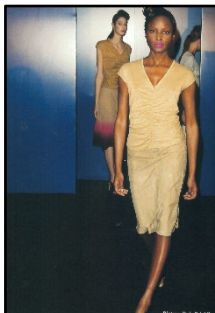
The design office, SMN March 1996



Dresses designed by Ghost for M&S,
SMN March 1996



Julien Macdonald and Sheilagh Brown,
M&S Annual Report, 1998



Betty Jackson for Autograph, 2001

1996

We employed 30 designers working on clothing and home, our top six suppliers employed 270 designers between them, working solely on designs for M&S. Designers visited international fabric trade shows, and the business subscribed to trend-prediction organisations like Trend Union in Paris.

1996

By 1996, a number of well-known designers were working on products for us, often through our suppliers, including Ghost, Ally Capellino and Marion Foale.

1998

Designer Julien Macdonald began advising on knitwear – Macdonald was known for his innovative use of knitwear and worked with our supplier Coats Viyella on innovative knitwear techniques.

1999

We announced a collaboration with designers including Julien MacDonald, Betty Jackson and Katherine Hamnett, this became the first Autograph collection, launched in 2000.



Design by Anna Smit, winner of the RCA competition, 2010

2010

Students from RCA were invited to submit designs for our Limited Collection range. Ten designs were chosen, with one student invited to produce a full collection for Spring 2011. M&S has collaborated with student designers at RCA since at least the 1980s.



Zandra Rhodes for M&S, 2009

2010s

Following collaborations with Patricia Field in 2008 and Zandra Rhodes in 2009, the 2010s saw us working with designers including Baartmans & Siegel, Kestin Hare and Alexa Chung.



Originals, AW 2022

2021

The menswear design team took inspiration from the M&S Archive to create the Originals collection – the range offered carefully manufactured, responsible menswear with a focus on considered design and our unique heritage.



M&S: Dress the Nation, 2024

2024

We announced a nationwide search for our next designer with the launch of a competitive ITV series, M&S: Dress The Nation. The series documented the search process from start to finish: 10 candidates competed to secure a highly coveted in-house design role.



3D digital sample and final garment

2025

Today M&S works with new technologies in predicting bestsellers and understanding trends.

Designers can now create a digital sample garment, enabling them to see their prints and designs to scale and eliminating the need for physical garment samples.



M&S X Aries, 2026

2026

Following a visit to the M&S Archive, Aries founder Sofia Prantera drew inspiration from our design heritage to create a unique collection. The M&S X Aries collaboration used archival designs and historical references to form the backbone of the collection.