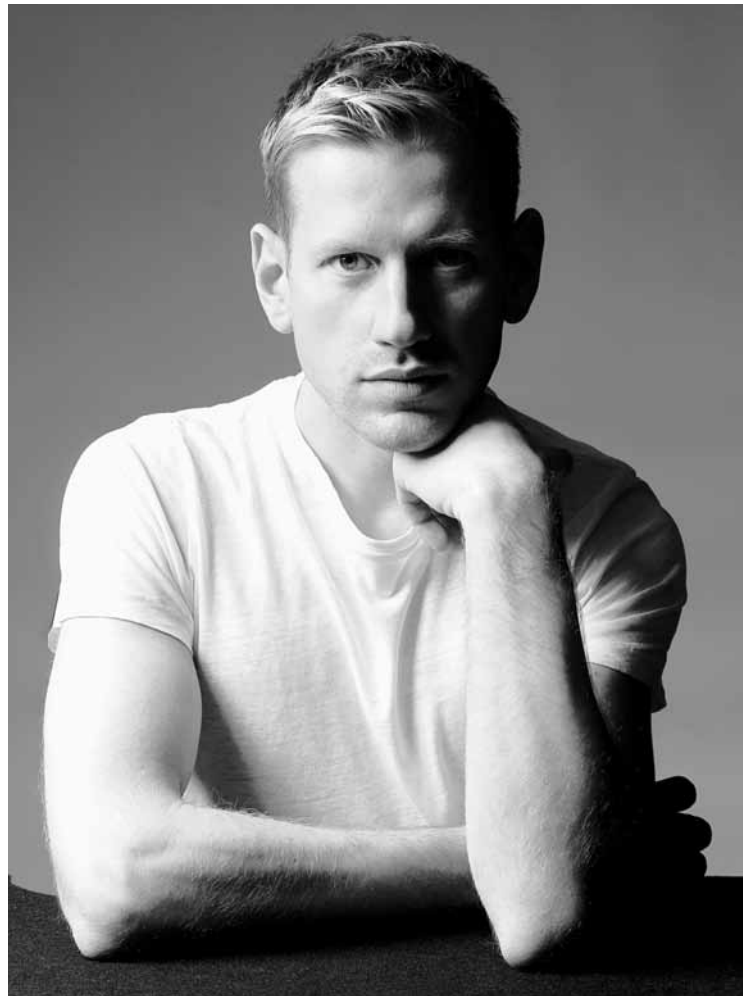


WALKING TALL

AS HE PREPS FOR HIS FIRST POP-UP SHOP AND CELEBRATES HIS CFDA/VOGUE FASHION FUND TRIUMPH, SHOE DESIGNER **PAUL ANDREW** TELLS SLT WHY SLOW AND STEADY ALWAYS WINS THE RACE.

For many women, a truly comfortable high heel is like a unicorn, nothing more than an urban fashion legend. These ladies obviously haven't tried on a pair by Paul Andrew, footwear's fairy godfather. "When a shoe is comfortable it can be your absolute best friend and when it isn't, your worst enemy," says the New York-based designer. "I'm trying to make friends with all of my shoes." As the latest recipient of the prestigious CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund, Paul now has an additional \$300,000 and a year-long mentorship with Tory Burch to ensure his line of cutting-edge handmade heels are as "friendly" as possible. For the designer, who spent nearly a decade as the former head of shoes and accessories at Donna Karan, the prize money also means that expansion plans are in the works, starting with a newly launched pop-up shop at his former employer's Conduit Street store in the heart of London. Leather handbags, sneakers, an e-commerce site and even a men's line are all also on the horizon. But for now, the British-born designer is keeping his foot evenly balanced between the gas pedal and the brake. "For all of these things, I want to take it slowly and surely so we get it right."



I GO TO ITALY EVERY 10 TO 15 DAYS...

if you can believe it. I hand make the first padding, the first heel, the first lot of every shoe. For me it's a way to ensure the fit and comfort is really perfect and the quality of the shoe is the best it can possibly be. Without the designer's eye in the factory, things go can awry. We do a series of fit-and-wear tests before we launch production. We use different fit models in different sizes to take the shoes and wear them around for a couple of days.

I WANT TO LAUNCH A SPORTS SHOE...

and do my version of the sneaker. I want to utilize the sneaker sole, which is made from this material called microporosa, and then do my own sexy slingback or pump silhouette on top. I imagine soccer moms on a Saturday wanting to feel comfortable with that rubber sole but wanting to still feel a little dressed up.

I SURVEYED 500 WOMEN INTERNATIONALLY...

to understand what is the perfect fit of now, because shoes are actually crafted using measurements that were established in the 1970s. I feel like they are totally outmoded given that people are wearing sneakers all over the place and most people's feet have changed to accommodate that sort of footwear. I have crafted the arch of my shoe so that it offers a lot more support than other shoes. Plus I added padding that has memory into the insole for cushioning.



THE FIRST PAIR OF SHOES I PICKED OUT MYSELF...

was a pair of Church's, a beautiful round toe oxford lace-up in a spazzolato black leather. It's so funny because I still wear similar styles from Church's even now. When I do my own men's collection, I [want to fill the] niche in the market for a great modern men's shoe, something that is classic but with a twist.

MY FATHER WAS AN UPHOLSTERER FOR THE ROYAL FAMILY...

where everything was handmade. He taught me that when something is handmade or when the details of that product are studied with a human eye, that it really can't be beaten by a machine. I'm using the same idea in my footwear, nothing is really machine made.



Paul's Pre-Spring and SS15 collection (available at Per Lei Couture) was inspired by his yearly summer holiday to the island of Patmos in Greece and Matisse's saturated shades. Above: Paul's movie muse Marlene Dietrich.

I WAS A BIT OF A LONER AT SCHOOL...

and I used to spend a lot of time watching old movies from the 1930s and 1940s so my muses came from film. I loved Gene Tierney and Marlene Dietrich and their wardrobes so they became sort of like a grand inspiration for my life.