

# Lauren, Ralph (1939-) Encyclopedia Article

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# Contents

<a href="#">Lauren, Ralph (1939-) Encyclopedia Article.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Lauren, Ralph (1939—).....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>

## Lauren, Ralph (1939—)

Bronx-born Ralph Lauren is the great dreamer of American fashion. He launched his fashion empire with wide ties (Polo Neck-wear) in 1967. By 1968 Lauren covered the menswear business, adding womenswear in 1971. Lauren builds on consistent themes: Anglophilia of stately homes and rustic luxury, including tweeds, tartans, and Fair Isle sweaters; the heroic American West, celebrating the cowboy but revering Native American crafts; the Ivy League and clubby American elite of the 1920s; Hollywood and movie stars particularly of the 1930s; and style icons, including the Duke of Windsor. The New York flagship store is a Madison Avenue mansion which feels more like an historic home than a retail establishment.

### **Ralph Lauren fashion show, 1982.**

Burnishing these powerful images, visualized in advertising photographed by Bruce Weber, Lauren has communicated a self-confident American style, compounded of aristocracy and adventure. Winning fame for Robert Redford's wardrobe in *The Great Gatsby* (1974), Lauren has given America a Gatsby imagination in apparel.

### **Further Reading:**

Trachtenberg, Jeffrey A. *Ralph Lauren, The Man behind the Mystique*. Boston, Little, Brown & Company, 1988.