



**Name in English:** Anna Sui  
**Name in Chinese:** 肖志美 [蕭志美]  
**Name in Pinyin:** Xiāo Zhīměi  
**Gender:** Female  
**Birth Year:** 1964  
**Birth Place:** Dearborn, Michigan  
**Current location:** New York City

## **Fashion Designer**

**Profession (s):** Fashion Designer

**Education:** Bachelor of Fine Arts, Fashion Design, Parsons School of Design, The New School, 1975

**Awards:** 2009, OCA Pioneer Award, Organization of Chinese Americans; 2009, Geoffrey Beene Lifetime Achievement Award, Council of Fashion Designers of America; 2008, Bravo A-List Fashion Award, Bravo; 1992, Perry Ellis Award for New Fashion Talent, Council of Fashion Designers of America; Top 5 Fashion Icons of the Decade, *Time Magazine*

**Contribution (s):** Anna Sui is from the first generation of Chinese Americans who have achieved international fame as fashion designers. She is best known for creatively “borrowing” fashion ideas from different genres of design, and pairing them in ways that are fresh and sophisticated.

Sui was born in Dearborn, Michigan, the heartland of American industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the daughter of two French-educated Chinese immigrants. Sui’s grandfather was a Chinese diplomat, and she recalls that both she and her parents grew up with a strong exposure to Western culture and influences. Because of this diverse cultural background, she thinks of herself as a “global citizen”.

Sui’s passion for clothing and design began as a child, designing outfits for her dolls, and collecting pages of fashion magazines that served as inspiration. Sui kept these early inspirations with her throughout her career, compiling what she referred to as her “Genius Files”, a collection of all her inspirations from childhood to today.

Sui’s career began to take shape during her studies at Parsons School of Design. Teaming up with fashion photographer, Steven Meisel, Sui worked as a stylist for various editorials and fashion spreads.

In 1980, Sui’s designs received their first notable recognition. Upon seeing some of Sui’s original pieces at a trade show in New York City, Macy’s placed an order, and featured one of her designs in an ad in the *New York Times*. Throughout the 1980’s, despite the growing popularity of her work, Sui continued to run her business out of her apartment.

In 1991, Sui premiered her first runway show, which the New York Times raved was a “pastiche of hip and haute styles.”

Chinese heritage has certainly influenced Sui’s designs, but is in no way her primary source of inspiration. In the book *China Chic: East Meets West*, Valerie Steele and John S. Major wrote, “Anna Sui takes a playful approach to her Chinese heritage, mixing ethnic and historical references with gay abandon.” Sui recalls being inspired by her Chinese aunt’s beautiful qipaos, and later designed several “Chinese-style dresses”, combining the glamour of traditional qipaos, with the edgier “grunge” fashion of the 1990s. Her first runway show in 1991 was so popular that three of the top supermodels of the time, Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, and Christy Turlington, modeled for free in exchange for the Sui designed clothes. Sui opened her first boutique in Manhattan in 1992. Throughout the rest of the decade Sui expanded her repertoire to include fragrance, footwear, cosmetics, and accessory lines.

Sui has also used her designs skills to benefit charitable causes such as the Mumbai based organization, Citizens for Justice and Peace, and the Stop Global Warming organization. Sui put her designs up for auction on eBay to show support for the victims of the Mumbai terror attacks in 2008. She has also leant her design skills to create and sell reusable, water bottles to help *Elle* magazine raise funds and awareness to prevent global warming.

Sui’s designs are currently featured in over 300 sales outlets in 30 countries, steadily increasing in international popularity because she has such a strong Hollywood following. Film stars such as Christina Ricci, Cher, Drew Barrymore, and Patricia Arquette are notably big fans of her work.

### **External Links:**

[http://www.filly.ca/taste\\_and\\_style/fashion\\_report/designer\\_profiles/Anna-Sui.asp](http://www.filly.ca/taste_and_style/fashion_report/designer_profiles/Anna-Sui.asp)

<http://www.style.com/fashionshows/designerdirectory/ANNASUI/seasons/>

<http://www.annasui.com/>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/12/fashion/12runway.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/12/fashion/12runway.html?_r=1)

<http://www.channelapa.com/2008/09/designer-anna-sui-at-fashion-week.html>

[http://sex.ncu.edu.tw/members/ho/study/2006spring\\_oraltraining/st2006s\\_annasui.htm](http://sex.ncu.edu.tw/members/ho/study/2006spring_oraltraining/st2006s_annasui.htm)