

Brooks Brothers Kicks Off Its 200th Anniversary in Florence

Nicole Campisano (January 11, 2018)



In Florence, Italy, Brooks Brothers held its 200th year anniversary in Palazzo Vecchio to celebrate the brand's longevity and accomplishments. CEO Claudio Del Vecchio who bought Brooks Brothers in 2001, is honored to be a part of the company's history.

[Brooks Brothers](#) [2] had its first ever runway show to celebrate its 200th anniversary. Even though Brooks Brothers was born in New York City, the celebration was held in Florence, Italy, in [Palazzo Vecchio](#) [3]'s Salone dei Cinquecento. CEO Claudio Del Vecchio, an Italian himself, exclaims that



"this is a moment to celebrate two hundred years steeped in both tradition and innovation."

A Celebration of Fashion

Paying tribute to the brand's origins, the runway models walked to the Italian Philharmonic Orchestra's performance of Alicia Keys' "Empire State of Mind." There was a total of 51 looks for the guests to enjoy. The collection consisted of mostly menswear with the exception of 8 looks that were presented by female models, though they all embodied a strong sense of masculinity as decided by Brooks Brothers' creative director, [Zac Posen](#) [4].

The History

Brooks Brothers is best known for its men's clothing and it is one of the oldest menswear companies in the US. Founded in 1818 by Henry Sands Brooks, it was originally called H. & D. H. Brooks & Co. with the intention "to make and deal only in merchandise of the finest body, to sell it at a fair profit, and to deal with people who seek and appreciate such merchandise."

When his four sons inherited H. & D. H. Brooks & Co. in 1850, Elisha, Daniel, Edward, and John renamed it to Brooks Brothers. The brand introduced the ready-to-wear suit to its customers and it quickly became a hit.

Brooks Brothers has outfitted 40 of the 45 American Presidents, including Presidents Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump.

Claudio Del Vecchio

In 2001, Claudio Del Vecchio acquired Brooks Brothers from [Marks & Spencer](#) [5], the British retailer through his privately-owned company, Retail Brand Alliance, now called The Brooks Brothers Group. Clearly, Del Vecchio is a very successful business man, but he had very humble beginnings.

He was born in [Pieve Tesino](#) [6] where there were less than 1,000 people, and grew up in Milan. He was very inspired by his father who showed him the importance of hard work and self-earned success. In his own words: "The greatest lesson my father taught me is: see the challenge, and make it an opportunity."

Leonardo Del Vecchio, his father, is the second richest man in Italy with a net worth of almost \$19 billion. He started the brand [Luxottica](#) [7] which is now the world's largest eyewear company. Following in his father's footsteps, Claudio Del Vecchio worked in the retail industry, and for 15 years, he was the head of operations for Luxottica in North America until 1997.

From Loyal Customer to CEO

Italy did not have a Brooks Brothers, so when the future CEO came to New York for the first time, he became a loyal customer. He admired the clothes, as well as the brand's message. In an interview with Brooks Brother's magazine, he explains that this company "was known as an icon of American style" and he "wanted to be a part of that in some way," so when Marks & Spencer put the company up for auction, Del Vecchio felt that he could revive the company and return its high standards that he felt had fallen.

However, the auction fell through due to the tragic events of 9/11. Eventually, Del Vecchio was able to buy it months later. He admired the spirit of New York in the wake of a tragedy, and knew he would be able to be successful.

Del Vecchio is very proud of the success his company has achieved, and its 200th year anniversary is very important to him. According to Del Vecchio, this 200th anniversary "marks a historic milestone not only for Brooks Brothers but for the fashion industry as a whole."



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