

## *Eiko Ishioka, Multifaceted Designer and Oscar Winner, Dies at 73*

By Margalit Fox

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Eiko Ishioka, a designer who brought an eerie, sensual surrealism to film and theater, album covers, the Olympics and Cirque du Soleil, in the process earning an Oscar, a Grammy and a string of other honors, died on Saturday in Tokyo. She was 73.

The cause was pancreatic cancer, her studio manager, Tracy Roberts, said.

Trained as a graphic designer, Ms. Ishioka was for decades considered the foremost art director in Japan; she later came to be known as one of the foremost in the world.

Ms. Ishioka won an Academy Award for costume design in 1992 for “Bram Stoker’s ‘Dracula,’ ” directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Her outfits for the film included a suit of full body armor for the title character (played by Gary Oldman), whose glistening red color and all-over corrugation made it look like exposed musculature, and a voluminous wedding dress worn by the actress Sadie Frost, with a stiff, round, aggressive lace collar inspired by the ruffs of frill-necked lizards.



Eiko Ishioka Brigitte Lacombe

These typified Ms. Ishioka’s aesthetic. A deliberate marriage of East and West — she had lived in Manhattan for many years — it simultaneously embraced the gothic, the otherworldly, the dramatic and the unsettling and was suffused with a powerful, dark eroticism. Her work, whose outsize stylization dazzled some critics and discomfited others, was provocative in every possible sense of the word, and it was meant to be.

Ms. Ishioka was closely associated with the director Tarsem Singh, for whom she designed costumes for four films. In the first, “The Cell” (2000), she encased Jennifer Lopez, who plays a psychologist trapped by a serial killer, in a headpiece that resembled a cross between a rigid neck brace and a forbidding bird cage.

“Jennifer asked me if I could make it more comfortable,” Ms. Ishioka told The Ottawa Citizen in 2000, “but I said, ‘No, you’re supposed to be tortured.’ ”

For Mr. Singh, she also costumed “The Fall” (2006), an adventure fantasy, and “Immortals,” a violent tale of ancient Greece released last year. Their fourth collaboration, “Mirror Mirror,” an adaptation of “Snow White,” is set for release in March.



Ms. Ishioka won an Oscar for costume design in 1992 for “Bram Stoker’s ‘Dracula.’” Her outfits included a heavy wedding dress worn by the actress Sadie Frost. Columbia Pictures, via Everett Collection

Ms. Ishioka’s other film work includes the production design of “Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters,” Paul Schrader’s 1985 film about the doomed writer Yukio Mishima. That year the Cannes Film Festival jury awarded her — along with the film’s cinematographer, John Bailey, and its composer, Philip Glass — a special prize for “artistic contribution.”

For the Broadway stage, Ms. Ishioka designed sets and costumes for David Henry Hwang’s 1988 drama “M. Butterfly,” for which she earned two Tony nominations, and, most recently, costumes for the musical “Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark.”

She won a Grammy Award in 1986 for her design of Miles Davis’s album “Tutu,” whose cover is dominated by an Irving Penn photograph of Mr. Davis, shot in extreme close-up and starkly lighted.

Eiko Ishioka was born in Tokyo on July 12, 1938. Her artistic pursuits were encouraged by her parents: her father was a graphic designer, her mother a homemaker who, in accordance with the social norms of the day, had forsaken literary ambitions to marry and raise children.



Ms. Ishioka was also the director of costume design for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

But when Eiko, as an undergraduate at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, announced that she planned to be a graphic artist, even her father warned that she would have a much easier life designing things like shoes or dolls. Graphic design in Japan, with its close connection to the sharp-elbowed world of advertising, was every inch a man's game then.

The young Ms. Ishioka persevered, graduating in 1961 and joining the advertising division of the cosmetics giant Shiseido. She opened her own design concern in the early 1970s; among her chief clients was Parco, a chain of boutique shopping complexes for which she created advertising and promotional materials for more than a decade.

Ms. Ishioka's work for Parco, which embodied an eclectic, avant-garde internationalism rarely seen in Japanese advertisements of the period, helped cement her reputation. Her print ads, for instance, sometimes showed models who were naked or nearly so, a rarity in Japanese advertising then.

"You've seen a kimono: they're not big into full-on nudes," Maggie Kinser Hohle, a writer on Japanese design, said this month in an interview for this obituary. (As Maggie Kinser Saiki, she is the author of "12 Japanese Masters," a book about design that features Ms. Ishioka.) "That's extremely shocking. And yet she did it in a way that made you drawn to the beauty of it, and then you realize you're looking at nipples."



Ms. Ishioka's costumes for the musical "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark." Sara Krulwich/The New York Times

Perhaps the most striking thing about Ms. Ishioka's ads was that they rarely depicted any actual item sold at Parco. For Japanese television, she created a Parco commercial in which, over the course of a minute and a half, the actress Faye Dunaway, black-clad against a black background, slowly and wordlessly peels and eats a hard-boiled egg.

In other work, Ms. Ishioka designed uniforms and outerwear for selected members of the Swiss, Canadian, Japanese and Spanish teams at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. She was also the director of costume design for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.

Ms. Ishioka's portfolio extended to the circus and a magic show. She designed costumes for Cirque du Soleil's "Varekai" (2002) and was the visual artistic director of the illusionist David Copperfield's 1996 Broadway show, "Dreams and Nightmares."

She also designed costumes for the singer Grace Jones's "Hurricane" tour in 2009 (they were noteworthy even by Ms. Jones's lofty standards for the outré) and directed Bjork's music video "Cocoon." Her books include "Eiko by Eiko" (1983) and "Eiko on Stage" (2000), both available in English.

Ms. Ishioka is survived by her husband, Nicholas Soultanakis, whom she married last year; her mother, Mitsuko Saegusa Ishioka; two brothers, Koichiro and Jun Ishioka; and a sister, Ryoko Ishioka.

Though she was known in particular for the form of her designs, Ms. Ishioka did not neglect function. For some athletes at the 2002 Winter Games, she created what she called the Concentration Coat, a full-length cocoon of foamlite fabric into which wearers could withdraw from the press scrum around them, podlike studies in portable solitude.