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OUR MAN IN SOCHI

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CANADA'S BEST NEW
RESTAURANTS



THE FUNNIEST MAN IN FASHION

Menswear legend Sir Paul Smith takes us on a tour of his collection of sidesplitting oddities

BY YANG-YI GOH



THE FASHION WORLD, for the most part, tends to take itself rather seriously. Maybe a little *too* seriously. No one would ever accuse Sir Paul Smith of this, however. His penchant for bright colours and whimsical prints has elevated him to the highest echelon of menswear design over his four decades in the business. Smith has carved out a distinct, divergent vision that pays tribute to the British traditions of fine tailoring and offbeat humour—tiny bunnies leap across old-fashioned foulard ties; a classic chalk-striped suit is lined with blindingly bright florals. It's "Savile Row meets Mr. Bean," as he likes to put it.

In support of Movember, Holt Renfrew teamed with Sir Paul to create a pair of special mitts suffused with his signature quirky style. The Brit icon himself was kind enough to walk us through the concept behind the collaboration and show us six of his favourite comedic items from his famously cluttered office.

1. SPINNING TOPS

"The boys and girls outside are always telling me off that my office is getting more and more crowded and this is where I have all of my design meetings. Once, they were telling me I needed to control what I get. And I said, 'It's not my fault! People send things!' And at that moment, this guy from reception walked in with a cart with five big boxes saying, 'These have just arrived for Paul.' There was a note from someone



from Italy, named Mikael. The note said, 'I know Paul collects things. These are for him.' There must have been about 30 spinning tops. That's what I mean!"

2. MR. MACHINE

"He's fantastic. You wind him up, and he rolls along on his wheels and whistles 'This Old Man.' If I'm in a meeting with designers, just to break the ice I'll subtly bring out Mr. Machine and he'll walk along the middle of the swatches and fabric. Just a way of saying, 'Relax, everybody!'"

3. MR. BROWN THE MONKEY

"He's very nice-looking and happy. We call him the office



manager because he sits on a storage cabinet with the guys who take care of me personally—scheduling, following up on things. He's from the 1930s and everybody loves him. We've photographed and printed him onto handkerchiefs, scarves, t-shirts and badges. He's becoming quite famous."

4. MECHANICAL HAND

"It was sent to me, and it's wonderful. It's got the actual fingers and thumb moulded from someone's hand. When you switch it on, the fingers go up and down and drum on the table like you're bored. Every time I bring it out, people film it on their phones—it's joyful."

5. 1968 ANIMAL SCHOOL BOOK

"It was made and mailed to me by a Korean graphic designer. It looks like a yearbook—you open it and there's a picture of a school and the school song, which is hilarious. The next page shows the faculty, but they're all animals: the headmaster is a lion; the deputy headmaster is an elephant. Then there's a page that says 'Tiger Class,' and there's a photograph of 40 pupils and of course they're all tigers. They're all different. Underneath are their names, and they're all called Tiger. The next one is Deer Class, and they're all called Deer. Just perfect."



6. PEANUT NATIVITY

"This was given to me last Christmas by a girl named Margot from Belgium—it's a Nativity, but made from peanuts. She's 17 now, and she's been writing to me since she was 11. She doesn't use email. Instead, she always sends handwritten letters, postcards or decorated boxes. The box in front of me, for instance, is hand-painted with a crocodile, some ducks, and 60 postage stamps from the US. She's sent me boxes from France, Kenya, Poland. [In her first letter] she said, 'I don't like fashion, but I like you.' She'd never even

met me. It's wonderful. I don't even know how she knew about me. She's quirky. I met her in person about a year ago, and she's such a bright girl. Going to go on and do interesting things. On my birthday, she called me. She's quite famous within the office. Margot said, 'You've got to put the phone on speaker.' So we put it on speaker. And suddenly I heard these footsteps, and then she began playing the piano from the other room. She doesn't play the piano, but she learned 'Happy Birthday' to play for me on my birthday."

7. PAUL SMITH FOR HOLT RENFREW MOVEMBER MITTS

"There's something nostalgic about mitts—as a kid, you'd have them on a string so you wouldn't lose them. It's a reminder that you shouldn't lose sight of your childlike side. We're all so informed these days, and in a way you can easily grow up too quickly. With the mittens and the seriousness of the charity, it's just to remind ourselves that we still need to have a childlike side to us. In this troubled world, we need this light-heartedness as well."