

Sophie Hicks | Chloé's Architect

DESIGN, WOMEN'S FASHION | By STEPHEN HEYMAN | JUNE 22, 2010, 9:38 AM



Jacob Sutton

"If I were to put a dress on, I wouldn't look like a woman," says **Sophie Hicks**. "I'd look like a man in drag." The sternly chic British architect began wearing mannish suits as a fashion editor at glossies like *Tatler* and *British Vogue*. Then, in the late 1980s, she quit her editorial job and went to architecture school. Sure, high fashion frustrated her.

(Madonna, at the very last moment, once bailed on a big photo shoot that Hicks had dreamed up with Azzedine Alaïa.) But Hicks's concerns about the industry went deeper. "I was only 26, and I started seeing fashion go in circles," she says, noting that the legends she worked alongside — like Grace Coddington — "must have seen the same things go around 12 dozen times." Hicks's biography has fabulous footnotes: She appeared in a Fellini film ("*Intervista*," in 1986), designed a Picasso exhibit for the Royal Academy of Arts, and made a perfume bottle for Paul Smith. Her most famous buildings are, perhaps predictably, fashion boutiques. She has designed shops for Yohji Yamamoto in Paris, Paul Smith in London and 100 or so Chloé stores, including flagships in Tokyo, New York and Hong Kong. Today, she's at work on a small home in South Kensington. For that building, she's invented a "geometric building block" with the British brick maker Ibstock. "It's a bit like mesh," she says of the partially translucent brick. "So you'll get little glimpses of what's going on outside."

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