

APRIL 2014

RTW Trend Report Fall 2014 / 2015

# iTALK@FGI

## TREND PRESENTATION Fall 2014/2015

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Frontliners

The Casualization of Men's Suitable Attire

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FGI Annual Meeting

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On April 10, 2014, Fashion Group International showcased its semiannual roundup of the latest trends emerging from the runways of New York, London, Milan and Paris. Curated by creative director **Mary Lou Luther**, members were treated to a concise overview of the ideas that will influence retail for fall 2014. After the presentation, the season's distinguished panel came forward to interpret the ideas that were presented on the screen.

The panel this season included moderator **Bridget Foley**, award winning chief fashion critic at Fairchild Publications; consultant **Julie Gilhart**; **Brooke Jaffe**, fashion director at Bloomingdale's; **Mickey Boardman**, editor *Paper Magazine*, and **Elizabeth Kanfer**, accessories fashion director at Saks Fifth Avenue.

**Sarah Brown**, Beauty Director at *Vogue*, unfortunately could not be present but helped create the beauty segment of the filmed portion of the program.

The theme of the panel discussion can be best summed up by a comment made by *Instyle's* **Hal Rubenstein** during the question-and-answer period. He noted that it was up to retailers and designers, when presenting their views to their customers, to clearly define the difference between knowledge and information. With a round of applause the audience acknowledged that this had been the panel's aim at the onset.

Foley first asked the panel to describe what excited them personally about the season. Jaffe loved the newness and special details that always appeal to her

novelty-seeking customer. Boardman loved the sparkle, Paris and ankle boots. Gilhart loved the variety that will allow everyone an individual choice. Kanfer praised the energy in Paris and how the fur, texture and shine in accessories will appeal to her shopper.

Foley then brought up the question of editing when so much variety was shown, and asked about the pressure of making the right choices for their audience. Kanfer said knowing how the Saks customer relates to new product gained via their continuous feedback helped her. Jaffe defined her consumer as girly and feminine. She and her team must understand how to translate the newness by providing information about the how-tos and whys of the new trends. Gilhart said that many outside elements also factor into an edit, such as economics.

Next was a debate on trends and whether they exist today or they are determined by lifestyle. Foley asked how stores and the press relay the message to the public. Jaffe mentioned that the Bloomingdale's shopper looks for direction and wants to know what she is supposed to buy. Knowing their girly customers' preference, the store must therefore take a position, such as choosing floral prints over abstracts and opting for holiday shine and sparkle. Kanfer plans the season by visualizing the floor and makes sure that the message is cohesive throughout all avenues of business, be it store visuals, windows and catalogues. When she loves a show, instinct and emotion kick in too.

Foley then questioned the place emotion has in the choices: How do you demonstrate that feeling to your consumer? Boardman said that he must direct his feelings to the readers so that they will love it, want it and buy it. Jaffe mentioned the clouds at the Marc Jacobs show and how they energized the audience. Communication is important and stores must make consumers share this feeling.

Foley talked about today's many levels of communication and how they differed in spreading the word. Boardman still likes the ability to linger over the printed message versus the immediacy and speed of digital options. Kanfer noted that today's message must be understood at ground level, allowing associates to understand the idea in order to explain it to the shopper.



From left: RTW Panel, Mickey Boardman, Brooke Jaffe, Elizabeth Kanfer, Julie Gilhart, Bridget Foley and Mary Lou Luther

Foley noted how, in many cases, accessories have stolen the thunder of ready-to-wear. Gilhart mentioned that with casual clothing so important, it's easier to buy a handbag that can be worn every day rather than a designer outfit with limited utility. Accessories satisfy the need to buy something new.

Jaffe felt that accessories are a useful status symbol and sees opportunity in the category. With Chanel's endorsement of the designer sneaker, accessories will continue to evolve.

Foley next asked for the definition of fashionable. Boardman felt it means how one personally wants to look. Gilhart defined a fashionable woman as one who creates her own individual look. Jaffe added that this is accomplished when the woman incorporates the trend while looking like herself.

Foley then questioned the value of fashion shows when 70 percent of a season's business is done from preseason collections. Gilhart agreed that there are too many shows but mentioned the importance to brands that don't advertise. She pointed out the nontraditional spring 2013 Rick Owens show. The publicity and social-media exposure brought him a customer who had never thought of shopping his line before. Foley added that a Prada show also brings energy and creative excitement to the category. Boardman spoke about the vetting system in Paris, which assigns a designer a slot based on several criteria. Kanfer agreed and said some designers are not ready for shows and would benefit from a showroom presentation instead. With the hype given to shows, many young designers disagree: They view a show as their gateway to success. Gilhart pointed out that the sheer number of shows often causes editors and retailers to miss key shows. Foley added that with the number of pre and seasonal shows, she is always looking at clothes.

Often, runway shows are not necessary for a retailer or editor to get the message. Boardman agreed and said that many main-street retailers do not need a show. Jaffe suggested that the calendar be divided between uptown and downtown days to alleviate the travel time needed to traverse the city. Boardman suggested further breakdowns, with bridge and designer brands showing on specific days.

Gilhart mentioned today's global access to emerging brands, leading to the topic of identifying new trends and brands. Kanfer added that via market research, new brands must be able to deliver and meet the requirements that are determined by each store. They must be able to

become a viable partner with the store in an allotted time frame. A discussion then followed, led by Boardman, differentiating a designer's actual talent versus hype generated by the press. Foley warned of the danger of young designers reaching for global prominence before they are ready.

Foley then polled the group to name their favorite shows of the season. Kanfer praised the luxury at Fendi, Chanel and Givenchy. Gilhart named Louis Vuitton and Altuzarra. Boardman cheered for Prabal Gurung and Anna Sui in New York and Givenchy, Valentino and Chanel in Paris. Jaffe voted for the candy colors and sparkle at Gucci, the happy models at Michael Kors, Fendi, Chanel and newcomer Misha Nonoo in New York.

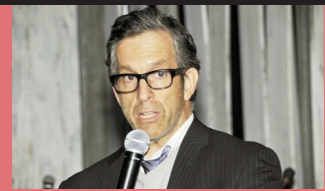
The panel then fielded questions from the audience about sustainability, plus sizes merchandized with their missy counterparts, and fashionable work apparel for women, among others. The panel agreed that fast fashion is here to stay and it's okay to pair designer clothes with items from a fast-fashion store. Foley reiterated that there would always be a need for well-made clothing at every price point. Case in point is the young aspirational generation.

**Ruth Finley**, publisher of *The Fashion Calendar*, asked for suggestions to help alleviate the crush of fashion week. Boardman suggested setting up an official calendar. Foley asked for a homogeneous grouping of shows.

The seasonal FGI fashion presentation then adjourned with some old and new points to ponder. Armed with all of the information, the group recessed with positive thoughts for the new season and hopefully with personal shopping on their minds.

— Carolyn Moss

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Kenneth Cole



Chris Mitchell



Eric Jennings



Todd Snyder



Will Welch

At the first signs of a new season, women are known to attack their closets with vigor, attempting to create a new persona for their wardrobes. Men read the signs differently and consider this quest an evolution rather than a revolution. This was one of the interesting facts that Fashion Group members discovered during the latest Frontliner event: The Casualization of Men's Suitable Attire.

Held on March 25th at Kenneth Cole's new event space, The Garage, members had the chance to meet major menswear players and learn firsthand how consumers are reacting to the changes occurring in men's fashion today.

**Margaret Hayes**, president of Fashion Group International, welcomed all and introduced the evening's host: designer and social activist **Kenneth Cole**. She mentioned Cole's special relationship with FGI, which acknowledged him for his philanthropy with its humanitarian award in 2009.

In his welcome, Cole touched on the casualization trend, which has come to the forefront in men's clothing during the last five years. He mentioned that only nine percent of men wear formal business attire to work. Branding and staying true to one's brand was also a key point. He then introduced those joining him on the panel. They included moderator **Chris Mitchell**, vice-president and publisher of *GQ* magazine; **Eric Jennings**, vice-president and fashion director of menswear, home, food and gifts at Saks Fifth Avenue; designer **Todd Snyder** and **Will Welch**, men's senior style editor at *GQ*.

Mitchell started the discussion with the statement that men dress differently today, mixing casual elements with more structured pieces. Welch agreed and added that men today are comfortable wearing jeans, a blazer and tie, moving away from more traditional uniforms. Jennings said that current menswear stresses lifestyle dressing as evidenced by younger customers who are influenced by European fashion. Cole related that this translates into a more fitted and shorter silhouette. Snyder mentioned that a mix-and-match attitude prevails today, breaking old rules and allowing new and unexpected collaborations to enter the market.

Jennings added that the new younger customer includes professional athletes. He related how he had participated in a panel discussion that explained a professional dress code to NBA draftees. Being well dressed is a professional requisite.

Cole said that today's suit customer makes a suit his own. Jennings added that this customization includes attention to buttons and linings. Mitchell felt that this sartorial interest encourages confidence and allows the customer to be experimental and hence a risk taker. In this vein, Welch felt that each customer looks for something different when buying a suit. He looks for information to better determine the choices he will make.

Mitchell asked the panel how far they thought they could push their customer. Snyder said that men are learning how to express themselves fashion-wise. As a designer, it is his role to encourage his customer to try new things, such as active inspirations and new fabrics. This evolution allows him to look good and better present himself. Cole agreed and felt that this new demographic is generational and fosters a sense of what fits the particular customer. He wants his customer to try new things but to feel good about his choice.

Jennings noted that timing is key in allowing the eye to adjust to new shapes: too fast, and an idea alienates the customer. He needs time to cultivate the look and feel of new designers such as Public School.

All agreed that social media has changed many ideas with oversize hip-hop style being replaced. New style icons such as Justin Timberlake are dressing with more polish and style. The speed and availability of style information is evident to this new and interested generation. Welch spoke about new influences coming from the street and the popularity of street photographers who capture instant fashion from the consumers themselves. Jennings said that street style demystifies fashion and makes it more accessible.

Turning to the importance of price, Jennings felt that price matters when buying a suit but doesn't matter in the sneaker craze, where the right style

and look is all that matters. Snyder mentioned that his company is offering a new line of suits that offer a quality product at an affordable price. Mitchell spoke about the fact that fast fashion challenges the old stress on longevity. Jennings added that retailers must teach their customers the story behind a suit, because men buy a suit for a reason and must buy the best suit that they can. The young generation wants to be cool now and hence is drawn to Zara, H&M and Topshop. As he ages, he will be taught to look for better construction as his suit needs become more serious.

Questions from the audience addressed topics including buying a suit online (Cole stressed that suits still have to be tried on and tailored) and the correct casual shoe (Walsh who suggested a sneaker or boot).

The audience left with a new understanding of the men's fashion scene and the knowledge that the men's business is on the rise as, after fashionably drifting, the American consumer is beginning to spruce up. This is a good omen for the future of fashion and menswear.

— Carolyn Moss  
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Kenneth Cole and Margaret Hayes



President **Margaret Hayes** called the Annual Meeting of FGI members to order on January 30, and confirmed that all nominees had been duly elected. **Dennis Curran, Vanessa Dusold, Susan Kaufman, Maria Giulia Maramotti, Angela Mariani, Vineet Mehra** and **Lori Rhodes** were each newly elected as Directors of the Board of the Corporation for a three-year term. **Nancy Cardone, Laura McEwen, Alexandra Wilkis Wilson, Nicholas Munafo** and **Elizabeth Rodbell** were each elected to serve for a second term of three years. **Joseph Boitano, Roseanne Morrison** and **Karen Young** were each elected to serve for a third and final term of three years.

**Donald J. Loftus** was elected as Chairman of the Board of the Corporation, to serve for a term of three years.

**Louise Evins** presented the Treasurer's Report, which was followed by reports on membership initiatives, regional activities, publication committee activities, special events programming and social media. It was also announced that **Diane Clehane** would be blogging on pop culture and entertainment.

Hayes also presented service awards and acknowledged the special efforts of several members, including **Evie Evangelou**, President of Fashion 4 Development, which recognizes developing talent all over the world through the expression of fashion. Fashion photographer **Jan Klier** was presented with the Entrepreneur of the Year award.

— **Nancy Jeffries**

*Contributing Editor, bnjcasa@aol.com*



From left:  
Service award winners  
Erica Roseman,  
Donnella Tilery,  
Nancy Jeffries and  
Entrepreneur of the Year  
Jan Klier.

Spirit of Volunteerism Awards acknowledged the hard work of several committee members—including the Publications Committee's Nancy Jeffries. Honors went to: **Sheree Hartwell**, District Director, Arizona, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Kansas City, New Orleans, and San Antonio  
**Nancy Jeffries**, Publications Committee  
**Erica Roseman**, Regional Committee  
**Donnella Tilery**, Chair, Membership Committee

## Upcoming Events

# THE ART OF THE BEAUTY START

Join us for our panel of beauty innovators and learn how they create, shape, invent and re-invent their brands to meet the needs of today's multi faceted and dynamically changing beauty marketplace.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2014

NEW YORK HILTON • MERCURY BALLROOM  
1335 Avenue of the Americas  
New York City

RECEPTION  
11:15 AM

PRESENTATION & LUNCHEON  
12:00–2:00 PM

To purchase Tickets/Table, please visit [fgi.org/store/page2.html](http://fgi.org/store/page2.html)

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