

Footwear Brands Wolverine, Chris Donovan and Oncept Recognized at FGI Rising Star Awards

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Patricia Field and Maryanne Grisz [PATRICK MCMULLAN/GETTY IMAGES](#)

NEW YORK — The fashion industry is known for its willingness to mentor the next generation of creatives, so it was no surprise that [Fashion Group International](#)'s 27th Rising Star awards drew a full house to the Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers on Monday afternoon to anoint the most-promising emerging brands.

Past recipients have included Jason Wu, Tory Burch, Phillip Lim and Thom Browne, so the path to success for those lucky enough to take home the crystal award is well established.

This time around, FGI established categories set up by sector rather than gender, including eveningwear, ready-to-wear and active/casualwear where men's, women's and gender-neutral brands vied for the awards. It also introduced a new award, one for collaborations, that recognized that popular fashion category.

The event started with FGI's president and CEO Maryanne Grisz, revealing the launch of a mentorship and learning program for emerging brands. The program will address topics such as business plans, sales and distribution, design and production, legal issues and other potential pitfalls that can sink a young business.



Wolverine's Tom Kennedy and Nigel Barker **PATRICK MCMULLAN VIA GETTY IMAGE**

The program, which is open to finalists as well as winners, will pair the emerging designers with industry executives including Gary Wassner of Hilldun Corp.; Edwina Kulego of Informa Markets Fashion; Behnaz Ghahramani of Brother Vellies; Caroline Fabrigas of Scent Marketing; Carlos Campos of his eponymous collection; Nicole Fischelis, a fashion forecaster and former Saks Fifth Avenue executive, and Douglas Hand, a fashion attorney.

But while the nominees were eager to sign up to participate in the mentoring program, it was the awards that took center stage at the luncheon.

Former Rising Star winner [Patricia Field](#) was the keynote speaker and chronicled her journey from NYU's liberal arts program to fashion designer, costume designer and now curator of ArtFashion Gallery, a Lower East Side location in New York where she selects handcrafted apparel and accessories from a group of artists.

Field said that in her opinion, "fashion is an art form," one that "depicts the mood of the time." So whether it was her work as costume designer for "[Sex and the City](#)" starting in the late '90s, or the 1987 film "Lady Beware" with Diane Lane, her outfits spoke to the times in which they were set.

Next up, Field said, is a documentary about her career, "Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field," that will be part of the upcoming Tribeca Film Festival.

Field ended her speech with some advice for the emerging designers in the room: don't be in a hurry since "all career successes take time," and "look inside, not out" in search of fulfillment.



Chris Donovan and Stephan Wierzbicki **PATRICK MCMULLAN VIA GETTY IMAGE**

Turning to the awards, the accessories award wound up in a tie with shoe brands Oncept, a collection from Megan Key Campos and Nick Lucio, and [Chris Donovan Footwear](#) sharing the honors. For Donovan, being in front of a room full of fashion executives was a far cry from the 25 years he spent as a telephone repairman — and much more satisfying, he said.

The beauty award went to Michael and Diana Wilson of Saints & Sinners Haircare, while the fine jewelry award was won by Burkindy, a line from Burkindy Faso, an immigrant artist from West Africa, who said the honor would represent a “new birth” for his brand.

The collaboration award was won by Wolverine 1000 Mile x Old Rip Van Winkle, a bourbon whiskey distillery. Although [Tom Kennedy](#), group president of Wolverine Work, joked that as a 140-year-old brand his company didn’t necessarily fit the mold of an emerging business, he made sure to point out that 100 percent of the proceeds from the capsule are donated to organizations that support young people pursuing careers in the trades.

The sustainability award was given to [Autumn Adeigbo](#) of the brand of the same name, The Hildun Business Innovation award was presented to Marcelo and Jordana Guimaraes of Fashinnovation, and Kimberly Carney of The Wires was named Entrepreneur of the Year.

Teddy von Ranson of the Teddy Vonranson brand won for active/casualwear. The designer, who spent 15 years at Ralph Lauren, thanked his “small but mighty team,” and credited his husband for supporting him when he came up with the crazy idea to become an entrepreneur. Now that his business is established, von Ranson said he’s hoping to help “build a new layer of American designer with all of you,” he told the room.



Oncept founders Megan Key Campos and Nick Lucio
PATRICK MCMULLAN VIA GETTY IMAGE

Marrisa Wilson New York took home the ready-to-wear award and said the creation of her business was part of a “strategic plan” she came up with in the second grade.

And finally, Bach Mai was awarded the eveningwear trophy.

To be nominated for an FGI award, participants must not have been in business longer than six years.

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