



G O L I G H T L Y

In Mercury Style

The Political Fight to Fashion: Welcome to Charleston, FGI

BY MEGAN ABIGAIL
CHANDLER

I would venture to assume that the uninformed fashion mind would see the Spring 2012 Ralph Lauren collection presented on the runway of Lincoln Center last week as an unimportant facet to the happenings around our world. Well, you may be right. You may be right in saying that, in Charleston, it doesn't matter that 165,000 working people in New York make up the fashion community, and that comes out to five percent of the population and, by extension, \$2 billion in tax revenue. You may be right in saying that, to Lowcountry men and women, the fact that Parsons The New School for Design graduates 90 percent of their classes year after year is irrelevant. You may actually be right in saying that the world of fashion is a pretty portrait but not much more. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, who just wrapped up their exhibit *Savage Beauty*, displaying the fabric architectural masterpieces of the late Alexander McQueen, may disagree with you, but who's to say they are right?

In a country whose economic turmoil continues to leave citizens reeling as we are inundated with headlines of increased debt ceilings, impending elections and the rise of the Libyan rebels, the world of fashion seems as if it may not matter. However, I think it would be good to know the economic impact on the neighborhood where the New York Fashion Week is held. According to a report by Fordham University Graduate School of Business students, the total economic impact on the neighborhood of Lincoln Park, where, by extension, millions of international business men and women flock in September and February, was \$20,902,193 following the February 2011 runway shows. The study, which focused solely on the Lincoln Center area and the roughly 100 shows held under the aegis of Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, is proof that fashion is the uplifting Band-aid on the gaping wounds of this nation's sad news.

Women like Eleanor Roosevelt, Carmel Snow and Edith Head founded Fashion Group International (FGI) in the 1930s as the first ever non-profit organization to support the business of fashion. This international organization was brought to Charleston by Rosanna Krekel, FGI of Charleston's Regional Director in January 2011, and has already found recognition among the New York branch whose members you may know — does Oscar de la Renta or Anna Wintour ring a bell? In the global FGI directory, the yellow pages of fashion, Charleston's FGI branch listings sit snugly between Chicago's and Boston's, and in plain sight of the world's heaviest hitters.

It would be easy to say, "How does this affect me?" But let's look at what Ms. Krekel and her Board of Directors have been up to in the first eight months. In February of this year, a Spring/Summer Presentation of Runway Collections from Paris, Milan, London and New York was shown to a sold-out crowd of Charleston industry professionals and moderated by a Louis Vuitton executive with panelists including designer Mary Norton, a celebrity make-up artist from Laura Mercier, Jodi

Turn Back Time
with Fashion Group International® of Charleston, Inc.

Join us for an evening of expert advice on skin care, nutrition, the latest in anti-aging products, skin cancer prevention, healthy food and makeovers.

Each guest will have an opportunity to meet the experts, hear what they have to say on looking and feeling your best, and leave with a special gift bag with information from the presentation, products, recipes and more.

Monday, September 26th 6-9 p.m.

The Spa At Charleston Place
205 Meeting Street 4th Floor
Charleston, SC

Moderated by:
Ms. Jane Larkworthy
Beauty Director, W Magazine

Peter Lichtenhal
President,
Bumble & Bumble

Howard Kaminsky
Co-Founder, B. Kamins
Laboratories & Author

Dr. Ann Kulze
Physician, Wellness
Expert & Author

Dr. McLean Sheperd
Founder, McLean
Sheperd Integrative
Dermatology

A portion of the proceeds to benefit
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For more information contact FGI Regional Director, Rosanna Krekel @843-696-2688 or email charleston@fgi.org
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IMAGE PROVIDED BY ROSANNA KREKEL OFF FGI CHARLESTON
The ad campaign for "Turn Back Time," a revolutionary beauty event put on by FGI, is pictured above. For more information on the event, visit www.charleston.fgi.org.

Riley and Ms. Krekel, former Vice President of Robb Report and publisher of *Life & Style*. In April of this year, an accessories event was held around the Royal Wedding with Charleston's master milliner Leigh Magar and Mariana Ramsay Hay, co-owner of our venerable 100-year-old retailer Croghan's. On September 26, Jane Larkworthy, beauty director for *W Magazine*, Peter Lichtenhal, president of Bumble & Bumble; and Howard Kaminsky, co-founder of B. Kamins Laboratories are coming to Charleston — for the first time — ever. They will be joining local talent Dr. McLean Sheperd and Dr. Anne Kulze in hosting Charleston's first ever national beauty forum. In December, Robin Lewis of Goldman Sachs will be here to host an unprecedented retail event, of which we will provide more details in the future.

The organization has met its first year membership qualifications: it has a strong Web site presence (www.fgi.org), a Facebook page and an active Twitter following and has an active campaign in the works featuring seven Charlestonians who are business owners and FGI members who are looking for support from Fashion Group International to help them stay current and build their businesses.

While the Holy City is justifiably wrapped up in the cruise ship debate, the *Mercury* has maintained sound opinions against warping our city into a knock-off Key West; however, we're a local newspaper, and we're rooted in Charleston. We want to see Charleston grow stronger as she maintains her footing in her heritage. Therefore, when we look to the conceptual proposals for boosting the city's economic standings, we cannot help but see the value in a non-profit organization like FGI. This group, committed to growing the careers of those in fashion from public relations to publishing to interi-

or design to retail, has already garnered national attention and an international award, steering the eye to Charleston and her overwhelming value.

Charleston has always been a refuge for the hedge-fund manager and semi-celebrity as they hide out in the sandy disguise of Kiawah's dunes or the cobblestones of the Peninsula, but it is no longer just a vacation hub to Mr. Big Stuff. Rather, the world is seeing value in the Charleston fashion scene thanks to FGI's presence.

So, for the individual who looks on graphic tartan and faux fur as faux-intellectual prowess and fluff for the *New York Times* Style Section, FGI's stats prove that the world of fashion is a serious world and ought to be taken as such. The world of fashion is the next ticket to Charleston's undeniable inching into the future. It won't change who we are. It won't change our history, our integrity or our gentility. FGI is as much a part of Charleston as it is a part of Paris or New York. It is a beacon to boast our value and potential as the next Mecca of impeccable elegance.

The introduction of a new decade in the millennium brought Charleston a step forward into the realm of couture and fashion aptitude. We already have the Art Institute and a strategic group of original local designers as well as retailers both local and national to bolster our fashion-standing. Local retailer Rhett Ramsey Outten of Croghan's says, "As members of Fashion Group International, we love the collaborative energy that takes place at all gatherings as well as the exposure to the best the fashion world has to offer, as this is truly an international organization." Annette Sandford-Lopez of Charleston Place Spa adds, "I've been a member of FGI for years as I worked in New York City with Estée Lauder. When I came to Charleston, I continued my membership, and I was ecstatic when they started an FGI chap-

ter in Charleston. Since I now run the spa at Charleston Place, I thought it would be a fantastic opportunity to network with others of like mind in the industry. It is also a great opportunity to share ideas and build business opportunities. So, as of late, I've been working very closely with Rosanna to help organize the *Turn Back Time Beauty Event*, contacting Peter Lichtenhal in addition to Howard Kaminsky and Dr. McLean Sheperd. All of the proceeds of the event will go to 'I Will Reflect' (a melanoma awareness and prevention campaign). So, from a business perspective, this has really been mutually beneficial." Suzanne Allen, interior designer of Wall Candy, says, "My business is interiors and specifically resurfacing anything from walls to furniture to floors. I get so inspired not only from fashion with its ever changing colors and patterns, but also with the people who love and respect fashion, as their perspectives on art and design are always an intriguing aspect of fashion group international gatherings."

Now we have an organized group whose cohesive interest is in the community's well being, from education (think of the Parsons example) to economic stimulation (think of the effects of New York City from their seasonal fashion weeks).

What makes Charleston so valuable in this quest is that it is our character, architecture and persona that make this branch of FGI so successful and groundbreaking. We have the potential to find a footing in this renowned organization without ever changing who we are, and how many times are you able to say something like that in a lifetime? The truth is that we are a city whose value is slowly coming to light in an altogether different section of the population, and we're doing so gracefully and elegantly with the help of FGI.

Keeping Up with King Street The Experience of King Street

BY SUSAN LUCAS

Patterson Smith recently commented that people don't want things as much as they used to; rather, they want experiences. Maybe that's why King Street is such a fascinating place. The things we need are all there, plus the experiences.

The information booth at 2nd Sunday is very educational in that regard. People give more information than they take away. There are questions, of course: "Where is Banana Republic? Where can I get a haircut on Sunday? Who has the best pizza?" By far the most frequently asked question is, "Why isn't it this way all the time?"

I grew up in the Midwest, where going to the mall was a shared community experience. Looking back, it was pretty contrived. The trees were all in pots, the light was artificial, dining alfresco meant the food court, and there wasn't a single locally-owned business to be found. King Street is a genuine shared community experience, only it's outdoors, the architecture is fabulous, and it's a couple hundred years old. No wonder people want 2nd Sunday every week.

That's something to remember when you're planning holiday shopping and events: downtown Charleston offers what can't be found at the mall, the outlets or online. It's the stuff plus the experience — the Farmers Market, the City Market, art galleries, and food. It's shopping on real, beautiful city streets, with shops and restaurants populated — even owned — by people who live in your neighborhood. Now there's a free trolley ride to boot. CARTA does a loop down King, across Broad, up East Bay through the City Market ... a fresh bus every ten minutes. What's next, free parking? It doesn't hurt to ask, because many businesses offer that too, but I'll pay for parking just like I do in any lovely coastal city; it's worth it for the experience.

Speaking of experiences, have you been to Bottega Brandina? Go; you will feel like you're visiting the Italian Riviera. They carry unique and beautiful bags and other products by Italian design icon Marco Morosini, whom I had the good fortune to meet. He's charming, attractive and creative to the max. Next time he's in town you'll hear about it here, so you can meet him, too.

There's a Trunk Show at Rapport September 22-24 for those who think Armani, and another trunk show coming up in October for Nina McLemore. You'll remember Rapport scooped up many of Saks's personal shoppers. Thankfully their excellent service and wardrobe advice live on in good experiences daily.

The Macintosh Restaurant will open on Upper King Street September 21 with a ticketed benefit for the Gavalis-Kolanko Foundation, an organization that awards scholarships to College of Charleston and Charleston Southern University students with physical limitations. Macintosh is the latest offering by restaurateur Steve Palmer and magic chef Jeremiah Bacon. Poke around www.upperkingdesigndistrict.com for a link to purchase tickets if they aren't sold out already.

Another great experience is Small Business Lunch at Halls, held the first Thursday of each month. The speaker lineup has been fascinating, featuring Mayor Riley, Helen Hill, Ray Chandler, Jim Newsome and coming up next month Coach Bobby Cremins. So far no speaker has shied away from controversy or discussion with the group of 70 or so local business-people, and the food is fabulous.

"Keeping Up With King Street" is about the experience of downtown. I realize it's sometimes easier to go to the mall, but think about what you'll miss.



PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED
Susan Lucas.

Out & About PHOTOGRAPHS BY MEGAN ABIGAIL CHANDLER



On September 22, co-founder of Omorovicza skin care line, Margaret de Heinrich de Omorovicza, hosted ladies in Cos Bar. There she held demonstrations on the value of the line while party-goers enjoyed light appetizers and libations. For more from the event see page 18.