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VENT diary

Trending at 35 Prioleau



On Tuesday the 8th of February, Charleston's very own Harbor Club, at 35 Prioleau Street, found itself the elected melting pot for fashion industry professionals and enthusiasts - namely, current and aspiring members of The Fashion Group International. For those unfamiliar, FGI is the largest, non-profit global fashion organization, founded by two Elizabeths (Arden and Roosevelt, respectively) and former Vogue Editor-in-Chief Edna Woolman Chase. To date, it boasts over five thousand members in thirty-seven regions - the most recent addition being that of our beloved Charleston. Tuesday night's forum, hosted both by Regional Director Rosanna Krekel and Public Relations Director Katie Kern, welcomed an esteemed panel of industry veterans - local accessories designer Mary Norton (touted by FGI as one of their Rising Stars); Laura Mercier make-up artist, Jodi Riley; Taylor Ware, Area Director of Louis Vuitton; and Krekel herself, having served under a number of renown magazine titles - among them, Life & Style Weekly, Rolling Stone, and Glamour.

The event's first hour saw individuals from all industry tiers mingling between two open bars and a room laden with mouth-watering hors d'oeuvres. On the menu? Roast beef and its complementary spreads, brie and an assortment of fruit, bread, and crackers, and pureed potatoes with all of their necessary accoutrements: chives,

cheddar, bacon and sour cream. Guests roamed freely, clutching mimosas and martinis and dressed à propos to the occasion. Name tags eliminated the game of Guess Who; ticket-holders wore white, media silver, and panelists – well, what else but gold?

By eight o'clock, bodies were ushered up onto the second floor for the start of an FGI-sponsored presentation.

As described by Krekel, the organization's mission statement here in the Holy City is to "develop the careers of our members and their businesses... and put a spotlight on Charleston as a fashion capital." Fittingly, their method to the madness included a thorough trend report that would, ideally, bolster the relevancy and taste-spotting for boutique-owners, buyers, and the overall fashion-conscious. The video presentation pulled from Paris, Milan, London, and New York runways, serving as a Venn diagram for spring designer aesthetics: veiling, macramé, the Seventies, long skirts, poplin – and these are just to name a few of the trends highlighted in FGI's How to and What's What guide. But it was the panel discussion that followed that watered down all of this season's possibilities into a must-have closet checklist, and if you weren't there, or simply not taking notes, I have compiled for you a hot-list as dictated by Ware, Norton, Riley, and Krekel:

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

MN: Platform heels and wedges. A longer skirt, a boyfriend shirt, and color, color, color.

JR: For beauty, apply a stronger lip. "The red is very dramatic and classic and yet it's very modern-looking." Also, try a teal on the eyes for a pop of color.

RK: "Beautiful long necklaces are great accents." Also: colorblocking, floral, and crossbody bags."They are pieces that can be added to a wardrobe already existing." And when all else fails, go monochromatic. "We all have it – a white jacket, a white pant, a white skirt. It's so clean and wonderful, and you can do it at any price-point."

TW: Take risks. Embrace the different facets of yourself, but don't be a style-schizo – wear what's you, but run away with whatever that is, be it "the glitz and the glamour, the oversized and the casual."

GET INSPIRED

MN: "I look at [DailyCandy](#) and [Style.com](#). Inspiration, for me, comes a lot from apparel – both from shopping around and looking at stores, and from vintage and looking at shows. My bags aren't plain; what I do is never plain – it's girl-on-crack. I like to see all the tchotchkes, so when I see evening gowns and when I see the over-the-top – for example, what Gucci did with all the fringe – I think, 'Oh my god, I'm gonna stick that on a bag!' More is more, and I wanna stick it on stuff. Seeing the runway shows is deeply inspiring.

JR: "I'm inspired by Fashion Week and award shows. I love it when I see people taking risks. I'm such a hoarder of every magazine. I love *Bazaar*, I love *Elle*, I love *InStyle*. Not a huge blogger, but I actually enjoy Perez Hilton and I do look at DailyCandy sometimes."

RK: "Inspiration really does come from everywhere. Traveling to places that we go to and see really unique styles... [It also] comes from going to great concerts and seeing the audiences and different bands and inspirations there. I love every single print magazine, so there will be no such thing as print magazines going out of business as long as we're alive. There are blogs there that I really love... [The Sartorialist](#). If you love the craftsmanship of clothing, Scott Schuman, the blogger, truly understands why we spend the money we do on the clothing we do. So if you're buying an investment piece, he will tell you every little bit about craftsmanship, everything about it. He has wonderful, inspired photography from around the world. There's another blog from Italy called [My Floor is Red](#) – but it's

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incredible because it's a very international perspective on fashion. Nathalie Maggiori writes in Italian, but you don't have to read Italian because she translates it on the bottom. Her perspective is so unique because she looks at things differently."

TW: "One of my favorite parts about spring and fall fashion weeks is The Sartorialist the week after. What they shoot in Paris, NY, Milan... Scott is amazing. I also love FTV.com - it's from France. They do a lot of bios on the models and show all the runways."

PERSONAL STYLE ICONS

MN: Annie Hall, Dianne Keaton.

JR: Kate Moss, Sienna Miller, Gwyneth Paltrow, Old Hollywood à la Ali McGraw.

RK: Grace Kelly.

TW: Cary Grant, Coco Chanel, Audrey Hepburn.

Beyond trends, however, the panelists touched on the current issues existing in the market, one being the rising price of cotton. "It's funny that cotton poplin is now your huge luxury item. It's no longer silk," observed Norton. A concern brought up by Ware involved the limited translation of pieces from catwalks to the stores that distribute them. "A show can be so inspiring and so compelling," Ware said, "but then when you watch the line come to retail... seventy looks walk the runway, but you might see forty that are actually commercialized." Norton, in drawing her own conclusions to the sources perpetuating the discrepancy, inadvertently pointed a finger at retailers' propensity to buy 'boring.' Such a statement drew local boutique owners Stacy Smallwood (of Hampden Clothing) and Nancy Lerner (of Nancy's) out of their chairs to defend their own editorial tastes. It was a live, off-the-cuff moment that brought forward comparisons to a town hall meeting, reminding the room that FGI is as much of a vicarious platform for the luxury designers they showcase as it is for the shoppers and shop-owners.

Perhaps more relevant to us at VENT, a burgeoning publication, was the ongoing struggle brought up by Krekel. "I feel like in publishing, we're going through what the music industry went through," she said, citing that "the iPad has been a game-changer for our industry... We've had a precipitate drop in single-copy sales. Our subscriptions weren't as bad, but in order to keep the magazine vital, we've got to work the content, and work with the social apps that apply." With technology moving as fast as a Google search or a single text message, perfect-bound pages must be HTML-coded in order to keep afloat from obsolescence. Particularly with fashion titles, the editorials of which have long graced bedroom walls, refrigerator doors, and collages upon collages - be it on school notebooks or inspiration boards of design houses - growing pains lie ahead. However, Krekel remained optimistic, saying, "Print is one-hundred-percent here to stay."

The forum concluded with questions from the audience. It was, all in all, a classy, lighthearted affair where the fashionables wined, dined, and converged in one distinctly Charlestonian setting. Keep an ear out for the next FGI forum and join us, if you can.

- words by Christine Felipe, Features Editor
- photograph by Cyle Suesz, Editor-in-Chief

For more information on The Fashion Group International, visit: <http://charleston.fgi.org>

Or, keep your fingers on the pulse here: <http://www.facebook.com/fqicharleston>

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