On November 9, a group of fashion industry veterans assembled at the Hearst Tower in New York City for Fashion Group International’s Spring/Summer 2017 ready-to-wear trends panel discussion. After an in-depth trend analysis from Marylou Luther, FGI President Margaret Hayes introduced the panel, which included Vogue.com’s Creative Digital Director Sally Singer as special guest moderator; legendary Bergdorf Goodman personal shopper Betty Halbreich; Bloomingdale’s Operating Vice President and Fashion Director for Women’s Ready-To-Wear Brooke Jaffe, Macy’s Fashion Director Nicole Fischelis, W Magazine’s Executive Beauty Editor Jane Larkworthy and Harper’s Bazaar’s Executive Accessories Editor Amanda Alagem.

The previous day’s presidential election was still top-of-mind for the panelists, with Singer kicking off the conversation by saying, “When the world looks good, you don’t have to. But the world can be ugly; fashion can help.” Singer moved on to highlight some recent industry shifts including the buy-now, wear-now movement; designer shuffles, and diversity on the runways. Then she opened up the discussion by asking the panelists what they are excited to wear right now.
sweaters and shirts help women project an effortless confidence that is attractive.

Singer also asked the panel how to convince the consumer to shop and spend right now. Jaffe reiterated that the Bloomingdale's shopper will spend for special, covetable brands. Halbreich added that women will always shop for bags and shoes, while Alagem said designers need to carry over styles from season to season and communicate that they are investment pieces.

One of the last subjects of the day was the "Zara-fication" of fashion, which led Larkworthy to ask, "Is Zara the devil?" Jaffe observed that "young women are proud to wear the badge" when it comes to the fast-fashion phenom. Singer added that Zara is best when it's not copying runway trends, but instead interpreting them. It was a fitting finale to the group's interpretation of the latest trends.

Halbreich chimed in first saying it's a difficult season since she walks the store every day and sees a lot of markdowns. She suggested that designers need to get back to the simplicity and reality of how women want to dress. "I have a feeling we're going back to a more simple look," she said. Larkworthy echoed this sentiment, saying that simplicity was a huge beauty trend on the runways.

Jaffe added that she is overwhelmed and intimidated by a lot of the season's upcoming trends. However, she also sees great opportunity for Bloomingdale's in the simplicity and ease of trends like shirting and denim.

Fischelis took a different view, insisting that the runway is meant to inspire and "fashion is a reflection of the time." In a chaotic time, she said the runways can provide a lot of hope and inspiration. She also noted that fashion is becoming less season-driven and heading more to a year-round model. Halbreich expressed a similar idea, saying that she doesn't go by the trends of each season and instead she puts customers in what is most flattering for them.

From Alagem's editorial perspective, she is most excited by the recent trend of collectible and covetable accessories that people will buy now and keep forever. Jaffe said this trend resonates for Bloomingdale's as well, because there are certain special brands that customers will step in and spend for, like Gucci.

At one point, the subject changed to whether women dress for men, "I feel like we haven't dressed for men in years," said Larkworthy. Halbreich agreed, noting the recent popularity of trends like flat shoes and baggier silhouettes. Jaffe added that Bloomingdale's shoppers are gravitating towards a relaxed ease and perfect imperfection. Additionally, Alagem suggested that rather than dressing for men, women are stealing trends from them. She said menswear-inspired sweaters and shirts help women project an effortless confidence that is attractive.

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— Melissa Pastore
Contributing Writer
Almost every seat was taken at FGI as members and guests packed the house for the 2016 edition of “Future Shock.” The hot topics at last year’s iteration were mobile and 3-D printing, said moderator and digital innovator Kevin Wassong. He asked the panel—Andy Marks, president of Marks Entertainment + Media; Jill Manoff, editor in chief of the website Glossy, futurist Erica Orange; and Adam Gam, VP of marketing at Perfect Corp., if augmented reality and virtual reality were coming into play in fashion and retail, considering the Pokémon Go phenomenon.

Manoff pointed out that most virtual reality (or VR) efforts seem like publicity stunts, but as the idea of the traditional runway presentation is evolving, she said there are a lot of possibilities. “Now, traditional runway is being streamed, viewed on laptops or phones. But some designers are doing runway via virtual reality goggles,” she said.

Orange explained the difference between VR and AR (augmented reality): AR being a computer-generated layer—like Pokémon Go. She cited an AR grocery store in South Korea that is only visible or accessible via smartphone in a certain location. VR, on the other hand, tricks the brain into thinking it’s doing something else, in a different location, in real time—using a headset or goggles.

Gam said the biggest challenge is getting beyond the goggles. “VR and AR are going to become a tool, and even though it seems far away, it’s closer than you’d think,” he said. He pointed to a promotion through Marie Claire and Soltice sunglasses that allows virtual try-ons.

Shifting the focus to the importance of social media, Wassong asked what platforms have the most impact on marketing. “Snapchat is where the next generation is,” said Marks. “Kids are nowhere near Facebook. My son is 15: Snapchat is their world.” He said Instagram is key to telling a brand’s story today.

Manoff agreed, noting the launch of Instagram’s “Stories” feature, and the fact that the app is becoming shoppable, are making “so exciting right now.”

The rise of Instagram over Twitter highlights the idea of time as the ultimate luxury proposition, according to Orange. “Communication is so much more truncated—from 142 characters to just an image.”

The other major change in communication, according to the panelists, is its temporal nature:

Snapchat messages are not permanent. It seems the “Cybrids” (the under-18 crowd) know how to avoid the hard lessons of posts frozen in time and coming back to haunt you, a la Facebook. There’s also the race to capture the ever-shorter attention span of most consumers.

A key difference between Generation Z and Millennials is that Generation Z is very aware that “big data” is watching: they share selectively and delete a lot more than Millennials.

So what’s the key message? Orange says don’t take your eye off the counteBrend: interaction and in-person conversation becomes the most effective tool. Gam points out that it’s not generational—in fact the latest thing is to go “live”—Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram all now offer a live streaming feature. “The pendulum is going to swing back to human-based transactions: face to face, play-based and brick and mortar.” Wassong pointed to all the “disruptors” who have found that they need to have (after all) a brick-and-mortar presence.

— Katie Kretschmer
Editor/Contributing Write
Thursday, January 26th, 2017
Rising Star Luncheon and Awards Ceremony

Rising Star Award winners in eight categories will be recognized at the annual celebration.

Cipriani 42nd Street
Reception: 11:30
Luncheon and Awards: 12:00 noon

For more information and to purchase tickets and/or tables
Visit www.fgi.org or call 212.302.5511

To all our members and friends,
Fashion Group sends every wish for a New Year of Health, Happiness, Peace and Prosperity.

Once again, ever-generous FGI members helped make the season brighter for more than 250 children at the New York Foundling Hospital. We distribute letters to Santa to any and all members who want to help fulfill Christmas wishes. The piles of festively wrapped gifts fill the halls at headquarters until Mr. Claus picked them up on December 16th. Making Santa’s extra-nice list this year are Jill Haber, who answered 40 letters, Idelle Haley, who answered 15 letters, and Gordon Kendall, who answered 10 letters. Several businesses and organizations went above and beyond as well: LIM College, 75 letters; Givaudan, 25 letters, and LVMH, 20 letters.

Many thanks to all who participated, and a gold star to FGI’s Jazz Purewal, who is Santa’s right hand and permanently on the “nice” list for her annual efforts.

— Katie Kretschmer
Editor/Contributing Writer

HAPPY HOLIDAYS