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iTALK@FGI

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From left: Mary Murcko, Caroline Fabrigas, Peter Lichtenthal, Karen Grant, Howard Kreitzman, Claudia Lucas, Essie Weingarten, Paulo Lima

Fashion Group International celebrated The Art of the Beauty Start on April 30, at New York's Hilton, with a panel of beauty industry innovators. FGI board member **Caroline Fabrigas**, president of the Scent Marketing Institute, introduced the experts who meet the challenges of today's changing marketplace, noting that the pioneering spirit of beauty is not gone. They included **Karen Grant**, vice president and beauty analyst at The NPD Group; **Peter Lichtenthal**, president of Bumble and bumble; **Howard Kreitzman**, vice president of cosmetics and fragrances at Bloomingdale's; **Claudia Lucas**, merchandise director for beauty at QVC; **Paulo Lima**, cofounder of IT Cosmetics, and **Essie Weingarten**, founder and global creative director of Essie. **Mary Murcko**, vice president and publisher of *Self* magazine, said each panelist lent a different perspective to engage, shape, invent and reinvent new products for today's beauty consumer, while Grant marveled that the combined wisdom of the panelists exceeded 100 years.

Invent and Reinvent

Having an authentic message is one of the keys to successful brand creation and maintenance. Lucas, a senior retail merchandising executive with 20 years of experience in the UK and USA, specializes in luxury beauty and emphasized the importance of having a product that really works with its story. "From our perspective, it's about storytelling and authenticity,"

Lucas said. "If there's a reason why this brand exists, it's because its passion is a point of distinction."

Lima, who began IT Cosmetics in his living room, now runs one of the largest private color cosmetics companies in the United States. Lima says his company is based on a problem-solving paradigm. "We have a brand DNA and we stick to it," he said. In addition, Lima emphasized that partnering with someone that understands who you are, and who can provide a platform for your brand's story is essential. "With QVC, we have a retail partner that allows us to be true to ourselves."

Weingarten, founder of the go-to nail brand for beauty professionals, was emphatic: "Be true to your brand; don't look at what your competition is doing." Essie cosmetics, available in more than 100 countries, is known for cutting-edge color, quality and nail care. It was acquired by L'Oréal in 2010. "We were in the professional nail-color business and originally came up with 12 colors that had a personality and a name. People were drawn to our products. I was basically the cheapest addiction around," said Weingarten, "You're looking at the American dream."

With more than 40 years of retail experience, Kreitzman has been in his position at Bloomingdale's since 2003. He looked at brand origins as well, noting, "We came out of no place and evolved into a place where women like to shop. We bring people in for our brand values."

THE ART OF THE BEAUTY START



From left: Peter Lichtenthal and Howard Kreitzman

Lichtenthal is president of both Bumble and bumble, a hair care and styling company founded in 1977, and Smashbox Cosmetics, which started in 1996 at the iconic Los Angeles-based Smashbox photo studios. He balances the dual identities of the brands, which have retained their original concepts, and said it's important to keep the brand story new and exciting. "What is critical is that you always keep your storytelling fresh, so you are perceived as always having the air of a start-up. Keep true to the storytelling and innovation as you evolve," said Lichtenthal.

Cultural Identity

When a smaller brand is acquired by a larger entity, fostering cultural identity is key. Lichtenthal emphasized balance. "Being part of a larger company presents a challenge, as well as considerable benefit in terms of quality and assurance, but we have to have what Grant termed, 'a split personality,'" said Lichtenthal, acknowledging The Estée Lauder Companies' role as the parent of the two brands.

"It's a completely different environment and now we're a little piece of a puzzle, and it's an amazing fit. It does work," said Weingarten of her brand's place at L'Oréal. She acknowledged that her one wish was to have every woman in the world love Essie. "With a big machine behind the brand, it will be able to touch every woman in the world. In 33 years, the brand hasn't really changed that

much. I'm like the guardian angel that looks over it and we hope it will live forever," said Weingarten.

Clearly, self-fulfilling prophecies are not in everyone's playbook, and strategies are at work to keep the wheels in motion. "There has to be a willingness to work in partnerships," said Lucas, "and there must be readiness for customer acceptance when a brand takes off. If a brand sells out on QVC and it takes off, you'd better be ready, because it's a big machine to build," added Lucas.

Evolving Times

Grant noted that the way the consumer engages with products is changing. While the rules are not hard and fast, there is a trend toward a curated model of product offerings in retail. Kreitzman cited the success of the Space NK shops, a boutique retail model in Bloomingdale's, and the vision of founder **Nicky Kinnaird** to provide an array of high-quality beauty brand offerings under one roof.

Likewise, the abundant options in today's market have also created the need for more excitement surrounding a product, and the need for relevance. While Weingarten's "Aha" moment came when she received a letter from her majesty's hair dresser requesting "Ballet Slippers" nail color for the queen, she knows that today's world is changing, notwithstanding the "honor of being on the best fingertips in the world." Weingarten acknowledges that e-commerce has been key for the brand, and going with her sense of what was right for the time has been good for her. "In the Eighties, I did pastels, then decided to go dark and dangerous with 'Wicked,' first killing it in the UK, and later a success in the US. You're probably looking at one of the luckiest women in the world because I followed my dream," said Weingarten.

Lichtenthal said that a lot depended on presentation. "It's how you sell and present. For example, at Bumble and bumble, we tell the story of an iconic product, create and enhance the engagement of the product with the consumer, and keep the level of excitement relevant."

In addition to curated assortments and fresh retailing, the emergence of new beauty tools and devices has taken off. According to Lucas, this has been a logical step in their success. "We showcase skincare and technology, and despite a price point of \$125, devices—for example, Clarisonic tools—have sold out. These devices continue to do really well for QVC," said Lucas. "Color cosmetics also continue to be successful. It's all about demonstration. Likewise, the fragrance category, which we sell from the emotional perspective rather than the technical, continues to sell well because of the story," she said. "At QVC, we encourage interactivity, and review and share product news with the customer. We have built trust with the customer, which is key," she said.

Making the products relevant and accessible remains essential for each of the brands. The consensus was that whether online, at kiosks, via social media or at brick-and-mortar retail, keeping the brands interesting and fresh, being open to consumers' choices and, according to Lichtenthal, "being open to the next generation of experts," will keep brands relevant. "As you become bigger and the market changes, the old paradigms just don't always work," he added.

Lucas was philosophical, "I don't think it's just youth. It's a marriage of the older, wiser wisdom and the younger, fresher outlook. It's okay to not know everything, but I know I've got a team that really understands it, so to have a great team, to trust them as well as the organization is important." Kreitzman concurred: "We may get the best ideas coming from a young person in college rather than the 'old guys,' but keeping the connection is essential."

— Nancy Jeffries

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Crystal-covered
Mini Cooper

From March 26 to April 3, the watch and jewelry industry gathered in Basel, Switzerland for Baselworld 2014, the most important watch and jewelry trade show of the year. The annual show drew more than 150,000 visitors, journalists, buyers and brand representatives from around the world to view the latest watch and jewelry innovations from the 1,500 brands who exhibited at the event.

Visitors traveled from more than 40 countries to attend Baselworld—including a large contingent from New York. Swiss Airlines Flight 17 from J.F.K. Airport to Zurich seemed like an unofficial Baselworld shuttle since it was filled with a crowd of New York-based buyers, editors and brand representatives making the trip to the show.

Due to the large crowd that descends on Basel each year, visitors take over every hotel room and spare apartment in the city. Boats and barges are even brought in and turned into temporary accommodations. Many attendees stay in France or Germany and commute by train or car each day.

The event filled more than 1.5 million square feet spread across several halls. More established brands like Hublot, Tag Heuer, Patek Philippe, Rolex and Swarovski had impressive booths in the prestigious Hall One of the event space. These massive brand installations spanned up to 20,000 square feet each and provided spectacular environments for the brands to showcase their latest collections to the buyers and press in attendance.

Besides showing their latest watch and jewelry collections, some brands also used Baselworld as an opportunity to present special installations. There was a massive fish tank at the Breitling booth, a crystallized Mini Cooper at the Swarovski booth and a specially commissioned art exhibit near the Movado space. Movado presented “Perceiving Infinity,” a captivating exhibit by South Korean multimedia artist Chul Hyun Ahn that used mirrors and light to create the illusion of infinity.

— **Melissa Pastore**

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Imagine. Invent. Ignite: Calls To Action At The Regional Directors Conference



Catherine
Malandrino

The Fashion Group International’s three-day Regional Directors Conference, held annually in New York is, in its way, much like the sales meetings organized by companies throughout a wide range of industries. Designed to motivate and inspire the FGI “sales force,” from May 15 to 17, 47 regional and district directors were spurred to imagine a future for Fashion Group and how to get there; the skills to invent sustainable strategies that ensure the retention of current members and the enrollment of new ones, and to ignite a new spark of leadership and volunteerism.

Opening night found the attendees gathered at Madison Avenue’s gem-and-art filled Macklowe Gallery, designated as the world’s foremost dealer in 20th century decorative arts. Managing director **Ben Macklowe** and his team hosted a bubbly Champagne-and-chocolate reception and Macklowe himself led a guided tour through the gallery’s three floors of period furniture and a vast collection of Tiffany lamps. The first floor, a gasp-inducing array of rare and precious estate jewels—Verdura, Oscar Heyman, Cartier,

Boucheron and Bulgari are just a few of the top-shelf signatures on view—presented an opportunity to pick up a bauble for anywhere from \$2,500 (not much in that price range) to a *Sterlé* Paris diamond-and-platinum fan brooch, a real dazzler for anyone with \$275,000 to spare.

On Friday, the Condé Nast auditorium, graciously pro bono on the part of that publishing empire, saw a full day of presentations. District and regional directors shared one goal each for the growth and health of their regions after which a rotation of standout speakers—all experts in their fields—spoke to the conference theme—Imagine, Invent, Ignite—as those three calls to action apply to trends in fashion and design, technology and social media.

The business aspect of the day complete, directors headed for The Museum of Arts and Design for a guided tour by curator **Ronald R. Labaco** and then off to The Cosmopolitan Club, which was, noted **Margaret Hayes**, like Fashion Group, founded by and for women. Among its early and illustrious

members were the authors Willa Cather and Pearl Buck; anthropologist Margaret Mead and, especially meaningful, Eleanor Roosevelt, an FGI founding member. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres tucked away, all eyes and ears were turned to the evening's keynote speaker, **Catherine Malandrino**, who spoke with such charm and grace about her life and times as a French fashion designer living and working in New York, staying to chat over dinner with her delighted and admiring audience.

All reconvened at FGI on Saturday morning for breakfast and a lineup of programs on social media, fashion and home décor trends followed by a Rising Star panel wherein award winners shared stories of their struggles, disappointments and the determination and passion that led them to success. The afternoon was given over to the workshops, generously hosted by longtime FGI supporter The Movado Group, where discussion groups offered up ideas and strategies developed to generate interest in and awareness of the FGI brand and promote membership growth throughout the regions.

Meeting adjourned. Homeward bound, by consensus, a successful, rewarding and memorable 2014 Regional Directors Conference.

— Wendy D'Amico

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Jasbir Purewal Weds

On a sun-splashed April day—albeit somewhat chillier than might have been expected—longtime FGI staffer, known to all as Jazz, married **Gurpreet Kahlon** in a solemn yet festive and joyous Sikh wedding. Held in a Sikh temple, called a Gurdwara, every time-honored custom was observed from the arrival and reception of the groom followed by the traditional wedding breakfast, milini and tea, to the actual ceremony itself. Guests removed their shoes, covered their heads and sat on the carpeted floor as, according to centuries-old rituals, Jasbir, our radiant and lovely Jazz, and Gurpreet were joined in “blissful union.” As prophesied on the wedding invitation, they are “two souls but a single thought; two hearts that beat as one,” now and forevermore.

— Wendy D'Amico

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Calendar of Events

Friday, June 20th

Retail Symposium Breakfast: Disruptors Vs. Disruptees

Whiz Kids Of E-Tail
(A.K.A. “The Disruptors”)
Take On Traditional Titans Of Retail
(A.K.A. “The Disruptees”)

Moderator:

Paul Charron,
Chairman Of The Board, Campbell Soup;
Former CEO, Liz Claiborne

Disruptors:

Neil Blumenthal,
Founder & CEO, Warby Parker;

Jennifer Hyman,
CEO & Founder, Rent the Runway;

Peter Weijmarshausen,
CEO, Shapeways 3-D Printer

Disruptees:

Mindy Grossman, CEO, HSN;

David Jaffe, President & CEO, Ascena
Retail Group Inc.

8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., New York Hilton
1335 Avenue Of The Americas

Tuesday, July 1st

Tastemaker Breakfast

Retail and brand consultant Rose Marie
Bravo in a one-on-one conversation with
Michael Gould, Chairman and CEO,
Bloomingdale's, ret.

Seated Breakfast, 9:15 a.m.;
Conversation; 9:45 to 10:30 a.m.

The 21 Club, 21 West 52nd Street

Tuesday, August 19th

Frontliner Home Event and Breakfast: Designing Lifestyle

Panelists discuss interplay between home
design and personal style.

The Javits Center, 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

The FGI Publications Committee
is looking for volunteers with editorial skills
who would love to attend FGI events – gratis!
And write about them for the
FGI newsletter – iTALK.

Brief monthly committee meetings
are held at FGI Headquarters.
Great opportunity for Next Gen members
who'd love to network at
FGI events and score a byline!

Writers, beginners or experienced,
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