



Photo: Ken Dowling and Anne Fulenwider (Credit: Alan Lunden)

## **FASHION FLASH – Objects of Desire**

**By Wendy D'Amico**

Any woman who thinks about fashion from a professional perspective, who follows fashion with a casual interest or is simply a consumer who combs the racks for something new however many times a year (pretty much all of us would be in there somewhere) is aware of all this conversation about see it, buy it, wear it now. (Actually, not all that sudden given that Donna Karen's been harping on it for years)

But now, with collections seen all over social media at the moment they're being shown, consumers, much in an instant gratification mode, are lulled into thinking that what they see on the runway can be in their closets immediately. Which, in some cases, is true.

Burberry, readers may remember, was the first luxury brand to espouse the see-now-buy-now movement and went that route again; pricey beauties could be snatched up right off the runway during the 2016 S/S London Fashion Week. New York designers Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, Thakoon and Tom Ford, among others have also offered up goodies for immediate consumption before they've taken their post-runway bows.

Ken Downing, senior vice president and fashion director of Neiman Marcus – shopping destination for legions of cash-laden, best-dressed A-listers – was, at the start, in the cheering section, but has now backed down a bit. In a one-on-one conversation with Marie Claire's Anne Fulenwider at a recent FGI Tastemaker luncheon at New York's Le Cirque restaurant remarked that social media has created an insatiable appetite for new. Customers expect the clothes they now see on the runway to be available immediately and fail to understand why they have to wait six months and, even more to the point, can get really pouty when a piece they've seen on the runway won't actually be produced. Might they escalate to an episode of foot stamping when a one-off red-carpet dress is not to be had?

The question is, if consumers pass on clothes currently on the racks and, having seen everything as it's being shown, are tired of the clothes before they even get to the store, what is the prognosis for the retailer?

But here's the thing: does anybody remember, as a child, hoping, hoping, hoping that something you wanted so much, for so long, would show up on your birthday – and that boundless pleasure and joy when it finally did? Or, perhaps, the satisfaction and sense of independence derived from buying something you very badly wanted, with your very own money, saved up from a paper route or baby-sitting? New York Times' Vanessa Friedman, who writes so often and so brilliantly about fashion, made the point in a recent article published during New York Fashion Week. To wit: "if you really want something, you should be willing to wait for it. Desire is the engine of fashion. If a dress is unforgettable, it should worm its way into your imagination until it becomes the solution to how you present yourself to the world. Waiting six months shouldn't make a difference."

Some would agree that the anticipation affords as much pleasure as does the moment when the lust for the newest coat or the must-have shoe is satisfied; that the wait makes the acquisition all the sweeter.