

MASTER OF THE FASHION ARTS

- TEXT - LISA GOUDSMIT -



GUERLAIN

Aqua Allegoria Lys Soleia is centered around a clean and transparent floral composition, which reproduces the aroma of oriental yellow lilies and the regal white lily. The base is airy and elegantly light, with clean musk and solar notes. Top notes: bergamot, lemon and palm leaves. Heart: lily, ylang-ylang, and tropical fruits. Base: tuberose, vanilla and white musk

Ah, the delight of having recently graduated and eager to start in the fashion world. The whole world has been waiting for you and can't wait to kiss your designer shoes covered feet. Yeah dream right, dream on. No one is waiting for you. No one will offer you a job unless you have years of experience. No one will pay you to do something that hundreds of others are willing to do for free. This is the harsh (admittedly pessimistic) reality of the fashion world today. One could state that a degree is in no way a guarantee for a career in fashion. If this is the case, what is important for wanting to work in this industry? By saying this, I would like to take a closer look at the meaning of titles in the wonderful world of fashion, or in other words: how important is your educational background in this creative industry in which you want to succeed?

Having recently graduated myself, I started to evaluate the importance of a certificate. No, let me rephrase that: the interest of other people in my future plans forced me to evaluate my chances, with my degrees, in this industry. Two years ago I decided to follow my BA in Fashion Management at the Amsterdam Fashion Institute up with a MA Design Cultures; a relative new masters study at a University in Amsterdam which researches the historical and cultural context of design. I truly enjoyed this more theoretical masters study and absorbed all the knowledge I could get for two years. In the meantime, the global finance crisis began to affect the creative industries. We all know what this crisis, combined with the changing political climate in the Netherlands, has done to the creative and art industries. Long story short: I have an interesting education that sounds good on paper but who is going to hire me, a young professional starting out when they can choose either a less expensive intern or someone with 20 years of experience? My chances are rather minute, forcing me to look for creative solutions: a challenge in itself.

Let's look at some inspiring cases: people who have succeeded in the fashion industry, against all odds or without any (specific fashion) degree. To begin with the most inspiring of them all, the most talented, the most stylish, the most innovative, the one, the only (drumrolls please) Posh Spice! What? Come again? That's right, little Mrs. Beckham has done it: she recently showed at New York Fashion Week and received a standing ovation. You see apparently having relative good taste, a famous husband, the talent to remember

all dance moves on 'Wannabe', and most importantly, a team of talented people around you, is enough to succeed in fashion.

The list of actresses/singers gone fashion is endless: Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen use their own fashion instinct and are pretty successful with their brand The Row. Another example is Sienna Miller and with the help of her sister, an educated fashion designer, founded her brand Twenty8Twelve - recently, after 6 years, ceased production, was relatively successful while it lasted. There are also less fashionable celebrities who use, and are being used by companies, their famous name: the Jennifer Lopezes and Miley Cyruses of this world. And don't get me started on all the fashionable celebrity perfumes, the king of all marketing products. Ok, I just need to get one thing straight: who gave Justin Bieber permission to copy Marc Jacobs' perfume bottle? There, I said it.

On the other side there are also successful fashion creators who are seriously successful even though they don't have a specific fashion education and/or official certificate. For instance: Tom Ford. He was trained as an architect - he became a successful fashion designer - and once people got used to that, a successful movie director. And what to think of the amazing Raf Simons who was educated as an industrial designer, he then worked as a furniture designer before starting his career in fashion. Jean Paul Gaultier did not even need a degree; he learned it on the job as an assistant at Pierre Cardin. The list continues: Oscar de la Renta started out as a painter. Hedi Slimane studied art history and photography

before becoming the creative director at Dior Homme and now Yves Saint Laurent, where, almost instantly, he changed the name to Saint Laurent Paris: what's in a name right? Besides his work as a fashion designer, Slimane is still quite successful and an appreciated photographer. What to think of my hero, Grace Coddington of Vogue USA? Grace, after a car accident destroyed her eyelid and modeling career, started out as a junior editor. The only training she had as a stylist was on the job. But, perhaps that example should be placed in a certain zeitgeist, the late 1960s and early 1970s when degrees were of lesser importance if one wanted to work at a fashion magazine. Furthermore, Grace Coddington has undeniable great taste and sense of fashion; so it was only a smart move of Vogue to offer her a job on the spot.

By now it should be clear: sometimes one doesn't need a degree in fashion to become a successful fashion designer or stylist. In some cases a famous name is enough to start a (commercial) clothing line. There are more ways that lead to Rome; in this case: the wonderful land of fashion. All the examples named herein do have one thing in common: people create their own chances. Sometimes amazing exceptional creativity opens doors, in other cases the game of fame. I believe that titles are not the most important thing in the creative industry: talent and perseverance are. No matter how persistent one is, a bit of luck and a stage to show the talent is essential. Creating your own chances and helping others to create theirs is the real treasure of the fashion industry. Yes we can!