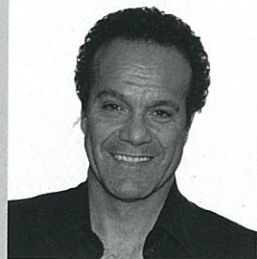


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CELEBRATING 40 YEARS



Robert Cromb on the 20 year story of Kookai.

PAGE 20



Tiffany Spencer takes on Taipei in a trade mission.

PAGE 22



Kath Purkis uses inventory to shape new etail venture with a twist.

PAGE 28



Fashion Council rounds up heavyweights

A FRESH INDUSTRY body with the aim to take Sydney's fashion designers to new heights has begun to rally prominent designers, fashion editors and corporate leaders as it readies for launch in 2013.

The Sydney Council of Fashion Designers (SCFD), a 'not-for-profit' trade association, is spearheaded by CEO, university graduate and fashion aficionado Joel Anthony and is scheduled to launch in March/April 2013.

To date, *Ragtrader* can also confirm that the initiative has already garnered support from a number of prominent fashion figures and corporate names, and that several industry members, including high profile fashion magazine editors have been approached to back the concept.

According to Anthony, designers targeted to join SCFD as part of its official advisory board are also of a high calibre.

Continues on page 9

BIG YEAR 16

The year that was in news – which stories made the top 10?



THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS



Tapping into Taipei

A local delegation attended trade show Taipei In Style from October 16 to 18. Assia Benmedjdoub asks about commercial opportunities at the event.

What prompted you to attend Taipei In Style this year?

Carol: TCF Australia hosted two emerging designers to showcase at the event, tour the exhibition and the adjoining Taipei Innovative Textile Application Show. Opportunities exist for Australian designers, retailers and agents to better understand the booming ASEAN market by attending a fashion trade event such as Taipei IN Style, building networks and developing new opportunities and in turn supplying fashion and accessories online to the growing Asian fashion consumer. Taiwan is often not highlighted in the area of fashion and design talent, but there is an upward trend of young 'streetwise' designers that have both the passion and ability to create a look that is distinctive and attracting global interest with designers linking up with online stores and retail showrooms in Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Singapore and beyond.

Tiffany: We manufacture in Asia so logistically it makes sense. We feel the economy is a lot stronger in Asia and therefore felt growth and exposure would be a lot higher. And finally, it takes House of Zaccaria to an international field which lifts the profile here in Australia. This experience was priceless, not only did I get to view and gain an understanding of the Asian market a lot more closely – which will be very helpful when designing further collections; keeping them in mind – but the contacts I made for assistance in the Asian arena and further opportunities in other product categories.

Chaynika: This opportunity to be a part of an Asian fashion expo was tempting for me as I have exported to an Asian market before, India, and I did get a good response from my

Indian clients. This gave me a good boost to try and explore Asian markets for my label. As they say this industry is all about networking, an event like 'Taipei In style' provides a good platform for a designer to meet other designers from different parts of the continent and experience the diversity in style offered by our peers. It was good to see the response of the agents/distributors regarding my style and the feedback I got from them and potential buyers gave me a better understanding as to where my brand stands in the international market.

You met with a number of agents and distributors – how do their rates and roles compare to Australia?

Tiffany: Very similar but competitive to Australia. Differences would be that some operators list your brand online first, then if that performs well, they sell the brand in their stores, if this goes well they franchise your brand with your own stores. Also some offer collective services such as distributing and/or being your agent as well as having their own stores and brands.

Chaynika: There were many agents/distributors from Russia, Singapore, Hong Kong to name a few. Handsome Heroes (HH) is a Hong Kong based company and they stock fashion brands Mango, Bree, icb, etc. and they showed good interest in my collection. They felt my collection could appeal to their clientele. Wildberries is a multibrand online shop in Russia. Their main interest was to source a company which could provide them with a quality garment that would suit their weather conditions. They approached me with an interest to get a few of my samples to Russia to see the response of their clients

as my garments could be easily customised as per their requirements.

Tiffany: I was really happy with the amount and standard of the buyers. I have potentially picked up representation in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore and even the opportunity to design a separate collection for a 120 store strong company in Thailand which is an amazing opportunity for me. Online companies were definitely the theme of the event and several online stores approached me; one in particular has pioneered a concept like no other being social media and online shopping together and they proposed that House of Zaccaria come on board.

What will the 120 store opportunity involve?

Tiffany: I was approached by the merchandising manager for a menswear store (120 stores) who are looking at womenswear to add/compliment their concept; either through another designers collection or by buying designs from a designer. This is still under negotiation. Most buyers were from very successful long established online stores from affordable to high end designer labels.

What do you see as the challenges in servicing this market?

Tiffany: As many companies interested are online getting a uniform RRP, image and product timing will present as a challenge. There were no confirmed orders from the event but we have since signed three contracts with Asian online stores and this is in the initial process stage.

Chaynika: I remember on my orientation day my lecturer told me 'the fashion indus-

MEET THE PANEL



CHAYNIKA SETHI

Chaynika Sethi launched CVS Fashions in 2006, after studying fashion in India and Western Australia. The brand

specialises in men's and women's corporate wear.



TIFFANY SPENCER

Tiffany Spencer is the creative director of House of Zaccaria, a Perth-based fashion label with stockists in Western Australia and Victoria.



CAROL HANLON

Carol Hanlon is founding manager at the Belmont Business Enterprise Centre (BEC), Textile Clothing Footwear Resource Centre of Western

Australia (TCFWA) and the designedge fashion incubator.

THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS

BUYER BULLSEYE

CAROL HANLON SELECTS THREE BRANDS FROM THE EVENT THAT COULD WORK FOR THE LOCAL MARKET.

NAIF: Designed by Hus Chiu, a textile artist trained in Paris, this brand developed a superb collection of natural 'indigo' hand dyed day wear in silk, linen and tencel. NAIF stands for Nature – Art – Indigo – Fashion, with these artisan 'works of art' developed by Hsu Chui using natural dye techniques some featuring mountain landscapes were breathtaking. NAIF has already been snapped up by a stockist in New York and the label has a great story to offer any Australian retailer looking for individual ECO daywear produced from the mountains of Taiwan at reasonable pricing.

JASPER.H: Designed by Jasper Huang, this is an exciting label gaining a lot of attention through global fashion weeks, couture showcases and media events. Jasper Huang has a substantial design portfolio which also includes corporate product design, accessories and celebrity red carpet gowns. He has now set his focus on developing global fashion collections utilising his traditional Taiwanese culture of oriental detail transferred into wearable contemporary styling.

DA.AI: This is a label promoting 'ECO Fashion from the Heart'. I first saw this product range when I showcased the work of our TCF Global village designers at the United Nations Artisan Fair in New York March 2012. I was amazed to feel and touch the wonderful soft textiles made from PET plastic drink bottles. It was great to meet the design team at Taipei In Style behind this label and discover the humble beginnings of the foundation which was established in 2008 by five Taiwanese entrepreneurs. In 2010, they donated all their shares to the DA.AI Foundation that has three main goals – environment protection, cycle of love and contribute back to society. The Foundation has 72,000 volunteers who collect plastic PET drink bottles from across Taiwan to recycle into usable product which is now so popular, DA.AI now buys in an additional 20 million plastic bottles from surrounding countries to keep up with demand. With 50 retail stores across Taiwan and online shopping site the DA.AI Foundation is keen to expand the technology and manufacturing operations to other countries or find investors wishing to contribute back to society. DA.AI distributes hundreds of thousands of blankets during disasters to those in need that have been made from the PET recycled water bottle.

try is not for weak hearted people'. And it is so true! There is a challenge at every step of the way, especially when you are trying to go international with your brand. A potential challenge that I see in dealing with the international market is of course the big established brands. It is hard to compete but definitely worth a try. I feel foreign language, country-specific laws and all these things which sometimes hold you back from taking this big step, should be put aside. You can always learn a language and regarding the export/import rules and regulations, there are associations like TCF Australia and small business associations which are there to help us through all these how's, when's and why's.

Carol: The market is very cosmopolitan and easy to get around. Language could be an issue but most designers and firms at the fair spoke English. Placing orders by providing clearly written spec sheets is important. We can connect interested Aussie firms to sourcing linkages over there through our networks. I see that it is viable for designers and retailers who may be looking for new Asian-inspired design labels or product from new eco innovation in textiles, such as coffee textiles, pet textiles.

Tiffany: A huge trend which I learnt at Taipei In Style is using non-traditional fabrics, i.e. fabrics made from coffee. There were very inventive and technological advance fabrics which can really set my collection apart from other Australian designers [however] the minimums were too high for us. I found many leads to develop accessories under my brand – therefore expanding my product offer and completing a total look which I've been interested in – but I didn't know where to start.

Chaynika: The textiles section of the exhibition had a wide range of fabric manufacturers, the innovative textiles companies who are breaking the limitations of the fabric constructions and creating eco-friendly fabrics, stain resistant, ultra-light (zero weight!) functional fabrics. My personal favourite was the fabric made from coffee beans. Most of the companies had minimum quantity of 500 yards to order, which was too much for me but I have requested them to send me a sample of coffee bean fabric to see how viable it is for me to include in my collection.

What advice would you have for Australian firms in dealing with the market?

Tiffany: Minimums were high so be aware of that. It's definitely great exposure and there are potential customers for Australian designers wanting to break into the Asian market. I would highly recommend it for that. Be prepared to meet one-on-one with potential buy-

“Minimums were high so be aware of that. It's definitely great exposure and there are potential customers for Australian designers.”

What were some of the other textile standouts that could work here?

Carol: Leading textile R & D firms such as Far Eastern New Century Corporation that developed the technology for Nike of the recycled polyester football jerseys for the 2010 World Cup soccer, which are now used in mainstream product ranges. Future innovations in the Far Eastern pipeline include biodegradable textiles, cradle to cradle (c2c) textiles, waterless dyes, and recycle 'dope' dyes. Another Taipei R & D innovative textile firm was Singtex Industrial Company, SCafe 'Drink it, Wear it' textiles made from recycled coffee grounds collected from the major coffee houses and cafes throughout Taiwan. This is the type of innovative textile technology that is being taken up by leading global brands and Australian labels needs to research and utilise these new ECO textiles in ranges to create new market opportunities.

ers; this is great as you have their undivided attention and can present your concept, image and product to them. Having costs in US dollars is a must. Be prepared to be flexible of pricing if they can support larger quantities.

Chaynika: I personally feel if you are looking to venture into this market, the first thing to do is check out the seminars at TCF Australia regarding 'exporting and importing' or 'how to venture into an international market'. These seminars will provide you with a good idea of what to expect when you plan to take that big step forward. Many people who came to the show had been to many other fashion expos around the world, or at least they have had a good exposure to the market trends internationally, so they are able to provide good feedback. From the feedback that I got and from my gut feeling I would say my next target destination would be Hong Kong. ■