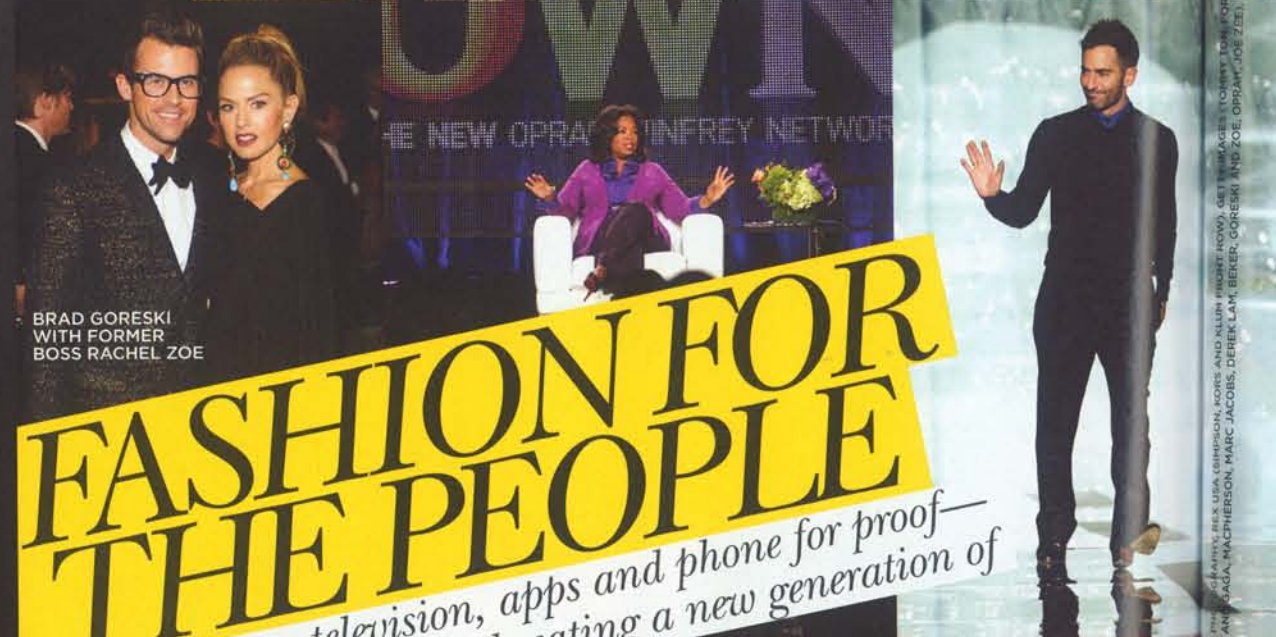




EAGLE-EYED JUDGES FROM PROJECT RUNWAY



BRAD GOESKI WITH FORMER BOSS RACHEL ZOE

FASHION FOR THE PEOPLE

Look to your television, apps and phone for proof— fashion democracy is educating a new generation of style lovers BY ELIO IANNACCI



ELLE MACPHERSON WILL HOST FASHION STAR

CANADIANS JOE ZEE (LEFT) AND JEANNE BEKER OFF AND ON THE RUNWAY

What a difference a decade makes. Ten years ago, fashion-focused reality TV shows, street-style websites and runway-obsessed bloggers were nowhere to be found. Someone who wasn't part of the chic elite—i.e., a stylist, seasoned editor, wealthy customer or an esteemed designer—had

no access to the catwalk or its cast of characters. Today, an estimated two million-plus fashion blogs are on the net, posting news and views on every trend, product and campaign coming from the major labels, invited or not.

The Twitterverse and tumblrati are lapping it up: accessing information at record speeds, uploading their opinions within days, hours, and sometimes minutes of viewing live stream collections, clicking through JPEG galleries, thumbing iPad-enhanced video or downloading head-to-toe designer looks directly to their smartphones via apps such as ShopStyle. Aside from these technical advancements, a new cast of sartorially savvy people—not just models or celebrities—have become a huge part of fashion's inspiration equation. Randomly snapped on their way to work, these stylish savants—who hail from in and outside of traditional fashion circles—continue to produce some of the most shared, liked and coveted looks on the planet, thanks to sharpshooters such as Garance Doré, Scott Schuman and Canada's own Tommy Ton. Websites of The Coveteur (thecoveteur.com) variety have taken this reality fashion mania up a notch, documenting the closets of these well-put-together style lovers, further breaking down the divide between fashion and fantasy.

Then, there is the increase in style-centric TV. Beyond the onslaught of *America's Next Top Model* and *Project Runway* reruns (which currently overpopulate our networks via syndication), a handful of new shows that focus on some of the most heroic—and unlikely—fashion observers are taking major airtime. For example, the startling number of fashion-obsessed productions on the schedule for the 2011-2012 broadcasting year include the recently launched *All on the Line* with Canadian style guru Joe Zee; NBC's upcoming *Project Runway* knock-off, *Fashion Star*, hosted by model Elle Macpherson and featuring Jessica Simpson; designer Chris March's docu-style series *Mad Fashion*; two shows about vintage retailers called *Dresscue Me* and *Fashion Hunters*; and a top secret Ryan Seacrest-produced style program, which is rumored to be hosted by Sarah Jessica Parker.

For those not privy to a front row seat, this "style for the masses" type of TV brings with it great possibility of bringing fashion literacy to even loftier heights. Think about it: A new generation of sartorialists will be exposed to fashion via a fly-on-the-wall experience seldom seen in the '80s, '90s and early 2000s.

"I feel like the veil of fashion has been lifted," says former *Rachel Zoe Project* star Brad Goreski. "The snobbery of it all has been diffused," he explains. In fact, as the former right-hand man in Zoe's celebrity stylist HQ in L.A.,

34-year-old Goreski is a perfect example of fashion's democratic uprising. "Who knew what a stylist did before?" he says via phone from Los Angeles while a camera is, in fact, filming him. "Who knew what went into pulling a red carpet look together? Who knew how many people and pieces it takes for a celebrity press tour?"

Born and raised in the small town of Port Perry, Ont., Goreski grew up watching *Fashion Television* host Jeanne Beker elbow her way into the many hidden processes (hair, makeup, fittings, etc.) related to the runways of Lagerfeld, Laurent, Lauren and beyond. "Now, people are obsessed with behind-the-scenes this or that—every photo shoot has a B-roll camera on set," he says. "Everybody wants to see what it takes to put a shoot together. The modern wave of fashion is that it's not exclusive anymore—it's very inclusive and people are adapting to that."

Goreski's we're-all-in-this-together attitude has kept his fan base growing—and learning—from his experience. So much so, *The New York Times* named him "the Zelig of Fashion Week" and Bravo signed him on to star on a reality series of his own called *It's a Brad, Brad World*.

"The access that I felt I had through Jeanne Beker's eyes taught me everything. It kept me current on what was happening in fashion and who was drawing from which part of art history and who the fashion personalities were. I don't think there is anything negative about these types of shows," Goreski explains, alluding to the fact that reality TV is not so much crushing the fashion dream, but blowing it up. "For example, I had these two guys stop me on Rodeo Drive and they told me they were going to intern at *Vogue* for the summer. They said they were trying to get into the accessories closet because that's how I started off."

He isn't the only friendly fashion persona who aims to re-school the world on the small screen. Annabel Tollman, who has been working behind the scenes as a stylist in the fashion industry for more than 10 years, is set to debut her own reality series. Offering a great deal of experience in the magazine world (Tollman is *Interview* magazine's former fashion director) and boasting a long list of well-known clients (Scarlett Johansson, Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, and Mariah Carey to name a few), she's a shoo-in for TV success. Yet it's Tollman's articulate—albeit populist—point of view on fashion that makes her more than just a ratings magnet.

"The rise of fashion literacy can only be a good thing," she offers when asked about the benefits of having so many behind-the-scenes shows. "Fashion as an industry and a business cannot live in a vacuum available only to a select few. As Coco Chanel said, 'Fashion does not exist unless it goes down into the streets. The fashion that remains in the salon has no more significance than a costume ball.' TV is doing a great job of introducing fashion into the conversation of popular culture as a subject, not just as the icing on the cake. It has helped paint a more realistic view of the industry and the business of creativity. The public probably now better understands fashion and what goes into creating it."

Claiming that the better part of style-related reality television gives off an anti-*Absolutely Fabulous* agenda >

“It’s not just a bunch of people sitting around saying, ‘I’m thinking long, sweetie’ and drinking champagne”), Tollman feels various camera-friendly glitterati have the power to become onscreen mentors. “They can help aspiring designers to realize that fashion is a business and there are tangible steps in getting where you want to be. I personally got introduced to fashion through magazines and also *The Clothes Show*, which was a weekly program about fashion in the U.K.”

But does fashion’s unrelenting exposure come at a price? If you count many of the artful concepts on the runway getting watered down by fast-fashion retailers, the answer is yes. Case in point? The word *couture* is the most misused word in the fashion dictionary. Part of fashion’s

Part of fashion’s allure has always been its exclusivity and mystique.

allure has always been its exclusivity and mystique. Which is why designers such as Tom Ford and Marc Jacobs are struggling to accept the open-door policy the industry has embraced. For example, instead of filling the web with untouched, pixelated looks from his debut womenswear collection last year, Ford decided to “control the images” (his words) and shroud himself in one of the biggest luxuries of our time: a secret. He famously left bloggers off the invite list of his tight-lipped fashion presentation, kept his audience to a cool 100 VIPs, banned camera phones from his runway and released Ford-approved pictures of his pieces 120 days after they were on the catwalk. The result was a collection that was talked about for months rather than weeks. The reason for his cloak-and-dagger ways, Ford told *WWD*, was simple. “I don’t get this need for fashion immediacy. In fact, I think it’s bad. The way the system works now, you see the clothes, within an hour or so they’re online, the world sees them. The customer is bored with the clothes by the time they get to the store.”

Something customers don’t seem to be fatigued by? Discovering the methods Ford uses to whip up his creations. Which is why Oprah Winfrey decided to have cameras from her OWN network follow Ford during his return to the runway for a recently aired documentary. During the film, it’s obvious that the 50-year-old Texan—who still holds his cards close to his unbuttoned shirt—wholeheartedly believes that a magician should never reveal his tricks. At least until they are out of season. “You should do something first and then talk about [it],” he says.

Marc Jacobs was just as uncomfortable with the thought of divulging his professional process via Twitter or Facebook to further define his brand. In a recent *WWD* interview, the 48-year-old New Yorker, who did not use Twitter at the time, was quoted as saying: “I’ve got better things to do [than tweet]. I don’t need to talk to schoolteachers from New Jersey about what was valid and what was invalid and what was derivative and what was referencing [in my collections].” (Jacobs has since jumped

on the Twitter bandwagon. He has a personal account, @MarcJacobs, but tweets are far more regular from his namesake brand’s official account, @MarcJacobsIntl.)

Yet beyond the Fords and Jacobs of the fashion world, there is a growing list of names actively pursuing a global fan base online. Nicola Formichetti, the 34-year-old creative director for Mugler (and one of the world’s most celebrated fashion stylists), regularly tweets job postings, collaborates with random Internet inspirations (his most famous being Montreal’s Rick Genest, a.k.a. Zombie Boy, whom he found on Facebook), invites media-savvy pop stars such as Lady Gaga into his workspace and partakes in meaningful one-on-one digital dialogue with his admirers. “You get to talk to and listen to your followers,” Formichetti told *WWD* of the 81,000-plus pack that trails his tweets. “I get inspired from this all the time. You feel like you’re designing together.”

Yet another designer who has made a bold move to help democratize his own collection is Derek Lam. Fashion lovers had a say in his capsule collection for eBay in February—he designed 16 dresses and invited his fans to vote online on which five would be produced. This method of fashion “for the people, by the people” created such a frenzy online that two of the five pieces that made the cut were sold out in a matter of weeks.

Lam isn’t the only one pushing fashion to the masses. More and more designers, stylists and tastemakers are making the leap to your laptop or tablet and turning the digital space into your own personal dressing room. For example, style authority Jessica Paster—who has dressed Dakota Fanning and Kate Bosworth for *FLARE* covers—has joined Just Fabulous (justfab.com), a website where she directs the site’s stylists on which items are best suited to their customers. Other sites that follow the same route include Send The Trend (sendthetrend.com), where designer Christian Siriano chooses looks for various clients, and Sole Society (solesociety.com), which features tips from Janie Bryant, the fashion visionary behind *Mad Men*, as well as recent website launches by Heidi Klum and Zooey Deschanel. A handful of apps are building on the strength of community-oriented fashion counsel. For example, Fashionism Mobile is an iPhone app that allows users to send photographs of what they are wearing to a random crowd of strangers (it’s whoever happens to be online at the time) for full-on wardrobe consultations and assessments. Its popularity has grown so much since its launch that it has been named one of this year’s leading downloads by the website International Business Times.

With the ivory tower crashing and the democracy of fashion infiltrating everything from your TV screen to your smartphone, this new world order of style signals a more fashion-savvy consumer. It also means a faster rise of new talent and a wider spotlight on emerging labels. As fashion lovers gobble up the new and unexpected, it’s hard to predict how long the love-in will last. But, as this fashion evolution continues for designers such as Formichetti and his ilk, one thing can be guaranteed: The revolution will be televised and tweeted so that all of us—not just a select few—can be inspired. □



KATE BOSWORTH WITH STYLIST JESSICA PASTER

MONTREAL'S ZOMBIE BOY

DEREK LAM'S EBAY CAPSULE COLLECTION

PHOTOGRAPHY: ABACA USA; STYLING: JESSICA PASTER; HAIR: TONY GARDNER; MAKEUP: DANIELA DOBE; SET: SCOTT LEHR; PROP STYLING: SCARLETT JOHNSON; FLOWER: JESSICA PASTER; PROP STYLING: JESSICA PASTER