

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Ralph Rucci, Andre Leon Talley and Robert Burke to speak at 18th annual New York Fashion Conference

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IAC's Gold 2016 show

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

The 18th annual New York Fashion Conference opens Nov. 4-5 in New York, with this year's theme of pioneers with a focus on conception, creation and innovation.

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Speakers include designer Eileen Fisher, Museum at FIT director Valerie Steele, film director Orin Mazzoni, designer Ralph Rucci, author Teri Agins, Chris Del Gatto, Rie Yano, Robert Burke, Kristy Caylor and former Vogue editor at large Andre Leon Talley. Founded and helmed by Lisa Koenigsberg, the event will be held at The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 365 Fifth Avenue between 34th and 35th Streets.

"We always seek compelling voices combining respected authorities, experts at their craft, and those who bring fresh perspectives," Ms. Koenigsberg said.

"Once the themes and topics are identified, we invite those from various fields of endeavor who can best address or who themselves embody the theme of the conference," she said.

Session titles include "Fashion Designers AZ: The Collection of The Museum at FIT," "Pioneers in Fashion," "Magnifico," "Your Choice Has Power," "Fashioning Platinum: Pioneering from Alloy to Retail," "Modern Alchemy: Diamonds and Disruptive Technology," "Pioneers in Denim," "Luxury Online, Retail Now," "Blueprints for Innovation," "Pioneers in Transformation: AJDC and the Platinum Challenge," "Walking With the Muses" and "If any...."

The agenda includes book signings and a private screening of Mr. Mazzoni's film, "Sharing the Rough."

In this Q&A, Ms. Koenigsberg, who is president of New York-based [Initiatives in Art and Culture](#), explains the raison d'être for the show, its target audience, what the speakers bring to the table and the role of fashion and jewelry as sustainable art. Please read on.

What makes this year's conference different from last year's and those in the past?

Initiatives in Art and Culture is always focused on the cutting edge, seeking to keep our finger on the pulse to capture and address what is going on at a given time.

This year, I think we have more direct discussion of process, material and iconic personage.

For example, the panel on created diamonds will begin with viewing the birth of a stone and will culminate in a discussion of the impact of this astonishing and disruptive technology.

With respect to sustainability, our commitment is once again clear. We are thrilled that Eileen Fisher is on the program, as is Kate Black.

Panel discussions such as the one addressing online luxury that you are moderating which may, at first blush, seem unrelated will be linked to sustainability and related issues.

In addition to Eileen, we are fortunate to be hosting Stephen Burrows, Pat Cleveland, Andr Leon Talley and Ralph Rucci, as well as the AJDC jewelers. Their participation provides attendees with authentic discourse, direct contact and interaction with iconic pioneers.

The screening of "Sharing the Rough" is a goal we have worked toward for a year, and we are delighted to host the first New York screening of this important film with director Orin Mazzone and jewelry designer Mark Schneider participating in a Q&A.

What is the focus of this year's event?

Those who really venture forward, putting themselves on the line with vision, design, process, concept or technology that changes their field of endeavor and has the potential to impact society.

Who are you targeting?

Our goal is an audience that cuts across silos, sectors and industry, bringing together people from each of these areas who are committed to and interested in the subject.

The diversity within the group that is unified by its interests adds effervescence and heightens the experience and deepens the perspective for all.



Attendees chatting at IAC's Gold 2016 show

How have you managed to adapt and keep the brand going for 18 years?

IAC responds to cultural shifts, events, new research, discoveries and fresh currents in the air.

Engagement with each of these factors ensures both integrity and relevance, both of which contribute to the brand's ongoing vigor and vitality.

What determined your speaker selection this year?

We always seek compelling voices combining respected authorities, experts at their craft, and those who bring fresh perspectives.

Once the themes and topics are identified, we invite those from various fields of endeavor who can best address or who themselves embody the theme of the conference.

This approach guides us each year, and we are honored by the caliber of those who participate.

What is the key difference between the current agenda and your first event?

The very first conference on fashion was a foray into a new field.

I had wanted to establish a fashion conference because to me fashion is a part of visual culture.

The first conference, which was done in 1998, was called "Fashion: The Newest Art" and simply the fact of its existence and the question posed in the title put us on the front page of the Art Newspaper of London.

Since then, we have explored many topics, expanded the focus, embraced social currents and continued to expand the vision and scope, while remaining true to the original purpose.

Is there a big chasm in the strides the worlds of fashion, jewelry, art and retail have made?

Art, fashion and jewelry can be seen as enterprises. They are also about creativity, artisanry, influence and expression.

Retail seems to me to be complex, but in a different way because it is the principal funnel for these goods to the consumer.

Rather than viewing it as a chasm, we might say there is a gap with three of these areas being more aligned, while retail responds to or impacts the designers, jewelers and artists whose works they put forward in the market place.

Retail today is certainly in a tremendous state of flux and the panel moderated by Gary Wassner will discuss that very topic.

What do you hope the attendees will get out of this conference?

I hope they will come away having gained knowledge, feeling invigorated and renewed by the energy, information and exchanges they have had during a multi-faceted, two-day exploration of pioneers and pioneering.

And perhaps they will be galvanized to make change in the ways that they can within the society and context that have been explored in the conference.

[Please access the conference agenda here](#)

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