



China: Manufacturers wake up to home-grown talent

WGSN's Fashion Report sees a move from 'Made in China' to 'Created in China' and names the Top 10 Chinese designers to watch

London, 29th April 2009 WGSN, the world's leading fashion and style forecaster, has today published its comprehensive Greater China Fashion Report, which includes Taiwan and Macau. The report gives an invaluable overview of China's sourcing and designer culture, retail and government issues and highlights its transformation from an export-oriented manufacturing country to a design-rich nation that puts its domestic market and talent first.

Increasingly, 'Made in China' is replaced by 'Created in China'. Sandra Halliday, WGSN's global managing editor for business resource and analysis at WGSN, says: "China's status as the world's largest manufacturing country has given its fashion designers a low profile internationally. But we now expect this to change as **Chinese creativity moves centre stage** in the years ahead and the country's role as a leading consumer market with home-grown brands strengthens."

While designers in the region are just as concerned about the economic conditions as designers everywhere else, Chinese are also extremely concerned about building and maintaining their **brand image, an area where they recognise their lack of experience**. For new independent designers in this highly competitive environment start-up funding is hard to come by; their most likely routes to finance are private family funding or links to manufacturers to develop small lines. Chinese domestic customers are increasingly interested in independent designers as their sophistication in fashion increases.

Manufacturers have understood this trend and are increasingly turning to their home market for future growth. Halliday comments: "Manufacturers are creating their own-label apparel brands to sell in the Chinese market or acquiring international

brand licences to develop their expertise in this area. What's more the Chinese government, which has traditionally been supportive of the textiles industry, urges these companies to maintain their international market share while exploring the huge domestic market as China has longstanding concerns that its textiles sector is too dependent on exports."

WGSN's Hong Kong team, led by the head of Asia-Pacific content Angelia Teo, has compiled its **Top 10 designers to watch from the Greater China region:**

- **Ma Ke:** Exception design director Ma Ke created the Wuyong label and showed it in Paris. She is widely considered the most important young fashion designer in China today. Exception is sold to 60 stores across 30 cities in China, drawing an eclectic mix of clients from artists, academics, entrepreneurs to fashionable youth and elegant older women. She is a philosophical purist who seeks spiritual and artistic attainment through her clothes
- **Liang Zi:** Tangy's Liang Zi was trained in New York and Paris and returned to China to create the label. She uses traditional cottons and silks, blending them with influences from art and Western fashion, creating in the process a widely-distributed brand that also has an international profile
- **Guo Pei:** Operating at the haute couture end of the fashion sector, Guo Pei has been in business since the 1980s and was chief designer of Tianma (Heavenly Horse) Clothing Company, one of China's most popular womenswear brands of the 1990s. She launched her own company, Rose Studio, in 1996 and has been a stalwart of China Fashion Week since the 1990s, once turning down a Milan Fashion Week invitation in order to show domestically instead
- **He Yan:** After working in Shanghai for large fashion companies, He Yan went solo in 2003. In 2007 she opened her first shop and launched her fourth collection, Spring Republic, inspired by the mesmerising construction of the elaborate costumes of the Beijing Opera
- **Li Xiao-yan:** FangFang's Li Xiaoyan was named womenswear designer of the year at the last China Fashion Week and is seen as a key up-and coming name
- **Liu Xing:** Miidii's Liu Xing offers an almost-Japanese feel for the avant-garde

with layering, tying, ruching, gathering, pleating and dyeing that challenges traditional approaches to womenswear

- **Qi Gang:** SEC's Qi Gang made the move from the Botao label and was named Designer of the Year at the last China Fashion Week. His collections have been likened to the work of John Galliano
- **Lu Kun:** Shanghai-based womenswear designer Lu Kun has seen his career take off after being named the Best Young Designer by the Shanghai Fashion Federation in 2004. Lu is a self-taught designer. His aesthetic mission is to build a bridge between the heady days of the 1930s Jazz Era of Shanghai and the fashion needs of today. Lu Kun has already generated interest in Europe and the US and his designs have been worn by stars including Paris Hilton.

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About this research

WGSN's Greater China Fashion Report is based on a survey of 700 of the country's leading retailers and manufacturers, all of whom are WGSN clients, carried out in December 2008.

The results together with WGSN's own design and business intelligence offers an essential reference for executives of retail companies who are exposed to or are planning to enter the Chinese market. The study is available exclusively from WGSN for £1495/€1195/£995. For more information please visit www.wgsn.com/reports

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