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INPERSON: FASHION AGENT MARC MERKLEN



un moment avec Lee
rue Saint Honoré, Paris

While big brands are establishing themselves one after the other in locations all over the world are seeing huge growth in the fashion and luxury sectors, independent labels find themselves with limited resources to get their collection exposure in less accessible locations such as Asia, Russia or the Middle East. With cities like Seoul, Kuwait, and Dubai hungry for new designers to differentiate their offering from the European capitals, there has not existed an efficient or effective channel for these relationships to build and diversify.

Enter Marc Merklen. Passionate about the product, pure and simple, Merklen's two-year-old agency, My Fashion Agent, has become an exemplary model for effective global networking. While he will modestly tell you he is not a creative person, the unprecedented work of his agency is that of an innovative thinker, and pioneer. In an interview at Hotel Costes, down the street from his Rue Saint Honoré address, Merklen laid out the goals of his endeavor, his process, and the proven benefits to everyone involved.

For designers who are trying to grow their brands, it is difficult to connect with opportunities outside of Europe. For Merklen, this is the root of the problem: "Europe is no longer where growth is happening," so why not go to where the opportunities are? "The Goal," he says, "is to adapt." Adapting to the opportunities of a globalized world, and to the needs of the buyers who are the key to that success.

Referring to My Fashion Agent as a traveling "pop-up-showroom," Merklen, pragmatic and progressive, explained matter-of-factly the travel, organization, and face-time involved in his process. But didn't we create show rooms and fashion weeks and trade shows so that buyers and designers would no longer need to hop around the country, or much less the world, in order to connect?

It has become clear that there are deep flaws in this system. Buyers have an overwhelming number of designers to see on any given buying trip, even without spending time discovering new talent, and many designers easily slip through the cracks when presented amidst hundreds of parallel products. In Merklen's mind, these problems presented an opportunity to reassess commercial dynamics, and, for emerging designers, to reconfigure their infrastructure in order to communicate their product more clearly and alluringly.

Starting internally with each collection, My Fashion Agent offers guidance in a made to measure capacity for each designer under its wing. Merklen's vested interest in his clients' success sometimes means organizing new photo shoots, re-evaluating pricing, coordinating collaborations, and has even inspired the partnership of French cultural and financial entities who wish to offer aid.

Choosing to work with a diverse assortment of collections, My Fashion Agent represents Menswear, womenswear, and accessory lines. No two collections alike, Merklen can reach out to a wide range of retailers, and be confident to leave most meetings with a buyer interested in at least one of his clients. All of this piecing together his ever growing global network.

Once on the road, one-on-one appointments with the local stores, often with a translator, become a unique opportunity for Merklen to enrich his understanding of the diverse cultures and their stylistic inclinations. With the added value of establishing a more human rapport, these meetings provide a foundation that makes My Fashion Agent's global network dually strong.

My Fashion Agent represents change, with a message of proactivity and greater perspective, following Merklen's own eagle eye view. It reveals multiplying opportunities to go out to developing markets, and not wait for them to find you. While Merklen expresses the desire to remain a small, selective Agency, the impact of his enterprise has officially expanded far beyond his office doors, but around the world and back here to rue Saint Honoré.

-Lee Anderson

www.myfashionagent.com