

Meet Fashion Designer Toni Francesc

INTERVIEW - TONI FRANCESC



Originally from Barcelona, designer Toni Francesc now regularly shows in both New York and Mexico. Below, he tells us about his designs, his philosophy, and how he got where he is today.

RUNWAY PASSPORT: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR MOST RECENT COLLECTION?

TONI FRANCESC: Seekers is my most recent collection, for Spring-Summer 2012. I presented it in Barcelona 080 Fashion and it is inspired by human migratory movements and the need to survive in a harsh environment. The search for freedom and the sense of identity are fused in multi-cultural diversity.

RP: I SEE YOU SHOW IN BOTH NY FASHION WEEK AND MEXICO CITY. HOW DO THE EXPERIENCES OF SHOWING IN THE TWO CITIES DIFFER?

TF: Everywhere I give a show, I try to put as much into it as I can, try to make my collection coherent and fluid. I'm always thinking about selling in the market where I'm giving a show. In New York I feel there's more pressure because of the amount of press and international critics who are interested in my collection; in Mexico the press is national so I'm not as tense and I feel more relaxed.

RP: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE DIFFERENCE IN STYLE BETWEEN PEOPLE IN MEXICO CITY VS PEOPLE IN NEW YORK CITY?

TF: In Mexico people are more interested in buying foreign brands than products designed in the country as it gives them more status; that's why there are campaigns to promote Mexican

fashion. In cosmopolitan New York, people buy all kinds of clothes by both national and international designers and brands. It's a more open and mature market and new designs are more easily accepted.

RP: I SEE YOU ARE FROM BARCELONA - HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE STYLE THERE?

TF: Barcelona is a designer city, here the people live surrounded by singular architecture and the latest tendencies in decoration and aesthetics. Even the cuisine and chefs work and experiment with design. Fashion here is not at all classic and classic designers present their collections away from Barcelona; here we value constant reinvention, and that's very difficult. Barcelona style is very broad in its tastes, and people buy national and international fashion and try to combine the cheaper pieces from several brands.

RP: IT SAID IN YOUR BIO THAT YOUR MOTHER WAS A DRESSMAKER SO YOU GREW UP AROUND THE FASHION INDUSTRY. WHAT ARE SOME MAIN CHANGES YOU HAVE NOTICED IN THE INDUSTRY TODAY VS BACK THEN?

TF: More than being born into the fashion industry, I was born and grew up in a workshop. Fashion was very different in those days. Today the internet has reached every home; technology, social networks and logistics define what a brand is or isn't. Before, everything was less accessible and much more exclusive. That's all been lost. Today fashion has become universal and socialized, everybody can see what you've shown within a few seconds and you can make your opinion known even to people who don't know you. We can all become critics with a single click.

RP: WHO WOULD BE YOUR DREAM WOMAN TO DRESS (LIVING OR DEAD)?

TF: I've always loved the old artists, the black and white ones, they were perhaps less accessible, and because you were a child, they seemed like myths to you. Katherine Hepburn, Marlene Dietrich, Ava Gardner, Greta Garbo, Audrey Hepburn. Too many to select a single one from the icons of my infancy.

RP: THE MAIN FASHION CITIES ARE CURRENTLY NY, LONDON, PARIS AND MILAN. DO YOU FEEL THAT IS CHANGING? DO YOU THINK THOSE 4 (EVEN AS OTHER CITIES GROW) WILL REMAIN THE 4 POWERS OR WILL IT EVEN OUT?

TF: The cities that set the trends in international fashion are Paris, New York, London and Milan. There are promising cities like Berlin, Sao Paulo, Shanghai, and Tokyo, but the future is uncertain and I don't know what will happen in 10 or 20 years and which city will be most significant in fashion then.

RP: WHO ARE SOME DESIGNERS WHO INSPIRED YOU?

TF: The designer I've always liked best is Cristobal Balenciaga, who was nothing like what the brand is currently doing He was a myth and a source of inspiration for many designers like me.

RP: WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE YOU HAVE OVERCOME AS A DESIGNER?

TF: Everyday I have to overcome so many obstacles. This is a marathon and you have to take it at a steady pace, not too fast, not too slow, otherwise you will get knocked out. Certainly, no

one has ever given me anything for free and everything has been the result of my own efforts and dedication.

RP: WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT?

TF: My greatest achievement has been to put on 4 consecutive shows in New York. I'm also very proud that I've gotten great press for every single one.

RP: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR ANY DESIGNERS CURRENTLY STARTING OUT?

TF: Being constant and believing in your work is important. Work hard to sell and if you make a mistake it doesn't matter, you only have to correct it. Be creative and accessible, and make fashion your life and livelihood.

RP: I ALSO SEE THAT YOU TEACH YOUNG DESIGNERS. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE MENTALITY OF THE NEXT GENERATION OF DESIGNERS? ARE THERE DIFFERENCES THAN WHEN YOU WERE STARTING OUT?

TF: Everything has changed a lot, for better and for worse. Young people are not so bothered about the quality of a product and are not so knowledgeable about dressmaking and patterns. Sometimes they make very creative designs that are impossible to manufacture and would never sell even if they could be made. However, they're better at technology, they know the programs and design tools better; over the past few years, technology has evolved very fast and today's design students have assimilated it with ease. When I finished my design studies, they were just installing computers in the classrooms so we had to learn while we worked.

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