

The Council of Fashion Designers of America acquired the Fashion Calendar, and will integrate the industry tool, which was founded by Ruth Finley in 1945, into its organization. The move will streamline the scheduling of fashion shows and events in New York, which, with more than 350 shows a season, can be quite a headache, and aims to make the overall fashion week experience easier to navigate for both participating designers and attendees. The transfer will be in effect Oct. 1, 2014. Finley will stay on as consultant and adviser, while Mary Hackley, who worked at the Fashion Calendar for 12 years, will join the CFDA staff to manage scheduling for the Fashion Calendar.



“The Fashion Calendar has been one of the foundations of our industry, ensuring that the press, retailers and designers are able to come together in an efficient manner,” CFDA president Diane von Furstenberg said. “Now that it is part of the CFDA, we are prepared and excited to take it into the new world.” Sitting in the CFDA offices with her son Larry Lein, who has practically consulted with her since he was a child, and CFDA executive officer

Steven Kolb, Finley said, the time was right to let the CFDA take over.

As Lein put it, “Ruth never wants to stop working. She is over 90 now and still very much going strong. The Fashion Calendar has been her life so we had to figure out a transition that would enable her to keep staying involved, and Steven was able to think creatively about how to keep her involved in the business but move it over here under the auspices of the CFDA.” The CFDA and Fashion Calendar have been longtime collaborators, and their relationship formalized last year when the CFDA took a more active role in the planning of shows and presentations.

As part of this, the CFDA launched NYFWList, a mobile application and desktop tool that was designed to move the calendar online. It also featured its own user-friendly version of the fashion week calendar that could sort events via specific categories, i.e. women’s or men’s wear, accessories, venue locations or runway shows versus presentations.

The New York Fashion Week schedule is the most congested of the four fashion capitals. Often, two or three shows take place at

the same time, and on several occasions, significant designers were forced to share their time slots. The aim is to address that under the CFDA. Kolb called the CFDA-owned calendar “a new authority and a new knowledge base on fashion week, given our work with young designers, for example. We are very intimately aware of who they are, and who they compete with. We can look beyond just who shows where and when. We can look at the total volume of shows and how the calendar and us owning it can address that.” Not having full control over scheduling did not benefit the mission of the CFDA, he added, which is to help strengthen the influence and success of American designers in the global economy.

“I believe there is an American entrepreneurialism that is good for fashion, the fact that anybody can show, but can we use the calendar as a way to create more structure, so that it hopefully becomes less cumbersome for people who are attending the shows,” said Kolb. “With all the other shows happening around the city, there is more value in that being branded together as New York Fashion Week, and that’s part of the evolution of the calendar, taking the concept and really defining New York Fashion Week.”



To that end, the CFDA is working with strategy agency Redscout to define the New York Fashion Week brand that could serve as an umbrella to bring the many disparate elements of the shows together. Those disparate elements go beyond the two main fashion weeks each year, and could result in more defined weeks for resort, pre-fall, bridal as well as a separate men’s fashion week, which the CFDA is considering.

“The money wasn’t the driver for Ruth,” Lein noted. “It was really the idea that her life’s work would be continued and she’d be able

to be a part of it ongoing.” The contract was signed on July 14 at the CFDA offices. New York-based law firm Hand Baldachin & Amburgey provided legal advice to the CFDA, while Mandelbaum Salsburg advised Fashion Calendar.

The calendar has more than 700 subscribers, of which about two-thirds are online and one-third still receive the printed version in the mail. As for Finley’s plans on Oct. 1, chances are she will still show up at work. As she put it, “I am on call, whenever they want me.”



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