

United Colors of Fashion

8128 248th Street, Bellerose, NY 11426 | T 917.266.4171 | www.UnitedColorsOfFashion.org

UCOF 2013 Annual Gala – Faith. Hope. Fashion.

August 25, 2013

Dear Media Friend,

On Wednesday, October 9, 2013, United Colors of Fashion (UCOF) will hold our annual gala at the historic Lexington Avenue Armory in New York City. The 2013 gala theme is **FAITH. HOPE. FASHION.** As the name suggests, this year's gala is a celebration of what UCOF believes in. We remain *faithful* that our mission to empower youth through fashion will launch the careers of our interns, while we provide *hope* for their futures and for our children in Soweto, South Africa through the magical medium of *fashion*.

This annual event, which features diverse fashion designers from around the globe, provides scholars of UCOF's **Fashion Education Program** the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned and work with top international fashion designers, stylists, hair and makeup artists, fashion show producers and publicists. With the funds raised at the event, UCOF is able to continue to organize internships and educational opportunities for under-resourced youth in New York and expose them to the many exciting career opportunities in the fashion industry.

This year, we are especially pleased to introduce UCOF's Achiever of the Year, Sade Solomon. Sade started the Fashion Education Program in 2010. During her time at UCOF, she has become a visionary and a paragon of hope with aims of starting her own business through which she can use fashion and philanthropy to empower and encourage youth to fulfill their own dreams and passions as she has done. Our Fashion Education Program allows aspiring designers like Sade to focus on design without the worry of funding, which is completely covered by our sponsors. Gala attendees will get to see Sade Solomon launch her first collection in a special fashion presentation/exhibition at the gala.

Our **Charity Care Program** allows UCOF to harness the fashion community's compassion to bring relief to youth in South Africa who lack access to adequate medical care. We are partnered with the Soweto Hospice, and through generous donations and the purchase of gala tickets from supporters, we have been able to provide assistance to over 50 HIV infected/affected children in Soweto, South Africa. In March of this year, UCOF made its highly anticipated yearly visit to South Africa and it will be engraved in our minds and hearts forever.

Attached, please find our press kit which will provide the following tools to learn about our organization and annual gala: Press Release; Sample News Story; Company Profile; Event Fact Sheet; Frequently Asked Questions; and Biographies of key people within the organization.

We are available for interviews. For media inquiries, please contact:

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THROUGH FASHION

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

United Colors of Fashion to hold Annual Gala and Fashion Benefit at Lexington Avenue Armory in NY

NEW YORK, NY (September 20th, 2013) – On Wednesday, October 9th, 2013, United Colors of Fashion (UCOF) will hold its Annual Gala at the historic Lexington Avenue Armory starting at 6:30 p.m. Fern Mallis, fashion industry leader and the renowned creator of New York Fashion Week, is the Honorary Chair for the event. Legendary supermodel Pat Cleveland, who walked the runway for UCOF's gala last year and has made invaluable contributions to the worlds of fashion and the arts, will be honored with the 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award. This black tie affair will include an international runway show featuring top models and seven acclaimed designers from around the world, including Marc Bouwer (South Africa), David Tlale (South Africa), Naked Ape by Shaldon Kopman (South Africa), Ron & Ron (Haiti/USA), Kosibah by Yemi Osunkoya (United Kingdom), Sukeina (USA) and Carmen Marc Valvo (USA). UCOF is also excited to have industry veterans overseeing the runway show, including: Jan Malan as show Producer, Sandi Bass as Casting Director and Christine de Lassus as Stylist. Supermodel Devyn, the first official winner of "The Face" reality TV modeling competition, is the International Fashion Ambassador who will represent the 2013 Annual Gala.

United Colors of Fashion is a New York City-based non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization with a mission to Empower Youth through Fashion. UCOF works to achieve its mission through two initiatives: (1) locally mentoring under-resourced youth in New York City about the fashion industry through hands-on training in fashion education; and (2) offering provisions of financial assistance, food, and clothing to youth in South Africa who are living with HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anemia and paralyisis. (Please see page 2 to learn more about UCOF.)

This year's gala theme is: FAITH. HOPE. FASHION. As the name suggests, this year's gala is a celebration of what United Colors of Fashion stands for: remaining faithful that UCOF's mission will launch the careers of its under-resourced interns, while providing hope for their futures and for the children in South Africa through the transformative medium of fashion. All proceeds generated from ticket sales and 100% of public donations will be used to fund the costs of running UCOF's Fashion Education and Charity Care programs for the upcoming year.

In addition to the international runway show and awards ceremony, gala attendees will also see the progress UCOF has made through the first collection by Sade Solomon – the Fashion Education program's top intern and UCOF's Achiever of the Year – which will also be presented. "I have learned so much in my past three years of working with UCOF," explains Sade. "I have also grown as a person and as a designer. UCOF to me is people helping people: helping children in South Africa with AIDS and HIV, and also helping emerging designers like myself."

The gala brings together a global community from the worlds of fashion, business, the arts, and philanthropy – all of who believe in the vision of UCOF. According to Ciano Clerjuste, UCOF President & Chairman: "The annual gala allows us to provide our interns the most extensive and intense training in design, textiles, marketing, management, event production, media and communications. We offer the training at no cost. The talented youth selected get an opportunity to turn their dreams into reality by working with the best in the industry. Our youth are the future leaders of our communities. As we empower them through fashion, we are investing in the upcoming groundbreakers in our country."

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For additional information please contact:

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Gala Sponsors

Official Airline Sponsor: South African Airways | Official Media Sponsor: Fashion One TV | Media Partner: Lumiere Magazine | Official Production Sponsor: Jan Malan Production | Official Casting Agent: Sandi Bass International | Official Stylist: Christine de Lassus | Official Makeup Sponsor: Makeup Pro | Official Hair Sponsor: Hair & the City | Official PR Agency: Bella PR | Official Food Sponsor: Clyde Frazier Restaurant | Official Workshop Sponsor: Millen Magese | PRG: Official Lighting Sponsor | Milano Green: Official Alcohol Sponsor | Wines of South Africa: Official Wine Sponsor | White Space Chelsea: Official Student Exhibition Sponsor | Hot & Crusty: Official Gala Reception Catering Sponsor | Strohmeier Lighting, Inc.: Official Lighting Designer

Modeling Agencies

Elite Model Management, Trump Models, Major Model Management, New York Models, Direct Model Management, Soul Models, Wilhelmina, Images Models, APM Models, IMG Models, Red Model Management, Muse Model Management, Q Models, Colby Models, Boss Models NY, Kaback Model Management, New York Models, William Michael- Exposure, Sandi Bass International, One Models, DNA, Request Models

About United Colors of Fashion (UCOF):

Founded in 2010, United Colors of Fashion is a New York City-based non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization with a passion to locally mentor under-resourced youth in New York City about the fashion industry through hands-on training in fashion education; and offer provisions of financial assistance, food, and clothing to youth in South Africa who are living with HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anemia and paralysis. UCOF is very different than most non-profit registered 501 (c)(3) organizations. 100% of public donations are used to fund its programs, while daily operating costs are covered by sponsors, the board of directors and private donors. UCOF's FREE Fashion Education Program is the first of its kind in the United States. The organization is supported by an international team of philanthropically-minded, skilled professionals with backgrounds in fashion, the arts, and business – all of whom donate their time and expertise free of charge.

Fashion Education: Countless talented youth aspire to work in the fashion industry, but few make it. In fact, the vast majority of new designers go out of business within two years. Moreover, without access to the unique educational opportunities, internships, and connections that are invaluable to building a career in fashion, under-resourced youth stand little chance of even entering the industry. With the funds it raises, UCOF organizes internships and educational opportunities for under-resourced youth in New York in our Fashion Education Program, in order to expose them and help provide them access to the many exciting career opportunities in the fashion industry. To date, UCOF has impacted the lives of over 200 under-resourced youth in New York and New Jersey. UCOF's top student for 2013, Sade Solomon, recently graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), and will launch her first collection at the gala.



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Charity Care Program: It is estimated that 67% of the 33 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS live in Sub-Saharan Africa. In South Africa alone, there are 300,000 children living with HIV/AIDS and another 1.4 million who have been orphaned by the disease. UCOF harnesses the fashion community's compassion for those suffering with HIV/AIDS to bring relief to victims in developing countries who lack access to adequate medical care. UCOF is partnered with Mapetla Day Care in South Africa to provide financial assistance, food, and clothing to young children suffering from HIV/AIDS.

To learn more about United Colors of Fashion, please visit www.unitedcolorsoffashion.org

To learn more about UCOF's Financials, please visit www.unitedcolorsoffashion.org/financials



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Sample News Story

Faith. Hope. Fashion.

On Wednesday, October 9th, 2013, United Colors of Fashion (UCOF) will hold their annual gala at the historic Lexington Avenue Armory. The event will include an international runway show featuring top models and designers from around the world, including Marc Bouwer, David Tlale, Naked Ape by Shaldon Kopman, Ron & Ron, Kosibah by Yemi Osunkoya, Sukeina, and Carmen Marc Valvo. The show will be produced by Jan Malan, casting will be managed by Sandi Bass and Christine de Lassus is the Stylist. Supermodel Devyn, the first official winner of “The Face” reality TV modeling competition, is the International Fashion Ambassador who will represent the 2013 Annual Gala.

UCOF, which *Vigore!* Magazine calls an “epidemic of hope,” is a New York City-based non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization with a mission to educate and mentor under-resourced youth about the fashion industry through hands-on training. In addition, the organization provides financial assistance, food, and clothing to youth living with HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anemia and paralysis in South Africa.



This year’s gala theme – “**FAITH. HOPE. FASHION.**” – is a celebration of what UCOF believes in: Remaining *faithful* that the organization’s mission will launch the careers of its interns, while providing *hope* for their futures and for the children in South Africa through the transformational medium of *fashion*. To date, UCOF has impacted the lives of over 200 under-resourced youth in New York and New Jersey. UCOF’s top student for 2013, Sade Solomon, recently graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), and will launch her first collection at the gala.

When explaining what inspired him to create United Colors of Fashion, Founder and President Ciano Clerjuste explained: “At age 12, I knew fashion design was what I wanted to go to school for and get a degree in. I started paying attention to what local seamstresses and tailors were doing and learned the basics from them. Unfortunately, at age 17, my mother was hit by a car, which left her paralyzed. Shortly after, my father died, and I had no choice but to go to school to major in business and finance in order to make a stable living. At undergraduate school, I often wished I had someone who showed me how to make it in fashion. It never happened. Most under-resourced youth from the urban areas normally experience the same.”



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With the funds raised at the annual gala, UCOF is able to continue to organize internships and educational opportunities for under-resourced youth in New York and help expose them to the many exciting career opportunities in the fashion industry. In addition to fundraising, the gala provides scholars of UCOF's Fashion Education program with the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned and work with top international fashion designers, stylists, hair and makeup artists, fashion show producers and publicists.

This year's gala will be an especially proud occasion for Mr. Clerjuste as gala attendees will get to see first-hand the progress UCOF has made through a fashion exhibition featuring the first collection of UCOF's top student, Sade Solomon. Ms. Solomon will also receive the "Achiever of the Year" award for her outstanding performance for the last three years. Fern Mallis is the UCOF 2013 Gala Honorary Chair and we will also be honoring legendary supermodel Pat Cleveland with the 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award.

"Normally, under-resourced youth do not have access to the opportunities to dress supermodels, learn about trends firsthand and attend shows like Mercedes-Benz New York Fashion Week," said Mr. Clerjuste, and that is the opportunity that he wants to bring to the youth. "Each year, we select two top students who are in high school, and we assist them with getting into a fashion school." With the entire staff working for free, including Mr. Clerjuste, 100% of public donations go directly to the Fashion Education and South Africa Charity Care programs.

Ciano further explained, "My main goal when I started UCOF was to provide resources to emerging designers. The fashion industry is largely about who you know. If you want to launch a collection after graduating fashion school, you usually need someone to guide you and or give you the funding. It's not just about designing; you need to know the industry inside and out. This is where UCOF can help: the business and technical sides of fashion. We are able to teach and mentor youth through the whole process to make wise decisions, so by the time they do launch their first collection, they are ready for the industry."

For intern Sade Solomon, her dream has definitely become a reality. "I have learned so much in my past three years of working with UCOF and met so many amazing people that have impacted my life," she said. "I have also grown as a person and a designer. UCOF to me is people helping people. Helping children in South Africa with AIDS and HIV and also helping emerging designers like myself."

The organization was founded in 2010 and is supported by an international team of philanthropically-minded skilled professionals with backgrounds in fashion, the arts, and business. Every member of the team donates his or her time and expertise. UCOF's focus is on improving the health and education of youth as the foundation for happy and fulfilling lives. UCOF raises funds for these causes from its annual gala and international fashion benefit, corporate sponsors, grants and generous contributions.

Today, there are many young people who may give up on their dreams of pursuing a degree in the arts and fashion. UCOF works passionately to turn dreams into realities. "We believe in investing in our youth," explains Ciano, "I hope during your journey on earth, you create a significant and positive legacy. That's my goal, and I am optimistic you will join us as we invest in our youth, as they are the future leaders of our communities"



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Company Profile

United Colors of Fashion (UCOF) is a New York City-based non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization with a passion to locally mentor under-resourced youth in New York City about the fashion industry through hands-on training in fashion education; and offer provisions of financial assistance, food, and clothing to youth in South Africa who are living with HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anemia and paralysis. We are very different than most non-profit registered 501 (c) (3) organizations. We use 100% of public donations to fund our programs. Our daily operating costs are covered by sponsors, our board of directors and private donors. Our FREE Fashion Education Program is the first of its kind in the United States.

Our Mission: The core mission of our organization is to Empower Youth through Fashion. UCOF passionately strives to carry out its mission through two core initiatives:

1. Locally: Education and mentorship to under-resourced youth in New York City about the fashion industry through hands-on training.
2. Globally: Provision of financial assistance, food, and clothing to youth in South Africa who are living with HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anemia and paralysis.

Our Goals: The organization was founded in 2010 and is supported by an international team of philanthropically-minded, skilled professionals with backgrounds in fashion, the arts, and business. Our focus is on improving education and health in order to lay the foundation for happy and fulfilling lives.

Fashion Education Program: Countless talented youth aspire to work in the fashion industry, but few make it. In fact, the vast majority of new designers go out of business within two years. Moreover, without access to the unique educational opportunities, internships, and connections that are invaluable to building a career in fashion, under-resourced youth stand little chance of even entering the industry. With the funds it raises, UCOF organizes internships and educational opportunities for under-resourced youth in New York in our Fashion Education Program, in order to expose them and help provide them access to the many exciting career opportunities in the fashion industry.

Sade Solomon is a living example of the mission and goals of UCOF. She has been in the Fashion Education Program for the past three years and has just graduated with a degree in fashion design from New York's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). Sade is this year's "Achiever of the Year" and her first collection will be shown at the gala during a special fashion exhibition. UCOF is proud to be associated with Sade and has kept its promise of assisting her every step of the way to realize her dream of fashion philanthropy, which so closely aligns to the mission of UCOF.

Charity Care Program: It is estimated that 67% of the 33 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS live in Sub-Saharan Africa. In South Africa alone, there are 300,000 children living with HIV/AIDS and another 1.4 million who have been orphaned by the disease. UCOF harnesses the fashion community's compassion for those suffering with HIV/AIDS to bring relief to victims in developing countries who lack access to adequate medical care. UCOF is partnered with the Soweto Hospice in South Africa to provide financial assistance, food, and clothing to young children suffering from HIV/AIDS.

To learn more about United Colors of Fashion, please visit www.unitedcolorsoffashion.org

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Event Fact Sheet

Event: United Colors of Fashion presents our 3rd Annual Gala: FAITH. HOPE. FASHION.

Description: Our annual gala serves as the biggest training for our under-resourced youth. It is the time of year where we raise the most funds to keep our programs running for the following year. The event habitually brings world press, dignitaries, New York/New Jersey elites and supporters from different parts of the world together to see how we have grown, the accomplishments of our students, and to witness how we have touched the lives of HIV/AIDS infected/affected children overseas. The black tie event will include a fashion show featuring seven designers from around the world, including Marc Bouwer, David Tlale, Naked Ape by Shaldon Kopman, Ron & Ron, Kosibah by Yemi Osunkoya, Sukeina, and Carmen Marc Valvo. Jan Malan is the Producer, Sandi Bass is the Casting Director and Christine de Lassus is the Stylist. Supermodel Devyn, the first official winner of “The Face” reality TV modeling competition, is the International Fashion Ambassador who will represent the 2013 Annual Gala. There will also be a special fashion exhibition by UCOF Achiever of the Year, Sade Solomon. We are very proud to have Fern Mallis as UCOF’s 2013 Gala Honorary Chair. Moreover, the 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award will be awarded to legendary supermodel Pat Cleveland, who also walked the runway for UCOF last year. Honorary Chair Awards and the Humanitarian Awards will also be presented. Proceeds generated from ticket sales and 100% of donations will be used to fund the costs of running UCOF’s Fashion Education and Charity Care programs throughout the year.

Date: Wednesday, October 9th, 2013

Program:

- **6:00 pm** Press Check-in Opens / Arrival of Honorary Chair
- **6:15 pm** Press Conference
- **6:30 pm** Cocktail Reception and Exhibition Begin
- **7:20 pm** Award Program Begins
 - Presentation of the Honorary Chair Award to Fern Mallis
 - Bethann Hardison to present the Lifetime Achievement Award to Pat Cleveland
 - Legendary Supermodels of the 80’s
 - Video of our Impact in NY and Abroad
 - Collection by Sade Solomon
 - Ciano Clerjuste to present the Achiever of the Year Award to Sade Solomon
- Live Auction by Host of the Gala
- International Runway Fashion Show by Top Designers
- Dance Presentation by Dancers from Steps on Broadway
- Grand Finale
- Thank You and Closing Remarks

Media/Press Inquires: Contact Saunak Shah, Director of Marketing at saunak@unitedcolorsoffashion.org



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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is United Colors of Fashion (UCOF)?

United Colors of Fashion (UCOF) is a New York City-based non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization with a passion to locally mentor under-resourced youth in New York City about the fashion industry through hands-on training in fashion education; and offer provisions of financial assistance, food, and clothing to youth in South Africa who are living with HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anemia and paralysis.

To learn more about United Colors of Fashion, please visit www.unitedcolorsoffashion.org

What does UCOF do?

The core mission of our organization is to Empower Youth through Fashion. Locally, we offer education and mentorship to under-resourced youth in New York City about the fashion industry through hands-on training. Globally, we offer financial assistance, food, and clothing to youth in South Africa who are living with HIV/AIDS, sickle cell anemia and paralysis. 100% of public donations are used to fund our programs (70% to Fashion Education, 30% to Charity Care), while daily operating costs are covered by sponsors, the board of directors and private donors.

To learn more about UCOF's Financials, please visit www.unitedcolorsoffashion.org/financials

What is the theme for this year's annual gala?

This year's theme – FAITH. HOPE. FASHION. – is a celebration of what UCOF believes in: Remaining faithful that our mission to Empower Youth through Fashion will launch the careers of interns, while providing hope for their futures and for the children in Soweto, South Africa through the magical medium of fashion.

What is the purpose of the gala?

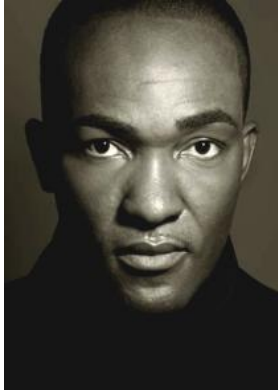
Our annual gala serves as the biggest training for our under-resourced youth. It is the time of year where we raise the most funds to keep our programs running for the following year. The event habitually brings world press, dignitaries, New York/New Jersey elites and supporters from different parts of the world together to see how we have grown, the accomplishments of our students, and to witness how we have touched the lives of HIV/AIDS infected/affected children overseas. The black tie event will include a fashion show featuring seven designers from around the world including Marc Bouwer, David Tlale, Naked Ape by Shaldon Kopman, Ron & Ron, Kosibah by Yemi Osunkoya, Sukeina, and Carmen Marc Valvo. Jan Malan is the Producer, Sandi Bass is the Casting Director and Christine de Lassus is the Stylist. There will also be a special fashion exhibition by UCOF Achiever of the year, Sade Solomon. The gala provides scholars of UCOF's Fashion Education program the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned and work with top international fashion designers, stylists, hair and makeup artists, fashion show producers and publicists. With the funds raise at the event, UCOF is able to continue to organize internships and educational opportunities for under-resourced youth in NY to expose them to the many exciting career opportunities in the fashion industry.



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Biographies of Key Players



Ciano Clerjuste

UCOF President & Chairman

Ciano Clerjuste's work is as influential as traditional art. He has rubbed shoulders with the best in the fashion industry and the poorest of the poor, yet in his own right, he is a simple, humble man contributing to making a change in our world today.

Prior to settling in the USA in 1996, Clerjuste made a promise to himself to help those less fortunate and in need, the same way he was raised by his parents. Ciano Clerjuste was born and spent most of his teen years in Gonaïves, Haiti. His educational background spans across a wide range of theatrical performances, dance, film, fashion, and arts. With 18 years of valid experience in these fields, he has graced stages performing in leading roles for such productions as *Romeo & Juliet*, *South Pacific*, *Daniel's Song*, *Pas De Deux*, *Lulumba*, and *Cinderella* and for 5 years in the run in *The Jesus Story*. He has coupled his acting with directing some of these productions including *Noel Sans Toi* for five years. He has also performed in the WYACT/NJPAC Summer Musical Production.

With extensive training garnered from Alvin Ailey American Dance Company, Newark School of the Arts, New York Conservatory of Dance and Cynthia Meryl, he has also made some independent films including *The Kreyol Boys*, *Descent*, and *Love Around the World*. He has teamed up with great designers from all over the globe – from as far as Argentina, Spain, Haiti, Angola, Paris, Trinidad, the Philippines, Russia and South Africa – with one purpose in mind: to Empower Youth through Fashion.

Today he holds a Bachelor in Business Administration and Management and has been an Account Executive for an investment & insurance firm for the past eight years. In addition, he works as a freelance Interior Designer and a much sought after high-end event planner. His perfectionism and eye for detail has seen him work for three consecutive years with the US-Spain Chamber of Commerce and United Nations, in addition to planning a multitude of charity events and weddings for New York and New Jersey elite.

Founded in 2010, United Colors of Fashion (UCOF) has been a platform for Clerjuste to work with and showcase young and gifted artists in fashion, and expose them on a global scale in order to realize their dreams. He also plays a role in planning UCOF's Annual Gala and International Fashion Benefit, which seeks to raise funds for UCOF's free Fashion Education and Charity Care Programs.



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Sade Solomon

UCOF's Achiever of the Year for 2013

Sade Solomon graduated with a degree in fashion design from New York's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). It is evident that she has no intention of resting on her laurels and she is clear that each achievement is only the foundation upon which she can build the next.

Since she started interning with UCOF, this former caseworker has grown into a visionary and a paragon of hope. She has aims of starting her own business through which she can use fashion and philanthropy to encourage and empower youth to fulfill their dreams and passions as she has done. UCOF is proud to be associated with Sade and has kept its promise of assisting her every step of the way to realize her dream of fashion philanthropy that so closely aligns to the

mission of UCOF.

In February of this year, Sade designed a number of pieces for the Hope Beyond Horizons exhibition of avant-garde fashion. In March, she visited South Africa during Joburg Fashion Week where she worked behind the scenes. She was an intern under South African designers David Tlale and Naked Ape by Shaldon Kopman and also worked with world-renowned show producer Jan Malan. The many inspirations she received from this trip have given Sade the impetus to launch her first collection on October 9th at the UCOF annual gala. The collection will be presented as an exhibition and will allow guests to get close to the garments, while asking Sade questions about her collection and experience with UCOF. This will precede the international runway show featuring internationally acclaimed designers who have mentored interns such as Sade.

Sade has been part of UCOF's Fashion Education program for the past three years. The program is the first of its kind in the United States and it aims to expose talented but under-resourced New York youth to the opportunities within the fashion industry at no charge. The challenge many newly graduated fashion designers face despite being artistically ready, is funding. The fashion education program allows designers like Sade to focus on design without the worry of funding, which is covered completely by sponsors.



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Fern Mallis

UCOF 2013 Gala Honorary Chair

Hailed as the award-winning creator of Fashion Week in New York City – Fern Mallis has been called an industry titan, doyenne, and The Godmother of Fashion. As the creator and host of premiere conversation series *Fashion Icons w/Fern Mallis* at New York's prestigious 92nd Street Y – Mallis assembled an incredible roster of guests for her now signature in-depth interviews, including Calvin Klein, Norma Kamali, Donna Karan, Tommy Hilfiger, Tom Ford, Michael Kors, Diane von Fürstenberg, Polly Mellen, Marc Jacobs, Betsey Johnson, Vera Wang, Suzy Menkes, and most recently – the legendary Oscar de la Renta.

In addition to her 92Y series, Mallis hosts *Fashion Insiders w/Fern Mallis* on SiriusXM's flagship celebrity talk channel – STARS, where she interviews the best and brightest, covering the most relevant topics of the day in the fashion industry, notably featuring her now indispensable NY Fashion Week shows, with daily on-the-go coverage and backstage interviews.

As one of the most photographed women in the industry, Mallis is consistently and widely quoted in the fashion press and broadcast media, especially in the business of fashion. She's been frequently featured on televised fashion programs, including *America's Next Top Model*, *She's Got the Look*, four seasons of *Project Runway*, and as the weekly judge on Bravo's first season of *The Fashion Show*, with Isaac Mizrahi and Kelly Rowland. Recently, she served as consulting producer on the CW network's reality television series *ReModeled*. Her globally inspired FERN FINDS: jewelry line is currently featured on HSN, and HSN.com.

Mallis is the recipient of a great many industry awards and accolades. She's received The Fashion Maverick Award from the American Apparel and Footwear Assoc.; Woman of the Year Leadership Award from Concern Worldwide; Fashion Legacy Award from the Fashion Chamber of Commerce State of Style Awards; A Special Award from Diversity Affluence Organization; Leadership Award from the Fashion Center BID. She was honored by Pratt Institute with their 2012 Fashion Industry Lifetime Achievement Award – presented to her by designer Calvin Klein. In May 2013, she was presented with the rarely bestowed Fashion Institute of Technology President's Lifetime Achievement Award, delivering the keynote commencement address.

Former SVP of IMG Fashion and former Executive Director of the Council of Fashion Designers of America – Fern Mallis is currently President of her own leading international fashion and design consultancy – Fern Mallis LLC. She's on the Board of Directors for Robert Graham in New York, and Tara Jewels in Mumbai, India, and serves on the Advisory Boards of AhaLife, FashionGPS, and Industrial Revolution II. She's consultant to Charleston Fashion Week, Seoul Fashion Week, and has served as Executive Advisor to Concept Korea for NYFW. Mallis also serves on the Steering Committee for NYCxDDesign Week, and is a consultant to the Centennial Anniversary Committee of Grand Central Terminal, as well as the Global Millennium Foundation in conjunction with the United Nations.



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Jan Malan

UCOF Fashion Show Producer

Namibian-born Jan Malan, director of Umzingeli Productions, is one of Africa's leading show producers. Umzingeli means "hunter-gatherer" in Xhosa and Zulu, as the company prides itself on finding and nurturing fashion and beauty talent that hails from Africa.

Since starting his show production career in 1985, his momentous work, energy and positivity towards the industry has led him to stage high profile productions in 22 countries spread over four continents. Using his powerful knowledge of the events industry, he brainstorms truly innovative concepts and executes them professionally with an enthusiasm that can only be described as electric.

Malan pioneered Africa Designs for M-Net and AngloGold, a pan- African fashion designer competition, in the year 2000. This was the first time that African designers showed on schedule at New York Fashion Week in a group show. He also conceptualized the legendary M-Net Face of Africa Model Search. Malan has produced shows at various fashion weeks across the continent including South African, Cape Town, Durban, Joburg, Kinhasa, Fashion Business Angola and Africa Fashion Week; Mozambique Fashion Week and Swahili Fashion Week in Tanzania; and also directed all shows at Delhi Fashion Week in India for two consecutive seasons in 2008 and 2009. Malan has also directed the international finals of Ford Models' Supermodel of the World for two years.

But regardless of an impressive client list, which includes names such as Elton John and Tyra Banks, Malan has continued his passion for charity work by giving his time to produce shows for the Witwatersrand Hospice, The Organ Donor Foundation, the South African Federation for Mental Health and most recently, United Colors of Fashion in New York. UCOF honored him with the "Producer of the Year Award" in 2012.



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Sandi Bass

UCOF Casting Director

Sandi Bass was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee. After graduating, she moved to Los Angeles where she studied Art Culture and Fashion Design at LA City College.

During this time, Sandi was discovered by Monsieur Hubert de Givenchy and taken to Paris, France as his muse. This historical, “Girls of Color Cabine” that took Paris by storm was on the heels of the Versailles Show honoring designers Halston and Stephen Burrows, and featuring models Bethann Hardison and Pat Cleveland. Sandi spent the next fifteen years as a top runway model living in Paris, Rome, and Tokyo working for top designers, Valentino, Christian Dior, Emanuel Ungaro, Karl Lagerfeld, Fendi, to name a few. She also found herself in a singing group on tour as The Peter Jacques Band at the famous Forum Coliseum in Rome opening for the Bee Gees and Abba, however, her passion was for fashion.

Passion for Fashion...

After turning in her runway pumps, Sandi returned to America, making appearances on numerous television shows as the on-camera personality and fashion coordinator presenting “Fashions of the Moment”. She also appeared as a guest judge on Tyra Bank’s “America’s Next Top Model”. As a writer, Sandi’s articles on modeling and fashion have been published in numerous magazines and newsletters.

Well-respected in the business...

Sandi is now on the other side of the modeling industry. She has experience working as the Director of Runway at a top NY agency and traveling the world as a top international model scout placing models in Asia, Europe, the US and Canada. Combining her great communication skills, her deeply rooted connections with agencies worldwide and her knowledge of the industry, she understands the importance of relationships and ethics in any business. Sandi is sought after by modeling agencies, schools and conventions to give seminars to models and parents, knowing they will get sound advice. It is her inviting southern comfort personality that has taken her around the world.

Now, to give back...

Sandi is the Creative Director for “Cover Girls for Change,” models of the 80’s and 90’s uniting to mentor young models through events during NY Fashion Week.

Sandi is honored to work with United Colors of Fashion as their Casting Director for their annual international runway show held during the yearly gala in New York. Sandi has also recently been chosen as a member of The National Association of Professional Women in New York.

Sandi lives in New York City and has a beautiful daughter, son-in-law and two wonderful granddaughters.



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Christine de Lassus

UCOF Stylist

Christine de Lassus is a world renowned fashion stylist and fashion editor who has, over the last two decades, collaborated with some of the most famous fashion photographers including Irving Penn, Steven Klein, Steven Meisel, Patrick Demarchelier, Jean-Baptiste Mondino, Albert Watson, Marilyn Minter and Ellen Von Unwerth.

Born and raised in Paris, France, she studied high level mathematics and advertising, graduating from the European Business School, before moving to New York where she shifted her interests to her true calling, fashion.

Christine's career took off immediately and she found herself styling major advertising campaigns such as L'Oreal, Revlon, Elizabeth Arden, Estée Lauder and many others.

In the nineties, she moved back to Paris and became a fashion editor and a regular contributor to French Elle, Vogue España, and Vogue Hommes International.

She currently lives in New York where she contributes to prestigious magazines such as Italian Amica, Paper, i-D, Vanity Fair, Italian Vogue, V Magazine and international editions of Harper's Bazaar, L'Officiel, Tatler, GQ. She styles international campaigns for Hogan, Absolut Vodka, Adidas, Moët & Chandon amongst others.

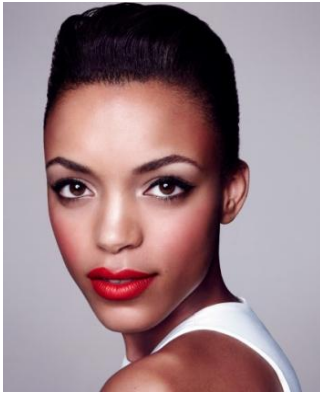
Fascinated by global youth culture, she has also dedicated time over the past nine years to Trace Magazine where her role as Fashion Director at large often involved creative direction and spanned collaborations on special projects for Absolut Metropolis in Tokyo, Leblon in Rio, in addition to Nike, Y-3, Adidas and Puma. These creative collaborations enabled her to travel the world extensively and sharpen her eye on the world's most exciting emerging trends.

Christine de Lassus's global approach to fashion allows her to perfectly combine art and a modern vision of fashion with business and clients demands, making her an invaluable asset to her collaborators.



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Devyn

UCOF International Fashion Ambassador

UCOF is excited to introduce you to Devyn, our International Fashion Ambassador who will represent the 2013 Annual Gala. This Bronx born, native New Yorker is a fashion model of Barbadian and Jamaican ancestry. With the encouragement of her parents since she was very young, Devyn studied dance and art, while also pursuing a passion in photography. During high school, she was scouted by an agency in New York and learned to balance her classes with the demands of working as a model. Since graduating, Devyn further developed her interest in photography, hosted a professional photography exhibit, and created a short film which was recognized at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Devyn admires how United Colors of Fashion empowers youth through fashion. “To me fashion is more than to set trends or popular styles. In my eyes fashion defines individuality and self-confidence. Whether we believe it or not, fashion has a huge impact on our daily lives. UCOF does exactly that, taking that individuality and self-confidence and mixing in the genius and creativity that comes with fashion to changing young people’s lives,” says the ambassador.

Recently, Devyn was awarded the title of being the first official winner of “The Face” reality TV modeling competition. UCOF is proud to welcome Devyn to our team.

Devin explains, “It is an unexpected honor being selected as UCOF’s newest fashion ambassador. In the past, I have shown my support for UCOF by walking in the annual charity fashion show... To now be a part of the entire UCOF movement makes my support grow ever more. I have seen the effect of their cause and the drive behind their vision. It feels amazing to be a part of something so beautiful.”



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Pat Cleveland

UCOF 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award Winner

Pat Cleveland is an international modeling icon. She has worked for the world's most prestigious fashion designers including Armani, Halston, Stephen Burrows and Valentino, both on and off the runway. Pat has also been seen in the work of important photographers including Richard Avedon, Helmut Newton, Horst and Steven Meisel.

Throughout her illustrious career, Pat has appeared on the pages of the world's most prestigious fashion publications such as *Vogue*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Interview*, and *W Magazine*. Her beauty has not been overlooked by the art world, having sat for Andy Warhol and Salvador Dali. She has done numerous commercials and advertising campaigns, the latest being Mac make-up in September 2012. She is mentioned and quoted in more than 50 books.

As a Fashion Ambassador, Pat has traveled extensively representing the United States and the United Kingdom on trips to China, Italy and Russia. In 1989, Pat represented the city of Barcelona as a fashion icon for the Summer Olympics in Spain. Recently she was the recipient of the "The Thurgood Marshall Award" for being a Fashion Icon, named as one of the The Huffington Post 100 Game changers, and was honored at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for her contribution in Versailles 73.

In addition to modeling, Pat has performed: singing and dancing on stage in *Let My People Come* on Broadway; acted in several foreign films including *Rio Babilônia* (Brazil), *Iago Shakespeare* (Italy), *Sotto il vestito niente* (Italy) and *Hair, The Musical* (Mexico); and has appeared in cameo parts for *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Sex and the City: The Movie*, was a guest judge on *America's Next Top Model* and most recently on *The Face*.

She was also featured in numerous documentaries, the most recent being; *Versailles 73*, *Ultra Suede in search of Halston*, *About Face*, and *Scatter my Ashes at Bergdorf*.

A superstar in Italy, Pat has recorded original lyrics written for Joe T. Vanelli and published a book of poems, *In The Spirit of Grace*, also published in English.

Pat resides in the U.S.A. and is currently writing her autobiography. She lives with her husband Paul Ravenstein and has two children, Anna and Noel.



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Marc Bouwer

UCOF Designer

Anyone enveloped in a Bouwer design, whether a sequined mini or a jeweled silk taffeta ball gown, gets noticed. This, in turn, has gotten the attention of Hollywood's a-list. His designs have graced the covers of numerous magazines and the red carpet at movie premieres and awards shows. That's part of his allure—the formfitting look—imbued with a genuine desire to celebrate, as poet Walt Whitman so neatly put it, “the body electric.”

Indeed, one of Bouwer's strong suits is his ability to cut a garment to complement a woman's figure. Another is his acclaimed talent as a draper, a skill he mastered during his tenure with legendary designer Halston.

Bouwer, who grew up in South Africa, had an unusual career trajectory. He was drafted into the army, a national requirement, before studying fashion and winning the South African Vogue Young designer award. His roots may be African, but his ambition drove him abroad. “There was only one place to go,” he insists, “New York.” His arrival, or what he calls his big “Hollywood moment,” came when Halston studied his portfolio, then uttered these six prophetic words: “I think you got something, kid.” what Bouwer got was an offer to join Halston's studio.

There, he learned various techniques, including the aforementioned draping, which were a hit on the runway. “Once I had Halston on my resume, it got easier,” he admits. “I gradually found patrons, and I went out on my own in the '90s. I worked out of my Greenwich Village apartment with Paul Margolin, my business partner. He handled the press and daily operations; I handled the designs. And we worked very hard. I'm lucky in that I can cut and sew.” His versatility proved crucial to his success, as did word-of-mouth marketing and finding his niche as one of the first eveningwear-focused designers in the United States.

The Marc Bouwer aesthetic is the very definition of timeless elegance, touched by his love of cinema (he counts *Blade Runner*, *Hero*, and *Marie Antoinette* among his favorite films). The look is distinct—lush colors, plunging necklines, and daring up-to-there slits are undeniably sexy, yet kept in check by an appreciation for classic silver-screen glamour.

Recently, Bouwer's strong ties to L.A.'s glitterati have made him a sought-after spokesperson for the entertainment industry. As a guest stylist and judge on many popular programs, he's become the go-to personality for advice on style and fashion. Whether making a guest appearance or spending long days designing a new collection, he sums up his professional demeanor in two words: hands on.

“I'm protective of my brand. And strong, sexy women will always be my muses.



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Ron and Ron

UCOF Designer

Ron & Ron, a menswear fashion label specializing in made-to-measure suits, was established in 1999 by twin brothers Ronald and Rony Delice.

The Ron & Ron label was noticed almost immediately, receiving critical acclaim from the leading periodicals including The New York Times and DNR, the predominant menswear trade magazine. They also earned Fashion Group International's "Rising Star Award" and Gen-Art's "Design Fashion Award." The label quickly gained popularity among a host of celebrities such as Will Smith, Samuel L. Jackson, Courtney B. Vance, D.L. Hughley, and Jamie Foxx, renowned musicians like Justin Timberlake, Jay-Z, and Sean John "Diddy" Combs, and star pro athletes like Latrell Sprewell, Curtis Martin, and Steve Francis.

The twin designers were born to a seamstress mother and a tailor father in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Inspired by their lifelong passion and seeking an alternative to the monotonous style of European-inspired minimalist design and limited detailing and sizing, the Delices' set out to create something refreshingly different within the very competitive high-end men's suit industry. Celebrating the essence of their Caribbean heritage, Rony and Ronald have been widely recognized for incorporating brilliant colors with truly remarkable details. The twin brothers often combine red-stitched button holes, contrast piping, top stitching and enhanced peak lapels on slender silhouettes cut from imported Italian cloth.

The Delice brothers developed their sharp eye for detail and penchant for quality by converging the skills they gained while apprenticing within Europe's most established fashion meccas. After completing their academic studies in New York City's Fashion Institute of Technology, they headed for Italy and France; Rony to the Via Condotti in Rome and Ronald to the Faubourg Saint-Honore in Paris. Nurturing their panache in impeccable tailoring from their experiences abroad, the twins returned to New York in the late 80's and began working with Avaram Goldman, then owner of Beau Brummel in Soho. They quickly transitioned from salesclerks to custom tailors for the reputable men's boutique. Compelled by popularity and growing client demand for the brothers' own custom-made suits, Goldman approached them with an offer to finance a signature line for the store. By 1998, the duo launched their private line, Ron & Ron.

By integrating subtle influences from their cultural background and adding signature detailing, this charismatic duo accentuates timeless, classic tailoring with their own distinctive and versatile touches, giving it a modern appeal. Success of the Ron & Ron label has been contingent on personal dedication and creative integrity within a continuously evolving industry. Their line has clearly been an influence to classic menswear as can be seen from the rising number of suits that have added the twins' signature color button hole and top stitching. The clear difference though can be seen in the way only a Ron & Ron suit fits a man; complementing his body and personal style effortlessly.



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Shaldon Kopman

UCOF Designer

Shaldon Kopman's Naked Ape Designs are the answer to the need for high-end menswear fashion for street and suit savvy gentlemen around the globe, catering to travelers that jet set from sunny South Africa to frosty New York City. Today you can find Naked Ape Ready-to-Wear and Bespoke available at Naked Ape's showroom in Johannesburg. Having worked abroad in cities such as New York, Chicago, Sydney, Milan, Paris and Dubai as a fashion director and stylist, Shaldon was called home by a strong passion for Africa. Once home, he applied his years of experience by filling the role of Fashion Editor for South African magazines such as *Elle*, *Soccer Life* and *Y Magazine*.

Today Shaldon focuses most of his creative energy on Naked Ape and growing the strong Afro Aesthetic to compete in an international market. His natural sense of style and clear direction for a well-rounded wardrobe earned him the "GQ Best Dressed Man" award for 2006 – 2007. More recently Shaldon appeared as one of four judges on the hit show *Diamonds in the Ruff*, and as "Fashion Police" for the Royal Monaco Wedding and for various events on *The Real Goboza*.

Design Signature.

A practical, multi-functional aesthetic for the discerning individual and meticulous attention to detail is a defining characteristic of Naked Ape, placing it on an international level of artistry and craftsmanship. Shaldon's love for Africa is authentically represented in the handmade nature of garments, the use of natural fabrics and staying inspired by the rich culture and people that inhabit the place he lives in.

With the mission to create multi-functional designs through the use of refined detail and fine fabrication, Naked Ape provides services in fashion and image consulting offering tailor-made wardrobes for the ever evolving fashion world.

Shaldon and the Naked Ape team are about educating and changing mindsets through style and fashion. Through a decade of exponential growth from its humble beginnings as a cottage industry with a handful of loyal clientele, to a fully fledged studio and showroom conveniently located above Benjamin Woollens – a large fabric company in Johannesburg's CBD – Naked Ape Fashion Consulting has established an elite service for the discerning individual.



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David Tlale

UCOF Designer

Since launching his brand “*Tlale*” in 2008, award-winning designer, David Tlale’s designs have far exceeded expectations. That same year Mr. Tlale was also voted the most stylish person at the Annual South African Style Awards.

Mr. Tlale was also voted Mzansi’s Star Fashion Designer at the Mzansi Star Awards, and was nominated at the Mercedes Benz Fashion Awards 2008. He was invited to judge the Elle New Talent 2008 competition, a place where he began his own journey in fashion.

In addition, it was also in 2008 that Mr. Tlale launched his Green Collection for the voluptuous women of Mzansi – a collection modeled by ‘South African’ celebrities and journalists, including the likes of Judith Sephuma, Lebo Mashile, KG Moeketsi and Anele Mdoda.

His proud moments in 2008 include designing a showstopper for British model, Jourdan Dunn, which was showcased at Virgin Mobile Cape Town Fashion Week and being chosen to be an ambassador for the Change-4-Ever campaign, which aims to alleviate poverty in Southern Africa.

In 2010, Mr. Tlale proudly showcased a 54 piece collection accompanied by a live, 28 piece orchestra at the African Fashion International Week (AFI) during the FIFA World Cup in South Africa.

Breaking all boundaries, Mr. Tlale hosted an outstanding show on the Nelson Mandela Bridge during Joburg Fashion Week 2011. The collection celebrated Nelson Mandela’s 92 years of life as the show consisted of an unbelievable 92 piece collection showcased by celebrities, models, sports men and women, as well as business people that all together make South Africa beautiful.

Both daring and dramatic, *Tlale* is a brand that defies convention and employs unpredictable use and understanding of fabric, color and texture.

It is with this understanding that the *Tlale* brand developed to be one of the most formidable fashion labels in South Africa to date. It came as no surprise when Mr. Tlale was awarded Fashion Designer of the Year at the recent ARISE Africa Fashion Awards, when he presented a Ready-To-Wear Collection that defied all expectations. With this award, Mr. Tlale had the opportunity to showcase at the Mercedes Benz New York Fashion Week, in September 2009, courtesy of Arise Magazine.

Since his catwalk debut in 2003, Mr. Tlale has enjoyed outstanding exposure on both local and International catwalks, taking his label to astronomic heights. David Tlale is a household label that firmly stands its own ground among a sea of other labels; this being attributed to the sheer design erudition and precision that challenges mediocrity.

Mr. Tlale Proudly supports United Colors of Fashion, Incorporated and its HIV/AIDS program at the Soweto Hospice in South Africa.



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Kosibah by Yemi Osunkoya

UCOF Designer

The seeds of Yemi Osunkoya's fascination with fashion in general and bridal wear in particular were sown at his first high society wedding in Nigeria. From then on, whenever he accompanied his parents to social gatherings, he would feel compelled to draw the dresses and guests after the function. So began his life-long love of figurative drawing. As he entered his teenage years, Yemi fell under the spell of the glamour and sophistication of Bob Makie's costumes for Diana Ross, and Anthony Price's gravity defying gowns for Jerry Hall. A career in fashion design was beckoning.

After a degree in Textile Design at Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, Yemi completed his studies at the Paris Academy of Fashion, Oxford St, London, gaining top marks in both men's and women's wear.

Yemi completed his studies in 1990 in London at the height of the recession. However, undaunted by the economic climate and determined to make his own mark, Yemi decided to strike out on his own and founded his own design label Kosibah.

It was natural that he would name the company in honour of his greatest supporter: his mother, Cosiba. The name Cosiba comes from the Republic of Benin and is the Day Name given to a female child born on a Sunday. However, in deference to the Yoruba tradition of not addressing elders by their first names, Yemi changed the spelling of the company name slightly as a mark of respect.

Yemi has worked hard to make Kosibah a truly global brand, but with clientele particularly well represented in the United Kingdom, the USA, West and South Africa, and the Caribbean. Among his celebrated clients, Yemi counts Lady Janet Boateng, Dianne Abbott MP, Kelly Rowland, Alesha Dixon, Sheila Ferguson, Hollywood actress Indra Ové, Louise Rose and members of several royal families in Nigeria and Ghana. Still on Yemi's wish list of celebrities to dress are Oprah Winfrey, Michelle Obama, Padma Lakshmi, and Keira Knightley.

Despite A-list success, Yemi's designs are firmly rooted in the desire to make every woman look and feel good. Drawing on his African roots, Yemi's designs celebrate the curves and shapes of real women. His signature use of corsetry and draping creates gowns that flatter and enhance every woman's figure. And his long experience of providing a personal attentive service to each of his clients means that he is now an expert in providing exactly what his clients want.

He also draws inspiration from the vibrant, multicultural life of London which is now his home. The capital's diverse populations allow Yemi to fuse influences from across the world into his designs with the luxurious fabrics, sumptuous embellishments and meticulous attention to detail associated with the finest traditions of Parisian couture.



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Sukeina

UCOF Designer

Omar Salam is the Founder and Head Designer of Su Kei Na Fashion House. Born in Dakar, in the Republic of Senegal, his childhood was spent in various countries in Europe. As a child, Omar had a very colorful and exciting imagination, which would later manifest itself in his designs and craftsmanship. He started sewing at an early age, inspired after he saw his mother, Sukeina, stitch together different pieces of fabric and patterns. Omar was also very fascinated with the power and intimacy of communication. When he came of age, Omar decided to study screenwriting with the hopes of one day getting into film. He later realized that he could tell more intricate and vibrant stories through fashion. “Clothing is a language within itself,” he says.

In 2001, Omar started working for world renowned French fashion designer Madame Sonia Rykiel. Starting off in Sales, he would later be promoted to Merchandising, and finally became Visual Director for the New York City branch. Omar spent seven years with Mme Rykiel. He regards this experience with great respect and love, especially for the extraordinary designer, who once told a manager to “Let Omar play... It should remain a game.”

In 2008, Omar decided to tempt fate, spread his wings and establish his own fashion house. Su Kei Na, the namesake of his mother, is very unique. The colors are vivid, while the fabrics are delicate, lush and elegant. His boldness is reminiscent of a young Gianni Versace, with the fineness and precision of Valentino. Omar Salam has fully engaged himself in his craft. His creations are not made to highlight himself, but rather to celebrate what we all enjoy about our bodies and life. “I truly must be honest. I want to dress people as they want to be. My clothes are made to move with you. Without a body in them, they are nothing.”



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Carmen Marc Valvo

UCOF Designer

Carmen grew up in Westchester County, New York. His father was an anesthesiologist and mother, a nurse. In the Valvo home, traditional children's story and coloring books were supplemented with educational and anatomy related volumes in hopes their son would follow in the family footsteps. This is where Carmen first developed the formative knowledge of the female figure that would later help him to become such a successful and intuitive designer. His artistic spirit revealed itself early on through his passion for oil painting and portraiture as well as fashion illustration. Before heading to Vienna where he hoped to pursue his artistic dreams, Carmen first attended the Fine Arts program at Manhattanville College. While traveling throughout Europe and exploring the rich cultural tapestry of centuries-old historic cities and quaint countryside, and becoming proficient in several languages, fate intervened – Carmen was injured in a car accident and returned to the States to recover. Finally realizing his true passion had always lay in fashion design, he set his sights on a career he thought was only a fantasy and enrolled in Parsons School of Design.

Upon leaving Parsons School of Design, Carmen's first position was with Bill Atkinson in mid-1970. However, Carmen's real professional career began with an offer to work in Paris with the house of Nina Ricci. This was followed by a position with Christian Dior in the same city. Dior is where he established his true sense of the couture aesthetic, which so embodies all of his works to date.

By 1989 he was ready to launch his own label. With only a few thousand dollars, he fearlessly pulled together a collection to show to department and specialty stores at the fall fashion market in New York. His collection was an instant success and was bought by several top stores. But it was his eveningwear, his true passion, which captured the hearts of buyers at both Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus.

Having established a solid reputation as one of 7th Avenue's most noteworthy independent brands with his Black Label Collection, Carmen launched Carmen Marc Valvo Couture in 1998. After years of working in the Parisian ateliers, Carmen was finally able to truly utilize his skill and experience to create his celebrity clientele the original Carmen Marc Valvo creations that they so desired. Twice each year during New York Fashion Week, Carmen's Couture collection is presented showcasing his extraordinary craftsmanship.

Since then he has been exploring his soul's desire to bring glamorous dressing to every woman's life through his eponymous Collection, whose enchanting designs have become synonymous with grace and refinement. Today his elegant eveningwear collection is a fixture at fine department stores throughout the world. Carmen's label also appears on his highly sought-after clothing and accessory lines – including swimwear, eyewear, footwear and fur, which reflect the designer's artistic sensibility.

