



AICI Connections



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Members & Chapter News*

January 2007

Be Your Own Designer!

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Heidi Klum began a made-for-TV model contest "Germany's Next Top Model" in January 2006, and it is still of high interest for millions of Germans. It shows how the selection takes place, how tough the jury is, and if someone is "too fat" (wearing European size 36). There has been a reaction from various organisations such as doctors, nourishing scientists and psychiatrists. They point out how important a stable self esteem is, not to get eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia. To be looked at as being only as good as your (low) weight is a really hurtful experience that affects teenagers and now even smaller children. Due to Heidi's rude judgements, her own image suffered and is now "softer" in her wording to contestants.



As a fashion designer I place a high value on aesthetics. Fashion designers have a certain target group in mind when creating collections, on which the "look" they want to transmit is really cool and "Zeitgeist". After delivering the merchandise to the shops things unfortunately get out of control. Designers cannot select who is wearing their clothes (although some try by offering a limited size range). Consumers only seeking young and hip looks are not considering that a garment might not really be intended for them.

I explain to my clients that until the 1950s people had a tailor to get a suit or a dress. The tailor was the one who consulted them about which silhouette or which designs (prints) to take. With industrialisation we get a huge offering of clothes, but with no qualified guidance as to what really suits us.

In my seminars for students and youngsters who start their first job, they are given the idea of being their own "designer" by being less dependent on brands. I encourage them to figure out what suits them well personally. Belonging to a group gives them a lot of self esteem, so I try to show them how not to lose that by dressing fashionably without looking like a fashion victim. Based on wearing well fitting trousers or skirts, which support the personal body silhouette, the fashionable look can be reached by wearing decorative tops, trendy boots, bags and other accessories.

This applies not only to people with a tendency to conform to their peer group, but also to people who are trend conscious. The strategy is first to encourage people to let go of fashionable items and hairstyles that do not look attractive on them and to get a new hairstyle or to indulge in a spa day. After receiving positive reactions and compliments, the second step is to encourage clients to sharpen their personal presentations by being more daring. That's where the fun part starts, where clients suddenly want to be seen-to be unique.

Christiane Dierks, AICI, CIP has been working in the field of impression management since 1998 and since founding The Image Institute in 2002, she has worked solely as an image consultant. She has held managerial roles with such global brands as Adidas and Levi Strauss and has had extensive training in Germany and in the U.S. Christiane can be e-mailed at dierks@the-image-institute.de.