

Musmanno Cultivates Fragrance Foundation's New Image



Elizabeth Musmanno

For Elizabeth Musmanno, thinking out of the box is what it takes to create a new package for the Fragrance Foundation.

"I was zipping around the city one day and my cell phone rang," she says. "Terry Darland (president, North America, Christian Dior) called me and said, 'You know, we're looking for a president of the Fragrance Foundation' ... and we kind of started the conversation from there."

The newly appointed president is on the move to help boost the organization's cache. Musmanno has already implemented the early stages of the organization's blooming transformation. First on the agenda has been improving the brand's image through a series of moves—especially upgrading the elegance factor for the Fragrance Foundation awards while nixing its "FiFi" acronym-cum-nickname. Another focus includes adding other aspects to the foundation such as educational talks from leaders across a variety of industries. The overall goal is to heighten the respectability of the organization while appealing to its members and generating greater consumer awareness.

"I would like to think that in three years we will be as respected in the world of fragrance as the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) is in the world of fashion," says Musmanno.

Right now, Musmanno stresses that the foundation needs to create new programs for members while creatively gaining public recognition. For example, the foundation has teamed up with Firmenich to sponsor a work that's part of New York's Frieze Art Fair and has its sights set on a bold Fashion Week presence.

The main focus is helping the members, she says: "We need to create an impact for them. And one of the things that they need and want and deserve is for us to be promoting this industry to consumers."

One aspect of this consumer-oriented push was this year's Consumers' Choice Award. Consumers were directed to vote via the organization's website, which is why she says the website needs to have a "luxury" feel to better represent the fragrance industry.

"Image is everything in many ways," says Musmanno. "I'm looking at it as a blank canvas ... We need to have a vision for how we look and feel, and I think that will hopefully resonate with the consumer."

The other key area on her agenda is strategizing the creation of a fragrance shopping experience through partnerships with retailers, which the foundation could promote to consumers, similar to Fashion's Night Out. She also says the organization is focused on creating a collaborative presence in the art world.

"We want to bring a beauty and elegance to the things that we do," says Musmanno, who has hired image making guru Alex Wiederin as creative director for the Fragrance Foundation awards on June 12.

"Wiederin [founder of boutique design agency Buero New York] co-founded *AnOther Magazine*, and he's done Terry Richardson's book [among others]," Musmanno adds. "I think he'll bring a very impactful point of view that will be very fresh and unique and creative to the Fragrance Foundation."

To that end, Musmanno brings her own perspective into the mix. The self-proclaimed "ideas person" started her career in the beauty industry working for brands ranging from Revlon to Calvin Klein cosmetics, Yves Saint Laurent Beauté and Elizabeth Arden. She eventually shifted into the world of fashion, moved to Paris with her family and began working at Christian Dior Couture, where she served on the executive committee and the global head of communications. She also worked with Vera Wang in New York as the head of marketing, advertising and public relations. And about three years ago, she started her own company, The Musmanno Group, a public relations, marketing, media-buying firm that works in fashion, beauty, fragrance, fine jewelry and art.

"We're going to connect the world of fragrance to other industries and vice versa," says Musmanno. "I think it's important because it's the future for business, and I think it's where very interesting things happen."

"There are so many dots to be connected from one industry to the next whether it's science, technology or art," she adds. "And there are so many great thinkers in these other industries [who] can really touch and influence the great thinkers in our industry."

For instance, Musmanno is mulling how the foundation can create a version of *TED Talks*, a daily video podcast that includes brief talks from the world's leading thinkers and doers. Her dream list of "talks" includes motivation from Jack Dorsey, who co-founded *Twitter*; or Soundsuits creator Nick Cave, who she says could talk about what his fragrance bottle would look like if he ever created one.

"You can learn from all of those groups," she says. "Then, you go back to the office the next day or the next afternoon and you look at things a little differently and [you're] inspired. I think it's a little bit of a chicken soup for the soul."

Still, Musmanno says the foundation hasn't changed its core mission: inspiring, educating and appreciating others.

"[The members] are primed and ready," she says. "They are saying we love this foundation, but we need this to go forward."

In the meantime, Musmanno's mantra is based on words spoken during a speech about former Avon CEO Andrea Jung.

"I'll dream, I will plan how to execute that dream, and I'll get it done," she says.

This conversation brought to you by:



We make it happen . . . together.