

New Age Fashion, Fragrance and Cosmetics



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Introduction

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Always one of my favorite forums for information and inspiration, I am delighted to be at your annual meeting and have been given the honor of presenting your luncheon speaker. Up and down the hallowed halls of our industry these days, we hear one common cry. "Where is the legendary creativity for which we have always been known? What happened to it? Did it disappear? Was it ever there? Have we lost it?" Well, it didn't disappear. It certainly was there, and we haven't lost it. Misplaced it, perhaps; but we didn't lose it. Creativity 1980 style is alive and well all around us if we want to see it, acknowledge it, and use it.

Our speaker today is one of the fashion world's great originals—no copy cat—Giorgio di Sant' Angelo. His designs have revolutionized, not only fashion and fabrics, but furniture, carpeting, jewelry, children's pillows (which he charmingly calls "Pillowkins"), hot-air balloons, men's wear, active wear, furs, and of a special interest to everyone in this room, environmental fragrance. He not only conceived and created new concepts in scents, but also the most elegant and sophisticated devices in which to house and disperse them. As we listen to this extraordinary talent, we might well ask ourselves if his type of insight and foresight isn't exactly what we are all looking for.

This is certainly the time to seek out the creative minds in whatever field which will bring new dimension to our product development and design. And speaking of design, may I present, from the magical fashion world, the award winner extraordinaire, painter, sculptor, gymnast, sensualist, a man who lives by the wisdom of his grandmother: "Never let people categorize you," costume designer for Lena Horne and Mick Jagger—the one and only—Giorgio di Sant' Angelo.

Tomorrow is the opening of my "for winter" collection which is a very important moment for a fashion designer. So if I appear nervous, please be patient with me. Fashion, fragrance, cosmetic and a new age is what I would like to talk to you about today. Fashion has been, for me, a very important part of my life ever since I was a child. I grew up in a family of ten fashionable women. It started with my grandmother, my mother and eight aunts. I was brought up to be always aware of style. I used to overhear my grandmother speaking to my aunts about style, fashion, fitness, posture, skin care, walking, and above all, cosmetics and a sense of smell.

I grew up in a large house and wherever you took a turn, there was always a full length mirror. That was my grandmother's way of teaching us how to develop a sense of self-awareness. I remember being quite young and overheard her saying to my mother, "Watch that child, he eats too much." That was me. She would also say, "It's not important to look good for yourself—it's more important that you look good for others."

It was Catherine d'Medici of Florence who introduced fragrance to France when she married King Henry II of France. She wore leather gloves impregnated in fragrance to protect herself from the maladies of the 16th Century. The leather tanneries were centered in Grasse. She brought her alchemist to Grasse and planted all the herbs and florals necessary to create her perfumes. This is why this area of France today is the center of perfume of the world. But as an Italian, I am very proud to remind you all that it originated in Italy.

Coming from this traditional line of women interested in fragrance, essence and aromas, added to my upbringing. Every room I entered, every door I opened had a distinctive fragrance. That was another of my grandmother's doings.



My grandmother, of course, knew it all, and when we moved from Europe to South America, she blended all this European knowledge with Inca and Aztec techniques of essence and herbs. This became her hobby. I learned about bergamot, lavender, jasmine, sandalwood, patchouly, musk, amber, civet, citrus, almond oil; how to blend them, how to use them as medicine, how to enhance my own sensitivity, and calculate my sense of aroma. This, as well as fashion, art, music, color, architecture and design, has been a very important aspect all my life. I consider fragrance as important as color and design.

I grew up identifying people, homes, villages, countries, by the sense of smell. Individuality has been the No. 1 priority in my entire career, and the same has been true for my sense of smell. Unfortunately, I find today that most women do not intrigue me or interest me with their fragrance, as they would rather keep me at a distance. And men are worse—they all smell alike. The “now” generation, is very distressed with

this approach to fragrance. It is not only that every fragrance smells the same, but every knock-off does also at a much lower price.

Today, we live in an age of mass production—our clothing, cars, furniture, households. Fragrance could be one way of giving each one of us a sense of individuality. I believe the fragrance industry will have to take one step back to be able to take five steps forward to capture this new age and myself. That is why I have been referring to my grandmother whose sense of smell and delicacy was so refined that she even knew how to fragrance waters, clothing, rooms, more than just merely perfume her body.

It was in the Orient that I learned about fragrance on yarns, clothing and ambiance. The Chinese burn essence to communicate with their gods. The art of Japanese perfumeries is exquisite, poetic and elegant. The Hindus constructed temples with aromatic woods. It was Alexander the Great who bathed his armies in essential oils to protect them from the illnesses of invasion to Mesopotamia. It was Hippocrates, the father of medicine, who ordered the spraying of Athens with myrrh to fight against the plague. Napoleon, who was addicted to fragrances, on his deathbed made his final request of France: “Please grant me my essential oils.”

I believe this new generation of today identifies themselves with this traditional sensitivity to essential oils, herbs and fragrance. I feel this industry should reach out with creativity, new technologies, and an awareness of reality to cultivate this new audience of healthy bodies through exercise, proper diet, awareness of religion, mysticism, and the power of crystals. I want you to think strongly of what I am saying.

In my fashion world, we create new fabrications to create a sense of today and comfort, such as a straight silk which enables me and other designers to create hemlines when they go up and down. More and more, men and women are working in the same level. I am sorry to say the fragrance industry is not moving at the same pace and direction. I would love to again leave someone's home and keep in my memory, not only the visual experience, but also a wonderful smell.

Finally, I would like to share with you a quote that I came across in William Kaufman's book, *Perfume*. “Perfume—a magical mystical word that conjures in the mind all the romances of life, the smell of herbs, spices, wild grass, flowers, the smell of good fish, of animal, of trees—is one of the secrets of the universe.”

