

CARTE BLANCHE TO LUCIEN PAGES

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Les Rencontres de la Mode 2018

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The fashion industry in France is a major pillar of the French economy, being the first sector in terms of Annual Sales with €150 billion and employing over 1 million people (IMF Study). So, its training activities must perform well. In fact, this is an objective that the MMM shares with the largest university in France, Aix-Marseille University (AMU). Together they have created the first comprehensive University Course in Fashion, with an Undergraduate Degree and Masters 1 & 2 Degrees, completed in 2018 by a further Degree Course in Retail Excellence and a Higher University Degree in Fashion Crafts and High-Tech. All of these courses will be brought together under the first University Chair in 3.0 Fashion. In the framework of a tutored project, the Fashion Contacts meetings widen the knowledge of Masters 1 students, as they exchange ideas and interact with influential personalities from the fashion world. This year it was an interesting idea to give a Carte Blanche on this project to Lucien Pagès, the founder of the PR Agency with the same name. He chose to take advantage of his network and invited Alix Morabito, Fashion Editor at the Galeries Lafayette, Hélène Guillaume, Journalist at the French daily newspaper The Figaro, and Christelle Kocher, creator of the label Koché but also Artistic Director of the Maison Lemarié fashion house which is part of the Chanel art and crafts group.

Together these four speakers shared details of their careers with passion and sincerity to around a hundred students from MMM partner education and training courses, including the Degree and Masters 1 & 2 Courses at AMU, the fashion design and garment prototyping school IICC Mode, as well as with young fashion designers.

Student feedback on the Fashion Contacts project on 21 November at the Docks Village in Marseilles.

First session (11.30am to 1pm): Trendsetter Trio with Lucien Pagès, Alix Morabito and Hélène Guillaume

Lucien Pagès

Lucien Pagès opens the Fashion Contacts talking about his career and experiences in the fashion world. After obtaining a diploma in fashion design and garment prototyping, he started his career as assistant to the Artistic Director Marc Ascoli. He created his PR agency after meeting the fashion designer Adam Kimmel, who became his first client. Today he works with more than 30 labels, including JACQUEMUS and Koché. He shared the inner workings and relationships of a PR Agency with their clients, not only being responsible for public and press relations, but also expanding their activities to include organising runway shows, seating, press photos and product placements. Today, his PR Agency can also help elaborate a positioning strategy for a label. He insisted that a label must choose the right moment to use the services of a PR Agency. Although their networks are in phase with a label's generation, their services come with a cost which must be made profitable. Finally, in response to questions from students, Lucien Pagès explained that he did not necessarily recruit people solely on the basis of having the necessary PR diplomas and training. He considered it important that individuals must be passionate about their work and the fashion industry, getting involved and working hard, and constantly being aware of what was going on in the industry.

Alix Morabito

After obtaining a Master's Degree in Management from Panthéon-Assas University, Paris, the Fashion Editor at the Galeries Lafayette started her career as an Art Buyer at the BETC Advertising Agency in Paris. Wanting to work in the Fashion Industry, she enrolled on the French Fashion Institute's Master's Degree course in Fashion Management, and had an internship at the 'MAFIA' trend forecasting agency. She then successively held posts as a Buyer for the Galeries Lafayette and Printemps department stores. Alix Morabito talked enthusiastically and in detail about the job of being a Buyer for a department store, which is all about buying garments she sees at fashion runway shows. She explained the purchasing process and the importance of « story telling » for a brand or label. She talked about her career to date, and explained several examples of the missions she has as Fashion Editor. Her role as coordinator between the different purchasing departments is essential for the artistic coherence of all the products sold in the different spheres of activity. Her advice also covered the capacity to analyse and detect new talent.

Hélène Guillaume

Her scientific training was not supposed to see Hélène Guillaume develop a career in the fashion world. As a journalist she now follows and meets with fashion designers and other actors in the industry. She explained the role of fashion journalists in the press and the importance of the internet, and clearly stated that, contrary to received ideas, the written press was not dead. To exist, however, it must have quality articles with serious and reliable content, which is essential given the importance of the sector to the French economy. Regardless of the climate and trends, people need clothes and, therefore, fashion has an important role to play. She talked about the evolution of her job and the problems linked to changes in reader behaviour. She also talked about the solutions, for example a multi-language version, or a digital edition to satisfy all users requirements. Although her job is both demanding and compelling, she explained how fashion journalists are faced with pressing requests which can become overwhelming in terms of quantity. She went on to explain the procedure she uses to decide which designers and creators to follow, which is based on their existing reputation and recommendations made by press offices. Finding that rare pearl is difficult and time consuming. It requires a passion for fashion and continuous self-questioning. Her last piece of advice: showing how motivated you are is the key advantage to succeed in fashion, much more important than diplomas and professional experience.

Second session (2.30pm to 4pm): The duo Lucien Pagès and Christelle Kocher

Christelle Kocher

Christelle Kocher graduated from the prestigious St Martin's School in London. She worked with Armani to become familiar with the Italian fashion industry, then moved back to Paris to join the fashion designer Martine Sitbon, and afterwards moved to Chloé. In 2010 Christelle Kocher became Artistic Director of the Maison Lemarié fashion house, which specialises in using feathers and flowers and is now part of Chanel's arts and crafts group of companies, their 'Manufactures de Mode'. This group is run by Dominique Barbiery, who also heads up Chanel's 'Innovation Centre'. He was a guest speaker at the 2016 edition of 'Fashion Contacts'. Since her appointment to the post of AD at Lemarié, Christelle Kocher's team has doubled in size to 40 people. Her working methods, combining craftsmanship and artisanal skills and know-how with new technologies, delighted the young fashion school students. In 2014 she launched her own label, Koché, combining her singularity, her haute couture skills and knowledge, and her signature « street culture », which she likes to call "Street-Couture". Lucien Pagès was impressed and became her PR Agency. She was immediately successful, and her label was selected by well-known and international concept stores. For her latest collection she revisits and feminises the universe of football, which impressed her as a child. An interesting and successful career so far for this woman who is passionate about what she does, and even mentioned how proud she is to be the first woman to have a Carte Blanche, at the 2018 OpenMyMed Festival, following in the footsteps of Yacine Aouadi and JACQUEMUS. "This young Festival shows just how incredibly creative and intercultural Marseilles is! The label Koché completely subscribes to this spirit."