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MKT 2335
15 October 2015

Graduate Center Symposium Essay: Reem Acra

Reem Acra, originally from Beirut, Lebanon, moved to New York to study fashion design at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Prior to moving to New York, Acra studied at the American University of Beirut. In 1982, Acra had her first fashion show at the American University of Beirut. The fashion show was also the first fashion show by a Lebanese designer held at the university. After a successful show, Acra asked her parents to send her to New York to further pursue a career in fashion. Today, Reem Acra's collections are "influenced by global fashion (personal communication, October 13, 2015)" and are styled for a modern woman. European, Middle Eastern, and other cultural styles are present in her designs but with a modern touch. In Acra's recent Spring Bridal 2016 runway show, the models wore headphones instead of tiaras and had cellphones with decorated selfie sticks instead of a traditional bouquet of flowers (Grechko.2015). The collection remained feminine, besides that added technology, with lingerie-inspired designs. Diversity amongst the models in Acra's fashion shows were present on her ready-to-wear Spring/Summer 2016 runway. Even though she is not the first to do so, Acra is among designers that are pushing to add diversity within fashion shows.

Reem Acra has designed for several global icons including some from royal families around the world. Among those icons are Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, Eva Longoria, Selena Gomez, Halle Berry, Jane Fonda and Madonna (Global Fashion Capitals Conference.2015). Reem Acra is known for "her ability to match a look to a woman's personality (Reem Acra Inc.2015)" and this is why celebrities choose to wear her designs for events such as red carpet events and award ceremonies. Reem Acra's ready-to-wear and bridal collections can be purchased from luxury retailers such as Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue and Bergdorf Goodman. Acra is a member of the Council of Fashion Designers of America and is also on the Board of the Dubai Design and Fashion Council (Reem Acra Inc.2015). Acra's influence on the fashion world are among the reasons she was chosen to speak at the *Global Fashion, Women, and the Creative Industries* symposium at The Graduate Center at CUNY.

At the *Global Fashion, Women, and the Creative Industries* symposium (2015), Acra also spoke about wanting to introduce or move the Middle East to a more modern style of fashion. This is all while being respectful to the culture and religion of that region. Although Acra is known as an American designer, she remains true to her Middle Eastern roots (personal communication, October 13, 2015). Reem Acra hopes to help place the Middle East as another fashion destination, particularly Dubai. Dubai, which Acra calls her second home, is where she will concentrate the majority of her time. Acra's eagerness to commit to supporting the Middle East's fashion community is amazing and is inspiring to the author. Reem Acra is known for her unpredictable runway shows, so it will be exciting to see what becomes of Dubai fashion with her guidance.

References

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