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inside fashion

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Ian MacKintosh

Upstart Publicist

“I want my designers to be stars sans the unnecessary drama of the pre-show chaos.”

After a brief stint as an intern for the Council of Fashion Designers of America—which turned into a three-year odyssey assisting executive director Fern Mallis—Ian MacKintosh was hooked on the drama of fashion. It was a whirlwind experience for the young fashion student: “The CFDA was just starting the tents plus doing the landmark benefit Seventh on Sale in San Francisco for AIDS and the CFDA awards gala. It was a time of energy, excitement, and exhaustion.”

MacKintosh then worked briefly for Eva Chun and Marc Jacobs at Perry Ellis, where he learned the inner workings of fashion public relations. He explains, “The up side of working in-house is being able to concentrate on one product, one image, one identity.” Many public-relations aspirants, he notes, work for outside firms with the hope of eventually working in-house, a life full of perks and times of relative peace.

Still, MacKintosh chose a different route. He could not pass up the opportunity to work with legendary publicist Eleanor Lambert. The ninety-five-year-old doyenne of American public relations, the founder of the CFDA, the Coty Awards, and the international best-dressed list, Lambert involved MacKintosh in every aspect of her business. The six-year stint gave him an unparalleled view of American fashion at its zenith, working with fashion icons such as Bill Blass and Oscar de la Renta. MacKintosh also learned the perils and pitfalls of owning a public-relations company in the often fickle world of fashion designers and their even more fickle financial backers. But he was smitten: “It definitely inspired me to start my own company. Working for someone as revered as Eleanor I had been taught by a master and knew the intricacies of the business.”

Today he and Diana Wright are partners in Iliad Communications and Production. He describes the firm’s range of services: “We do everything

from special events to graphic design, web design, speech writing, and runway production down to the nitty-gritty of product placement.” MacKintosh is known for unceasing work on behalf of his clients—trailing camera crews into shows and showrooms alike, devising charity promotions and celebrity tie-ins. Gone are the days when a fashion show alone guaranteed preeminence in the fashion press. He comments, “Today you have to consider celebrity dressing, award shows, corporate sponsorship, and promotions—e-tailing as well as retailing—and now there are hundreds of magazines and television shows to be pitched. After a grueling ten-day fashion ‘week,’ I want my designers to be stars sans the unnecessary drama of the pre-show chaos that prevails in this industry.”