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THE **FINE LINE** —

Living | 03.01.2018

Women Who Inspire: Designer Fanny Karst



Each month, The Fine Line features a woman who inspires us in a unique way. This month's guest is French-born fashion designer Fanny Karst. At 34, she's younger than our typical guest, and though you might not know her name, you've very likely seen her groundbreaking work.

Her glorious “Old Is the New Black” and “Old Is the New Gold” tees have been spotted on bloggers and Instagrammers of a certain age since their release. She reveres older women and has an unusual point of view on aging. We are delighted to share our conversation with her.

Fanny Karst has been on a mission since childhood: to showcase to the world that older women are spectacular. But this mission is not just a brand statement for the designer, it’s a mantra that has woven itself through her studies — at the renowned Central Saint Martins no less — to her eponymous clothing line.

Raised in a large family in London, Karst revered her grandmothers, great aunt, and mother like royalty. She found them to be cool women who never lost their confidence or edge, and who “should not be seen as fragile,” she says.



In 2009, Karst launched her first clothing line. Called The Old Ladies Rebellion, it embodied her “aging is beautiful” crusade. Though the clothing was sought after, the moniker was polarizing. “Even though the American woman is a modern woman and open to the irony and humor of it all, many clients just

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did not like the word ‘old’ on the label,” Karst says with a charming accent. “I now say I make clothes for women of a certain age.”

Karst’s initial following consisted of women who glided down the runway at her final university show. They were “friends of my mother and grandmother, as well as models who were kind enough to trust me.” The designer was grateful they joined her again the following year for her first Paris runway

show, which featured Daphne Selfe (the world's oldest supermodel, who is now approaching 90 years old) and French model Monique Rozier.

“There was quite a lot of press at my first show, including the main newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Times*. I was absolutely unprepared for that. It was a messy thing because I was on my own. It was badly organized but very lighthearted and fun. I think [the press] were interested because it was a new idea.”

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Then the fashion-forward darling's unique vision caught the eye of Ari Seth Cohen, creator of **Advanced Style**. His photo project was new at the time. Like Karst, Cohen is devoted to the sartorially savvy senior set. The two recognized one another instantly as kindred spirits.

“We met, and it was like we fell in love,” she says. “We had so much to talk about. We share the same passion. We became very good friends. We work together and help each other a lot, but we try not to work together too much, because we are friends first and we want to protect that.”

Karst insists Cohen is responsible for helping her find clients once she moved to New York City in 2013. What began as a two-month stint to see what excitement the city had to offer led to a successful fashion business and meeting and marrying her husband.

Even as she works on growing her business, Karst says she never loses sight her original inspiration.

As she reminisces about her grandmother's “confident posture” and “the way she politely crossed her legs,” she muses that an older woman's undisputable grandeur stems from her sense of freedom.

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“Older women like my grandmother — and now my mother — rediscover all the wonderful things about life. It comes out in the way they dress, the way they walk, their general attitude.” Only older women have this nonchalance, Karst says, because “after you have lived, you know what works, what doesn’t, and you are not burdened by superficial worries.”