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# iTALK@FGI

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THE TASTEMAKERS

By Design: A Stylish Sit-Down



How often have you wanted to be a fly on the wall and overhear a conversation between two newsmakers? On November 21st, Fashion Group members had the chance to be privy to a dialogue between two iconic New York notables. The fourth installment of FGI's "The Tastemaker" series took place at famed eatery Le Cirque. The participants were author **Pamela Fiori** and fashion designer **Dennis Basso**.

The location was not by accident as Le Cirque has figured largely in the lives of these two. Basso has been a patron for many years and cherishes its reputation for unabashed luxury. Fiori has recently written an acclaimed book about the restaurant entitled *A Table At Le Cirque*. This first cookbook heralds the institution that has cultivated the best chefs of our times and serves as a social club for celebrities and power brokers. Autographed copies of Fiori's book were available for purchase after the event.

Basso and Fiori are fast friends due in part to their shared New Jersey beginnings. This fact was the starting point for a lively discussion of Basso's fabled career. Fiori asked Basso about his early life and thus began a fun-filled life story told by this experienced raconteur.

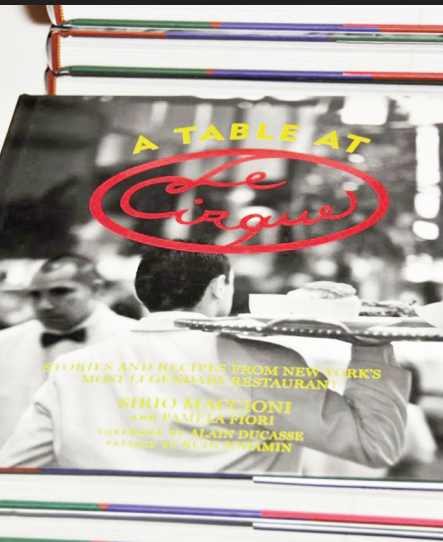
An only child, Basso was born into a close-knit Italian family. Not content to follow in his Dad's produce business, Basso always looked to the future and to a life that was filled with glamour and populated by the beautiful people. He never was attracted to childish pursuits, but always looked to adults for direction.

Heroes included **Bill Blass**, **Carolina Herrera** and **Oscar De La Renta** as they succeeded in appealing to the luxurious audience that Basso sought.

Fiori asked him how he became involved with fur. Basso simply explained that though he loved designing beautiful clothes, he couldn't get a job in the apparel market and settled for trial employment with a small furrier. Thus began a hilarious romp through his early career in the fur industry. His journey begins with his painting the showroom on a Sunday morning and culminates in Fashion Week exposure, international renown and the recent opening of a Madison Avenue flagship.

Throughout his career, he unabashedly admitted that he loved to work with divas and he has dressed plenty in his pursuit of the good life. When QVC came calling, Basso decided that this was a way to spread his vision to a new segment of the market. Here were women who desired luxury that was within their means. A showman at heart, television became a natural venue for this ebullient personality. He recently celebrated twenty years with the shopping channel and an amazing sales record of six million units.

When Fiori asked him the reasons for his success, Basso was quick to share his secret: A loving family, a great team whom he respects, products made in New York and attention to customer service are all part of the package. A thirty-year career is just the beginning of the Basso legacy. When someone in the audience asked what he would like to do in



Dennis Basso and Pamela Fiori



Margaret Hayes and Dennis Basso



Pamela Fiori signs her book, *A Table at le Cirque*

the future, without a moment's hesitation Basso announced that he would like to host a talk show.

After this conversation we have no doubt that Dennis Basso will continue to pique our interest whether we are in the market for a couture gown, a sable coat or a

or a faux fur on QVC. This ultimate showman certainly knows how to sell the goods that enable him to share the dream that he envisioned as a boy back in New Jersey.

—Carolyn Moss

Contributing Writer, carolynkmoss@gmail.com

## Frontliner Licensing—Pathway to Business Growth & Global Reach

On November 13, FGI hosted the latest event in its Frontliner series, “Licensing—Pathway to Business Growth & Global Reach” with a lively discussion on licensing in the fashion industry featuring a panel of experts in the field including moderator **Barbara Friedman**, consultant at LIM College and former president of corporate licensing at Liz Claiborne, Inc. The esteemed panelists included **Patricia DiPette**, SVP of licensing at Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, **Barbara Kolson**, executive VP general counsel at Stuart Weitzman, **Maria Vicari**, president of global licensing at Nautica and **Paul Rosengard**, menswear president at Li & Fung USA.

The evening kicked off with an introduction from **Charles Klein**, Esq. of Davidoff, Hitcher & Citron, LLP. He delved into the discussion by saying he once asked himself, “Who would want to wear a logo on their jacket? I learned, a lot of people,” said Klein.

What makes a brand licensable was one of the first topics of discussion among the panelists. Vicari shared that brands must have a clear point of view and brand DNA in order to launch a successful licensing program. According to Vicari, Nautica has been successful with licensing because it is a desirable brand with a clear point of view and the potential to extend across multiple categories. Vicari also stressed the importance of design consistency and establishing and enforcing branding guidelines with all partners. “When the consumer sees any category, it should look like one person created it,” said Vicari.

Although DiPette's background is in the fashion industry, having spent time at Elie Tahari, Laundry by Shelli Segal, Lucky Brand Jeans, Sigrid Olsen and Liz Claiborne, she is now working on a lifestyle brand at Martha Stewart Living. DiPette said Martha Stewart's wide appeal in the home and



From left: Patricia DiPette, Barbara Kolson, Maria Vicari and Paul Rosengard

entertaining categories has been a driving factor in the brand's licensing success. For instance, the target consumer for Martha Stewart's bridal products is a woman around 28 years old while the target consumer for home is closer to 48 years old.

Rosengard outlined his list of what makes a brand appealing to licensees, including: consumer awareness, strong brand DNA, market share, the ability to create a halo effect and the potential to open the door to another licensor.

Kolson brought another perspective to the discussion since Stuart Weitzman mainly deals with territorial licensing, in which the brand contracts partners to open and operate Stuart Weitzman stores outside North America on their behalf. They also work with outside partners for e-commerce in both Europe and Asia. Kolson said it's extremely important to conduct due diligence when entering into international agreements because trademark registration laws vary greatly from country to country.

The difficult nature of negotiating a licensing contract was another major area of discussion. While Rosengard said some of his licensing negotiations have made his marriage and divorce seem easy, he insisted tough negotiations can often lead to dream partners. “If you're in business with the right people, you don't need a contract and if you're in business with the wrong people, no contract will protect you,” said Rosengard.

Kolson agreed the hard work has to be done in the negotiation stage of any licensing partnership. She shared her experience working on a challenging licensing agreement

during her time at Kate Spade. The brand was working with Estée Lauder to create a fragrance but the partners did not agree on distribution, which Kolson said can be a huge source of disagreements and litigation when it comes to licensing.

DiPette also stressed the importance of working out all issues during the negotiation stage of licensing agreements saying, “You're always tied at the hip to legal counsel.”

On the pros and cons of working with licensing agents, Vicari said they can be an excellent resource if your brand is expanding into a new category or territory where the agent has expertise. She also said they can be an excellent choice for small companies who do not have the infrastructure to support an in-house licensing program. The major drawback to working with a licensing agent is diluting of revenues.

The economics of licensing also came up during the course of the evening. The panel agreed that a licensee most likely will not make a profit in the first year because of the enormous investment required to launch a licensing partnership. A successful licensing program should turn a profit by its third year. The panel also shared typical royalty rates: five to 10 percent for apparel, eight to 12 percent for accessories and seven to 10 percent for international deals.

—Melissa Pastore

Contributing Writer, melissa.pastore@gmail.com



An FGI member of many years standing, lifestyle commentator **Robert di Mauro** was honored by the Department of Education at it's Career & Technical Education event recognizing industry leaders and partners. As an advisory board member of the High School of Fashion Industries, di Mauro created the Industry Partnership Program (IPP), which strengthens the bridge between the industry and HSFI students. Recognized as a role model for Career & Technical Education, partners of the program include Macy's, Kleinfeld, Saks Fifth Avenue, Li & Fung and Keds. Di Mauro has dedicated the IPP to the memory of his father, Thomas Gaetano Di Mauro, who attended the High School of Fashion Industries, then known as the Central High School of Needle Trades.



Zeroing in on the now and future of education—on-line learning—**Francesca Sterlacci** has opened the virtual doors to University of Fashion, the first-ever, on-line fashion design video library. From illustration to draping, the Web site features lessons led by widely recognized fashion college professors and industry pros. Recently filmed, for example, is a 30-lesson series, Designer Fashion Speaks, debuting with Carmen Marc Valvo. The video tutorials are being marketed to school libraries nationwide with New York's F.I.T. and Parsons first up.

A former professor and chair of F.I.T.'s Fashion Design Program, Sterlacci is a longtime FGI member, a 1984 Rising Star nominee and has published a number of books on fashion for which she did her research at the Fashion Group International Archives.



**Paws For Thought**

Fashion designer, former model, author of *Diva Dogs: A Style Guide to Living the Fabulous Life* (Bowtie, 2008) and—not to be overlooked—longtime FGI member **Jo Jo Harder** has penned a new book. Titled *Top Dog Model: Featuring America's Top Dog Models*® (Trimark Press, 2013), this guide offers star-struck pet parents helpful tips on grooming, training and working with agencies for print and TV work. A founder of America's Top Dog Model Contest®, Harder created the competition to celebrate the unions that humans share with their canine companions. Headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida, and now in its ninth season, the contest is a national search for “dogs that make a difference” with winners featured in the annual America's Top Dog Model Calendar® and on the pages of Harder's new how-to manual, where inquiring minds can find out how the “top dogs” won their laurels. Career hopefuls can find the guide at Baker & Taylor, Amazon.com and Marketing@TrimarkPress.com.

**Rising Star Nominations**

**JANUARY 6TH**

Voting Opens for Members

**JANUARY 23RD**

Luncheon and Award Ceremony at Cipriani 42nd Street

Visit [www.fgi.org](http://www.fgi.org) for nomination forms and nominate a Rising Star in:  
 accessories • beauty/fragrance  
 fine jewelry • home/interior  
 men's apparel • retail  
 women's ready-to-wear



Every Christmastime, FGI members help make a difference by fulfilling children's holiday wishes through the Santa Claus Club.

It's a massive undertaking on the part of FGI staff—this year spearheaded by **Miho Takagi**—gathering letters from schools and organizations such as the New York Foundling Hospital and P.S. 20, distributing them to members and then receiving and coordinating the distribution of gifts.

This year, we collected gifts for 300 children.

Members often take more than one letter, but this year several generous board members took stacks: **Kate Greene** of Givaudan and **Louise Evins** of Evins Communications each took 20 and **Pam Linton** of LIM took 25. Additionally, Zylie, a toy company launched by **Mary Beth Minton** and her son, **Matt McCarthy**, partnered with FGI to donate cuddly Zylie bears to children writing to Santa. The National Toy Award-nominated company is also offering a special discount to FGI members shopping on [zyliebear.com](http://zyliebear.com). Just use code FGI12013.

Thanks to everyone for helping spread holiday joy!



**More Talk From iTalk!**

Fresher, newer, better, sooner...  
 timelier coverage and updates.  
 iTalk now arrives in  
 your inbox and the FGI website  
 about 10 times a year!  
 Look for it!

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 Ike C. Iregbulem\*  
 Francesca Kennedy\*  
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 Inma Medina  
 Sylvie Millstein  
 Bethany Newell  
 Toyin Okoro  
 Youjin Park  
 Jennifer Pickett  
 Jennifer Rowe  
 Erica Schweiger\*  
 Paz Sintes  
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 Kaity Moreira\*  
 Stuart Oberman  
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 Martha Jackson  
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