

talent & fashion: a toronto case study



Deborah Leslie & Shauna Brail
University of Toronto

presentation outline

- overview
- regulation
- space
- talent
- gender
- next steps



overview

overview

- size and strengths of industry
 - 550 apparel manufacturers
 - 50,000 employees
 - contractors known for quality garments, flexibility and quick turnaround (ICF Consulting, 2000)
 - large fashion houses: Roots, Joe Fresh, Lida Biday
 - competitive strength in independent design

toronto's strengths: multicultural, niche, small scale



Saniya Khan



Comrags



Fashion Nation





'Collective' selling items made by / staffed by local designers on Queen Street W.

overview ii

- industry composition
 - 'layers' of industry: design, production, distribution, retail, marketing, media
 - industry focus: women's clothing

overview iii

- recent change
 - recession
 - international competition
 - trade liberalization
 - NAFTA
 - expiration of MFA

regulation

regulation

- sunset industry
- designated as one of ten key clusters in Toronto (2000)
- fashion cluster offers substantial competitive advantage to other Toronto clusters
- promotes overall economic vitality

toronto fashion incubator (TFI)

- toronto as first to innovate
- spearheaded by TEDCO and FILC
- programs: outreach and resident
- focus on business advice, equipment and resources



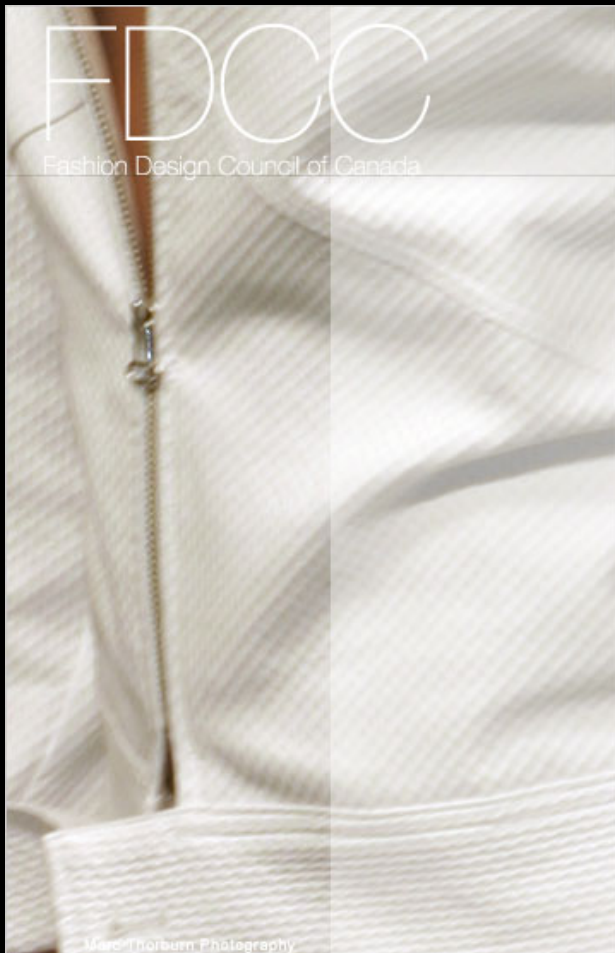
Susan Langdon, Exec Dir, TFI

"Designers need more than raw creative talent to survive. They need to understand what marketing and cash flow mean. That's where TFI comes into play. No one else in the country is offering this type of niche market [support]. I see TFI as the hub of a passionate design community that wants to keep jobs, production and industry here in Canada."

TFI new labels, fashion show



L'Oreal fashion week, FDCC



**L'OREAL
FASHION WEEK**



**Check out our
News section for
LFW coverage!**

A vertical banner with a pink header containing the text "L'OREAL FASHION WEEK". Below the header is a photograph of several models on a runway, wearing dark, form-fitting outfits. At the bottom of the banner is a grey box with white text that reads "Check out our News section for LFW coverage!".

L'Oréal fashion week, march 2007



fashion magazines



training

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF
FASHION



GEORGE
BROWN
COLLEGE

Việt Ngữ Español
中文 한국어 日本語

showcasing student talent

Signatures 2007 *Cocktails at the Castle* *Annual Fashion Gala*

George Brown College - Center for Fashion Studies

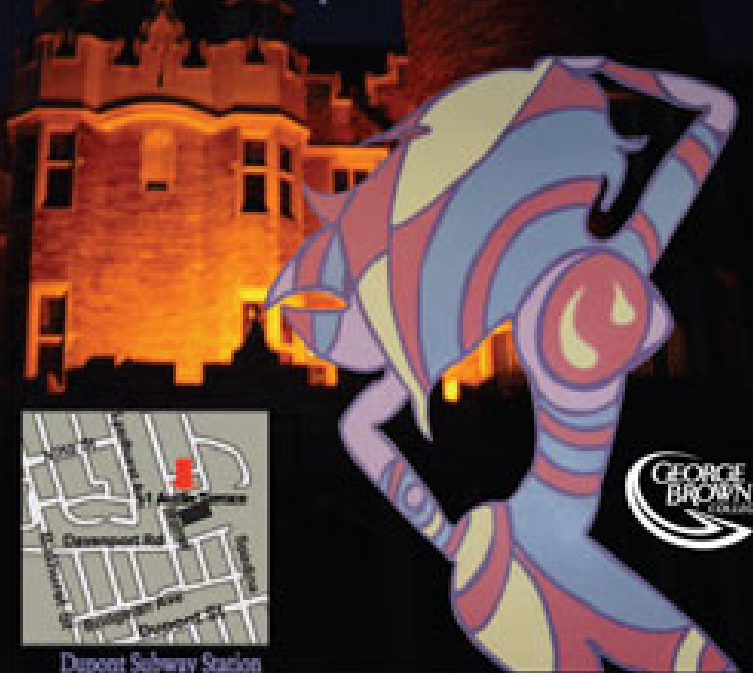
Thursday, April 26th, 2007

At Casa Loma, 1 Austin Terrace

Tickets: \$35 in Advance/ \$40 at the door

Cocktail Reception 7:00pm

Show at 7:30pm



SCHOOL OF FASHION

MASS EXODUS 2007

RYERSON UNIVERSITY | PLATFORM

Tickets Available for:

Wednesday, April 11th: 7:30pm
Thursday, April 12th: 5:00pm,
and 7:00pm.

Prices are \$15, \$20, and \$25 for
the Evening Gala show.

Ryerson Theatre—43 Gerrard
Street East.

Reception one hour before every show in the commons

Curves

le château

MAKE UP FOR EVER
PROFESSIONAL

challenges for governance

- hybrid nature of fashion design encompasses both art & commerce
- not included in the Ontario Ministry of Culture mandate

“While a skirt has no plot and you can’t hum a pair of pants, fashion sometimes involves human intellectual achievement that might qualify it as a cultural industry like literature, music, and film. Other times fashion is just another name for overpriced goods.” (Toronto Star, March 2007)

space

space

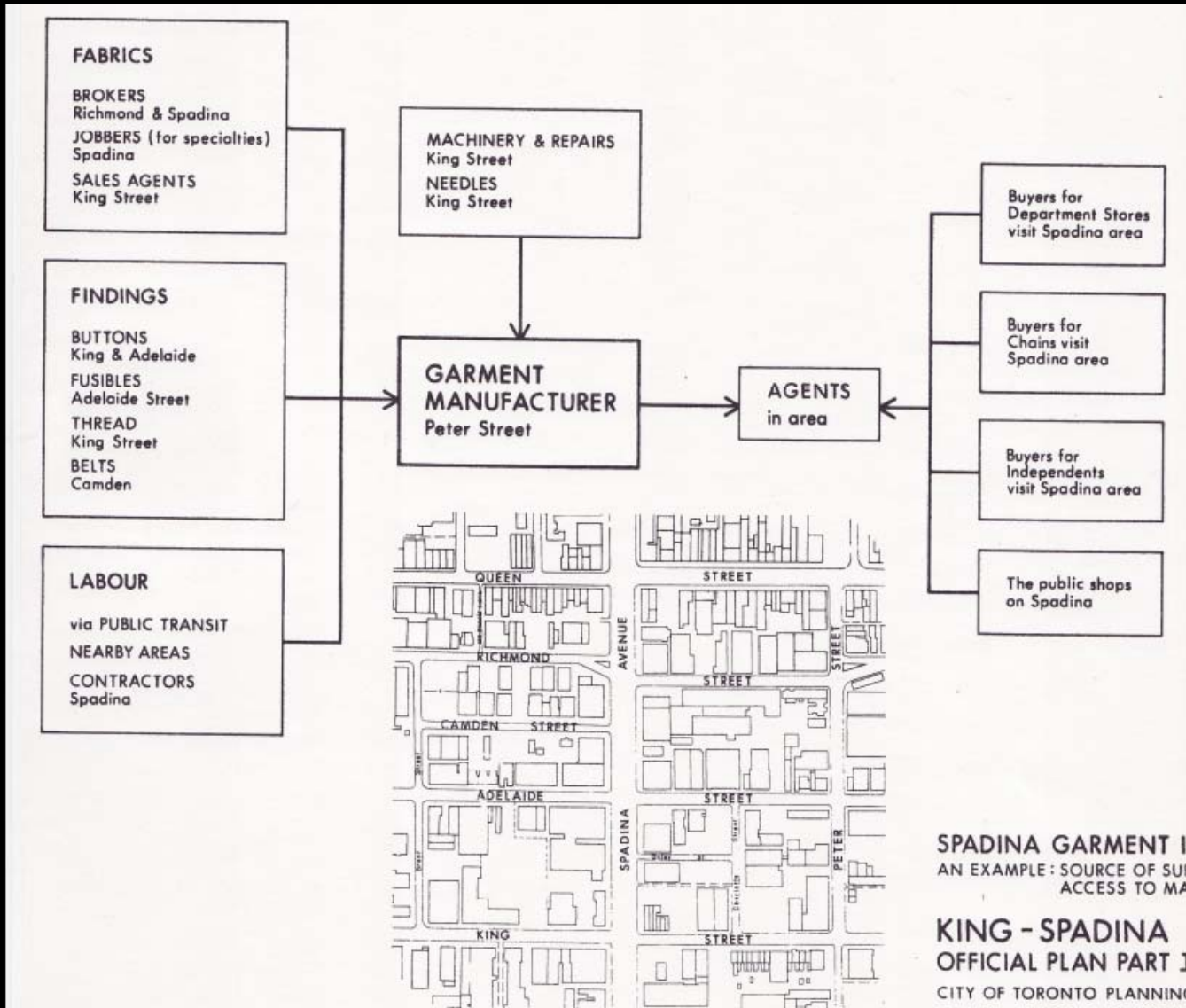


Spadina Avenue, historic fashion district



Spadina / Richmond

spadina production chain



newer spaces



Northwest Toronto, Simon Chang

west queen west



talent

portrait: Joe Mimran



- serial fashion entrepreneur
- spaces of city nurture homegrown talent
- city generates spill across effects (Florida, 2006; Markusen, 2006)



talent & teamwork

- literature focuses separately on:
 - process of conception 'as moment of innovation' (Rantisi, 2004)
 - unskilled 'uncreative' exploitative nature of sewing
- range of other talented workers also key to artistic and commercial success of sector
 - photographers, art directors, makeup artists, editors, pattern makers, cutters, graders, pressers

comrags

- Many independent designers source locally
- 'Our studio has a relaxed and team-oriented atmosphere, encouraging staff to stick with us. Susan, our production manager and her team of seamstresses, sample maker, cutter and presser have worked with us for a million years. Laurie works directly with us finishing samples, pattern grading and indulging our whims ... it is a team effort that has brought us to where we are today'



the comrags 'team'

increasingly skilled talent

- Scott (2002) and Kessler (2004) find that overall number of jobs declined in LA, but non-operator occupations actually increased
 - i.e.: professional and semi-professional occupations such as pattern makers, quality control experts, import-export and production managers
- growing shortage of qualified skilled workers (Scott, 2002; Kessler, 2004; Larner & Molloy, 2007; interview UNITE, 2007)

gender

gender

- literature emphasizes socio-spatial dimensions of quality of life
 - diversity, tolerance, social inclusion, public space
- Donald and Morrow (2003) suggest literature has not paid adequate attention to gender and life cycle issues

“Fashion is of course an almost wholly feminized industry. Apart from a few men at the top, including manufacturers and retailers, celebrity designers and magazine publishers, it is and has been a female sphere of production and consumption. For this reason alone fashion *is* a feminist issue.”
(McRobbie, 1997, p. 84-85)



women and fashion

- disconnect between design and manufacturing
- celebrity 'star system' leads to dilution of talent and corrosion of creativity in a 'talent-led economy' (McRobbie, 2002)
- explore mutual dependence between sites and actors
- emphasize spaces of collective consumption and reproduction
- emphasis also on social and ethical issues relevant to attracting and retaining female talent

social construction of talent

- industry roles seen as being 'talent based' tend to be populated by men
- need to consider gendering of talent and creativity
- also to consider: race and ethnicity in talent

next steps

next steps

- interviews
- statistical analysis
- policy recommendations

thank you

