
How Competitive is the Field of Fashion Design?

In this line of work where it's common to produce megastars, there's always the talented but unremarkable designers that fall to the wayside into obscurity. They live out their days putting together small collections to lukewarm reception, or they specialize in small parts of a garment such as French cuffs or lace ruffles. To elevate themselves above this, they must have fortitude and a larger than life personality, or some would say larger than their vision.

Many young designers are drawn to fashion design because of the glamour associated with the environment and work products created. There are only two areas in the United States where the majority of the action is: New York City and California. Because there is such a small number of areas where designers can work, this causes an overabundance of designers all vying for the same positions in concentrated locations. Having a degree and a starter portfolio isn't enough to get them in the door anymore.

This is why getting the perfect fit internship is so important while still in school, or when school is ending, because it gets the designer's foot in the door. It is common for fashion houses to hire those interns that do well, as they've already proven themselves to be a good fit. This bypasses a lot of the intense competition of job hunting.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is such a low turnover of jobs in the fashion industry that, combined with the large numbers attracted to the profession, and only two areas of the country where this business thrives, it creates a highly competitive job market. This collection of factors leads many designers to self-employ; between one quarter and one third of all fashion designers are self-employed.

Once a designer makes it to the big time, the competitive nature does not subside. If anything, it intensifies. As Heidi Klum from Project Runway says: *"One minute you're in. And the next, you're out."* Designers spend a lot of time reading trade publications, fashion magazines from all over the world, looking at what other designers are



offering, new materials, and attending fashion shows in order to keep up with the break-neck speed in which the industry changes. Just staying relevant requires an inordinate amount of time and energy.

But merely staying relevant isn't enough to guarantee the designer's longevity in the fashion industry. Very few occupations are so dependent on the capricious nature of popular opinion from one minute to the next. The truly gifted designers are able to stay one step ahead of the fickle changes in tastes that happen in a moment - there is no lead time or warning signs. Being able to influence and capitalize on those hair-trigger flips in fashion desires is something they all strive for.

It is vital that they know their fashion history. Fashion designers need to know nearly everything that has come before so that they can recognize it when it's resurrecting itself. Not understanding this phenomenon, that old is new again, and new is old right now, could be detrimental to the designer.

In the beginning of their career, and every minute of every day when they've *'made it'*, is a never-ending battle with keeping the competition at bay. Creativity, and having a vision aren't all that's required for fashion designers to have a sustainable career - grit and ingenuity are imperative because there are many talented and hungry designers chomping at their heels.

Source: <http://www.design-training.com/fashion-design/a/how-competitive-is-the-f...>

Vocabulary

to fall to the wayside (expression)

failure to have great success

garment (noun)

an article of clothing

larger-than-life (expression)

very strong or lively personality

getting (your foot) in the door (expression)

getting an interview, getting noticed

turnover (noun)

change

thrives (verb)

succeeds

one third (1/3) (noun)

one of three equal parts

make it to the big time (expression)

become famous; achieve success

subside (verb)

diminish; go down; reduce

fickle (adjective)

change opinion frequently

grit (noun)

determination

Questions

Question 1

In which two places can fashion designers expect to find work?

Question 2

What are two things unremarkable designers are forced to do?

Question 3

Why is it important to have an internship that's a perfect fit?

Question 4

Why do many designers self-employ (become self-employed)?

Question 5

Does success in fashion design guarantee a more relaxed lifestyle? Explain.

Question 6

What is the fashion industry dependent on?

Question 7

Why is it important for a fashion designer to know about fashion history?

Question 8

What is the battle most fashion designers face?

Question 9

What four things do fashion designers need to have a sustainable career?

Answers

Answer 1

1. New York City
2. California

Answer 2

1. put together small collections
2. specialize in small parts of a garment

Answer 3

It gets the designer's foot in the door.

Answer 4

The job market is highly competitive.

Answer 5

No. Once a designer makes it to the big time, the competitive nature of the job does not diminish, it intensifies.

Answer 6

It is dependent on popular opinion.

Answer 7

It is important for them to recognize styles that come back into popularity.

Answer 8

The battle is keeping the competition at bay; keeping the competition away.

Answer 9

1. creativity
2. vision
3. grit
4. ingenuity