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| EMERALD CITY FASHIONISTA |

MONIR ZANDGHOREISHI

FGI - SEATTLE | IADT - SEATTLE

ONE OF EMERALD CITY'S GEMS

MONIR ZANDGHOREISHI

Following an international career in Persia and Vienna, Austria, Monir Zandghoreishi (*pronounced Mo-Neer Zang-or-eh-shee*) moved to Seattle in 1987. As a highly respected couture designer, she specializes in creating gowns to adorn women for their weddings or for their appearances at gala events. Monir prides herself in designing and making one-of-a-kind gowns from fine fabrics that she sources from all over the world.

Aside from being a well-known designer, she is currently the Program Chair of Fashion Design for the International Academy of Design and Technology (IADT- Seattle) and the Regional Director of Fashion Group International (FGI- Seattle).

Headquartered in New York City, Fashion Group International is widely considered to be the most prestigious professional organization in the fashion industry. Fashion luminaries Diane von Furstenberg, Karl Lagerfeld and Donna Karan are among the rank and file members.

Long before she became the Regional Director of FGI, Monir worked behind the scenes as an avid supporter and volunteer. While Monir joined FGI in 1996 and maintained a quiet profile, each year she became more and more involved by organizing their annual auctions and fundraisers, and by making many contributions to the auction from her own business.

In those years, Monir felt a long-lasting satisfaction derived from the powerful networking that took place among the members of the group. Part of the mission and scope of the organization is to become an active and vital force in the fundraising community. The regional chapters around the country frequently partner with

nonprofit organizations and foundations in order to lend a hand to and make a difference in the community.

Late last July Monir was in Los Angeles attending a conference along with 20 other FGI Regional Directors. Suddenly she had an intuitive flash—that the Seattle fashion community needed a *Project Runway* styled competition to showcase the region's top design talent. She knew the Seattle chapter of FGI did not have the funds for such a project, so she decided that she would find sponsors.

Her journey to find sponsors was a short one. *Seattle Metropolitan* magazine and *Macy's* were immediately captivated with the concept of a Seattle version of *Project Runway*. By September, the teams sat down and met—the gala event now took on a whole new energy and a new name—*Project Red Dress*. The reason for the red? It was quickly decided that the proceeds would be donated to the American Heart Association.

The main focus of *Project Red Dress* was to showcase design students from the Northwest's top schools. Monir had already established a relationship with Nick Verreos, the star of Bravo TV's *Project Runway*. Nick had already been to Seattle twice as the guest of the International Academy of Design and Technology. Nick was only too happy to return to Seattle to judge *Project Red Dress*.

In this special competition, twelve budding designers each created one red dress. The contestants were students who had been selected from every school in the Northwest that offers studies in fashion design technology.

Each student selected ten yards of red

fabric to use in designing the best red dress. The twelve contestants met every Saturday for four weeks to work on their creations on the IADT- Seattle campus. At the end of each Saturday, the students' designs were securely stored, only to be finally unveiled before the panel of prominent judges in a fashion show at the *Project Red Dress* gala event that was held at *Macy's* in downtown Seattle.

Monir Zandghoreishi has long been known as a mentor for new, up-and-coming designers and she is passionate about cultivating new generations of designers. Monir recounts what was most important to her during the four weeks leading up to the gala event of *Project Red Dress*.

One Saturday when she was in the school with the candidates while they worked on their dresses, one of the students told her that she was an immigrant and never fathomed that she would be part of the American Dream. The student's family was so proud of her accomplishment that they had purchased fourteen tickets for all of their close family members to attend.

Monir commented, "This young woman has only been in this country for a few years, and yet she has already faced her challenges and is now participating in a classy fashion show as a student."

Monir found it very moving that this young woman's family saw her participation in *Project Red Dress* as the epitome of the American Dream. She had a deep understanding for this student's struggle and triumph.

Monir had a story of her own to match—she had endured her own

tumultuous arrival to America. Having lived in Iran during the revolution and the time when the Shah was ousted, she feared for her life and the safety of her family. Iran was at war with Iraq and the city where Monir lived, Teheran, was bombed night and day. Monir escaped the terror of Iran and found asylum in Turkey. Soon afterward, she moved to Vienna, where she was able to work as a courtier and a seamstress.

"That was many years ago," Monir says proudly. "In 1987 I arrived in Seattle. It was a struggle for me to learn English and start a new life for myself and my three daughters."

She opened a business, Monir Couture Design, and soon Nordstrom and many other luxury boutiques were sending their clients to Monir for consultation and alterations.

As her business grew, she became known for her exquisite bridal and evening gowns, a place where women found the right gown for one of the most special days of their lives.

Aside from wielding great influence with FGI, Monir also plays a large role in directing other fashion events at the IADT- Seattle.

The school's annual fashion gala *La Mode: An Evening of Fashion* has featured models wearing original designs created by IADT student designers who were competing to win top awards.

This past August, the Academy hosted another gala event, *Imagine!* It again showcased the fashion design program and brought the return engagement of Nick Verreos and his sidekick Sweet P.



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"...a mentor for new, up-and-coming designers and is passionate about cultivating new generations..."

Monir feels that it is a blessing to be in the position to help the younger generation of emerging designers and is excited to be sharing her knowledge and experience.

"Our society needs new design talent to create apparel. Fashion is a huge driver in the economy that constantly needs fresh ideas from young people. I am so proud of our programs here at IADT because they prepare students for the jobs that help to make the industry strong." 

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