



By Ren Yan

Anina in China

Despite her worldwide fame, it has never been easy to introduce her. A supermodel, entrepreneur, blogger, and mobile artist etc. Yes, she manages to fuse so many identities into one life. Probably the only word appropriate to address her is “Anina”, because she is one of a kind.

Anina’s hottest program is 360Fashion.net (<http://360fashion.net/>), which she found and launched in 2005 from Paris, France. 360Fashion is a Network of high-level fashion professionals using the latest web 2.0 and mobile technologies to promote their brands online. Standing at the crossroads of Fashion and Technology, 360Fashion aims to offer a 360 degree professional observation of what is happening in the world of fashion created by all aspects of the industry’s professionals.

Here comes Anina, with her red hair glitters with rays of wisdom and her 360 degree overview of China fashion industry.

Q: When and why did you come to China?

A: I have been traveling back and forth between China, Europe, and USA for the last year and a half.

I came to China because we have already established the network in Europe and America and I felt China was the place to complete the circle. Mr. Wang Qing at the FIRS fashion gala dinner said, China is transitioning from manufacturing to brand building. Brand building is what 360Fashion specializes in using a strong online strategy to promote our network members worldwide. There are new communication technologies that can help promote professionals and brands and the West are starting to use them with great results. A new French jeans brand, April77, which has exploded across the globe, has never done any traditional advertising. All their dialogs have been online with their customers, using only a blog. Oliver Saunders, the owner, attributes their brand blog to the total success of making their brand famous and their sales soar.

The fashion industry has an aversion to technology; the top companies don't understand it or how to use it to benefit their businesses. In the West, only young designers are embracing an online strategy to gain market share. The East however, has been so advanced with mobile

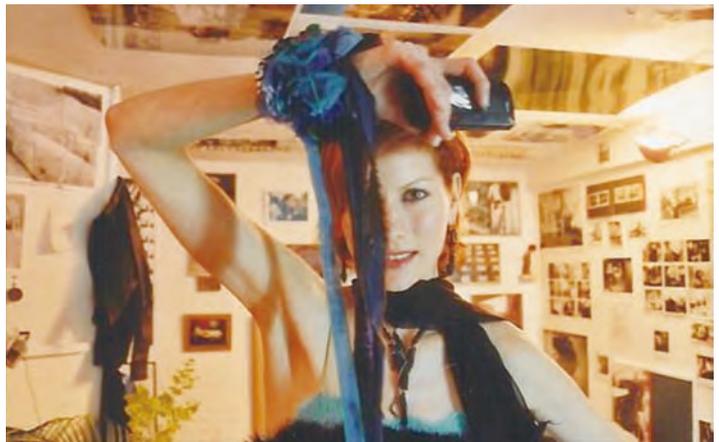
and online for a long time. They have been blogging, texting, and using their mobile phones way before the West. I felt that if I came to China, I would have to do less explaining about what technology, and concentrate more on teaching what it could do for building a brand. I thought that people would understand me better in China, as there are already many professionals using blogs to make themselves more famous. 360Fashion is here to discover, and offer an international platform and connect them to other top-level professionals.

Q: What is the new perspective that 360Fashion trying to offer to China fashion industry?

A: Technology and fashion don't normally go together. Traditionally when talking about what "technology" can do for fashion, people only think of "fabric" and "textile". Fashion is far more than a piece of clothing only related to the fashion models and photographers. It's actually a communication tool. Technology industry doesn't care about fashion - it's too small of a market niche and who cares about women services, right? Fashion industry doesn't understand technology because it's cold and complicated. Sometimes I feel that I am standing at the crossroad and fighting lonely battle. I want to get the two into a room so we can build services that support the fashion industry, and become widely adopted by people everywhere with more human interfaces.

How people use technology really needs to evolve. For example, 360Fashion has created a new mobile game for fashion lovers where you can discover

“ Technology can really help the fashion industry. There are new communication technologies that can help promote professionals and brands online and the West are starting to use them with great results. I came to China because I felt that the China fashion industry could learn from and cooperate with the West, and use these 360Fashion resources to support to their rapidly expanding industry. ”



Who's who

young designers through the mobile phone. This supports the local fashion designers and helps them connect with local customers at the same time of giving them a global visibility. In China, you have powerful search engines like Baidu and Sogou. How wonderful it would be to have such technology let people search the conversation around a fashion brand and link it to related fashion products.

In 360Fashion we are developing mobile games, blog channels and videos online with interviews on the designers and brands. These offer a 360-degree professional observation of what is happening in the world of fashion—from the insider perspective. 360Fashion is willing to promote new brands and discover new business modes for fashion industry. We teach brands and professionals how to promote themselves online.

Q: How could this Network benefit China fashion industry?

A: Many companies and people working in this field have collaborated with me already. Most brands that have collaborated with me are the ones interested in projecting an international image of high quality. As a fashion model, I want not only to introduce the Chinese top brands to the West, but also help to research, discover, and promote these emerging new brands around China. I would like to bring top professionals from the fashion industry over to meet top professionals from the fashion industry here and start a dialog about culture, beauty, aesthetics, and working methods. The 360Fashion experts have a wealth of experience and knowledge they can offer to the budding China fashion industry, and they are willing and ready to teach what they know. They want to learn also about the Chinese culture and better ways of working together as a unit group for win-win business situations.

If we could put the top Chinese fashion photographer, together with the Top Western makeup artist, with Top Chinese hairstylist, and a Top Western fashion stylist, we could come up with a totally new global perspective! If Regina Harris (makeup artist for Vogue covers in USA) came to work together with the China Fashion Week, perhaps it could support the fashion week in having a more international feel. Having master classes with photographers, and bringing agents over to discover Chinese fashion models could bring them to the West to for work experience. 360Fashion is here to showcase the top local professionals, and have them meet with top international professionals—so a new world perspective can emerge.

I have found several amazing brands here in China, like Lu 12.28 (<http://lu1228.360fashion.net>), Le Divan (a European brand founded in China, <http://ledivan.360fashion.net>), JNBY1994, EBASE, etc that no one has heard of in the West. I am very proud to showcase Lu12.28 and Le Divan and show what China can offer the global fashion market.

In addition to brands, I have also met and collaborated with some Chinese top photographers like Tong Kong Studio, Feng Hai, Yan Zhixiong etc. Their expertise is of world class. It is a great pity that they are not known more in the West. Language is such a barrier. So I'm really interested in bring these people into my network and give them visibility. So when foreign companies come here they know whom they could work with for top-level quality.

In one word, this network covers all aspects of fashion: agency, stylists, photographers, publications, models, designers, and brands. So 360Fashion is really created to "To showcase excellence and help match-make."

Q: What's the difference between fashion in Europe and China?

A: Apparently in fashion, the West is more developed and China is developing.

From my observation, the Chinese business philosophy of creating an eco-system of collaboration with mutual-benefit leaves me with a deep impression. The Westerners are sometimes too competitive: you have to make others lose in order to make yourself win. They meet, they smile, one wins one loses, say "Bye" and leave. You are not sure to work with them again, even if you did an excellent job. Chinese people hold the philosophy of "win-win" strategy: they become friends and pin their strength together. In this way both get his share of profits and they establish long-term cooperation.

Q: What hinders the development of China fashion industry? What are your suggestions?

A: China needs first to change its image. There are still people asking me questions like "Do they have skyscrapers? Do they have buses?" The Olympic Games were of great significance in this sense. Only one fashion week is far from enough. China needs to bring professionals from all aspects of the industry together to meet and build collaborations.

Communication is always, always the most important. China has things that the West should learn from; and the West also has what China could benefit from. Together we can create new business models which fashion has to adopt to develop in this new world—online and offline. I am sure that there are many people I have not yet met who would love to have international connections. I have a dream that is to hold a conference one day by bringing elites of fashion together, West and East, including stylists and photographers etc; to let people share their works and let them notice the differences and similarities. This is the way people break language and culture barriers, communicate and learn from each other.

Chinese brands could benefit from the

western trend of promoting themselves online, and communicating with their customers using technology. We have just launched the 360Fashion channel in Nokia phones, blackberry, and are about to release our iPhone applications. We would appreciate more collaboration with the Chinese fashion industry to use these mobile channels to reach customers worldwide.

Q: How would you evaluate your public image of "a role model" for and "tech icon" for the female?

A: In the West, I don't have a lot of role models that I can look up to. However, there are many women role models in China. They have successful career, they have a family and they stay glamorous. Once I asked a female CEO why China has more successful women than other places. You know what? She answered because Chairman Mao had told us "Man and woman are equal." In China, I can find so many role models that I can learn from. Women however, tend to not want to be in the spotlight. I think the only thing that really sets me apart is that I'm willing to be the first bird out who gets shot, and speak publicly in order to encourage other women to stand up and shine out too.

Like the new generation females, I don't want have to choose online one image: a mom, or a wife, or a lonely tough career woman. I want to have both a successful career and a happy family. I started designing new technologies because I felt that the female perspective could create new services to fit my multi-tasking lifestyle. Technology only designed by men has yet to create applications or services that fit my multi-faceted image. I thought if I could use my image as a model who creates technology, more women may want to enter the industry. I use my image and voice to encourage all women to embrace technology so they will have more possibility to compete in the new digital markets that are emerging globally and help create new services for the future women lifestyles. ■