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N e i g h b o u r s o f

FOREST HILL

*Fashion and
Philanthropy*
with Suzanne Rogers



Cover photo by Chris Nicholls Photography



At the launch of The Suzanne Rogers Fashion Institute, Ryerson University – Suzanne Rogers
Ted Belton photography



Suzanne Rogers Presents Diane von Furstenberg event :
Edward Rogers, Loretta Rogers, Diane von Furstenberg,
Suzanne Rogers, Chloe Rogers
George Pimentel photography

Fashion and Philanthropy

with Suzanne Rogers

By Mollie Wilkins

Suzanne Rogers has always loved fashion. She was the little girl who showed up to grade school wearing a faux fur bomber jacket. “My friend still teases me about that,” she laughs. But it was her keen eye and attention to detail that would go on to influence and shape her style. “I was very observant,” she says. “I was particularly fascinated by street fashion and the interpretations of different cultures, and I’ve always been attracted to feminine things: pretty pastels, bows, pinks... romantic clothing.” True to form, Suzanne is wearing a lovely, long, floral pink dress when we meet for coffee in mid-August. It’s the perfect summer uniform - comfortable, airy and pretty - and of course she wears it effortlessly.

I could easily sit around and talk about clothes all day but that’s what gives fashion a bad rap, particularly in Canada. It can be considered frivolous, excessive, even silly. “It’s so different in Europe,” Suzanne explains. “Fashion is a huge and important part of the arts and culture over there...here it’s viewed as simply a retail business.” With this in mind, Suzanne decided to utilize her enormous network and put her name behind something that would raise awareness - and funding - for her two biggest passions: fashion and philanthropy, with a focus on benefiting children’s organizations. Thus, Suzanne Rogers Presents and The Suzanne Rogers Fashion Institute were born.

Founded in April 2010, Suzanne Rogers Presents’ first gala showcased Oscar de la Renta with proceeds going to HealthyKids International (developed by Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children) and Casa Del Nino, a children’s charity started by de la Renta. Needless to say, it was a smashing and sold out success. “The event was off the charts!” Suzanne exclaims. “And it proved that fashion and philanthropy can be combined.” In fact, that might be putting it mildly - the evening raised close to \$1 million across the country for children’s charities and garnered extensive praise and accolades from all who attended.



At the launch of The Suzanne Rogers Fashion Institute,
Ryerson University – Robert Ott, Director, SRFI,
and Suzanne Rogers
Ted Belton photography

Since then, Suzanne has hosted three more galas: Marchesa, Zac Posen and Diane von Furstenberg. The events have raised over \$3 million, supporting numerous children’s charities and helping to combat poverty and improve healthcare and education. Next up is Victoria Beckham, which will take place in November and include an intimate fashion presentation followed by a seated luncheon. Proceeds will benefit Camp Oochigeas, a summer camp for children affected by cancer, and The Penelope Neuroblastoma Foundation, providing support to families and helping to fund ongoing research. “Our press release went out on April 24, and in less than three weeks we had over 100 emails from people wanting tables,” Suzanne smiles. “That, to me, is success. It’s the highlight of the Toronto calendar and I guarantee you get your money’s worth.”

The amount of work, time and effort that goes into putting on events of this caliber is massive. Each gala requires at least a full year of advance planning, especially since Suzanne participates in every single detail - from the invitations to the menu, the table seating and all of the personal touches. “There’s a LOT of back and forth but in the end it’s something new and different that you’re not going to see anywhere else,” Suzanne says. “And that’s what makes it special.”

It seems incredible that she should have time to do anything else, but this is just the tip of the iceberg - Suzanne is also a committee member of Scrubs (in support of The Hospital for Sick Children), a founding ambassador and jury member of the Canadian Arts & Fashion Awards (CAFA) where she is also the benefactor of The Suzanne Rogers Designer



Suzanne Rogers Presents Oscar de la Renta
gala – Edward Rogers, Suzanne Rogers,
Oscar de la Renta
George Pimentel photography



Sid Neigum, winner of The Suzanne Rogers Designer Grant for International Development at CAFA's 2019, with Suzanne Rogers
George Pimentel photography



At CAFA – Stephanie Moscall-Varey, SRFI Fellow, and Suzanne Rogers
George Pimentel photography



Suzanne Rogers Presents Oscar de la Renta gala – Oscar de la Renta and Suzanne Rogers



Suzanne Rogers Presents Zac Posen gala – Coco Rocha, model, Sylvia Mantella, Zac Posen, Suzanne Rogers, Hamish Bowles, International Editor at Large, Vogue
George Pimentel photography

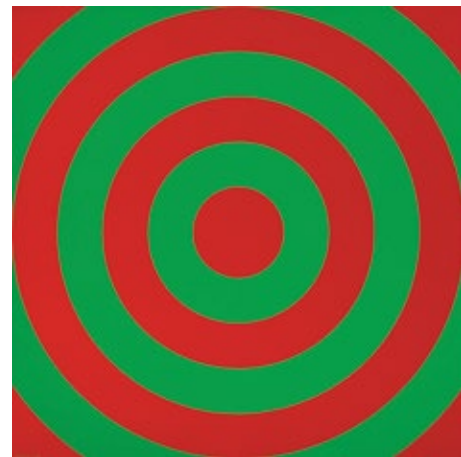


At Canada House in London with Robert Ott, Director, The Suzanne Rogers Fashion Institute, Chloe Rogers, Suzanne Rogers, Stephanie Moscall-Varey, SRFI Fellow, Dylan Kwacz, Program Co-ordinator, The Suzanne Rogers Fashion Institute (SRFI)
Darren Badoo photography

Grant (\$20,000) for International Development that supports Canadian fashion designers. Most recently she founded The Suzanne Rogers Fashion Institute, a fellowship program (the only one in Canada) that offers mentorship, awards and international opportunities to third and fourth year students and recent graduates of Ryerson University's School of Fashion. "Whether it's an application process or help with tuition, rent, travel expenses, or even just some guidance, I want these new designers to know they are not alone," Suzanne states. "I want them to be given the level of international experience and exposure that they deserve and that is so hard to get in Canada."

Each year Ryerson chooses its top four Fellows to help achieve their career objectives. As Robert Ott, Director of the SRFI puts it, "Being an SRFI Fellow is more than a title; it is the confidence to pursue your dreams without the burden of personal finances. It provides the Fellows with the determination to aim higher." For Suzanne, it's being able to watch these young designers raise the bar for the Canadian fashion industry and reach their full potential. "It's a very hard road for these incredibly talented designers," she says. "They deserve a chance and this institute is giving them that chance."

Galas, Charities, Foundations and Institutes. The fundraising and philanthropy never stops. But Suzanne is also an avid traveller, has been married for 14 years and is the mother to three children (two boys and a girl). "I suppose that's why I've never created my own fashion line," she laughs. "I really don't have enough time." Never say never though - especially when it comes to Suzanne. And if she does find the time, we definitely won't be disappointed. "Eclectic, funky, different... I don't do trends. I'm always looking for new things," she says. Stay tuned! We can't wait to see what's next.



**Claude
Tousignant,
Absurdo
(1964)**

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