

PARIS IS BURNING

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Look behind any great fashion success story and you'll surely find a cunning public relations team. After all, designers aren't just selling common cloths, they are selling their story, unique experiences and vision. John MacKay, founder of PR firm MacKay and Co. and a seasoned fashion media guru, is using his expertise and time-honored connections (Hermès, Tiffany and Co. and Club Monaco) to make a difference in the careers of up-and-coming Canadian fashion designers.

MacKay is currently offering his guidance to Paris Li, a designer with the Toronto Fashion Incubator, a greenhouse for Canadian fashion talents. "We've been working with Paris for a little over a month," says

MacKay. "We began by spending some time with her to ascertain her communications strengths and weaknesses."

Judging from her deft tailoring, mink-trimmed dresses and a superb wool cashmere vest, those skills will come in handy when Li shows her Fall 2010 collection at Saturday's TFI New Labels fashion show and gala. MacKay sees this as her chance to test her newly-acquired PR finesse, with an audience of key fashion players and discerning editors. "With the TFI Awards in front of her, it gave us something very specific to focus on. We've been educating her about the media. Next we'll shape up her communications with buyers so that she can get appointments. Then we'll work with her on how to show her collection," says MacKay, who plans to take on new designers as the program develops.

For fashion protégées like Paris Li, this kind of mentorship is priceless.

