

Fashionable Credibility, The Pulitzer Prize

Although it was never her goal to be a fashion correspondent, Lead Washington Post StyleWriter, Robin Givhan represents the best of fashion journalism not only in Washington, DC but in the United States.



Ms. Robin Givhan graduated from Princeton University in 1986 with a bachelor's degree in English. She received a masters in journalism at the University of Michigan in 1988.

When she won the coveted Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 2006, Ms. Givhan, in one singular moment, imbued the District with some much needed fashion credibility. Washingtonians have always understood fashion-its importance, its irony, its immense creativity and beauty. Now we can prove it.

Ms. Givhan obtained her first writing job as a general assignment feature writer for the Detroit Free Press. She was assigned to the Entertainment Section, a department she describes as "being dominated by film, theater and music critics." After stints at the Free Press and the San Francisco Chronicle, Ms. Givhan accepted the lead fashion writer position at the Washington Post and moved from Detroit to Adams Morgan, Washington, DC in 1995.

Her first impression of Washington was that it was an energetic and lively city. What intrigued her most was the fact that the District was a company town in the same way that Detroit was. "It was interesting to me to see the way that government managed to seep into basically every aspect of the city," she added.

And though this influence affected both the style and perception of Washington, Givhan thinks the result is irrelevant. "NY is where the fashion industry is based and if the people there were not more creatively dressed, there would be something wrong. The same is true for Los Angeles."

Washingtonians until a few years ago worked with different priorities. "DC style has always been measured by a different stick." Here, the power players are obsessed with creating an image that conveys confidence not privilege. It's less about logos and more about timeless elegance and a perfect fit. Case in point: St. John signature knitwear. Visit a style maven's closet East of the River to Foxhall Road and see for yourself.

But that has changed, says Ms. Givhan, as Washingtonians begin to incorporate more fashion trends into their style. She believes the upgrade in DC's fashion sensibility has a lot to do with changes in the fashion industry as a whole. "Fashion has become a lot more democratic. It is possible to go into H&M, Target or Macy's and have access to a very strong designer sensibility."

Today, Washington is home to a variety of independent fashion boutiques and clever designers that cater to DC's new fashion vanguard. Our favorites include, Dekka (1338 U Street, NW), Everard's Clothing (1120 20th Street, NW), Muleh (1831 14th Street NW), Inga's Once is Not Enough (4830 MacArthur Blvd., NW) and Coup de Foudre boutiques (1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, NE); and designers Lara Akinsanya (www.ishandi.com), Eric Finn (www.ericfinn.com), Shaka King (www.shakakingny.com) and Vanilla Beane, DC's oldest working milliner 202-727-0862.

